



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

OPR Ref: IP-032-23

23rd November 2023

Planning Department,
Kildare County Council,
Áras Chill Dara,
Naas,
Co. Kildare.

Re: Issues Paper for the Newbridge Local Area Plan 2025-2031

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work in preparing the Issues Paper (the Issues Paper) for the proposed Newbridge Local Area Plan 2025-2031 (the LAP).

The planning authority is commended for publishing an Issues Paper, engaging proactively with the public, and notifying the Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) of the intention to prepare the LAP.

In accordance with the provisions of section 31AO of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended (the Act), the Office is obliged to evaluate and assess local area plans to ensure alignment with national and regional planning policy, the objectives of your county development plan and the *Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2024* (Transport Strategy).

The Office has set out some broad issues relevant to the preparation of local area plans, in addition to some specific issues of particular relevance to the preparation of this LAP, under the following headings:

1. [Strategic policy framework](#)
2. [Development plan and core strategy](#)
3. [Zoning, compact growth and infrastructural services](#)
4. [Regeneration](#)

5. [Education, social and community amenities](#)
6. [Economic development, employment and retail](#)
7. [Transport and mobility](#)
8. [Flood risk management](#)
9. [Climate action](#)
10. [Environment, built and natural heritage](#)
11. [Implementation and monitoring](#)

The comments are offered without prejudice to any observations and recommendations by the Office at future stages of the plan-making process. They also do not affect the obligation on your planning authority to comply with the relevant legislative requirements, or to be consistent with the fullness of the detailed policy context of the higher order plans and strategies and Ministerial guidelines.

1. Strategic policy framework

Section 20(5) of the Act requires the LAP to be consistent with the objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), National Planning Framework (NPF), the specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) of section 28 guidelines and the relevant development plan.

Of particular relevance to the LAP is RPO 8.6 for the preparation of a Local Transport Plan (LTP), and any strategic development sites for the delivery of residential, employment or other uses identified in the RSES.

The Office encourages the planning authority to liaise with the Eastern Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) in preparation of the draft LAP, particularly where clarity is required on how the objectives and guiding principles set out in the RSES relate to the LAP.

2. Development plan and core strategy

Section 19(2)(b) of the Act requires the LAP to be consistent with the objectives of the development plan and its core strategy. This is also a key message of the section 28 *Local Area Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2013) (LAP Guidelines).

In this regard, the Office notes that the core strategy of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 provides for a population increase of 2,917 persons with a requirement for 1,061 housing units and 31 hectares of residential land over the 2023 – 2029 plan period.

A key part of the Office's assessment of the draft LAP is to consider whether the objectives and zoning provisions of the LAP are consistent with the level of growth set out in the core strategy for the settlement.

3. Zoning, compact growth and infrastructural services

Our assessment will also carefully consider whether proposed zoning objectives can demonstrate consistency with the objectives for compact growth and densification¹ under the NPF (NPO 3; NPO 35) and the RSES (RPO 3.2). The implementation of effective compact growth to avoid urban sprawl also plays a key role in climate change mitigation.

Zoning objectives should also be consistent with any strategic development sites for the delivery of residential, employment or other uses identified in the RSES.

In relation to residential development, any provisions or standards for density or building height in the LAP should have regard to relevant section 28 guidelines and any SPPRs therein, including:

- *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Cities, Towns & Villages (2009);*
- *Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018);* and
- *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2020);*
- or any subsequent guidelines that replace them.

Land use zoning should follow a sequential approach so that the development of lands closest to the town centre are prioritised over lands on the outskirts of the town, as set out

¹ Including through reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development, area or site-based regeneration and increase building heights.

under section 6.2.3 of the *Development Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022)* (the Development Plans Guidelines).

The planning authority also needs to ensure that lands that cannot be serviced within the lifetime of the LAP are not zoned for development, consistent with the tiered approach to zoning under NPO 72 a-c of the NPF. In this regard, an infrastructure assessment should be prepared in accordance with Appendix 3 of the NPF and section 4.5.2 (Settlement Capacity Audit) of the Development Plans Guidelines.

The planning authority is advised to liaise closely with the relevant prescribed authorities concerning the delivery of essential services and infrastructure. The Office understands that there is sufficient capacity in the Waste Water Treatment Plant and sufficient water supply to cater for the targeted growth for Newbridge set out in the core strategy of the Development Plan.

4. Regeneration

Both the NPF (NPO 4 urban places; NPO 6 urban regeneration; NPO 18a proportionate growth; NPO 18b new homes; and NPO 35 increasing residential use) and the policy objectives of the RSES emphasise the importance of opportunities for urban and village regeneration to create attractive, liveable, and high quality urban places. The reuse of brownfield sites and vacant buildings will also contribute to climate change mitigation.

The Development Plan seeks to prepare and implement a Town / Village Renewal Masterplan for Newbridge (Action UD A3). The Office encourages the planning authority to prepare the masterplan as part of the draft LAP to ensure that an appropriate implementation strategy is prepared to deliver on this objective.

The Development Plans Guidelines advise that larger settlements normally have certain development sites that play a critical role in achieving the core strategy and NPF policy objectives for consolidation and compact growth. These sites should be specifically identified as 'Settlement Consolidation Sites' and integrated into the wider regeneration strategy for the settlement.

Where such sites are identified, the planning authority should prepare a development framework for future development with appropriate guidance regarding layout, massing,

permeability, green infrastructure and Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) etc. as set out in section 5.7 of the LAP Guidelines.

The Office recommends that the LAP includes a strong policy framework to support the utilisation of existing buildings, brownfield/infill sites, and derelict and underutilised sites. The planning authority should also consider proactive land activation measures including the planning authority's powers for land acquisition / compulsory purchase and derelict sites and vacant land. In this regard the Office welcomes as good practice provisions for reduced contributions under the *Development Contribution Scheme 2023-2029* for development supporting town and village centre development and on designated regeneration land / sites. The LAP should also align with sources of funding to facilitate key regeneration projects such as the recently announced *Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund Scheme*, and Town Centre First-aligned funding streams under the Government's *Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns*.

5. Education, social and community and amenities

Access to quality childcare, education and health services is a National Strategic Outcome of the NPF. The LAP should therefore seek to align population growth with investment in childcare and education facilities on well-located sites within or close to the existing built-up areas, to meet the diverse needs of local populations.

As such, the LAP should be informed by a social or civic infrastructure audit to establish the capacity of existing facilities, including community centres, leisure, amenity and cultural facilities to serve existing and future residents, and identify the need for any additional facilities.

It is also important that access to existing and proposed facilities by walking or cycling is prioritised consistent with the sustainable approach to settlement and mobility discussed below.

Specifically, in relation to schools, the planning authority should consult with the Forward Planning and Site Acquisitions Section of the Department of Education.

The local authority's *Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)* and *Traveller Accommodation Programme* should also inform the LAP to provide for the co-ordinated spatial planning of housing and community services for the area.

6. Economic development, employment and retail

The NPF, RSES and section 28 guidelines emphasise the need to take an evidence-based approach to the inclusion of objectives for employment and other commercial uses.

In particular, the LAP should be aligned with the detailed economic strategy and all relevant guiding principles of the RSES, in addition to any objectives concerning strategic enterprise / employment sites. The Development Plan identifies the importance of the Naas to Newbridge Strategic Employment Zone, which encompasses the Tougher Industrial Estate outside of Newbridge and the industrial zone on the northern edge of Newbridge. The Office notes Action UD A2 of the Development Plan, which seeks to prepare a Masterplan/Urban Design Framework for this area, with a focus for this plan period on the Newbridge end of the corridor linking back up to Tougher. The planning authority is therefore encouraged to progress this objective in respect of the strategic employment lands at Littleconnell as part of the draft LAP, in order to provide an appropriate framework for development of the area.

The Development Plan also seeks to promote and facilitate the development of the Sallins-Naas-Newbridge Economic Cluster (Objective RE O34); support Newbridge as an attractor to Biotechnology, ICT, professional services, high-tech manufacturing and research employment (Objective RE O26); and facilitate Bord Na Móna Green Energy Hub headquarters (Objective RE O79). These economic objectives should be highlighted in the draft LAP.

In terms of identifying the optimal locations for employment zonings, the key criteria should be: compact growth, the sequential approach to development and the options for sustainable transport having regard to the need to mitigate climate change. The reuse of appropriate brownfield sites and vacant premises should also be prioritised.

The facilitation of retail facilities also need to be considered to provide for the anticipated population growth. Particular regard should be given to the sequential approach to the location of retail development, particularly the underutilised lands and buildings within the existing core retail area (Development Plan Objective RET O22), other provisions of the *Retail Planning - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)* and the position of the town in the retail hierarchy of the Development Plan.

The planning authority should also ensure that an integrated approach to the planning of the town centre is supported and that a greater focus on linkages and commercial synergy is achieved in the draft LAP, consistent with Development Plan Objective RET O23.

7. Transport and mobility

The *Climate Action Plan 2023* identifies the need to significantly reduce car kilometres and increase sustainable journeys, guided by the *National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)* and the proposed *National Demand Management Strategy*.

The integration of land use and transportation is centrally important to this objective and to the objectives and provisions of the NPF (NPO 27 alternatives to the car; NPO 33 location of new homes; and NPO 64 air quality, among others) and the RSES.

The RSES identifies the requirement for an LTP for the town under RPO 8.6. The Development Plan Action TM A2 also commits to the preparation of an LTP to inform the LAP in consultation with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

The Office acknowledges the record of the planning authority in preparing quality LTPs to inform certain LAPs, including Athy and Naas, supported by good engagement with the NTA and TII. The planning authority is therefore aware that the NTA's and TII's *Area Based Transport Assessment Advice Note (2018)* (ABTA) and *ABTA How to Guide Guidance Document Pilot Methodology (2021)* should be considered by in preparing the LTP and that the LTP should inform the preparation of the LAP and, in particular, the zoning provisions.

The planning authority is strongly advised to liaise with the NTA and TII in the preparation of the LTP.

As per other LAPs prepared for the county, such as Naas LAP 2021-2027, the draft LAP should set out an ambitious (but realistic) modal shift target for the area of the LAP.

In order to increase the potential for trips to be made on foot, bicycle or public transport, the LAP should demonstrate consistency with 'Avoid-Shift-Improve' principle and the '10-minute town concept', as well as providing for the proactive implementation of the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (revised 2019) and the NTA's *Permeability Best Practice Guide*.

Consistency with the NTA's Transport Strategy is required for LAPs within the Greater Dublin Area planning authorities.

8. Flood risk management

Having regard to the location of Newbridge along the River Liffey, flood risk management will be the most critical climate change adaptation measure to be addressed in the LAP, informed by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).

The planning authority should ensure that the LAP is consistent with NPO 57 by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, in accordance with the detailed requirements and provisions of section 28 *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2009). These guidelines require a staged approach to flood risk assessment and, in particular, the application of the sequential approach and the requirement to carry out the plan-making justification test where appropriate.

The planning authority should overlay the flood risk zones on any proposed land use zoning maps to illustrate the potential flood risk arising and to demonstrate how the sequential approach has been applied. The planning authority is also requested to make a copy of digital mapping data available to the Office and to the Office of Public Works (OPW) to facilitate assessment.

Further, the planning authority is strongly advised to liaise with the OPW in the early stages of preparing the SFRA to avoid issues arising at draft LAP stage.

In accordance with NPO 57, the LAP is required to integrate sustainable water management solutions, such as SuDS. In this regard, the Office draws the planning authority's attention to *Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas, Water Sensitive Urban Design, Best Practice Interim Guidance Document* (2022).

9. Climate action

It is a National Strategic Outcome of the NPF to transition to a low carbon climate resilient society. The effective implementation of climate mitigation objectives through the LAP are critical to the achievement of the Government's Greenhouse Gas emissions reduction

target to mitigate climate change under the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (2015)*, as amended (*Climate Act 2015*).

The efficient use of land, including through infill development and brownfield development consistent with compact growth, will ensure consistency with NPO 53. An integrated approach to land use and transport planning will help ensure that climate action is integral to the LAP in support of national mitigation targets under the *Climate Act 2015*. The LAP should also consider how development in the area might best contribute to the delivery of renewable energy consistent with NPO 55.

The effective implementation of climate adaption objectives through the LAP will be essential to ensure Newbridge is climate resilient into the future. As noted, above, flood risk management will be the most critical climate change adaptation measure to be addressed in the LAP. The *National Adaptation Framework (2018)* specifies the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities in their administrative areas in order to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of any positive effects that may occur.

10. Environment and natural and built heritage

The planning authority is the competent authority for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, and will be aware of the section 28 *Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities (2022)* and the *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities (2009)*, as revised.

The planning authority should also ensure the LAP is consistent with objectives of the NPF and RSES concerning environmental protection. In this regard the Office highlights the importance of integrating green and blue infrastructure into the LAP consistent with NPO 58 and planning for greenbelts (NPO 62). Planning for green and blue infrastructure can contribute to climate change adaptation, in particular, flood risk management through nature based solutions consistent with NPO 57 and NPO 63. It can also make a positive contribution to climate mitigation and have positive impacts on biodiversity (NPO 64).

The Office also highlights the importance of integrating green and blue infrastructure into the LAP consistent with NPO 58.

Having regard to Action AH A21 of the Development Plan, the planning authority should consider what locations would benefit from the designation of an Architectural Conservation Area over the period of the LAP.

11. Implementation and monitoring

The NPF and the RSES place increased emphasis on the importance of monitoring the implementation of statutory strategies and plans to measure plan effectiveness and to continually update a relevant evidence base to inform future planning strategies.

The planning authority is therefore encouraged to set out specific provisions for monitoring the implementation of the objectives of the LAP, having regard to the provisions of the Development Plans Guidelines and the Local Area Plans Guidelines.

Summary

In summary, the Office commends the local authority for the preparation of this Issues Paper. The Office advises the local authority to pay particular attention to the following issues in the preparation of the LAP:

- the delivery of housing in serviced or serviceable areas should be informed by an infrastructure assessment / settlement capacity audit, and consistent with compact growth, the sequential approach and with the development plan core strategy;
- the inclusion of appropriate policies, objectives and strategies to promote and prioritise regeneration and the development of infill brownfield sites, particular those in the core retail area, as identified through Development Plan Objective RET O22, and utilise active land management strategies to tackle vacancy and dereliction elsewhere in the LAP area. The Office would also encourage the planning authority to prepare the Town / Village Renewal Masterplan for Newbridge as part of the draft LAP, consistent with Action UD A3 of the Development Plan;
- the integration of land use and transport planning, including the preparation of an LTP to inform the LAP, land use zoning objectives and associates modal share targets, in consultation with the NTA and TII;
- the development of the Naas to Newbridge Strategic Employment Zone and the Sallins-Naas-Newbridge Economic Cluster as optimal locations for employment zonings, having regard to compact growth, the sequential approach and active,



sustainable transport modes. The Office would also encourage the planning authority to prepare the Masterplan/ Urban Design Framework in respect of the strategic employment lands at Littleconnell as part of the draft LAP, consistent with Action UD A2 of the Development Plan; and

- ensure that the provision of the LAP and associated zoning objectives are fully informed by an SFRA, consistent with the *Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009)*, in consultation with the OPW, and promote SuDS and nature based solutions as a means of managing surface water run-off.

The Office looks forward to reviewing the future draft LAP and to continued positive engagement with your authority in the implementation of national and regional policies at the county and local level.

Please feel free to contact the staff of the Office in the context of your authority's responses to the above, which we would be happy to facilitate. Contact can be initiated through the undersigned or at plans@opr.ie.

Is mise le meas,

Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluations
