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Introduction and Strategic Context

1.1 Introduction and Strategic Context

This County Development Plan 2011-2017 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. It sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Kildare over the period 2011-2017 and beyond to the horizon year of 2022.

This Plan relates to the functional area of Kildare County Council, which is County Kildare, excluding the Town Council areas of Naas and Athy, as these are separate Planning Authorities. It is however, relevant to the two Town Councils as it sets out an overall vision, strategies, policies and objectives for the county as a whole. Its successful implementation will have a positive impact on all areas within the county, including the Town Council areas. It builds on the *Mid-term Review of the Kildare County Development Plan 2005-2011*, taking into account recent key development trends, national, regional and local policy developments and the EU requirement to include the application of Strategic Environmental Assessment.

This Plan is set out in a written statement, with accompanying maps. It comprises 19 chapters and appendices which can be grouped as follows;

Chapters 1 and 2 set out the introduction, strategic context and core strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Kildare.

Chapters 3-14 set out detailed policies and objectives under a range of specific topic headings which the County Council seeks to achieve over the six-year life of this Plan e.g. settlement hierarchy, housing, economic development, retail, infrastructure, rural development, social and community, heritage and landscape.

Chapters 15 and 16 outline urban and rural design guidance to promote quality developments.

Chapters 17 and 18 incorporate village plans, a development strategy for settlements located within the rural areas of the county and environs plans.

Chapter 19 sets out development management standards to be applied to future development proposals in the county. The purpose of these standards and objectives is to guide and assist the formulation of development proposals and to regulate the impact of development on the environment.

Appendices include, Housing Strategy, Record of Monuments and Places, Landscape Character Assessment etc.

1.2 Purpose of Development Plan

The purpose of this Plan is to set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. It has been prepared having regard to those matters that must be included in a County Development Plan (i.e. mandatory objectives) as well as those matters that may be included (discretionary objectives) as required by the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

Consideration can only be given to matters that relate to the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. In summary, the main mandatory objectives of the Act for this Plan are:

- Zoning of land where the proper planning and sustainable development of the county requires the uses to be indicated;¹
- The provision of infrastructure including transport, energy and

¹ It should be noted that there shall be no presumption in law that any land zoned in a particular development plan (including a development plan that has been varied) shall remain so zoned in any subsequent development plan (Section 10(8) Planning and Development Act 2000).

- communication facilities, water supplies, waste recovery and disposal facilities, waste water facilities, and ancillary facilities;
- The conservation and protection of the environment, including, in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and protection of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed;
- The encouragement, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, of the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species;
- The promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established—
 - (i) for bodies of surface water, by the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009;
 - (ii) for groundwater, by the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010; which standards and objectives are included in river basin management plans (within the meaning of Regulation 13 of the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003);
- The integration of the planning and sustainable development of County Kildare with the social, community and cultural requirements of the county and its population;
- The preservation of the character of the landscape, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest;
- The protection of structures, or part of structures which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest;
- The preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;
- The development and renewal of areas in need of regeneration;
- The provision of accommodation for travellers, and the use of particular areas for that purpose;
- The preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities;
- Reducing the risk of a major accident having regard to the Major Accidents Directive;
- The provision of services for the community including schools, crèches, and other educational and childcare facilities;
- The promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to—
 - (i) reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources,
 - (ii) reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and
 - (iii) address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular,

having regard to location, layout and design of new development;

- The preservation of public rights of way which give access to mountains, lakeshores, riverbanks or other places of natural beauty or recreational utilities; and
- Providing a framework for the identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention (Florence 20th October 2000).

In accordance with Section 15(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, there is a duty on the planning authority to take such steps within its powers as may be necessary for securing the objectives of this Plan. However, the achievement of many objectives will depend on the availability of finances from the State and other sources.

The Council recognises the role and importance of infrastructure providers, semi-state bodies and landowners/stakeholders in Kildare in realising the objectives of this Development Plan.

1.3 Key Challenges for the Plan Period

This Plan has a critical role to play in ensuring that the needs of future population growth are planned for. It has been prepared at a time of unprecedented changes in the economy. The county has experienced significant population growth from 134,881 in 1996 to 186,335 in 2006 and has a target population of 252,640 by 2022. According to the 2006 Census, 122,016 persons or 65.5% of the population of County Kildare, were designated as residing in urban areas. Having regard to the exceptional period of growth since 1996, the population targets arising from the Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022, coupled with the significant changes to economic development, employment levels and Government finances, the key challenges for County Kildare comprise the following:

- (i) Directing population growth to the main urban centres with maximum growth focused on the vibrant towns of Maynooth, Celbridge, Leixlip and Kilcock within the Metropolitan Area;
- (ii) Promotion of significant new economic development within defined economic clusters;
- (iii) Providing local employment opportunities in hinterland towns;
- (iv) Promoting a balance between jobs and settlement centres and facilitating employment growth in hinterland towns at a scale appropriate to the level of population and housing growth;
- (v) Unlocking infrastructural constraints and ensuring adequate investment in infrastructure, to maintain and facilitate economic development;
- (vi) Delivering community facilities in tandem with significant population change throughout the settlement centres in the county;
- (vii) Ensuring that new public and private development is sustainable and of a high quality;
- (viii) Protecting the built heritage, unique landscape, natural heritage and biodiversity of the county for their intrinsic value and as a resource for the tourist economy of the future;
- (ix) Integrating climate change considerations into the strategic approach and objectives;
- (x) Integrating the implementation of the Habitats Directive, which seeks to prevent any plans/projects which would be likely, either individually or in combination with other plans/projects to give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site and to

recognise that such projects will not be permitted unless for imperative reasons of overriding public interest; and

- (xi) Seeking to ensure the integration of the recommendations of Appropriate Assessment are carried out (at all levels of the planning hierarchy) as relevant and appropriate.

The chapters that follow in this Plan set out the planning policy response of the County Council to these challenges.

1.4 Main Policy Considerations

The Planning and Development Act 2000 requires that a Development Plan shall, so far as is practicable, be consistent with national plans, policies and strategies, which relate to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area covered by the Plan. The most central Government plans, guidelines, policies and strategies influencing the preparation of this Plan are noted below. Other relevant documents include various Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and comprise:

- Architectural Heritage Protection;
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual;
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines;
- Design Standards for New Apartments;
- Development Plan Guidelines;
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment;
- Provision of schools and the Planning System;
- Quarries and Ancillary Activities;
- Retail Planning Guidelines;
- Sustainable Rural Housing;

- Sustainable Development in Urban Areas;
- Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures;
- Wind Energy Development;
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management.

These are dealt with in the relevant sections of this Plan.

1.4.1 National Policies and Strategies

The following paragraphs set out a brief summary of the main provisions of national plans, policies and strategies, which relate to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area covered by this Plan.

(i) National Spatial Strategy for Ireland (NSS) 2002-2020, People, Places and Potential (2002)

The NSS provides a framework to promote and direct balanced regional development and sustainable growth. It also guides policies, programmes and investment. The strategy emphasises continued strong growth in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) but with significant improvement in the regions outside the capital and more particularly in the nine gateway cities and nine hub towns. Kildare has neither a gateway nor hub town and as such will have to compete with higher order cities and towns to secure funding for strategic investment opportunities. Notwithstanding this, the GDA is identified for consolidation and in strategic terms the following issues are of particular importance for Kildare:

- Effective integration of land use and transportation;
- Supporting the region's capacity for innovation;
- Facilitating ease of movement of people and goods; and

- Maintaining a high quality environment.

(ii) National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013, Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All (2007)

The goal of the NDP is to integrate strategic development frameworks for regional development, rural communities, all-island co-operation, and for protection of the environment with common economic and social goals. There are a number of challenges facing the country which the NDP aims to address including infrastructural bottlenecks, improving skills and education, creating and sustaining high value economic opportunities and redistribution of wealth. The NDP sets out a strong framework for the promotion of regional development with particular focus on investment in the NSS gateway centres. The changes to the international and national fiscal situation is likely to impact on the level of available funding for the projects identified in the NDP impacting on prioritisation and timing of delivery.

(iii) Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland (1997)

The national strategy for sustainable development provides a framework for the achievement of sustainability at a local level. It calls on planning authorities to incorporate the principles of sustainable development into their development plans and to ensure that planning policies support its achievement.

(iv) Transport 21 and Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future (2009)

Transport 21, is the capital investment framework for the transport system over the period 2006-2015. It addresses the twin challenges of past investment backlogs and continuing growth in transport demand. It comprises two investment programmes – a National Programme and a Programme for the Greater Dublin Area. County Kildare will benefit from both programmes which aim to increase accessibility, ensure sustainability, expand capacity, increase use of public transport, enhance quality, create a high quality efficient national road and rail network and to strengthen

national, regional and local public transport services.

Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, is the new transport policy for Ireland for the period 2009-2020. The policy recognises the vital importance of continued investment in transport to ensure an efficient economy and continued social development, but it also sets out the necessary steps to ensure that people choose more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Actions are proposed:

- To reduce distance travelled by car and encourage smarter travel;
- To ensure alternatives to the car are more widely available;
- To strengthen institutional arrangements to deliver the targets set out in Smarter Travel.

(v) National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012 (2007)

The National Climate Change Strategy outlines the measures that Ireland will take in order to meet its commitments to limit greenhouse gas emissions over the period 2008-2012. This is to be achieved through legally binding limits to the production of those gases with the strategy incorporating a programme of actions for achieving those limits. The main focus is on reducing transport emissions, encouraging renewable energy sources, changes in agricultural practices and changes in waste disposal policies and plans. The strategy recognises that decisions by local authorities on the location, design and construction of domestic and commercial developments and of related economic and social activity, can have a significant affect on greenhouse gas emissions.

(vi) National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2009-2020 (2009)

The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan outlines Government actions to achieve its target of 20% energy savings across the economy by

2020. A strategy is outlined to reduce the country's dependency on imported fossil fuels, improve energy efficiency across a number of sectors and ensure a sustainable energy future. The Government's energy policy framework *Delivering a Sustainable Future for Ireland – The Energy Policy Framework for 2009-2020* is designed to steer Ireland towards a new and sustainable energy future, one that helps increase security of supply, makes energy more affordable, improves national competitiveness and reduces our green house gas emissions.

1.4.2 Regional Policies and Strategies

Regional policies and strategies provide the policy link between national policies and guidance documents and local authority planning policies and decision. The most relevant are outlined in the following sections.

(i) Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (RPGs) 2010-2022 (2010)

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) is a policy document which aims to direct the future growth of the GDA and works to implement the strategic planning framework set out in the NSS. The Guidelines provide an overall strategic context for the Development Plans of each local authority in the GDA including population and housing targets, and also provide a framework for future investment in environmental services, transportation and other infrastructure. The core principles of the RPGs are as follows;

- Dublin as the capital will serve a wide range of international, national, regional and local needs.
- The Dublin and Mid-East Regions will be attractive, vibrant locations for industry, commerce, recreation and tourism and will be a major focus for economic growth within the State. In this regard, Maynooth, Leixlip and Naas have been identified as primary economic growth towns and as part of economic clusters with adjoining designated towns. Kildare town and Athy in south Kildare are

designated as a secondary economic growth centre serving south Kildare.

- Development in the GDA shall be directly related to investment in integrated high quality public transport services and focused on compact urban form. The key growth centres in the county are located on or in close proximity to quality public transport services comprising, Naas, Newbridge, Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge, Kilcock, Kildare, Monasterevin, Kilcullen and Athy.
- Development within the existing urban footprint of the Metropolitan Area which includes north east Kildare, will be consolidated to achieve a more compact urban form, allowing for the accommodation of a greater population than at present, with a much-enhanced public transport system, with the expansion of the built up areas providing for well designed urban environments linked to high quality public transport networks, enhancing the quality of life for residents and workers alike. The Metropolitan towns of north east Kildare, comprising Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge and Kilcock will accommodate 35% of the population and housing target over the period of 2006-2016.
- Development in the Hinterland Area, will be focused on the high quality integrated growth and consolidation of development in key identified towns to include Kildare, Monasterevin, Kilcullen and Athy, separated from each other by extensive areas of strategic green belt land devoted to agriculture and similar uses. These towns will have high levels of employment activity, higher order shopping and a full range of social services, with good road and bus linkages to other towns and by high quality public transport to Dublin City. They will play a key role in serving the surrounding rural communities and smaller towns and villages.

(ii) Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016 (2008)

The Greater Dublin Area Retail Strategy aims to set out a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to the assessment and provision of retail within the GDA so that:

- Adequate and suitable provision is made to meet the needs of changing population patterns, both overall and locally, and provide for healthy competition and consumer choice.
- Retail is provided in suitable locations, integrated within existing growth areas and public transport investments.
- Significant overprovision is avoided, which would place more marginal locations under severe pressure and undermine sustainability driven policies aimed at revitalising town centres.

A series of policy recommendations draw on quantitative analysis undertaken as part of the review, examining market patterns, expenditure and future growth projections. By setting out a strategic framework for retail, the strategy seeks to give guidance on where future retail should be provided and what issues need to be addressed. To this end, the strategy proposes a retail hierarchy as a core spatial policy around which future growth, rejuvenation and expansion in the retail sector needs to be focused. The Retail Strategy for County Kildare is determined within the context of the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

(iii) Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area

The Dublin Transportation Office (DTO) A Platform for Change 2000-2016 seeks the development of an efficient and high quality system of public transport connections within the Greater Dublin Area. It comprises two interdependent objectives:

- Infrastructure and service improvements to expand the public transport network,

some strategic road construction and traffic management.

- Demand management to reduce the growth in travel through the application of land use and other policies while maintaining economic progress.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has issued a Draft Transport Strategy for the GDA which is linked to sustainable land use planning and is directed by the economic, social, cultural and environmental needs of the people of the GDA.

(iv) Eastern and South Eastern River Basin Management Plans (2008)

The Water Framework Directive was adopted in 2000 and requires the preparation of a management plan for all waters in an area called a River Basin District. Parts of Kildare are located in the Eastern River Basin District and the remainder in the South Eastern River Basin District. The Directive's main aim is to maintain all water bodies, rivers, lakes, groundwater and estuaries at high status, to prevent deterioration in the existing status of water and to achieve at least "good status" in relation to all waters by 2015. The River Basin Management Plans describe in detail the status of all waters and protected areas. A programme of measures will be put in place to provide the works necessary to bring water bodies to good quality status. These measures have informed the preparation of this Plan.

1.4.3 County Kildare Plans, Strategies and Studies

Kildare County Council policy documents are also relevant to this Plan. These include the Corporate Plan, the County Development Board Strategy, the Economic Development Strategy and Local Area Plans.

(i) Kildare Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2009-2014 (2009)

The Kildare Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2009-2014, sets out the mission statement for the Kildare Local Authorities and a strategic

framework for actions by the authorities. The plan outlines core values and the key strategic objectives to be pursued over the five year period, subject to available resources. The plan also sets out the context for the preparation of the annual budget and business plans for each section of the local authorities.

(ii) Kildare 2012 – An Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy 2002-2012 (2002)

Kildare 2012 is an economic, social and cultural strategy prepared by the County Development Board for the development of Kildare based on a shared vision for Kildare over a ten year period. It seeks “*to make Kildare a better place to live, learn, work, visit and do business*” and is accompanied by a set of goals and objectives to achieve this vision together with actions that will build on the strengths and opportunities of the county. Strategic goals and objectives have been taken into account in the preparation of this Plan

(iii) Competing in a Globalised World – An Economic Development Strategy for Kildare (2007)

Competing in a Globalised World – An Economic Development Strategy for Kildare is the current economic strategy for County Kildare. The key message is that Kildare has to compete internationally in order to attract and retain investment and skills to stay ahead. It recognises that the county will need to develop and attract more strategic activities in the manufacturing sectors and re-orientate towards high value-added traded services. At a strategic level it advocates the importance of identifying locations that have the highest potential for the attraction of high-tech, high value-added and research intensive activities and that these sites be ring-fenced specifically for those developments. It also recognises the need to cater for a wide range of business, residential and infrastructure developments throughout the county.

(iv) Local Area Plans and other Studies

In accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 Local Area Plans were prepared by the Council for designated Census

towns with a population over 2,000 or areas which were identified for significant levels of development.² They set out in greater detail the Council’s requirements for new development, including such factors as density, layout and design requirements, community facilities, transportation, open space and recreational facilities. These plans must be consistent with the County Development Plan. The following local area plans were adopted during the course of the County Development Plan 2005-2011- Prosperous, Athgarvan, Allenwood, Kilcullen, Derrinturn, Monasterevin, Sallins, Castledermot, Kilcock, Clane, Leixlip, Collinstown and Celbridge.

Other plans and strategies have been carried out which inform the preparation of this Plan and comprise:

- a) The County Heritage Plan 2005-2009 which outlines an action plan for the conservation, preservation and enhancement of Kildare’s heritage including natural heritage. This plan is due to be reviewed in 2011.
- b) The County Biodiversity Plan 2009-2013 provides a framework for conserving biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level. It consists of a number of practical actions which serve to raise awareness of and enhance the protection, conservation and management of our natural heritage.
- c) Village Design Statements (VDS) have been prepared for Ardclough, Brannockstown, Staplestown and are due to be finalised for Nurney, Robertstown and Calverstown. These studies are informed by the opinions and views of communities on how their village could be developed in the future. The role of a VDS is to advise how developments should be carried out in sympathy with the character and quality of the locality.

² Population threshold for LAP has been increased to 5,000 (Refer; Planning and Development Amendment Act 2010)

1.5 Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC), was transposed into Irish Law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (SI No 435 of 2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI No 436 of 2004) which requires the Kildare County Development Plan to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in order to improve the planning and environmental management of future development in the county.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the term which has been given to the environmental assessment of plans. It is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a plan in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic and social considerations. The SEA was carried out in parallel to the preparation of this County Development Plan.

The environmental issues which were considered by the SEA are as follows:

Biodiversity (flora, fauna),
Landscape/Geology;
Agriculture and Forestry;
Population;
Water Quality;
Air Quality;
Waste Management;
Cultural and Material Assets;
Climate

The Environmental Report of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 provides a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of development in County Kildare. The Environmental Report has guided the preparation of objectives, policies and development alternatives for the Development Plan with the aim of achieving sustainable development in the County without causing adverse harm to the environment.

1.6 Appropriate Assessment

All land use plans require to be 'screened' for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites. In any case where, following screening, it is found that the draft plan may have an impact on the objectives of a Natura site, or such an impact cannot be ruled out, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) under the EU Habitats Directive must be undertaken.

This AA process comprises the assessment, based on scientific knowledge, of the potential impacts of the plan on the conservation objectives of any Natura site and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects. The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of the plan, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impacting on the site. The AA process informs plans of the environmental impacts of alternative actions and contributes to the integration of environmental considerations into plan making.

A Stage One Appropriate Assessment was carried out on the Development Plan. It concluded that the Development Plan had been formulated to ensure that uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based upon the Development Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) would not give rise to significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

1.7 Overall Vision

Through the public consultation process for this Plan a number of key themes emerged for consideration regarding the overall vision for the county over the period 2011-2017. These themes have been amalgamated and expressed in the following vision:

"To build on the strengths of the county by facilitating sustainable development, through the provision of high quality employment opportunities and residential developments supported by quality urban and rural environments with physical and social infrastructure to support communities throughout the county."