



Proposed Variation No. 2 to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly notes the publication of Proposed Variation No. 2 to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied) and sets out hereunder, observations on behalf of the Assembly. This submission was prepared by the executive and approved by the members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly at its meeting of 10th October 2025.

1.0 Overall Context

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) is part of the regional tier of governance in Ireland. It is primarily focused on driving regional development through the formulation, adoption and implementation of the Regional, Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), oversight and coordination of County Development Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans, management of EU Operational Programs, EU project participation, implementation of national economic policy, and additional functions working with the National Oversight and Audit Commission. As a strategic policy body, EMRA also participates in the consultation processes of other relevant strategic plans and policies.

The role and function of the Regional Assembly, including the scope of the RSES, as set out in the Planning and Development Act 2000-2025, has been superseded by the Planning and Development Act 2024-2025. Part III of the new Act commenced on 2nd October 2025 with other provisions of the Act to commence on a staged basis in the coming months.

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly has prepared this submission for the consideration of the planning authority and states whether, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly, the draft Variation of the development plan, and its core strategy, are consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and provides recommendations and observations in this regard.

2.0 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The Council will be aware of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region which was made by the Members of the Assembly in June 2019, and it is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future growth throughout the Region. The overall vision of the Strategy is to create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of people and places in the Region, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunity for all. The vision of the RSES is supported by sixteen Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs), that are aligned with National Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework (NPF)¹ and framed around the three key principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity.

¹ Including the First Revision April 2025.

A primary statutory objective of the RSES is to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF), alignment with the investment priorities of the National Development Plan (and thus Project Ireland 2040), by coupling new development with the requisite investment in services and infrastructure. The RSES, as the succeeding tier of policy delivery in Ireland, is of critical importance for the delivery of Project Ireland 2040.

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; securing Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres, acting as regional economic drivers and supports for their wider catchment areas; and promoting a network of large economically active Key Towns (which include Swords, Maynooth, Bray, Navan, Naas, Wicklow, Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore and Portlaoise) 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. In line with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2024-2025, the planning authority shall ensure, that a development plan and Variation are consistent with the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region, thus ensuring full alignment between local, regional and national planning policy. In this regard, the Regional Assembly welcomes the proposed Variation to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

3.0 Proposed Variation No. 2 to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Kildare County Council has published its proposed Variation No. 2 to the Kildare County Development Plan (CDP) 2023- 2029 to include a new Newbridge Settlement Plan, related maps and documents in the County Development Plan.

Kildare County Council states that the proposed Variation will provide a Settlement Plan for Newbridge, replacing the Newbridge Local Area Plan 2013-2019. It includes a written statement and mapped objectives, to provide a coherent planning policy framework for Newbridge to guide the planning and sustainable development of the town. It is stated that the Draft Settlement Plan will align with current National, Regional and County growth targets and policy objectives, including the Kildare County Development Plan (CDP) 2023-2029 Core Strategy targets.

4.0 Submission

The Assembly considers that the overall Draft Settlement Plan, is generally consistent with the RSES and the submission broadly follows the chapter headings of the Draft Settlement Plan, as follows:

1. Introduction and Context
2. Vision and Strategic Objectives

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Settlement Strategy & Housing
(including compliance with Kildare Co. Core Strategy) 4. Consolidation & Renewal of Central Newbridge 5. Economic Development 6. Homes & Communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Movement & Transportation 8. Built Heritage & Archaeology 9. Green & Blue Infrastructure 10. Infrastructure & Environmental Services 11. Implementation |
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The Draft Settlement Plan is informed by supporting reports and appendices, including an Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA), Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA), Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA), Screenings for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA), a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), Surface Water Management Strategy and a Habitat Mapping Report.

Introduction and Context

In line with objective (CS O9²) of the Kildare County Development Plan (CDP) 2023-2029 (as varied), the Council are reviewing and preparing up-to-date plans for settlements within Co. Kildare in accordance with relevant Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines, regional planning objectives and the CDP.

Section 1.2 provides the local context of Newbridge highlighting the significant and important role it plays in County Kildare and the wider region. Since the last 2022 Census, the population has risen by 7% (2016-2022) to 24,366 and it is recognised as an employment hub with diverse range of indigenous and multinational businesses particularly in manufacturing, information technology, pharmaceuticals, and logistics/warehousing. The town also holds a rich cultural heritage and contains recreational facilities such as Conleth’s Park, the Riverbank Arts Centre and the Liffey Linear Park.

As highlighted in the RSES, Newbridge is identified as a town which has a sufficient level of local employment, services and amenities, which serves not just its resident population but a wider catchment area and has capacity to become more self-sustaining.

To inform its strategic vision and strategic objectives a SWOT³ analysis was undertaken as part of the Draft Settlement Plan and the Assembly welcomes this analysis including the identification of the ‘opportunities’ for Newbridge, expanding upon the employment zone and 10-Minute Settlement concept, both of which are explored in further detail below. It also notes that a draft Newbridge Town Renewal Masterplan has been developed alongside the Variation which contains a series of interlinked public realm projects to reinvigorate the settlement.

² Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029, as varied, Chapter 2, Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy, page 36): [Chapter 2. Core Strategy Settlement Strategy.pdf](#)

³ Strengths – Challenges – Opportunities – Threats

Vision and Strategic Objectives

Section 2.0 sets out the overall vision of the Plan which seeks to strengthen the identity of Newbridge as a town with a strong sense of place by continuing to support and enable economic and retail development in the town centre while trying to address significant issues such as congestion, community safety and deficiencies in social infrastructure. The Draft Settlement Plan also aims to create an inclusive and sustainable neighbourhood that safeguards cultural heritage, promotes active travel development such as walking and cycling facilities while supporting climate resilience.

To deliver this overall vision, the Draft Settlement Plan is underpinned by seven strategic development principles which are in line with the strategic vision of Kildare CDP 2023-2029 and have been integrated throughout the plan:

- Creating Vibrant Neighbourhoods
- Enhancing Sustainable Movement
- Improving Community Safety
- Delivering Social Infrastructure
- Destination for Economic and Retail Activity
- Harnessing the Area's Natural, Cultural and Built Heritage
- Fostering Resilience against the Climate Challenge.

The Assembly welcomes the inclusion of these development principles, and associated key measures detailed in Section 2.1 to achieve this vision for Newbridge. These include creating town centre vibrancy and regeneration, economic development, compact growth, maximising ease and efficiency of movement, enhancing the public realm and social infrastructure, creating vibrant and inclusive neighbourhoods, protecting and promoting heritage and meaningful climate action. The Assembly considers the plan preparation to be comprehensive, with the structure and content in accordance with the approach in the 'Local Area Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2013' and 'Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022' (where relevant).

Settlement Strategy and Housing

Newbridge is located within the 'Core Region' identified in the RSES, which is a peri-urban 'hinterland' in the commuter catchment around Dublin. It has capacity to become a more self-sustaining town in line with its CDP designation as a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' and capacity of public transport, services and infrastructure. It provides a range of functions for its residents and surrounding communities.

The Draft Settlement Plan indicates that there are 24,366 persons (Census 2022) living in Newbridge. A key role of the Draft Settlement Plan is the identification of sufficient land to accommodate population targets and housing demand, to be delivered in tandem with accessible social infrastructure. The Draft Settlement Plan provides for a projected population target of 2,917 by 2028

with a required housing target of 1,061 units for the same period. The Assembly notes the population targets for Newbridge align with those in the Core Strategy table of the Kildare CDP 2023-2029 ensuring consistency. The Assembly notes the land use zoning in this Draft Settlement Plan was informed by the previous Newbridge Local Area Plan 2013–2019 and CPD.

The Draft Settlement Plan aligns with the existing CDP Core Strategy; however, the Regional Assembly advises, that the Council will be required to ensure the CDP Core Strategy is consistent with Policy and Objective 1 of the ‘NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (as per Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended). This requires the housing growth requirements for each planning authority as set out in Appendix 1 of the Guidelines to be reflected in the CDP to ensure consistency with the NPF 2025. An ‘additional provision’ of up to 50% over and above the housing growth requirements (listed below) is required under Policy and Objective 2.

As per the Guidelines, the preparation of a Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) will identify zoned serviced/ serviceable lands and highlight infrastructural requirements. The Council has prepared a SCA which informed this Variation. Part III of the Planning and Development Act 2024-2025 has commenced and planning authorities will be required to prepare development plans with a 10-year lifespan. Appendix 1 of the Guidelines establishes the following allocation for Co. Kildare:

- Existing Annual 2020 Housing Requirement (Housing Supply Target) 1,535
- Adopted Development Plan - Annual Housing Requirement (Housing Supply Target) 1,524
- New Annual New Housing Growth Requirement 2025 to 2034 2,755
- New Annual New Housing Growth Requirement 2035 to 2040 1,918

With this Variation, the Council do not intend to de-zone the overprovision to the Core Strategy in Newbridge, but instead identify housing allocation informed by local context considerations (for example, 50% unit capacity is expected over the CDP plan period at the Central Newbridge Settlement Consolidation Site and Greatconnell SHD and Rickardstown residential scheme is only at pre-application stage, but is included as represents zoned/ serviced land, ready for development within the lifetime of the CDP).

Section 3.5 recognises the NPF 2025 as the Government’s long term policy platform to guide and manage the future growth and development of the country. The NPF includes a series of National Policy Objectives (NPOs) which are particularly relevant to the Draft Settlement Plan such as those relating to compact growth, the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed and integrated urban places. In support of this objective, the Draft Settlement Plan promotes compact growth by targeting the delivery of at least 63.1% of new residential development within the town’s existing built-up footprint and this is welcomed by the Regional Assembly.

The Assembly also welcomes a Tiered Approach to Land Use Zoning which aligns with NPO 101 of the NPF 2025 to distinguish zoned lands that are serviced (Tier 1) and zoned lands that would be serviceable within of the lifetime of a plan (Tier 2), identified through the SCA. Table 3.7: Estimated Residential Development Capacity examines infill/ brownfield sites, extant and pre-assessment applications (Section A) and revised housing target core strategy allocations (Section B) for units allocated to Phase 2 which will only be carried out in accordance with Objective CSO 1.5 of the CDP. It is considered that this approach aligns with the Regional Assembly's comments above regarding the incorporation of new housing allocation targets in the CDP.

In terms of housing density, the Draft Settlement Plan outlines a range of densities at Table 3.6, noting that each development will be assessed at detailed design stage. The Assembly supports the provision of housing in a manner consistent with the 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2024' and the NPF 2025 which requires new residential development to be prioritised on brownfield and infill sites within the town's existing built-up footprint; supporting compact and sequential patterns of growth.

In this regard, the Assembly welcomes policy objectives CSO 1.1-1.6 and particularly CSO 1.2 which promotes compact growth development in Newbridge guided by the 10-Minute Town settlement concept. This concept is also outlined in the guiding principles for the RSES for statutory land use plans. It relates to the integration of land use and transport whereby services are accessible within short walking and cycling timeframes or accessible by high quality public transport in larger settlements. The Assembly wishes to refer the Council to the [15-Minute City Implementation Pathway report](#) recently published by the Assembly, which identifies public policy support, ongoing actions, good practice examples and funding opportunities for '15-Minute City' and '10 Minute Town' concepts.

Consolidation and Renewal of Central Newbridge

The Draft Settlement Plan outlines the critical role that the town centre plays in creating an attractive environment to live, shop, work and socialise. It emphasises the importance of a mixed-use town centre which will deliver town prosperity in line with the Government's Town Centre First policy approach.

The Assembly notes that a land survey was undertaken which identified a low percentage of residential units on the Main Street and Cutlery Road. As a result, there is a lack of passive surveillance along the Main Street and this, combined with vacancy issues has resulted in anti-social behaviour within the town centre. The Draft Settlement Plan therefore supports several public realm projects which aim to revitalise the centre of Newbridge. It lists strategic projects (Table 4.2) which were identified as a part of the Draft Town Renewal Masterplan for Newbridge and there are specific policy objectives to support their delivery. This is welcomed by the Assembly as it will make the town centre more attractive to retail and leisure activities and may create interest in residential units/ living over the shop, where higher levels of vacancy currently occur.

Section 4.4. identifies Newbridge Central Settlement Consolidation Site (SCS) as a strategic regeneration site within the town. The 12.26-hectare site is located near Newbridge Town Centre. The site represents an opportunity to deliver compact growth and provide a high-quality urban environment which supports the town centre. Seven specific sites within the SCS are cited as having redevelopment potential during the lifetime of this plan. The approach aligns with RSES regeneration Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) 9.7 - 9.9 which aim to promote the plan-led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in towns and support the economic development and regeneration of the town centre. The Assembly further welcomes measures for urban regeneration and public realm improvement that enhance the economic potential of Newbridge. This will be further enhanced by the development/ redevelopment of civic facilities as identified at TCO 3.6.

As outlined in Section 4.2, Newbridge is classified as a *'Level 2 – Major Town Centre & County (Principal) Town Centre'* in the RSES retail hierarchy. As such the Assembly welcomes the proposed policy objectives to protect the viability of the town centre by delineation of a compact core retail area as per Map 4.1.

Economic Development

As highlighted in the Draft Settlement Plan, Newbridge's labour force participation rate of 62.1% is closely aligned with the regional average (58%) but still below the national rate (66.6%). According to the 2022 Census a significant portion of workers live and work in Newbridge at 44%. The town's largest sector is commerce and trade accounting (29%), followed by professional services (22%), manufacturing industries (13%) and other (15%). Notably, the Census 2022 built-up area boundary of Newbridge does not reflect an area to the east of the town which is home to several companies with global recognition.

The Regional Assembly notes the long-term vision for the Newbridge to Naas Strategic Economic and Employment Zone which aims to link each town centre by creating a strong economic corridor on the east side of the R445, supported by a future electrified DART rail service from Sallins to Newbridge. As highlighted in the RSES, Naas has strong connections with Sallins and Newbridge in terms of services, employment, and education. Additionally, there is opportunity to capitalise on infrastructure investment, strengthen the local employment base, promote regeneration and consolidation of the town centres.

Section 5.3.3 of the Draft Settlement Plan outlines the future economic vision for Newbridge. The land zoned for enterprise and employment was informed by the Settlement Capacity Audit which classified lands as either Tier 1 (serviced) or Tier 2 (serviceable). From this, four distinct areas have been identified to guide future employment growth in the town. These areas include the Town Centre and

Environs, Littleconnell Strategic Employment Area, IDA Newbridge Business Park (Green Road), and Cill Dara Industrial Estate (Athgarvan Road).

In relation to tourism, Newbridge has strong potential to grow its share of the sector. Newbridge benefits from retail tourism with key attractions such as Newbridge Silverware and the Whitewater Shopping Centre. Sporting tourism also plays a role with facilities such as St. Conleth's Park and the nearby Curragh Racecourse which hosts significant horse racing events. There is also potential to explore military tourism given the town's historic layout and its origins as a garrison settlement.

Homes and Communities

The Assembly notes that a Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA) was undertaken to inform the Draft Settlement Plan to identify the availability and capacity of Newbridge's current social infrastructure, identify gaps, evaluate future service needs, and identify priority investment areas in line with the town's projected growth.

Newbridge has a greater proportion of school-going children when compared to the State average and lower percentage of persons at retirement age. Its household size of 2.93 is broadly in line with the county average. There is a higher than county average of people renting from the local authority or from housing bodies. There are both very affluent and very disadvantaged areas in Newbridge as per the Pobal Deprivation Index 2022.

As a result of the findings of the SIA, the Draft Settlement Plan aims to deliver a sustainable and inclusive community by providing a diverse range of housing types, tenures, and densities; and addressing existing gaps in social infrastructure to ensure both existing and future populations have adequate services and facilities. The Assembly considers that a clear evidence base has been provided for current and future social infrastructure needs within Newbridge, including zoning requirements. The Council sees the 10-Minute Settlement concept as essential to delivering sustainable communities with key community facilities and services accessible within 10 minutes (walk or cycle) of peoples' homes, or to ensure that they are accessible by public transport services.

The Draft Settlement Plan allows for a greater mix of housing types and sizes especially on greenfield or edge of town locations to ensure housing developments contain a mix of building heights and typologies. The Assembly supports policy objectives HCO 1.2 and HCO 1.3 which support the redevelopment of brownfield and infill sites, and that all new residential developments incorporate healthy placemaking principles and high-quality urban design standards.

The Assembly welcomes objectives relating to residential tenure and density, with a focus on providing accommodation for an aging population, facilities, childcare, healthcare, open space, sports and recreation, social and community and, social infrastructure. These objectives contribute to the

promotion of 'Healthy Placemaking,' one of the three cross-cutting principles of the RSES, and are aligned with RPOs 9.10 to 9.13 and Figure 9.2 of the RSES.

The Assembly notes the Draft Settlement Plan emphasises the importance of promoting inclusive and accessible design to support the development of high-quality services, community infrastructure, and open space for all. The Assembly welcomes and acknowledges the plan's alignment with RPOs 9.12 and 9.13 of the RSES which identifies the need to cater for all levels of disability, especially those of an ageing population and new social infrastructure must be accessible and inclusive for all users by using universal design principles. Additionally, this supports the broader objectives of Regional Strategic Outcome 13 of the RSES - '*Improve Education Skills and Social Inclusion*' - which seeks to improve education, develop the right skills to attract employers, retain talent and promote social inclusion to ensure opportunities for quality jobs across the Region.

Movement and Transportation

Newbridge is strategically located within the Greater Dublin Area, with access to M7 and M9 motorways and frequent train and bus services. Despite this, the Draft Settlement Plan states that there are localised infrastructure challenges, due to severance caused by the rail line, River Liffey, and M7 Motorway and inadequate walking and cycling infrastructure. The Draft Settlement Plan highlights the 'Avoid-Shift-Improve' principle which is also supported in the NPF 2025 and emphasises the need for integrated land use and transport planning policy.

The Council prepared a Newbridge Area Based Transport Assessment (NABTA) which outlines an analysis of the current transport infrastructure examining all modes of transport and opportunities for their integration. There are detailed measures to connect growth areas to retail, education, service and employment trip destinations, improving transport infrastructure within the town. This approach is consistent with RPO 8.6 of the RSES.

The Draft Settlement Plan prioritises sustainable travel modes starting with walking and cycling, followed by public transport and then private vehicles. It outlines short, medium, and long-term policy actions to support Newbridge compact growth and its aim to become a 10-Minute settlement, recognising that a fundamental shift is required to the transport network to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel and sustainable travel behaviour. The Assembly welcomes policy objective MATO 1.1 which aims to adopt 'whole journey approach' when considering and implementing transport infrastructure to ensure universal accessibility is integrated into all stages of a person's journey. Several active travel measures are proposed, which are also welcomed. Additionally, the Assembly welcomes the delivery of 'transport mobility hubs' in the town to support residents' use of sustainable modes of transport.

Again, the above approach aligns with Section 8.3 of the RSES and RPO 8.6 which requires the preparation of a Local Transport Plan for selected settlements in the Region which should include the transport priorities for the settlement (i.e. public transport infrastructure and services, cycle investment, improvements to the pedestrian environment and road enhancements). This is welcomed by the Assembly and the Council's attention is drawn to the [Sustainable Mobility Academy](#) which is a repository of knowledge, showcasing case studies, project outcomes, and ongoing advancements across all local authorities in the area of active travel and sustainable mobility. This repository is a key output of the Pathfinder 27 Project, the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Accelerator Programme (SSMA), which is being delivered by the Assembly for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The Assembly notes the Draft Settlement Plan emphasises the importance of providing a wide variety of active travel measures, such as greenways, quietways and cycling measures. Greenways have been identified along the northern side of the rail line and the River Liffey which will improve pedestrian and cycle travel through Newbridge. Additionally, the Liffey Greenway will connect to Corbally Harbour and the Grand Canal Greenway via proposed quietways, thus expanding regional connectivity. The Assembly supports the protection and enhancement of national and regional green infrastructure corridors. This aligns with RPO 7.24 and RPO 4.49 of the RSES which aim to strengthen strategic greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure.

Built Heritage and Archaeology

The Assembly welcomes policies and objectives set out in the Draft Settlement Plan to safeguard the architectural and archaeological heritage of the Plan area, including Protected Structures, Protected Views and Archaeological monuments. This aligns with RPO 9.30 of the RSES which supports the sensitive reuse of Protected Structures and Section 9.7 of the RSES which identifies the importance of cultural, architectural, and archaeological heritage within the Region, particular in contributing to a town's identity, and identifying the repair and reuse of historic buildings as an integral part of sustainable development.

Objectives in this Section are supported by the Regional Assembly, including BHO 1.1-1.3 which seek to restore and enhance the heritage assets of Newbridge. Such measures will support the character of the area, and the Assembly also recognises that it will support the renewal of the town centre area.

The Assembly particularly welcomes recognition of the importance of sensitive restoration and enhancement of shopfronts including the use of the Irish language and policy objective BHO 2.5 which seeks to encourage heritage-led regeneration. This local policy approach aligns closely with the broader objectives of the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSO) of the RSES. Specifically, RSO 5 which seeks to enhance, integrate and protect our arts, culture and heritage assets to promote creative places and heritage led regeneration.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

The Assembly welcomes the inclusion of a dedicated chapter on Green and Blue Infrastructure, the identification of Newbridge's natural heritage as a critical asset and that sustainable land use planning cannot be achieved without a holistic approach to the conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity and natural heritage. It also recognises that parks, rivers, wetlands, woodlands and open space promote health and well-being and enhance the quality of life for local communities. Habitats of international importance, such as Pollardstown Fen, national and local importance are identified.

RPOs 7.22 and 7.23 of the RSES note the importance of the identification, protection, enhancement and management of green infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner and the further development of green infrastructure policies. It is considered that this section of the Draft Settlement Plan could be further strengthened by making reference to the RSES 'Guiding Principles in the preparation of Green Infrastructure Strategies', Section 7.7 of the RSES, which mentions the need to identify and protect existing Green Infrastructure assets; the importance of connectivity; consideration of the ecological impacts of greenways; integrating an ecosystem services approach; carbon sequestration and integration with the natural and built environment. Section 9.6 of the Draft Settlement Plan recognises the shift to biodiversity net gain, which is welcomed.

Furthermore, the Assembly has developed [a range of resources](#) to support the implementation of objectives for ecosystem services and green infrastructure which may be of assistance to the local authority in balancing environmental sensitivity with development. These include a green infrastructure and ecosystem services mapping methodology, policy briefs which include 'how to' recommendations, good practice handbooks, and infographics.

Infrastructure and Environmental Services

An SCA informs the zoning of land for residential and economic development, to ensure it grows in tandem with the delivery of physical infrastructure over the plan period. The objectives on water and wastewater, ground and surface water including the use of SuDS and nature-based solutions, flood risk management measures are welcomed.

Newbridge is well served by energy and communications infrastructure, with electricity, gas and high-speed broadband. A green energy hub is proposed at the BnM headquarters in the town and local renewable energy projects are supported, particularly within industrial and warehousing projects. Air, light, noise pollution and waste management have related CDP objectives to mitigate their effects.

The Draft Settlement Plan sets out the policy framework for a place-based approach to climate focusing on key areas such as compact growth, transport, building upgrades, green infrastructure, electricity infrastructure, water and waste management. The Draft Settlement Plan outlines that targeted objectives are incorporated throughout the plan to transition Newbridge to a low carbon

economy. The Draft Settlement Plan is linked with the strategic vision of the CDP to support the transition to a low carbon climate resilient environment and guiding principles around adaptation, low carbon future, energy efficiency and conservation and decarbonisation of lifestyles and communities.

In terms of water, Newbridge water supply is sourced from two treatment plants; the Scrowland Plant and the Ballymore Eustace Plant. The Scrowland Plant is on the EPA's Remedial Action List, with an upgrade scheduled for completion by December 2026. Chapter 10 of the RSES sets out the strategic water investment priorities for the Eastern and Midland Region, noting that water supply for the wider Dublin area is at critical level of demand, and to facilitate further growth in line with NPF population growth projections, the prioritisation of water supply investment should occur. In this respect, RPO 10.2 of the RSES states that EMRA supports the delivery of the strategic water services projects which are included in Project Ireland 2040 to provide for planned development and maintain and improve existing services.

Newbridge is served by the Osberstown Wastewater Treatment Plant, with upgrades and replacement sewers installed recently as part of the Upper Liffey Valley Sewerage Scheme. This upgrade resulted in an increase in capacity from 80,000 to 130,000 population equivalent (P.E.). As result this upgrade provides the necessary wastewater infrastructure needed to support population growth and economic development. The upgrade also helps reduce emergency overflows into the River Liffey and lowers the risk of flooding part of the settlement.

The Assembly supports the policy approach, as set out in the Draft Settlement Plan, to flooding and water resource resilience and natural flood risk mitigation using green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

Additionally, the Assembly notes and welcomes policy objective IEO 4.4 which encourages-site renewable energy projects and other business-led initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emission. This aligns with RPOs 6.23 and 7.40 of the RSES which aims to accelerate the shift towards a low-carbon economy and a circular economy and promote energy conservation, efficiency, and the use of renewable energy in existing buildings.

Implementation and Monitoring

The Assembly notes the inclusion of a separate chapter dealing with the implementation of the Draft Settlement Plan, detailing objectives and the provision of an effective monitoring and evaluation system. The monitoring framework identifies the relevant department and stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Plan and the timeline. The Assembly welcomes the commitment given in Chapter 11 that Kildare County Council will put in place an effective monitoring system to ensure that progress on key objectives in the Plan is evaluated. The Assembly draws attention to the [Regional Development Monitor](#) which provides a series of mapping and visualisation infrastructures which are

intended to be of assistance to local authorities in gaining a greater insight into social, economic and environmental trends to aid better monitoring and decision making.

The chapter further outlines a delivery schedule, identifies funding sources, and details the infrastructure requirements necessary for their implementation, which is also welcomed.

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 full SEA as it would not result in likely significant environmental effects, taking account of the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2025.

Furthermore, a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) was also carried out and concluded that the proposed Variation will not have any likely 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 AA process, including the preparation of a Natura Impact Report (NIR).

6.0 Recommendations and Observations

The Regional Assembly would like to acknowledge the work that Kildare County Council has carried out in order to prepare proposed Variation No. 2 to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 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.

The Assembly would like to make the following recommendation and observations.

Recommendation:

1. It is considered that Chapter 9 of the Draft Settlement Plan could be further strengthened by making reference to the RSES 'Guiding Principles in the preparation of Green Infrastructure Strategies', Section 7.7 of the RSES, which mentions the need to identify and protect existing Green Infrastructure assets; the importance of connectivity; consideration of the ecological impacts of greenways; integrating an ecosystem services approach; carbon sequestration and integration with the natural and built environment.

Reason: To fully align with the policies of the RSES.

Observations:

1. The Assembly wishes to refer the Council to the [15-Minute City Implementation Pathway report](#) published by the Regional Assembly, which identifies public policy support, ongoing actions, good practice examples and funding opportunities for '15-Minute City' and '10 Minute Town' concepts.

Reason: In the interest of best practice.

2. The Assembly wishes to refer the Council to the [Sustainable Mobility Academy](#) which is a repository of knowledge, showcasing case studies, project outcomes, and ongoing advancements across all local authorities in the area of active travel and sustainable mobility..

Reason: In the interest of best practice.

3. The Assembly wishes to refer the Council to an [Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Mapping Methodology](#) to support the implementation of objectives for ecosystem services and green infrastructure which may be of assistance to the local authority in balancing environmental sensitivity with development.

Reason: In the interest of best practice.

4. With regard to monitoring, the Assembly wishes to draw attention to the [Regional Development Monitor](#) which provides a series of mapping and visualisation tools which are intended to be of assistance to local authorities in gaining a greater insight into social, economic and environmental trends to aid better monitoring.

Reason: In the interest of best practice.

7.0 Conclusion

It is considered that proposed Variation No. 2 to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 is consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031, having regard to the recommendation and observations outlined above.

Regards,



Clare Bannon
A/Director
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
10th October 2025