

Magee Barracks

Local Area Plan



Kildare County Council

28th November 2005



CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION / ANALYSIS

1.1 Introduction

This Local Area Plan (LAP) for the former Magee Barracks lands, shown in Figure 1 below, has been prepared in the context of the Kildare County Development Plan 2005 and the Kildare Town Local Area Plan 2002. Objective O3.2.12 of the Kildare Town Local Area Plan aims to “encourage the redevelopment of the former barracks for an appropriate mix of uses”, and later expands on what is envisioned at the barracks lands:

“(Magee Barracks) has been identified as being the subject of a separate Local Area Plan. It is envisaged that the barracks lands will be intensively developed with a mix of uses so as to ensure a new vibrant quarter of the town emerges. The Local Area Plan will identify the proposed uses, street pattern/urban form and mobility through the site. The Council intends that this area be knitted in to the existing urban fabric so that it becomes an integral part of the extended town centre.”

(Kildare Town Local Area Plan 2002, 2.9.2)

Of particular significance to the redevelopment of these lands is the decision by the government to make Magee Barracks available as one of the initial sites for the Affordable Housing Initiative, announced by An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern in the context of the Sustaining Progress pay agreement with the social partners in 2003. It is the intention that the Affordable Housing Initiative will target those who in the past would have expected to purchase a house from their own resources but find that they are unable to do so in the current market.

Key Objectives of the Local Area Plan

- Creation of a vibrant urban quarter, linking to the town centre, that complements and enhances the development of Kildare town
- Provision of a range of housing, aimed at a balanced mix across the site, with an emphasis on Affordable Housing
- Enabling the provision of educational, community, cultural and amenity uses that serve the town as well as the residents of the subject lands
- Provision of a significant element of public open space
- Reflecting the historic military character of the lands

1.2 Site Description

1.2.1 Historical Context

Kildare is a small cathedral town situated at the western end of the Curragh Plain. Its character is that of an established market town with a medieval type street pattern. The town of Kildare marks a site which has been sacred since pre-Christian times. The origin of the town can be traced back to pre-Norman times when it was an important religious site. A double monastery was founded by St. Brigid, which became the principal church of the Kingdom of Leinster. After the Norman invasion a castle was built and by the end of the 13th century Kildare had developed as a small corporate town. It continued to grow in importance and in 1309 a Parliament was held in the town. The town lost much of its religious importance with the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1500s.

Kildare town has a long history of military association. The site of Magee barracks had been a British Army barracks since the early 1900s and subsequently was the first depot of An Garda Síochana following Independence. Magee Artillery Barracks was built in the 1930's, and was one of the first military barracks to be built by the newly independent Irish Free State.



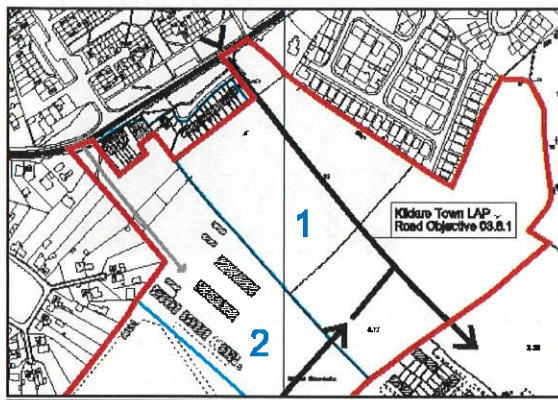
condition. The former shell store, which is surrounded by a high security steel fence, is very prominent as is the former, green painted, water tower. A major feature is the former Parade Ground, which, as it was designed for use by artillery, is of vast proportions. Of the barracks buildings only the former Officers Mess, which has its front entrance facing away from the barracks square, is a protected structure. The main splayed entrance gates and railings are also listed for protection in the County Development Plan.

Another strong feature of the Barracks site is the band of mature trees surrounding the entrance and fronting onto Hospital Street, and the tree-lined main avenue that gives access to the centre of the site. The predominant character of the site lies in its current spaciousness. Most of the built environment is dilapidated and redundant.

1.3.3 Character areas, potential development zones

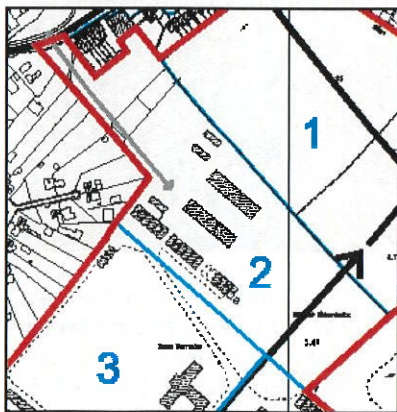
As presently constituted the site breaks down into five main sub zones that each has a distinct environmental character. These areas are indicated on Diagram No. 1.

Area 1



This greenfield (former horse grazing) area at the northernmost end of the site is about 9 hectares in extent. For the most part the land slopes gently in a north/north easterly direction. Houses back onto the western, northern and eastern boundaries. There is access to Melitta Road via the north western corner and to Hospital Street via the main avenue. Access to the area through a private housing estate on the eastern boundary is an objective of the development plan. There are some distant views of the Dublin Mountains from the Melitta Road end of this area.

Area 2

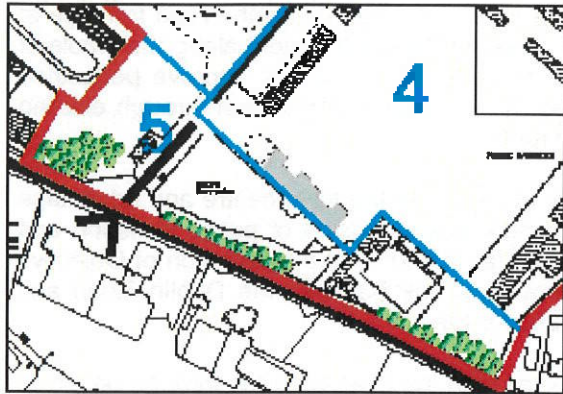




atmosphere. Houses back onto the eastern and north eastern boundaries of this part of the site.

The Officers Mess is a protected structure. It faces away from the parade ground in a southerly direction. In front of the Officers Mess is level ground forming a garden with a number of trees.

Area 5



This area has approximately 340m of frontage to Hospital Street and measures approximately 2 hectares. It includes the main entrance, a security area, and the former Officers Quarters which is now in use as a halting site for travellers. The gates and railings to the barracks are protected structures. The boundaries to the road are planted with trees. The mature trees to the west of the main gates are particularly attractive.

1.3.4 Architectural features

Whilst there are only two structures on site listed for protection, there are a number of buildings that might be deemed to have architectural or historic merit. As noted above, most of the other buildings are in poor condition and appear on casual inspection to have little architectural value or potential for practical reuse or conversion. Nevertheless, it should be noted that no concerted architectural survey has been carried out on the site and this will need to be done prior to the commencement of development on site.

1.3.5 Influence of surrounding uses (sensitivity)

Practically the whole of the site is bounded by existing residential development (as shown in Diagram 2). For the most part, the houses, a mixture of bungalows (such as Melitta Park or Campion Crescent) and two storey houses (as at Beechgrove and Ruanbeg) back onto the barracks site and, provided the normal rules relating to rights of light and privacy are observed, should not inhibit development. Because of the topography at the north east corner of the site, the adjoining houses would overlook development on the site. Similarly, development on the barracks site would overlook existing residential development on the eastern boundary. Residential density in the surrounding areas varies from one estate to another. Densities generally are low, in the traditional 8 – 12 units per acre range.

There are differences in levels at a number of points on the boundary of the site. The houses in Ruanbeg Manor to the north of the parade ground are approximately three metres below the level of the barracks site. At the northern boundary, the residential development at 'The Plains' is at a significantly higher level than the barracks site.

1.3.6 Links to town centre

Although the Market Square is less than 500m from the main gate of the site the road linking





- The vast proportions of the Parade Ground (Area 4) do not lend itself to easy integration with residential, neighbourhood scale development. It is possible and desirable, however, to reflect the military/parade theme in the detailed design and layout of the development. This could be achieved through the interspersal of small formal squares as a motif through the overall development.
- Subject to the findings of architectural survey, all structures other than those listed for protection will be subject to demolition.
- Certain baseline surveys will be necessary (topography, ground conditions, contamination check and architectural record) before proceeding to implementation of the development.

1.4 Adjoining Land Uses

1.4.1 Surroundings – uses and character.

With the exception of mixed commercial development on Hospital Street and Dublin Street, the barracks site is completely surrounded by residential development. The development to the west and north west of the site is predominantly local authority housing, whilst to the north and east (excepting Rowanville) most of the housing is private. The town centre and most of the existing retail, cultural, sporting and educational services lie to the west and south of the site, as do most of the tourist attractions. Public open space is scattered in relatively small self-contained units associated with the various individual residential estates. It is generally accepted that the area as a whole (east of the town centre) is poorly served with social and cultural facilities.

Hospital Street and Dublin Street do not have a strong urban presence. These streets are currently characterised by scattered commercial buildings and have little of urban quality or continuous street frontage. This reflects, among other factors, their status until 2004 as part of the N7.

1.4.2 Recent Development in Kildare town

Significant recent developments in the town will help to attract employment and commercial activity to Kildare. At Claregate Street, a mixed use development of 15 retail units, library, office and 56 apartments was completed in 2004. In September 2004, Kildare County Council granted planning permission for a tourist outlet village of 53 units with a gross floor space of approximately 10,925m² at the Nurney Road (Ref. 04/927). This development is currently under construction. At land adjacent to the M7 interchange, a planning application was lodged in December 2004 for an industrial and business park, hotel and leisure centre, motor mall, bar, restaurants, and 330 residential units (Ref. 04/2974).

These developments, when complete, will increase the commercial base of the town and help to meet the employment needs of the town. Each of these developments is located to the west of the town centre. Development at Magee Barracks will help to rebalance the commercial activity of the town to the east.



2.1.4 Kildare and Monasterevin Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use and Transportation

The Kildare Town and Monasterevin Draft Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use and Transportation (IFPLUT) is presently being produced. This plan seeks to ensure that future development in the town will be sustainable and that alternative modes of transport other than the car will be provided for the communities created by new development in the town. The Draft Integrated Framework Plan identifies Magee Barracks Local Area as of significant development potential to the town.

2.1.5 Kildare County Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy, adopted by Kildare County Council in the 2005 County Development Plan, assesses the need for housing in the county and puts forward strategies for dealing with it. The strategy notes that County Kildare continues to experience significant housing affordability problems. It is anticipated that demand for social and affordable housing will continue to exceed the anticipated supply, and 20%, the statutory maximum that is transferable for the provision of social and affordable housing under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, applies to housing development in the county. Of this 20%, 8% is for social housing and 12% for affordable.

2.1.6 Kildare Town Local Area Plan 2002

The development plan is based on a future population projection in the town area of 12,000 by 2006, representing a 300% increase in the population in 10 years.

The development strategy as set out in the local area plan is to consolidate the town as part of the Kildare-Monasterevin secondary growth centre. Kildare will evolve with a range of employment, recreational, cultural, retail and educational facilities appropriate for a town of its size. The plan aims to redirect the growth of the town to the north and west, rather than the existing trend to the east. The plan aims to ensure that the redevelopment of the barracks makes a positive contribution to the town.

The plan identifies three areas of the town as requiring Area Plans; the South Green area to the northwest of the town centre (identified for future residential growth) and the town centre as Action Area Plans and former barracks as a Local Area Plan.

“(Magee Barracks) has been identified as being the subject of a separate Local Area Plan...The Local Area Plan will identify the proposed uses, street pattern/urban form and mobility through the site.

The plan includes an objective to develop a county museum (or branch of the National Museum of Ireland) at an appropriate location in Kildare town.

2.1.7 South Green Action Area Plan 2004

The South Green area to the northwest of the town centre is identified in the Kildare Town Development Plan 2002 as being the most appropriate location for the future expansion of the residential area of the town. The plan identifies lands to be developed for high, medium and low density housing, amenity and recreational use and other commercial and community development. The plan sets out the planned phasing of development, including both the residential and other uses and the infrastructure necessary to support it. Approximately 1,690 residential units are planned in the area over the two phases of development, which will extend beyond the life of the existing Kildare Town Development Plan 2002.



CHAPTER 3 – DEVELOPING THE VISION

The decision to prepare the Magee Barracks Local Area Plan in Kildare town arises from the policies and objectives of the Kildare Town Local Area Plan 2002.

As stated in the Kildare Town Local Area Plan 2002;

“The Magee Barracks has been identified as being the subject of a separate Local Area Plan. It is envisaged that the barracks lands will be intensively developed with a mix of uses so as to ensure that a new vibrant quarter to the town emerges. The Local Area Plan will identify the proposed uses, street pattern/urban form and mobility through the site. The Council intends that this area be knitted-in to the existing urban fabric so that it becomes an integral part of the extended town centre. Pending the adoption of the Local Area Plan the existing zoning will remain in effect”

The nature of the proposed development is further refined by the need to provide a significant number of residential units to contribute to the Affordable Housing Initiative. Residential development, consistent with the need to integrate with, and knit into the urban fabric of, the town is the key objective of the plan.

3.1 Concept

The central concepts in the development of a vision of the lands are ‘intensive mixed development’ and ‘vibrancy’. Key too is the idea that the area should become part of the town centre. This vision extends to establishing a community that is viable and sustainable and to creating an environment that has a sense of place and identity of which the residents and the town as a whole can be proud.

An important issue in the consideration of the potential of the Magee Barracks site is how the development of the barracks land will relate to, and integrate with, the already developed residential areas surrounding the site and the town centre from both a physical and functional viewpoint.

3.2 Factors Affecting Layout and Uses of the Site

Certain policies and proposals, taken at national level since the Kildare Town Local Area Plan 2002 was adopted, impinge on the attainment of the vision and overall objectives for this site. These include:

- The specific requirement of the Department of Environment, for use of the site for the provision of a significant amount of housing under the Affordable Housing Initiative.
- The Department of Justice have confirmed that there is no long term need for the use of the site for asylum seeker accommodation and that they will have vacated the site by the end of 2006.
- The potential location of 380 additional jobs in Kildare town, due to the decentralisation of Revenue Commissioners IT staff.
- The commitment to the local community on the sale of the barracks, given by the (then) Minister for Defence in regard to open space and community facilities representing about 10 acres of the site.

Limiting development of the site to the provision of housing for the Affordable Housing Initiative would result in the infusion of a large mono-social unit in an area already largely surrounded by local authority built housing. This would run counter to national housing policy and against the objective of creating integrated communities and reducing social segregation. For this reason, the residential component on the site will be made up of a range of residential types to provide a better social balance, albeit weighted towards Affordable Housing.



and the opportunities for the creation of a new civic and tourist attractions in the town, the site is deemed well capable of fulfilling.



is envisioned that approximately 550 to 650 units could be developed on the site at densities of between 30 to 40 dwelling per hectare (11 to 16 dwellings per acre). An indication of the possible mix of residential types is set out in the following table

Residential Type	No. of Units
Affordable Housing Initiative	350 units
Social units	50 units
Open Market Sale	200 units
Total	600 units

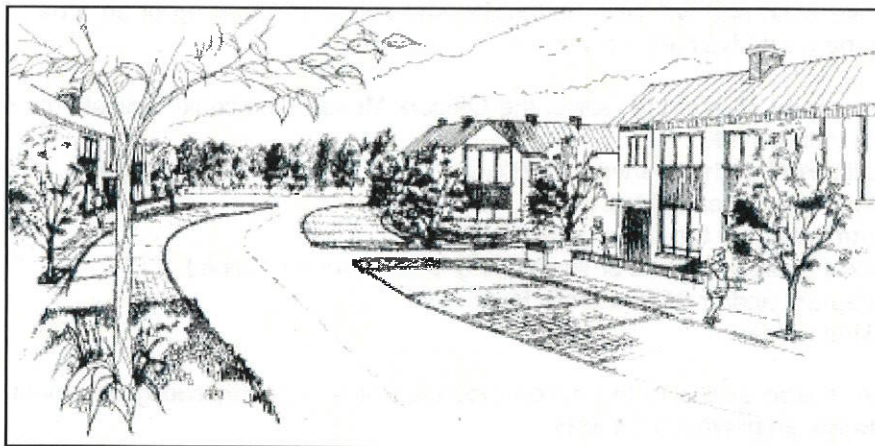
Table 4.1 Indicative Residential Split

To ensure that a balanced mix of housing be provided within the site, 60% of the open market sale units should be made up of "trade-up" type dwelling units of a floor area not less than 1600sqft/150sqm, in order to cater for the local market and enable persons within the town to upgrade/trade-up.

Housing for the elderly has been identified as of particular concern in the town and will also form part of the housing on the site. The actual breakdown in the residential types will be based on the identified need in each type at the time of development. The residential units available for open market sale may be distributed through each of the proposed development parcels rather than concentrated in one part of the site to provide an opportunity for people to trade up from starter homes to larger units.

Higher density development is suited to the lands adjoining the proposed village centre to the west and east (see below). This will be developed at a density of between 33 – 40 units to the hectare (13-16 units per acre). The northern part of the site, about 9 hectares (23 acres), would be developed for low to medium density residential use 30 – 33 units/hectare (11-13 units per acre).

It is considered that traveller specific housing may not be required on this site. A site has been identified on the South Green Action Area Plan and this should be used to meet the town's requirement for traveller specific accommodation. However, travellers can be accommodated on the site in standard housing if this is their preferred option.

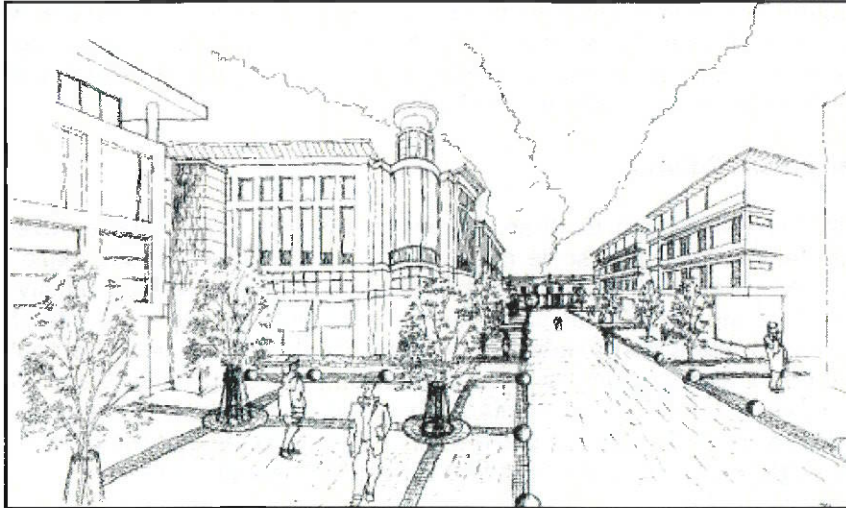


Indicative sketch of residential street

4.2.3 Parade Ground

It is not recommended that the military parade ground be retained in its entirety as this is vastly out of scale with normal residential development. Instead it is proposed that a 'cultural plaza' is created addressing the Officers Mess facing onto Hospital Street as the gateway to the new quarter of the town. The 'plaza' will be designed to reflect the military associations of the site and its links to the town. It will be a hard landscaped





Indicative Image of Village Centre area

4.2.6 Civic / Community Use

This area, based on the Officers Mess and opening directly via a pedestrian plaza onto Hospital Street, would adjoin and be linked directly to the Village Square, and will have a tourism and cultural focus accommodating civic and cultural uses. It is envisioned that the Officers Mess will be retained and will be reserved to accommodate a museum use that is suited to its design. This block also reserves a site for the provision of a cultural centre, including performance arts centre, gallery, multipurpose theatre/lecture hall, library and similar facilities. The particular cultural use will be determined by further study, taking into account the particular requirements of potential users, its viability and issues surrounding its ongoing management. However, the delivery of accommodation for the uses identified, shall, at no cost to Kildare County Council or the community, be an intrinsic part of the development of the area. No residential or commercial development shall be permitted in advance of an agreement on the design, delivery and management of the community facilities including all costs involved. Such community facilities, and/or the cost thereof, shall be not less than the current market value of ten acres, to be assessed by independent valuation, prior to the development of the master plan. This is the Council's response to the original commitment made by the Minister for Defence to provide ten acres or the value thereof, for the benefit of the community of Kildare Town. Arrangement shall be made in consultation with Kildare Area Councillors and the agreement of Kildare County Council.

These facilities are located in the southern part of the site forming the sides of the main gateway plaza in conjunction with the Officers Mess. The cultural and commercial uses reflect and are intended to complement the nearby Kildare town centre.

In order to open the plaza out to Hospital Street and to allow for the optimum development of the site it may be necessary to remove the railings at the front of the site.

4.2.7 Educational and Related Use

A site of approximately 3 acres has been made available for use as a primary school site or educational related use. The site is located adjacent to the proposed park. The site is also centrally located within the barracks site and is easily accessible to serve the expanding educational needs of the town.

4.2.8 Linkages to the town centre

The development of the barracks lands provides the opportunity to create an urban edge and character to Dublin Street and Hospital Street, strengthening the connection with the town



Land Use	Mixed Use	Residential	Educational & Related	Open Space	Community Civic and Cultural
Dwelling	Y	Y	N	N	N
Guest house/hotel/hostel	Y	O	N	N	N
Restaurant	Y	O	N	N	O
Pub	Y	N	N	N	N
Shop (convenience)	Y	O	N	N	N
Shop (comparison)	Y	N	N	N	N
Retail warehouse	N	N	N	N	N
School	N	N	Y	N	N
Medical and Related Consultant	Y	O	Y	N	O
Health centre	Y	N	Y	N	O
Nursing home	N	N	Y	N	N
Community hall & Sports halls	O	O	Y	Y	Y
Recreational buildings	Y	O	Y	Y	Y
Cultural uses, library	O	O	O	N	Y
Offices	Y	N	N	N	N
Garages, panel beating and car repairs	N	N	N	N	N
Petrol station	N	N	N	N	N
Motor sales	N	N	N	N	N
Car parks	Y	N	O	O	O
Heavy commercial vehicle parks	N	N	N	N	N
Cinema, dancehall, disco	N	N	N	N	N
Warehouse (wholesale)	N	N	N	N	N
Repository, store, depot	N	N	N	N	N
Industry	N	N	N	N	N
Industry (light)	N	N	N	N	N
Workshops	N	N	N	N	N
Playing fields	N	O	Y	Y	N
Place of worship	Y	O	Y	Y	Y
Park/playground	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tourist camping site	N	N	N	N	N
Tourist caravan park	N	N	N	N	N
Halting site	N	N	N	N	N
Cattle shed/slatted unit	N	N	N	N	N
Broiler house	N	N	N	N	N
Stable yard	N	N	N	N	N
Amusement Arcade	N	N	N	N	N
Hot food take-away	O	N	N	N	N
Utility structures	Y	O	O	O	O
Funeral homes	O	N	N	N	N
Crèche/playschool	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Incinerator	N	N	N	N	N

Y = permitted in principal, O = open for consideration, N = not permitted

Table 4.2 Land Use Zoning Matrix



creating the cultural plaza. This area is closest to the town centre and will also provide a significant population that can be served by the proposed village centre and developing community facilities on the site. An estimated 180 residential units can be provided in this development area.

5.2.3 Cultural plaza and Village Square

The first phase of development will also see the initiation of works on the cultural plaza and the commercial village square (area P1A). Work on this can take place concurrently with the residential development, but is likely to be completed over a longer period. This phase will also include a residential element of approximately 35 units, but these are unlikely to be completed early in the development period.

5.2.4 Decentralised Office

A location for a proposed decentralised office or other high quality employment facilities is reserved in area P2A. Should this site be chosen by the OPW, it can be made available in the early phase of development of the barracks lands. This would provide a strong impetus that would improve the attractiveness of the overall barracks lands (and of the town in general) and encourage early development of the remaining village centre lands for the other suitable uses identified.

5.3 Phase Two

The second phase of development is again concentrated to the south of the barracks lands. It will feature a strong residential component at medium to high density. In addition it will involve the setting out of Magee Park and the provision of community facilities in the vicinity.

5.3.1 Residential Development

This phase of residential development will take place in area P2A. Development will be to a density in the range 33-40 per hectare. The area would accommodate approximately 140 units. Should the decentralised department or other high quality employment facilities not locate at the barracks, the identified site on Block P2A will be reserved for development in this phase for use as a hotel or county council local office.

5.3.2 Park

This phase will include the definition, layout and initial landscaping of the proposed Magee Public Park (P2B). The park measures approximately 3.5 acres and will serve the broader area to the east of Kildare town. Community facilities will be provided adjacent to the park in area P2C. These may include childcare facilities, playground and a local convenience shop.

5.4 Phase Three

The third phase of development involves the development of the medium density parts to the north of the site. This can, if desired be broken into two parcels, divided by the proposed distributor road. They will be facilitated by the completion of the realignment and upgrading of the distributor roads, namely the connection from the former Main Avenue ('Parkway') and of the road linking Ruanbeg Manor estate with Melitta Road.

5.4.1 Residential

Phase three would commence on completion of the distributor roads. It would comprise Medium Density residential development situated, yielding approximately 125 units on area P3A to the west of the main distributor road and 170 units on site P3B. These developments would be served with local open space provision in addition to their prominent locations adjacent to Magee Park.



Appendix I

Statement on the likely Significant Impact on the Environment of Implementing the Plan

The Planning and Development Act 2000 requires all statutory plans to contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan. The requirement is in fulfilment of the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, introduced in July 2001, as incorporated into the Planning and Development Act 2000.

The assessment required is similar to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) insofar as it attempts to assess in a systematic way the consequences for the environment of implementing proposals. Unlike an EIS however, this assessment attempts to assess the impact on the environment of implementing a whole plan rather than a particular project. Consequently, it must take a more strategic approach than an EIA.

This statement on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the *Magee Barracks Local Area Plan* is based on methodologies developed for Heritage Appraisal. However, in place of the relatively narrow scope of a heritage appraisal it was decided to assess the policies of the plan under the wider range of topics as defined by EIS regulations, namely;

- Human Beings,
- Flora,
- Fauna,
- Soil,
- Water,
- Air
- Climate,
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal,
- Material Assets,
- Cultural Heritage,
- Interaction of the Foregoing

The various policies of the plan are assessed against sustainable development principles and presented as a matrix on the following page. Policies are considered on the basis of the likely significant impact they will have on the environment if implemented. The impacts are assessed as to whether they will be positive, negative, neutral or insignificant or uncertain.

Policies are considered positive if, on balance, they are likely to lead to the conservation or enrichment of the environment, negative if, on balance they are likely to lead to the degradation of the environment, neutral or insignificant if they are unlikely to have a significant impact one way or the other and uncertain if the impact depends on the nature and scale of development.

Environmental assessment such as this must be considered as a process rather than an end product. It entails a systematic assessment of the environmental consequences of implementing the plan carried out at the various stages of drawing up a plan.

As one of the principal reasons for drawing up and implementing a development plan is to ensure that development is environmentally sustainable it is to be expected that none of the policies is anticipated to have a significant negative impact on the environment. The environmental assessment does, however, highlight those policies whose impact on the environment is uncertain, depending on how they are implemented.

