



Proposed Variation No. 2 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly notes the publication of proposed Variation No. 2 of the Wicklow County Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028 and sets out hereunder observations on behalf of the Assembly. The submission has been prepared by the executive and approved by the members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) at the meeting on 8th November 2024.

1.0 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The Council will be aware of the finalisation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region which was made on 28th June 2019. In line with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the planning authority shall ensure, when making a variation to the development plan, that it is consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region, thus ensuring full alignment between local, regional and national planning policy.

2.0 Legislative Context

The role and function of the Regional Assembly, including the scope of the RSES, is provided for in the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. It should be noted that the Planning and Development Act 2023 was enacted into legislation recently. The new Act will commence on a phased basis. The provisions in the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, will remain in place until the relevant provisions in the new Act are commenced.

Under Section 27C of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, is obliged to prepare submissions/ observations to be submitted to the relevant planning authority and copied to the Office of the Planning Regulator.

A submission shall contain a report which shall state whether, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly, the draft variation of the development plan, and its core strategy, is consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. If, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly the proposed draft variation of the development plan and its core strategy is not consistent with the RSES, the submission / observations and report shall include recommendations as to what amendments, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly, are required to ensure that it is consistent.

This report contains the opinion of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly in relation to the above matter along with recommendations as required under Section 27C of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

3.0 Proposed Variation No. 2

Wicklow County Council has published proposed Variation No. 2 seeking to vary the Wicklow County Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028 to ensure alignment and consistency between the County Development Plan and certain Local Area Plans in the County.

The Variation lists an order of priority for local area plans that will be prepared in the County up to 2025 as follows:

1. Wicklow Town – Rathnew
2. Blessington
3. Greystones - Delgany – Kilcoole
4. Arklow and Environs
5. Bray Municipal District (including Enniskerry and Kilmacanogue)

Furthermore, the following clarification in the narrative forms part of the Variation:

‘To ensure that the zoning and key development objectives of these LAPs clearly form part of this County Development Plan, the land use zoning and key development objectives maps are adopted by way of variation into the County Development Plan during the making of each LAP.’

The proposed Variation also updates the narrative in the written statement in relation to the adopted CDP, and deletion of references to ‘after adoption’ of the CDP.

The proposed Variation includes the following additional text in Chapter 3 of the Wicklow CDP 2022-2028;

‘Upon adoption of this County Development Plan in 2022, the amount of zoned land in pre-existing LAPs exceeded the amount of land needed to meet the Core Strategy 2031 housing targets for each of the towns set out in this County Development Plan (as detailed in Table A of the Core Strategy).

In the preparation of the updated LAPs during the lifetime of this County Development Plan, development and growth objectives, including the amount of zoned housing land and phasing / prioritising objectives, shall take into account the zoning principles set out hereunder as well as the guidance set out in ‘Development Plans – Guidance for Planning Authorities’ (DoHLGH 2022) and any further Government or Ministerial policies / guidance in place at the time of the adoption of the LAP.

In particular, residential development objectives including land zoning provisions will be made on the basis of providing enough housing land to meet the prevailing Core Strategy population and housing targets set out in the County Development Plan at the time of adoption of the LAP, with flexibility in the zoning provisions to ensure that (a) the targets can be achieved in the event that unforeseen impediments to the development of certain lands arise and (b) the LAPs do not have to be formally amended to reflect any changes in the Core Strategy or population / housing targets that may arise during the lifetime of the County Development Plan due to changes to the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy or planning legislation.’

The proposed Variation includes a new Volume 2, Part 5 under the heading Local Area Plans for Bray Municipal District, Wicklow Town – Rathnew, Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole, Arklow and Blessington which includes land use zoning and key development objectives maps for the listed LAP settlements. This includes 4 no. maps published as part of the draft Wicklow Town and Rathnew LAP 2025 which will be incorporated into this section of the Wicklow CDP 2022-2028 to ensure consistency between the two plans. The 4 no. maps relate to the following;

- Land Use Zoning Map
- Key Green Infrastructure Map
- Indicative Flood Zones Map
- Transport Strategy Map

4.0 Submission

The Regional Assembly acknowledges proposed Variation No. 2 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 which seeks to vary the County Development Plan having regard to the publication of the draft Wicklow Town - Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025 in order to ensure consistency between the draft and final Wicklow Town – Rathnew LAP with the County Development Plan.

The proposed Variation amends text associated with Chapter 1 (Section 1.2), Chapter 3 (Section 3.5), Chapter 17 and Volume 2 with a new Part 5 added to same detailing Local Area Plan Maps for Key Towns and Self Sustaining (Growth) Towns. This includes relevant text to Local Area Plans, including the four maps published as part of the draft Wicklow Town – Rathnew LAP 2025.

It is considered that the proposed Variation is consistent with the RSES by bringing the content of the Wicklow CDP 2022-2028 into alignment with the maps and details published as part of the draft Wicklow Town and Rathnew LAP 2025, and in this regard, the Regional Assembly supports in principle the proposed amendments to the Wicklow CDP 2022-2028. The Planning Authority should however note that should there be further amendments proposed to the draft Wicklow Town – Rathnew LAP 2025 (including maps published as part of this proposed Variation) that materially impact on this proposed Variation, then this will have subsequent consequences to the final wording of this Variation which should be noted.

In addition, the RSES sets out 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) which are aligned with national policy, specifically the National Planning Framework. These are cross referenced and aligned with the three Key Principles of the RSES; Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity. The most relevant RSO which supports the proposed Variation is RSO 2, ‘Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration’, which is to *‘promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built -up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choices for the Region’s citizens’*. This aligns with National Strategic Outcome 1 of the National Planning Framework. With Wicklow Town-Rathnew being identified as a Key Town in the Region as per the RSES, it is important that the future growth of this settlement incorporates the principles of sustainable residential development and compact growth.

The proposed Variation also indirectly supports Regional Policy Objectives 4.54, 4.55, 4.56, 4.57 and 4.58 of the RSES that relate to Wicklow Town – Rathnew. It is considered that the proposed Variation amendments do not impact on the core strategy chapter of the Development Plan. Accordingly, the Regional Assembly does not have any objection to the proposed Variation No. 2 of the Wicklow CDP 2022-2028 as placed on public display and consider it consistent with the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031.

5.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The proposed Variation underwent a screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and concluded that the proposal does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment as it would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects, taking account of the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

Furthermore, a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) was also carried out and concluded that the proposed variation will not have any likelihood for significant effects on any European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The AA screening therefore concluded that it is not considered necessary to undertake any further stages of the Appropriate Assessment process. The proposed variation does not therefore require an Appropriate Assessment or the preparation of a Natura Impact Report (NIR).

6.0 Conclusion

It is considered that proposed Variation No. 2 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, is consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031, having regard to the observations outlined above.

Regards,



Clare Bannon
A/Director
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
11th November 2024