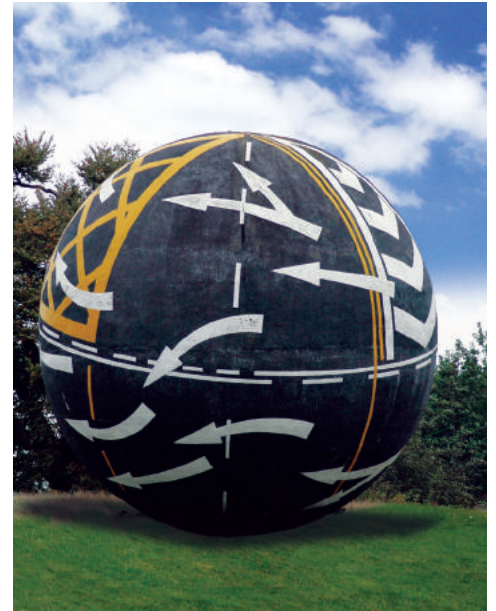


Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework

Submission of Kildare County Council



Planning and Strategic Development Department
31 March 2017



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The preparation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) present an opportunity to reflect on the growth of Ireland since the publication of the National Spatial Strategy in 2002 and to guide and shape the spatial development of Ireland over the next 20+ years. Kildare County Council welcomes the opportunity to be part of this important discussion.

The NPF will address a multiplicity of issues including:

- Population increase of 1 million additional people;
- A need for at least 500,000 extra homes close to services and amenities;
- The delivery of 500,000 jobs, many of which will be high skilled jobs;
- Major environmental challenges such as protecting air, water quality, biodiversity and addressing climate change;
- The quality of life and well-being of all citizens.

By addressing these issues in a co-ordinated and strategic manner, the National Planning Framework (NPF) will provide a sound basis for future planning at the regional and local level which will ensure the delivery of the national vision.

Purpose of Submission

This submission explores the key issues from a Kildare perspective and concludes with a series of recommendations for the NPF.

The NPF should seek to unlock the existing potential of all areas and improve competitiveness and quality of life in the more developed areas of the State.

While the NPF's Issues and Choices paper identifies a significant number of challenges to be addressed, the overarching challenges will continue to be the mutually supporting objectives of:

- **Managing development pressure in the Greater Dublin Area and the Eastern part of the Country;**
- **Protecting the competitiveness and key national/international role played by the Dublin City Region; and**
- **Achieving effective regional development by capitalising on existing assets and opportunities in regional cities, county towns and rural areas that are supported by networks of smaller towns and villages.**

One of the biggest challenges will be to deliver a policy framework of sufficient detail to guide policy formulation and investment at a regional and local level without being overly prescriptive.

Kildare Overview

County Kildare is situated within the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly Area adjacent to Dublin and has the fourth highest population in Ireland¹. The population of Kildare has increased by over 70% since 1991 to a population of 222,130 persons in 2016.

The county has a strong network of vibrant towns including Celbridge, Kilcock, Leixlip and Maynooth in north Kildare; Naas, Newbridge, Kilcullen and Kildare in mid-Kildare; and the towns of Monasterevin and Athy in south and west Kildare. There is also a network of small towns, villages and settlements that support rural populations together with large tracts of open countryside.

In 2012 there were 7,774 active enterprises in Kildare with a workforce of 104,000 persons (approx.). Large employers include Intel, HP and Maynooth University in north Kildare; Kerry Group and Kildare County Council in Naas; Pfizer, Bord na Mona and the Whitewater Shopping Centre in Newbridge; Kildare Village in Kildare Town; and the Defence Forces and the equine industry in the vicinity of the Curragh. Towns, villages and settlements provide a diverse range of services and the bloodstock and equine industry, agriculture, energy production and tourism feature strongly in the rural economy.

2.0 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GREATER DUBLIN REGION

The Dublin City Region (inc. Kildare) plays a vital national and international role for Ireland. One of the key challenges for the NFP will be to protect this international role, whilst also supporting effective regional development. A careful balance must be achieved. Given the medium to long term challenges posed by Brexit and wider political uncertainty internationally, it will be crucial that the national spatial plan provides certainty for future trade and business investment.

The perceived dominance of Dublin needs to be carefully tested, particularly when considering its international role². Dublin continues to perform well internationally, in terms of business competitiveness and in respect of broader economic, environmental, social and cultural indicators. However, it is a relatively small city region on the international scale and needs to develop and grow to maintain its success.

To secure a sustainable future for the Dublin City Region and for the state as a whole it will be important that the NPF and RSES:

- 1. Recognises and protects the international role of the Dublin City Region (inc. Kildare);**
- 2. Defines the extent and scope of the functional city region (rather than municipal areas) and the role and function of towns that fall within its influence;**
- 3. Recognises that current infrastructural and capacity constraints, in particular those relating to water services, transportation, housing and social infrastructure, are more reflective of past development trends and under investment than the underlying capacity of this region to grow; and**
- 4. Prioritises investment in the areas that are impacting on competitiveness and on quality of life in the Greater Dublin Area.**

¹ Census 2016 Preliminary Results.

² Table 4.1.1 of the Issues and Choices Paper refers.

Map 1: County Kildare and the Greater Dublin Area

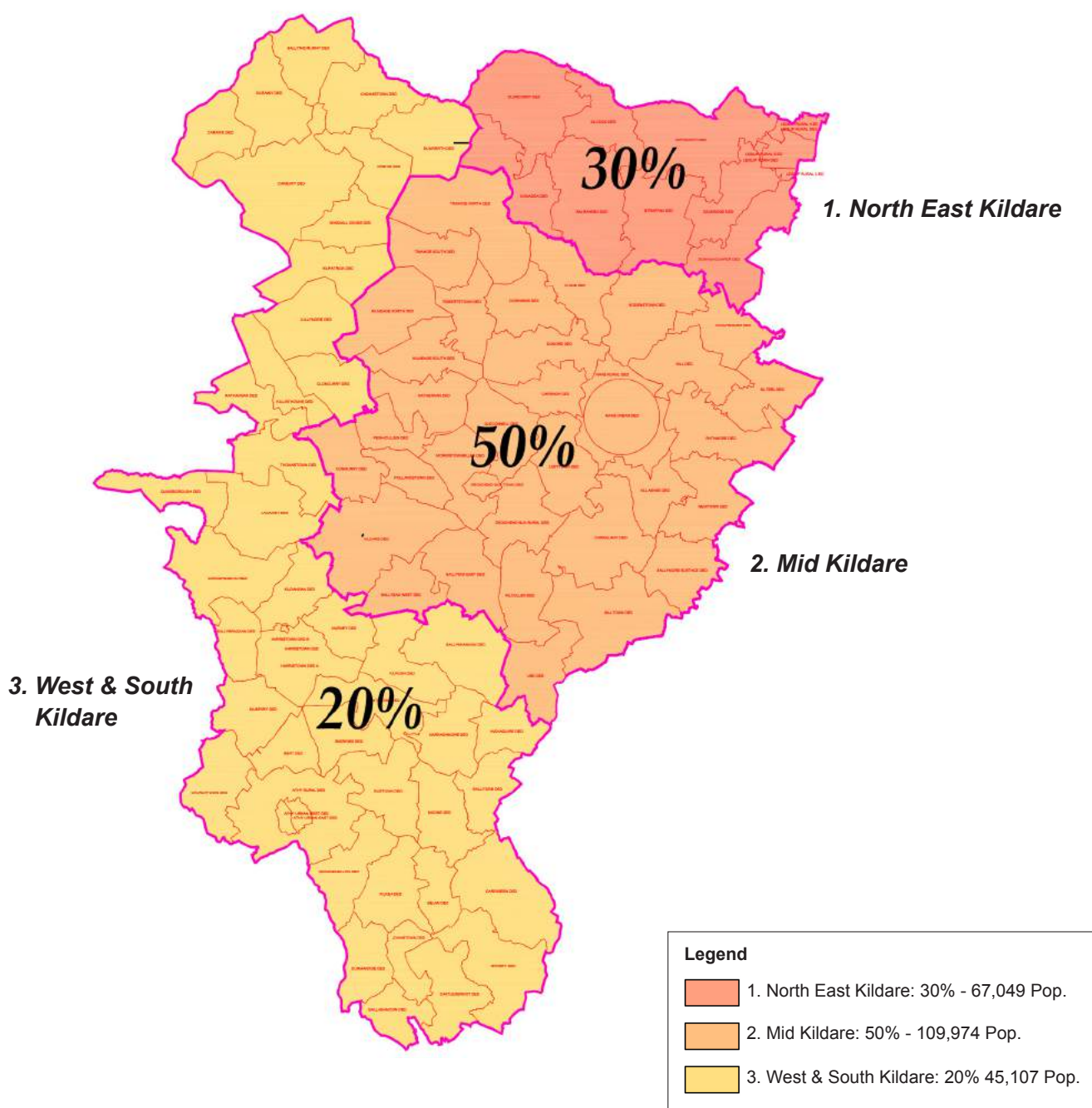


3.0 GROWTH AND CHANGE IN KILDARE – A 20 YEAR PERSPECTIVE

Kildare by virtue of its proximity to Dublin and its strong economic, social and transport connections is a fundamental part of the Dublin City Region.

Kildare has experienced major population expansion over the last four decades due to both a high birth rate and high levels of inward migration. Since 1991, the population has grown by over 70% to a population of 222,130 persons in 2016. Only the local authority areas of Dublin City, Cork County, Fingal and South Dublin have larger populations. The distribution of population is skewed with 80% of the population living in the north and east of the county in areas that are proximate to Dublin (see Map 2, below).

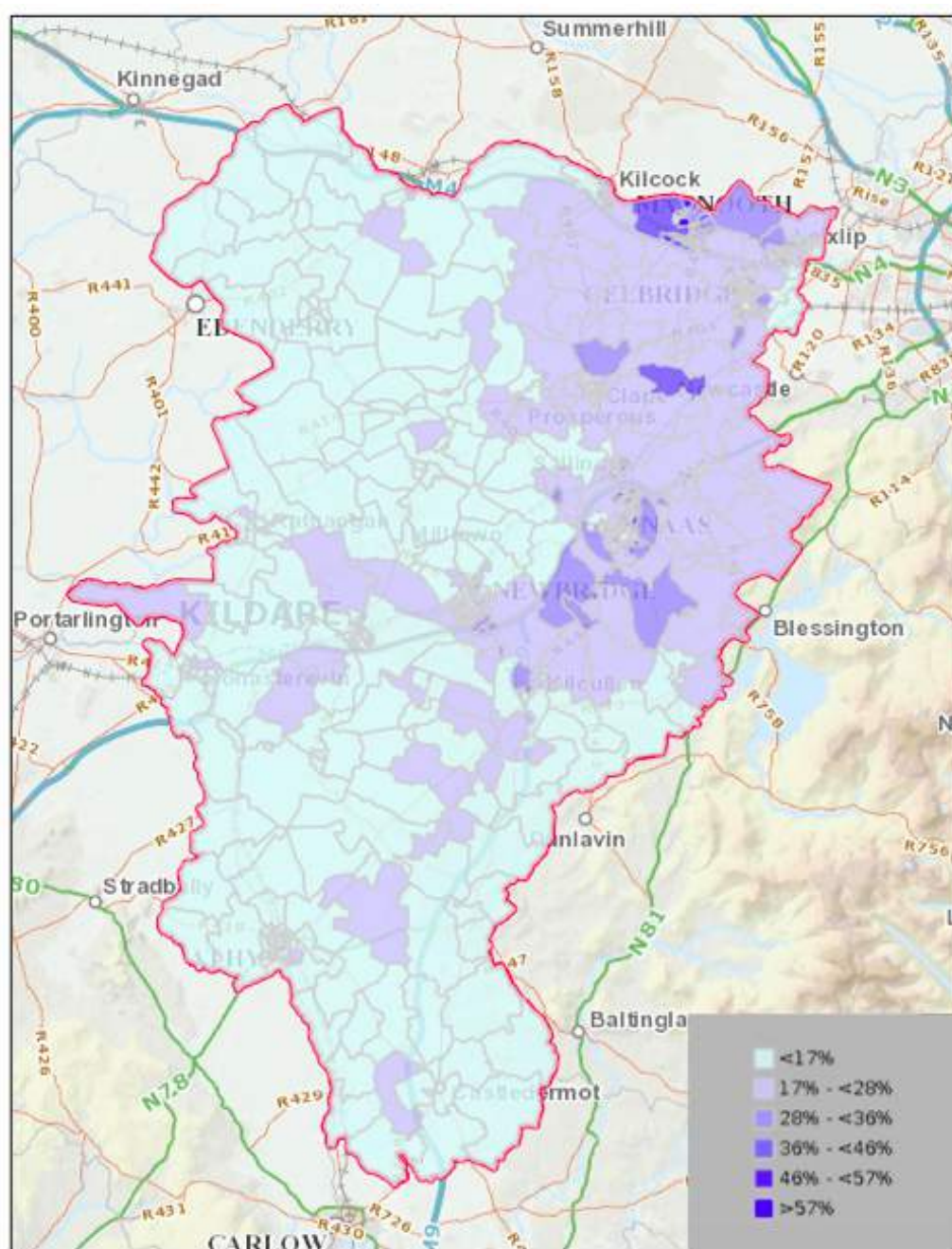
Map 2: Census 2016 - Preliminary Results for Kildare Population Breakdown



In 2011, the proportion of young people (aged 0-24) in Kildare was 37% of the County's population, the highest rate of young people in the state. In addition, the '65 and over' age cohort is increasing and now represents 7.9% of the total population living in the County.

Kildare's population has a high level of educational attainment. The proportion of the population aged 15 and over with an honours degree or higher, is higher than the national average. The County rate is 17% with higher levels of attainment in the north and east of the County, close to Dublin and the main urban centres. In Maynooth, the population with an honours degree or higher is 35%, in Leixlip and Celbridge it is 25% while in Naas the figure is 22% (See Map 3, below).

Map 3: Census 2011 - Percentage Population Aged 15+ with an Honours Degree or Higher



³ Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, 2004 and 2010.

While there has been an increase in the number of jobs in Kildare over the last 20 years, new job creation in the county has not kept pace with the rate of population growth. In 2011 there were 55,918 jobs in Kildare relative to a labour force of 104,226 persons. Some 40% of Kildare's working population commute out of the County with 73% of those commuters travelling to Dublin. The highest commuting rates are in the north and east of the county along key transport corridors. This highlights the importance of Kildare in the functioning and economic status of the Dublin City Region. With the exception of Naas and Newbridge, all towns in the county operate as net exporters of workers, mainly to the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

Kildare also has a high volume of commuting traffic from adjoining counties on the main motorways in Kildare with large workforce numbers commuting through the County to the Dublin Metropolitan Area from origins such as Westmeath, Meath, Laois, Offaly and Carlow.

The recent economic recovery has been accompanied by many changes in the life of individuals. While wages are progressively being restored and the country is returning to full employment, it has become clear that the quality of life for residents in many areas is not improving in tandem with these factors. Quality of life is not merely determined by employment status and income but also depends on factors such as access to employment, commuting times, availability of childcare, access to high quality social infrastructure, education opportunities, recreation opportunities and on the quality of the built and natural environment.

Looking Forward

Kildare, as a fundamental part of the Dublin City Region, needs to play a part in accommodating the future sustainable growth of Dublin. The 'business as usual' trend would see growth dispersed in towns, villages and rural areas throughout the County, contributing to increased sprawl, car-based commuting, congestion and adverse impacts on people's lives and on the environment. If people are to be provided with good quality housing, educational and employment opportunities, healthcare, sustainable transportation, and all the other services that people expect, then a more focused approach will need to be adopted so that Kildare, the Dublin Region and Ireland can perform to its maximum potential.

For the purposes of the NPF Kildare needs to be considered as three distinct areas:

(i) Metropolitan Towns

The Kildare towns of Leixlip, Celbridge, Maynooth and Kilcock are situated within the Metropolitan Area of Dublin as defined by the RPGs, with Leixlip and Maynooth designated as Large Growth Towns II and Celbridge and Kilcock designated as Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns³. Maynooth and Leixlip are also identified as primary economic growth towns to be prioritised for local and regional enterprise.

The metropolitan towns and their rural hinterlands have been accommodating the growing population of Dublin over many decades and will continue to do so. The population of this area was 67,000 persons in 2016 (See Map 2, page 4). This represents 30% of Kildare's population and is higher than the total populations of the counties of Carlow, Longford, Leitrim, Roscommon, Sligo and Monaghan and is close to the populations of Offaly and Cavan.

There has been significant investment in water services, transportation, energy and telecommunications infrastructure to support this area and it is envisaged that the NPF and RSES will build on the policy framework and investment of the past 20 years.

³ Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, 2004 and 2010.

In addressing the increasing footprint of the Dublin Metropolitan Area, there is an opportunity through the NPF and RSES to acknowledge the position of Leixlip, Celbridge, Maynooth and Kilcock within the Metropolitan Area of Dublin and to harness the capacity of these towns to support sustainable population and economic growth based around an integrated regional transportation system.

This metropolitan catchment area is located within Corridor C of the NTA's Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035. A 37% increase in travel demand is anticipated by 2035 along this corridor. The expansion of the DART network to Maynooth and Hazelhatch are key planned public transport projects that will address travel demand and modal shift in this corridor (See Map 4, below).

Map 4: 2035 DART and Commuter Rail Network in the Greater Dublin Area (NTA, 2015)



Kildare County Council has identified strategic housing and employment sites along the Dublin – Cork and Dublin – Sligo rail corridors. Strategically located land banks that are close to the existing railway network are identified at Confey and Collinstown in Leixlip and at Hazelhatch in Celbridge and offer significant potential for consolidated plan led growth over the medium to long term. The rail nodes in Maynooth and Kilcock are embedded within the urban centres and these towns offer significant potential for growth. To support integrated land use and transportation planning it will be important that the NPF and / or RSEs acknowledge the role of strategic sites along rail corridors and prioritise these areas for growth.

(ii) Hinterland Towns

The population of mid-Kildare including the towns of Naas, Newbridge, Kilcullen and Kildare was 109,974 persons in 2016⁴. This represents 50% of the county's population and is higher than the total populations of the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath, Leitrim, Roscommon, Sligo, Cavan and Monaghan and just below Clare and Waterford.

A significant proportion of the mid-Kildare population commute out of the County for employment and one of the key challenges for the NPF and RSES will be to ensure a greater alignment between population growth and job creation to redress this imbalance.

⁴ Celbridge No. 1 Rural Area.

The RPGs identifies Naas, the County Town, as a primary economic growth town in the Hinterland area to be prioritised for local and regional enterprise. Naas is ideally placed to play a strong role in the future growth of the Dublin City Region. It is strategically positioned and has high quality connections to Dublin and other centres, whilst also supporting and servicing a wider local economy. Its connectivity to Dublin, Waterford, Cork and Limerick along a high quality transportation corridor that includes a rail line, motorway network and strong bus routes presents a significant opportunity for Naas and for the region. It is important that the NPF and RSES acknowledge the role of Naas as a strategic economic centre within the Dublin City Region, so that economic growth can be aligned with the existing high quality labour market that exists in Naas Town and in mid-Kildare and with the attractive urban and rural setting that offers significant quality of life benefits.

Mid-Kildare is located within Corridor D of the NTA Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035. A 25% increase in travel demand is anticipated by 2035 along this corridor. Planned improvements to the Kildare rail line and upgrade works to the N/M7 to address congestion are key infrastructure requirements outlined in the NTA Strategy to address travel demand and modal shift.

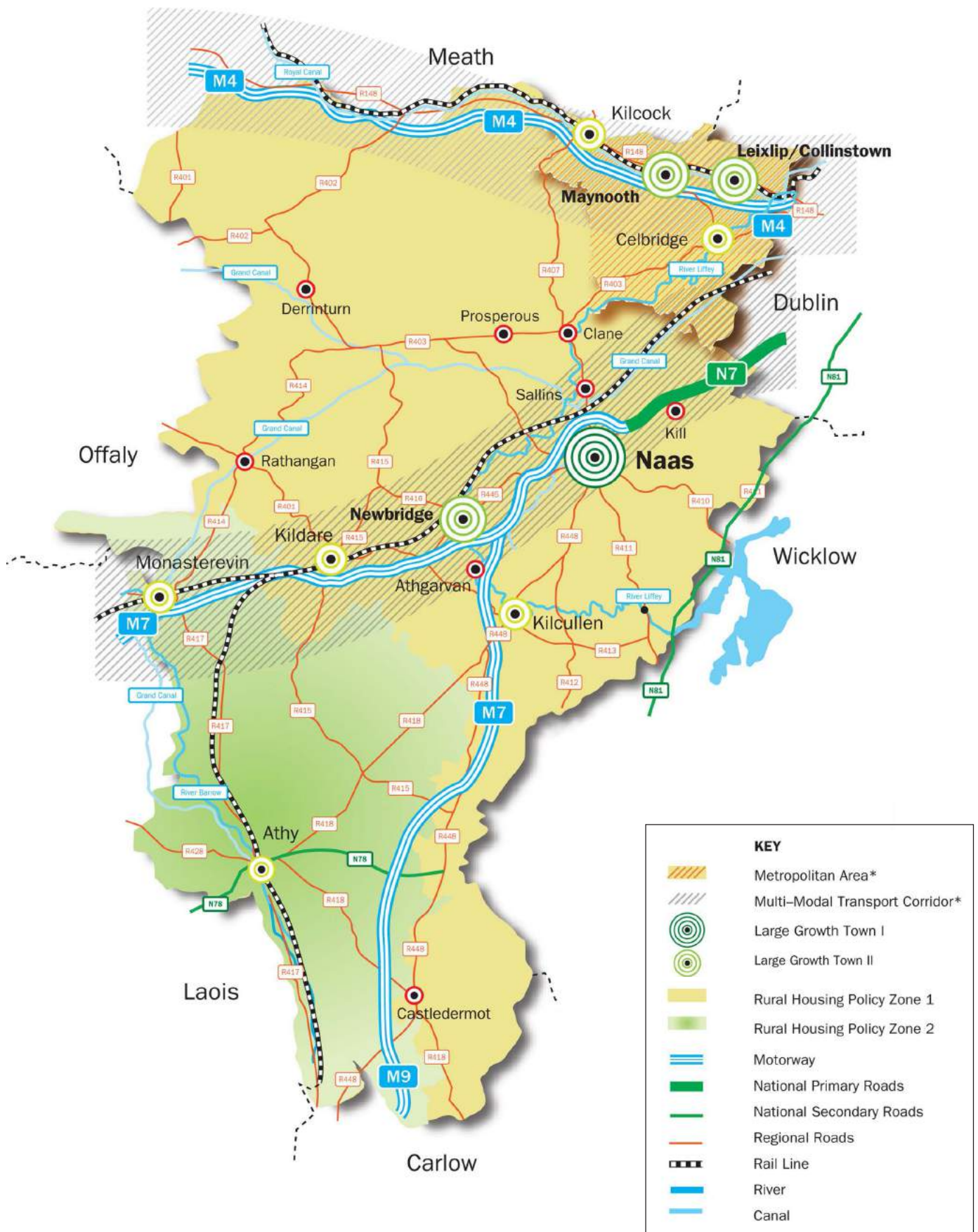
Kildare County Council has initiated a “visioning” process for Naas that will inform the forthcoming Naas Local Area Plan. The role and function of key districts within and adjoining Naas, such as Naas Town Centre, Devoy Quarter, Millennium Park, Maudlins, Sallins, Johnstown and Killashee and their capacity to accommodate economic and population growth over a 20 year horizon will be carefully explored.

The major employment district in the North West Quadrant (Millennium Park) in proximity to the Dublin – Cork rail line, presents a significant opportunity to align new employment with an existing centre of population within the Dublin City Region. Identifying Naas as a key employment destination within the region will maximise the value of established physical and social infrastructure and connections; and build on established synergies with other key towns. The potential for a ‘Bus Rapid Transit’ type link from the national rail line at Sallins into Naas Town Centre would further integrate Naas within the region.

The other Hinterland towns and in particular the larger towns of Newbridge, Kildare and Athy are active and vibrant centres that have grown significantly over the past 20 years. There is an opportunity through the RSES to identify these towns as regionally significant growth centres with distinct economic strengths so that they can complement and support the role of Naas as a nationally significant growth centre.



Map 5: Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 Core Strategy



(iii) Rural Areas

Similar to the national trend, research undertaken to inform the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 highlights an ongoing pressure for low density housing developments in the smaller towns and villages and in the open countryside. This has impacted on the growth of the county's key urban centres, diverted population and investment away from larger centres and has created a disjoint between where people live, work or study. While over 60% of Kildare's population live in the 10 largest urban centres, there are no urban centres in Kildare with a population of 25,000 persons or over.

To secure future competitiveness, quality of life and environmental quality it will be important to direct a higher proportion of future growth into a smaller number of key urban centres in Kildare and to build economies of scale for the provision of infrastructure, facilities and services.

National policy will be important to secure a more sustainable approach. Kildare County Council welcomes the opportunity to work with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government to explore these issues and to pilot more sustainable housing options in both key growth centres and rural areas.

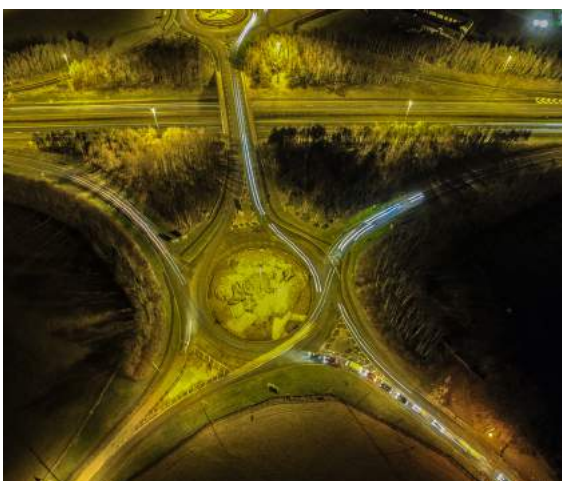
Kildare is committed to working within the policy framework of the NPF and RSES towards the development of a small number of larger urban centres that offer higher order economic and social opportunities, high quality housing and amenities and high quality transport choices.

4.0 ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Growth in Kildare has relied heavily on historic physical and social infrastructure, and deficiencies are now emerging, particularly in the area of transportation, water services infrastructure, social and recreational infrastructure. The national policy context contained in the NPF and as translated to the regional level through the RSES will need to be supported through targeted investment.

Kildare is committed to working towards the development of attractive urban centres that offer a range of higher order economic and social opportunities, high quality housing and amenities and high quality transport choices. This will mean directing a greater proportion of future growth into a smaller number of key urban centres in the Metropolitan and Hinterland areas of Kildare and to build economies of scale for the provision of infrastructure, facilities and services.

The provision of supporting infrastructure, services and facilities will be an important prerequisite to secure the implementation phase of the NFP. Infrastructure providers need to be aligned with the planning process, with whole of government buy in for policy driven investment. Strategic and social infrastructure is needed to support increasing urbanisation and this will need to be prioritised in future Capital Investment Plans. If spatial policy is not aligned with investment the likely result is the “business as usual” scenario.



5.0 REGIONAL ASSETS

Kildare has a range of community and cultural, recreational, heritage and sporting assets that offer significant potential to increase the cultural, heritage and lifestyle profile of the region and to support quality of life and well being. A list of key assets is set out in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Key Assets of Co. Kildare

Key Sporting Assets

Sports activity in the county, particularly equine and golf play an important role in the local economy. Some headline facilities include;

- The Curragh and Punchestown racecourses hold festivals that attract international publicity and international tourist
- Key golf clubs include the K Club which hosted the 2006 Ryder Cup, Carton, Palmerstown and Moyvalley which will host the Irish PGA Championship
- Mondello Park Racing Track
- Numerous local GAA, Rugby and Soccer sports clubs

Key Educational & Health Assets

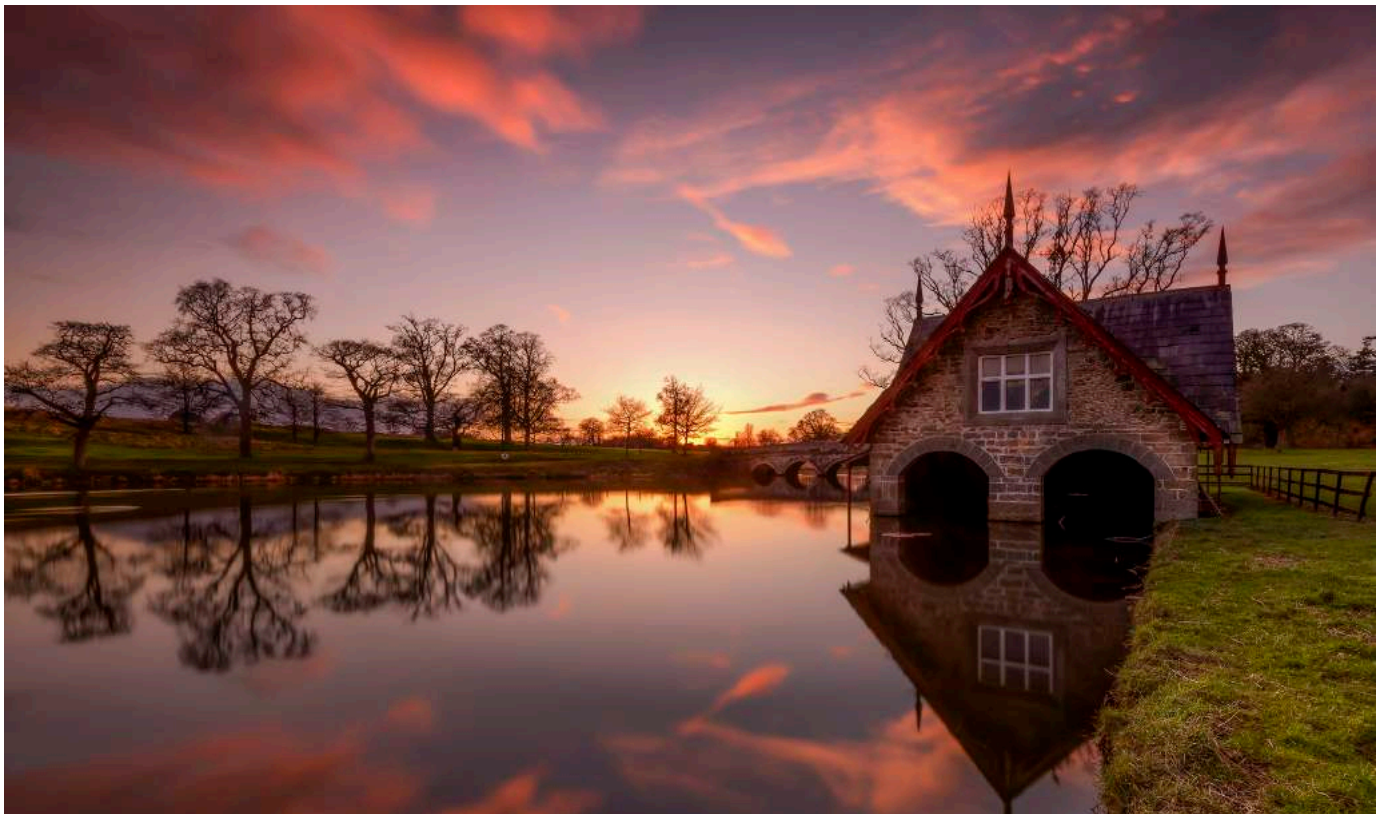
- Maynooth University
- Naas General Hospital
- Numerous Primary care facilities

Recreational Facilities

- The Irish National Stud & Japanese Gardens
- Donadea Forest Park
- Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park
- The Bog of Allen Nature Centre
- Two long distance walking routes along the Grand Canal and Royal Canal
- The Dublin – Galway Greenway (under construction) adjacent to the Royal Canal in Kildare
- Arthur’s Way walking route between Leixlip and Oughterard
- Proposed ‘Barrow Blueway’ connecting Kildare with counties Laois & Carlow along the banks of the River Barrow
- The Kildare Maze Family Activity Park
- Demesne lands open to the public including Castletown and Carton
- Kildare Village Retail Outlet

Key Heritage Assets

- Carton House
- Castletown House and Demesne
- Leixlip Castle
- Kildare Town Heritage Centre. There are significant heritage assets in Kildare town including St. Brigid’s Cathedral and Round Tower
- Athy Heritage and Museum including the Shackleton exhibition and incorporating the potential of the Dominican site and Library and Community Arts centres offers a unique cluster of Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities in the south of the County
- Newbridge Silverware and Museum of Style Icons





6.0 CONCLUSION

Kildare County Council is committed to working with the support of government and stakeholders to strengthen Kildare's urban structure and towards accommodating the sustainable growth of the county as a whole.

The Council looks forward to working with both the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and with the Regional Assembly in the preparation of the forthcoming National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area and is available at any time to further discuss and explore a future strategy that supports the sustainable growth of County Kildare, set within its broader regional and national context.

Key Recommendations

1. **Recognise and protect the international role of the Dublin City Region (inc. Kildare), whilst providing for more effective regional development.**
2. **The perceived dominance of Dublin needs to be carefully tested, particularly when considering its international role.**
3. **Prioritise investment in the Greater Dublin Area in the areas that are impacting on competitiveness and on quality of life nationally. The Dublin Region has capacity to grow with the appropriate investment, in the interests of the State as a whole.**
4. **Define the extent and scope of the functional city region of Dublin and the role and function of towns that fall within its influence.**
5. **Define the economic role of towns in the metropolitan and hinterland area of Dublin to provide clear direction in relation to the distribution of economic development.**
6. **Direct a higher proportion of future growth into a smaller number of key urban centres in defined city regions.**
7. **Lead the transition towards more compact and sustainable urban areas that are attractive to citizens and offer a range of higher order economic and social opportunities, high quality housing and amenities and high quality transport choices.**
8. **Provide a policy framework that supports economies of scale for the provision of infrastructure, facilities and services.**
9. **Support a greater alignment between population growth and job creation.**
10. **Provide a level of certainty in relation to the funding and delivery of the necessary transportation and environmental infrastructure to support the spatial and economic strategies of all regions.**