



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

Social Infrastructure Audits in County Kildare

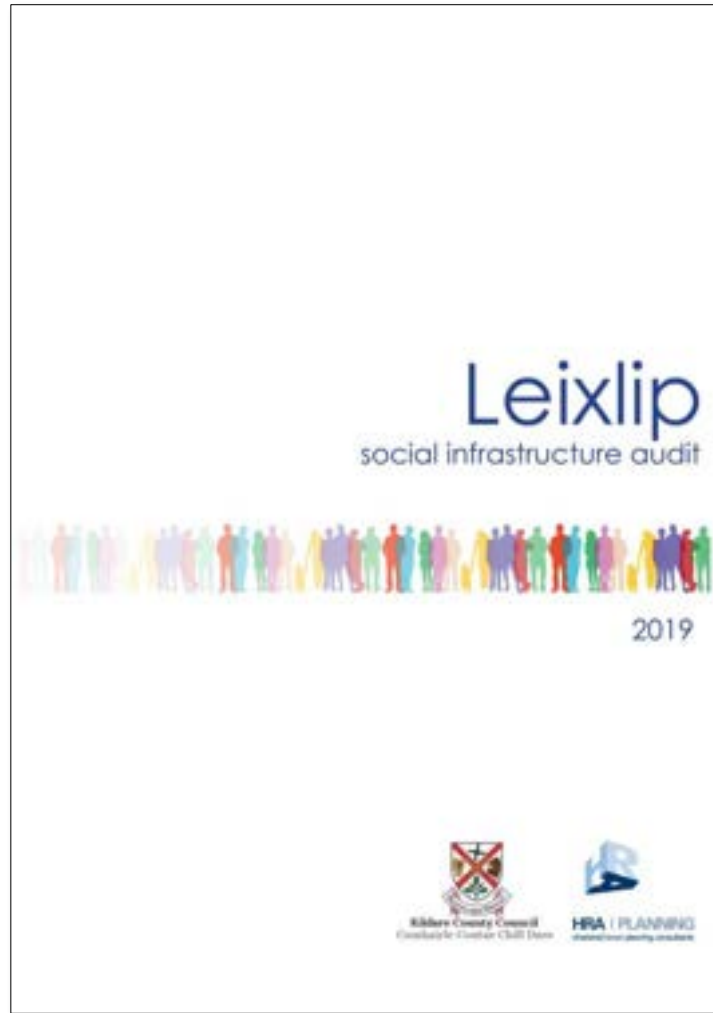
OPR Webinar

Planning for Sports and Recreational Facilities

23 October 2026



Where Have We Come From and How Did We Get Here?



- First SIA - Leixlip Local Area Plan (2019) on foot of a Ministerial Direction on the Draft Leixlip LAP (2018)
- Context:
 - Fast growing, greenfield development and infrastructure deficits
 - Increasing awareness amongst key stakeholders regarding the importance of social infrastructure
 - Emphasis in NPF (2018) on compact growth and improving quality of life of population
- Result: A move to a more comprehensive evidence-led methodology for preparing land use plans

Defining Social Infrastructure and the SIA

What is Social Infrastructure?

Social infrastructure relates to the provision of services and facilities which are essential to the health, wellbeing and social development of a town/settlement.

What is the purpose of a Social Infrastructure Audit?

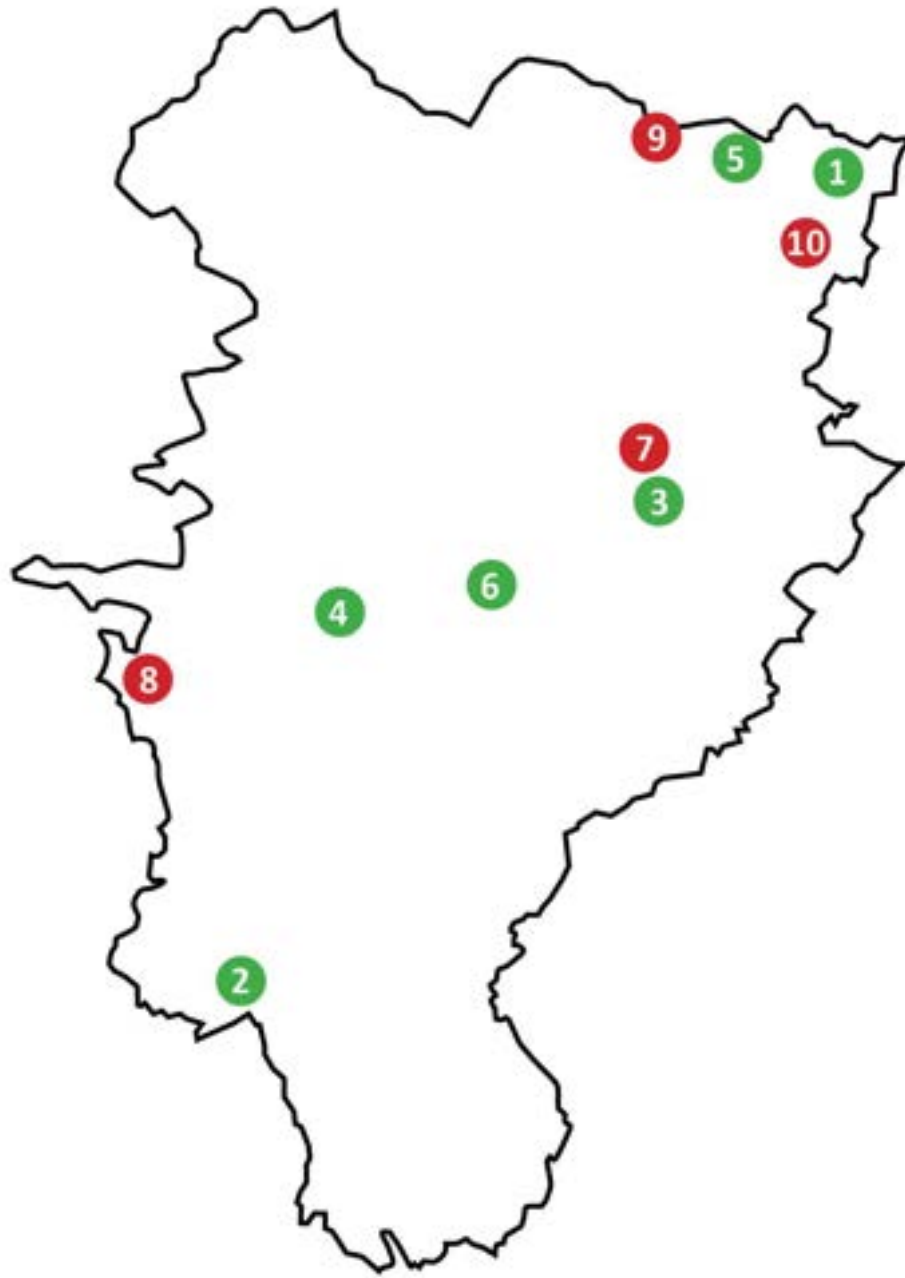
The purpose of a Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA) is to evaluate the availability and capacity of existing social infrastructure facilities, identify current deficiencies, project future requirements, and provide recommendations based on both existing gaps and anticipated growth in a town / settlement.

What is the Nature and Purpose of a Social Infrastructure Audit for Kildare County Council?

- An evidence-based, objective assessment prepared in-house by KCC planners and is published alongside a Draft Plan
- Role is to inform policymaking / decision making and support the future proofing of our settlements
- Bespoke to each settlement and responsive to the scale and context of that settlement:
 - *100 - 1,000 pop.*
 - *1,000 - 10,000 pop.*
 - *10,000+ pop.*



Social Infrastructure Audits – Settlements - *Existing and Planned*



1. Leixlip (2019)
2. Athy (2020)
3. Naas (2020)
4. Kildare Town (2023)
5. Maynooth (2024)
6. Newbridge (2025)
7. *Sallins (2026) - published*
8. *Monasterevin (2026) – published*
9. *Kilcock (2026) – in preparation*
10. *Celbridge (2026/2027) – in preparation*



County Development Plan (2022)

Available at: kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/Planning/

SIA Methodological Approach

Overarching Methodology



SIA Methodological Approach – What We Survey...



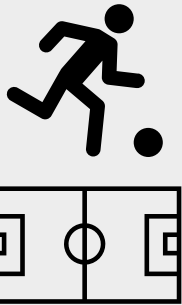
Education and
Training



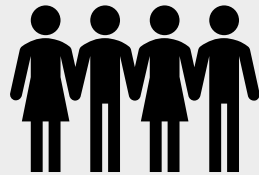
Childcare



Health



Sports, Recreation
and Open Space



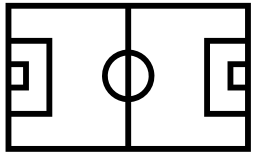
Community



Neighbourhood
Centres

- Six key themes assessed in more recent SIAs
- Continuously reviewed for every SIA
- **Example:**
Maynooth
– Student accommodation

SIA – Methodological Approach – What we Survey...



Sports, Recreation and Open Space

- Public Parks (urban neighbourhood parks, local parks, small parks, pocket parks) and amenity green space
- Outdoor sports including sports clubs and facilities
- Playgrounds and play areas



Establishing Benchmarks

- Established benchmarks are crucial to identifying any current or projected deficiencies / requirements in particular types of social infrastructure
- Difficult to ascertain as no national standards for social infrastructure
- **Result:** A level of improvisation...

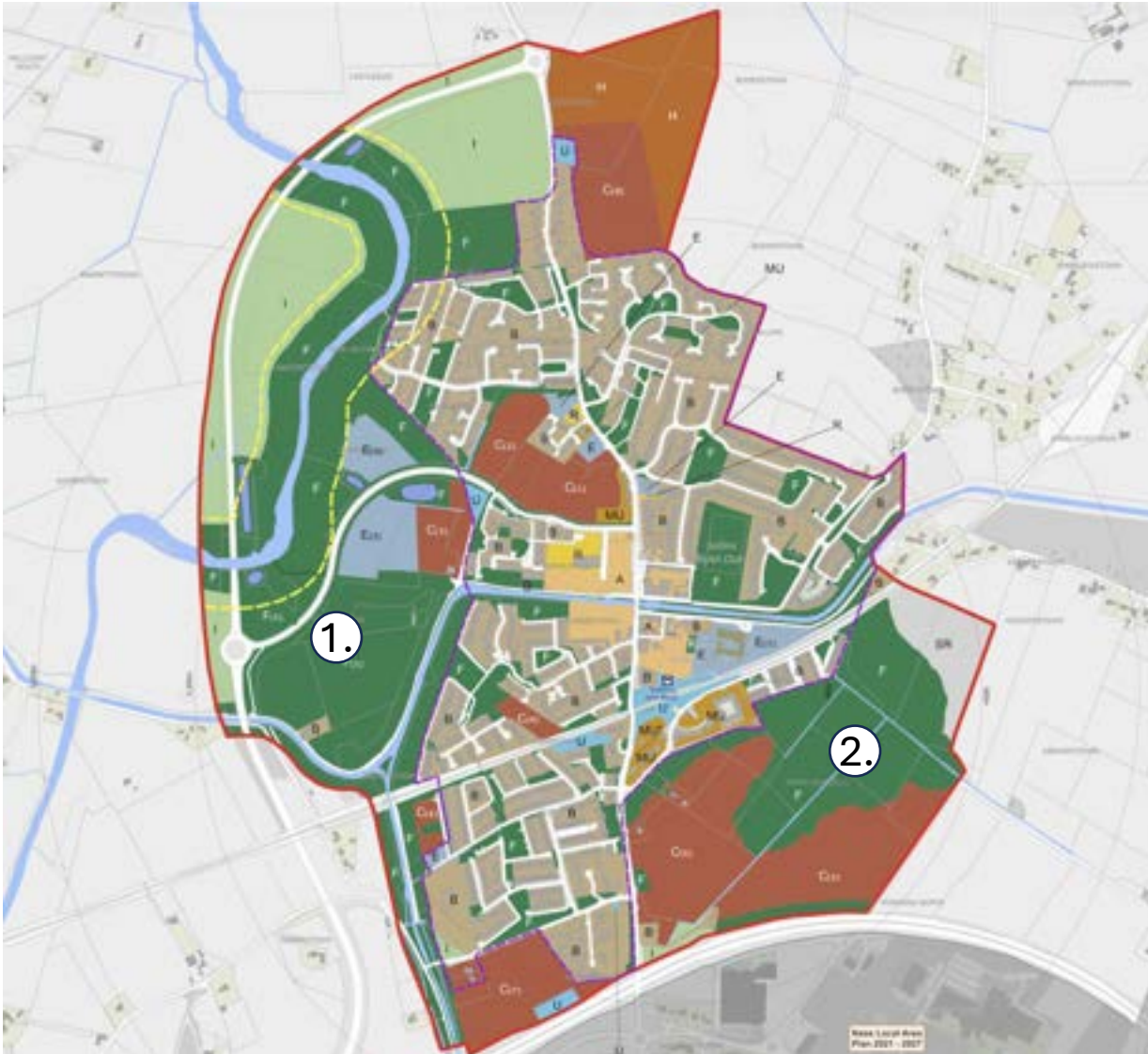
Example:

Open Space Provision

- **Overall Standard:** 2.5 ha per 1,000 pop. to comprise of formal/informal public open space areas (Kildare Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy, 2023)
 - **Public Parks:** 0.8 ha per 1,000
 - **Amenity Green Spaces:** 0.6 ha per 1,000
 - **Outdoor Recreation:** 1.6 ha per 1,000
 - **Playgrounds / Play facilities:** 0.25 per 1,000

Creating Great Spaces for All
(Fields in Trust, 2024)

Implementing the Social Infrastructure Audit



Variation No. 6 (Sallins Settlement Plan) to the Kildare CDP 2023-2029 (as varied)

Sallins SIA identified a series of deficits in terms of open space provision

Settlement Plan Response:

1. Kildare County Council-led delivery
– Sallins Amenity Lands
2. Developer-led delivery
– The Willows Key Development Area

SALLINS PARK LANDSCAPE PLAN, SCALE 1:100 @A1

SALLINS PARK Client: Kildare County Council, Drawing: Landscape Plan, Drawing on: 2022 LAR03, Drawn by: Mervin Kirkpatrick, Checked by: Cathal O'Shea, Issue: Part 8 Date: 28/07/2021, Sheet: 1 of 24

- 16.8 ha (42 acre) site to west of town
- Purchased in 2016, Part 8 secured in May 2022, work commencing in 2027
- Funded by LIHAF, KCC and LSSIF
- Project incorporates:
 - *2 grass pitches (GAA x1 and soccer x1)*
 - *3 grass training pitches*
 - *An all-weather pitch*
 - *Tennis, basketball and skate park facilities*
 - *Playground*
 - *Running and walking loop*
 - *Formal access area to River Liffey*

Implementing the Social Infrastructure Audit



The Willows Key Development Area

Open Space provision:

- Circa 23 hectares
- Provision of a multi-functional public open space providing for a range of recreational, social and ecological roles
- Open space to contain 2 full-sized sports pitches, playgrounds, rain gardens and wetland areas.

SIAs: Practical Lessons and Insights

Outputs vs Outcomes

Initial Output: Leixlip SIA 2019 – assisted in getting the Local Area Plan adopted

Long Term Outcomes: Resulted in significant benefits and implications for plan making and implementation in Kildare

Benefits: unforeseeable and varied

- Enormous value with the Elected Members – showing that key provisions of a plan have been decided in a non-arbitrary, transparent and traceable manner (increases trust in process and between parties) – also, difficult to challenge!
- Value with key stakeholders (i.e. Department of Education and Youth) and public (honesty relating to existing / future deficiencies)
- Valuable for internal departments (i.e. KCC Parks, Community Team)
- Embedded the evidence-led approach to policymaking...

SIAs: Practical Lessons and Insights



Benefits continued...

- The SIA has become a key informing document of the Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) which KCC uses to inform Land Use Zoning decisions
- Requirements have become more specific over time
- Very useful exercise for early career planners – i.e. research, fieldwork and report writing skills

SIAs: Practical Lessons and Insights

Implications of Undertaking SIAs:

- Resource intensive – requires an adequately staffed team
- Results in longer preparation time for plans
- Requires buy-in from management (trade-offs!)
- The undertaking of SIAs now expected as a matter of course
- Requests to undertake more detailed SIA analysis
- Delivery of identified social infrastructure (KCC Capital Plan)
– managing the expectations of the Elected Members
i.e. the delivery of schools
- SIA implemented through Development Management
has become a key DM tool
- Limitations – a piece of research undertaken at a
certain point in time...



Where to next?



Key aim: To create a GIS-linked 'live' database