



Proposed Variation No. 4 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly notes the publication of proposed Variation No. 4 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 13th June 2025.

1.0 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Council will be aware of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (RSES) which was made on 28th June 2019. The RSES presents a Spatial Strategy, devised and informed by a complementary Economic Strategy, which provides a framework for future growth, ensuring the delivery of effective regional development through the realisation of viable and vital places. This includes championing the capital city of Dublin as a smart, climate resilient and global city region; identifying Regional Growth Centres which act as regional economic drivers and supports for their wider catchment areas; and promoting a network of large economically active Key Towns that provide employment and services to their surrounding areas. All of this is supported by Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns and a network of multifaceted Rural Places. The RSES identifies Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns within the Region, however Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns and Rural areas are to be defined by Development Plans.

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 It should be noted that this legislation has been superseded by the Planning and Development Act 2024, which was signed into law on 17th October 2024. However, the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2024 relevant to the Regional Assembly have not commenced to date, and they will commence on a staged basis in the coming months. Until then, the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, remain in force.

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.

3.0 Proposed Variation No. 4

Wicklow County Council is preparing new Local Planning Frameworks for the settlements/areas of:

- Greystones - Delgany and Kilcoole (currently under consideration)
- Arklow (to be prepared)
- Bray Municipal District (including Enniskerry and Kilmacanogue) (to be prepared)

Wicklow County Council has therefore published proposed Variation No. 4 seeking to vary the Wicklow County Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028 to facilitate the adoption of local development frameworks for the areas above, with a view to replacing existing Local Area Plans and to ensure alignment and consistency between the County Development Plan and the draft and final Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework to be included in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.

The proposed Variation will add a new part (Part 6) to Volume 2 of the Development Plan ‘Introduction to Local Planning Frameworks’ followed by the insertion of the final Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework.

To accommodate this proposed addition, the proposed Variation further seeks to update the text in the ‘Structure of The Plan’ under Volume 2 of Chapter 1 of the Development Plan in the following way (*new sections in highlighted in italics*):

Volume 2 contains:

a) a set of ‘town plans’ for the following settlements: Ashford, Aughrim, Avoca, Baltinglass, Carnew, Donard, Dunlavin, Laragh-Glendalough, Newcastle, Newtownmountkennedy, Rathdrum, Roundwood, Shillelagh and Tinahely.

b) the land use zoning and key development objectives maps for the Local Area Plan settlements / areas of Wicklow Town – Rathnew and Blessington which have separate Local Area Plans (the written statement is published in a separate Local Area Plan).

c) Local Planning Frameworks for the settlements / areas of Greystones – Delgany & Kilcoole, Arklow & Environs and Bray Municipal District (including Enniskerry & Kilmacanogue).

There are also proposed changes to the text in relation to zoning in Volume 1 Chapter 3 of the Development Plan (additions in *italics*):

As part of the LAP adoption process for the settlements of Wicklow Town – Rathnew and Blessington, the land use zoning and key development objectives maps for these LAP settlements / areas are integrated into Volume 2 of this County Development Plan by way of variation. For the remaining settlements (Bray, Enniskerry, Kilmacanogue, Greystones – Delgany, Kilcoole and Arklow), ‘Local Planning Frameworks’ (which will replace their previous LAPs) which set out settlement specific objectives including land use zoning and key development objectives maps are to be integrated into Volume 2 of this County Development Plan by way of variation.

New Local Area Plans (LAPs) and Local Planning Frameworks (LPFs) will be made for the following settlements in the period 2022-2025 in the following order of priority:

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

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/LPFs 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 PART A - iii Authorities’ (DoHLGH 2022) and any further Government or Ministerial policies / guidance in place at the time of the adoption of the LAP/LPF.

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/ LPF, 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/ LPFs 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 also proposes amendments to the following maps:

- Map 17.09 Wicklow Landscape category map to reflect boundary of Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole LPF
- Map 19.01a Wicklow North Coastal Cells map to reflect boundary of Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole LPF

4.0 Submission

The Regional Assembly acknowledges proposed Variation No. 4 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 which seeks to vary the County Development Plan having regard to the publication of the draft Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 2025 in order to ensure consistency between the draft and final Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 2025 with the County Development Plan.

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 Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 2025, and in this regard, the Regional Assembly supports in principle the proposed amendments to the Wicklow CDP 2022-2028. Notwithstanding, the Planning Authority should note that should there be further amendments proposed to the draft Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 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.

Having regard to the draft Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 2025, the RSES identifies Greystones as a highly urbanised settlement in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) area, strategically located on the North-South rail corridor. Table 6.1 of the RSES identifies Greystones as Level 3 (Town and/or District Centre and Sub-County Town Centres) of the retail hierarchy. Furthermore, the MASP sets out an integrated land use and transportation strategy for the sequential development of the metropolitan area, including a focus on planned development of strategic development areas in Greystones, as well as a new park and-ride location. The MASP supports employment generation at strategic locations within the metropolitan area to strengthen the local employment base and reduce pressure on the metropolitan transport network, including Greystones (see Table 5.2). The MASP notes that strategic employment locations, particularly those that are employee intensive should be located in proximity to existing or planned strategic transport

corridors and supports the development of an IDA strategic site in Greystones to strengthen economic base in North Wicklow.

The draft LPF is framed by the overarching themes of the Wicklow CDP, namely; healthy placemaking, climate change, and economic opportunity. These themes strongly correlate to the 3 key principles of the RSES (Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity), which is welcomed by the Regional Assembly. This chapter also states that the vision of the draft LPF must also be consistent with the Core Strategy of the Wicklow CDP following the hierarchy of plans, including the NPF at national level, the RSES at regional level and the Wicklow CDP at county level, which is further welcomed by the Regional Assembly.

Chapter 4 of the draft LPF outlines the key parameters for the future physical development of Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole based around protection of the environment, addressing climate change, sustainability, compact growth and developing the settlement in a manner that improves the modal choice of citizens. These parameters are consistent with the growth strategy of the RSES and support for the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable Region.

The Assembly further welcomes explicit reference to maximising the potential opportunities associated with the area's strategic location at the edge of the Dublin Metropolitan Area and the focus on the dense, mixed-use regeneration and development of town and village centre infill sites (particularly vacant or under-utilised sites) that helps support our vibrant rural areas with a network of towns and villages, a key part of the Region's growth strategy.

Chapter B3 of the draft LPF set out the local objectives for the sustainable development of the LPF area's economy that are relevant to and implementable through a local land-use framework. These objectives support the strategies of the Wicklow Local Economic and Community Plan and the Wicklow Local Enterprise Office, which is welcomed by the Regional Assembly.

The 2022 Census data indicates that the draft LPF area has a low unemployment rate (Greystones-Delgany 5.5%) but the same area has a high commuter rate with a low job ratio and the majority (72%) of those travel for over for over 30 minutes. However, this is not uniform across the area of the LFP, with a strong jobs ratio of 77% identified in Kilcoole. The Assembly welcomes the breakdown of residents' employment into sectors and the introduction of specific objectives for employment types such as objective GDK28.

It is considered that the proposed Variation amendments do not impact on the core strategy chapter of the Development Plan and that the draft Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 2025 aligns with the principles of the RSES. Accordingly, the Regional Assembly does not

have any objection to the proposed Variation No. 4 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 Environment Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The Assembly welcomes the preparation of the Variation of the CDP in tandem with the required environmental processes, namely Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA). The SEA Environmental Report was issued with the Draft Variation of the CDP and sets out the iterative process to date including an assessment of the overall environmental effects arising from the Draft Variation of the CDP provisions.

The Environmental Report concludes that taking into account the mitigation measures which have been integrated into the Variation of the CDP, it has been determined that significant residual adverse environmental effects will not occur as a result of the implementation of the Plan. The Draft Variation of the CDP is subject to Appropriate Assessment (AA) and a Natura Impact Report (NIR) has recorded the decisions that were taken during its preparation. The NIR concluded that the Draft Variation of the CDP will not adversely affect (either directly or indirectly) the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

6.0 Recommendation

The Regional Assembly would like to acknowledge the work that Wicklow County Council has carried out in order to prepare proposed Variation No. 4 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and, in particular, the overall approach and effort of the Council to coordinate and incorporate policies and objectives so that they are consistent with the RSES is welcomed.

In order to ensure consistency with the RSES, the Regional Assembly makes the following recommendation:

1. Any material amendments to the draft Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 2025 (including maps published as part of this proposed Variation) should be reflected in the final wording of the proposed Variation and should be consistent with the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region.
Reason: In the interest of clarity and to ensure consistency with the RSES and the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.

6.0 Conclusion

It is considered that proposed Variation No. 4 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.

Regards,



Clare Bannon
A/Director
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
13th June 2025