



3rd February 2026

Senior Executive Officer,
Planning Department,
Kildare County Council,
Áras Chill Dara,
Devoy Park,
Naas,
County Kildare,
W91 X77F.

**Re: Proposed Material Alterations to Variation No. 2 (Newbridge Settlement Plan) of
the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029**

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work in preparing the proposed Material Alterations (material alterations) to the proposed Variation No. 2 (proposed Variation) to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (County Development Plan).

As Kildare County Council (Planning Authority) is aware, a key function of the Office of the Planning Regulator (Office) is the assessment of statutory plans to ensure consistency with legislative and policy requirements relating to planning. The Office has evaluated and assessed the proposed Variation under the provisions of sections 31AM(1) and 31AM(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (Act) and this submission has been prepared accordingly¹.

Recommendations issued by the Office relate to clear breaches of the relevant legislative provisions, of the national or regional policy framework and/or of the policy of Government,

¹ Chapter 5 of Part 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2024, which relates to the preparation of development plans and variations by planning authorities and the assessment by the Office, was commenced on 31st December 2025. However, section 69(2) provides that the variation of a development plan under section 13 of the Act of 2000 shall continue under that Act after the repeal of section 13 of the Act of 2000.

as set out in the Ministerial guidelines under section 28. As such, planning authorities are requested to implement or address recommendation(s) made by the Office in order to ensure consistency with the relevant policy and legislative provisions.

Observations take the form of a request for further information, justification on a particular matter, or clarification regarding particular provisions of a plan on issues that are required to ensure alignment with policy and legislative provisions. Planning authorities are advised by the Office to action an observation.

A submission also can include advice on matters that the Office considers would contribute positively to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Planning authorities are requested by the Office to give full consideration to the advice contained in a submission.

On adoption of the plan, the Office will consider whether the plan has been made in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the Office and whether the plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and development of the area concerned.

Overview

As outlined in the Office's submission to the proposed Variation at draft stage, the Office considered the Variation to be generally consistent with the policies in the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025) (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area.

The Office acknowledges and commends the significant efforts of the Planning Authority with the publication of a very comprehensive Chief Executive's Report response and the careful consideration of the Office's submission at draft stage. In particular, in regard to residential zoned lands, the Office notes as this is a transitional stage of the proposed Variation, it poses challenges in coordinating the settlement plan within the wider context of the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (2025) and Variation No.3 to the County Development Plan.

In regard to zoning land for housing development, the Office particularly welcomes the Planning Authority's approach to the inclusion of MA 59 which uplifts previously zoned Strategic Reserve lands to Residential 2 lands at Crotanstown with the potential to deliver over 250 new homes. Furthermore, a new Design Brief and Urban Design Framework has

been developed and demonstrates how the new community will be served by significant social infrastructure provision. Similarly, the Office fully supports the inclusion of MA 63 and MA 29 which assist in demonstrating how the proposed site will integrate into the proposed and existing active travel and public transport networks.

Furthermore, the Office welcomes the inclusion of MA 58 which rezones a small parcel of land in the Morristown from Strategic Reserve to Residential 2 lands in response to Recommendation 1 of the Office's submission at draft stage. The Office also commends the inclusion of an amendment to the Newbridge North Key Development Area Framework which integrates these lands in a comprehensive manner.

Notwithstanding the rezoning of a small part of the Morristown lands, the Office notes that the majority of the site remains zoned as Strategic Reserve (Residential and Community). The Office acknowledges the Planning Authority's rationale regarding of the quantum of residential zoned land relative to the housing growth requirements, and the coordination of housing growth with supporting social infrastructure in the town. The Office further recognised that the identification of these lands for longer-term strategic and sustainable development provides an important degree of certainty in relation to future housing land supply.

However, the Office recommends that the Planning Authority continues to actively monitor residential land requirements over the remaining, relatively short duration of the current plan period, and that the Morristown lands be brought forward for development in a timely manner where emerging need is identified, in order to ensure an adequate and responsive supply of housing land.

In relation to Recommendation 2 of the Office's submission on the proposed Variation, the Office notes and welcomes the inclusion of MA 21 which provides a baseline of modal share targets with the inclusion to support the National Cycle Policy Framework 2020 to increase in journeys to work and school from 2.3% for cycling to 10%. The Office also notes that the associated Newbridge Area Based Transport Assessment has been published and added to the Planning Authority's website and a note added at MA 31 to link this document to the proposed Variation.

The Office further commends the inclusion of MA 63 which integrates the Implementation Map to include short and medium-term transport measures inclusive of strategic sites such

as Littleconnell Strategic Employment Area, Newbridge North Key Development Area and the new Key Development Area at Crotanstown. Furthermore, the Planning Authority has clarified the plans for the new bus route (MA 29) which will also include key employment areas of Newbridge Industrial estate, Littleconnell and new residential communities at Crotanstown.

In relation to flood risk management, the Office welcomes the inclusion of MA 65 which included a number of important additions to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), including the provision of individual Plan Making Justification tests at appendix C and additional text to clarify that the policy objectives are amended to replicate the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), however there are two minor modifications recommended relating one particular test and a mapping anomaly.

Notwithstanding the above, the Office has concerns regarding the inclusion of MA 53 which proposes to amend lands at Greatconnell previously zoned as Open Space to New Residential which appear to be partially located within Flood Zone A or B and therefore could pose a risk of flooding to new homes. As such, the Office recommends parts of the site affected located within the flood extents are not zoned as New Residential and are reverted back to Open Space.

The submission below has been prepared to provide a strategic level input to your authority in finalising the proposed Variation. It is within the above context that the submission sets out one (1) recommendation under the following key theme:

Key theme	Recommendation	Observation
<u>Flood risk management</u>	<u>MA Recommendation 1</u>	-

Flood risk management

The Office notes and welcomes that the Planning Authority's response to its recommendation on Flood risk management (Recommendation 3 at draft stage). The Office notes the Planning Authority has reviewed and updated the Flood Zoning map 10.2a SFRA to ensure use of present-day flood zone mapping is shown rather than previously based on high end future scenario mapping for Newbridge.

However, MA 53 amends an area of 0.71 ha from Open Space to New Residential within the wider residential lands at Greatconnell. While the flood maps are not clear, the Office is concerned that part of these lands appear to be located within the present-day Flood Zones A or B. This proposed zoning objective (MA 53) should therefore be reviewed and the parts of these lands located within Flood Zones A or B should be omitted from the New Residential zoning and reverted back to Open Space.

The Office further welcomes the inclusion of additional Plan Making Justification tests under MA 65. However, the Office notes under Existing Residential/Infill section, the test (iii) regarding lands within or adjoining the core of an established or designated urban settlement, has not been passed and the conclusion should be corrected to reflect this position.

Furthermore, if the Planning Authority intends to retain the zoning to reflect existing uses it should clarify that no new 'highly vulnerable development' can be located within Flood Zone A or B or 'less vulnerable development' in Flood Zone A.

Furthermore, while the Office notes that the Planning Authority has included MA 65 and identified and included assessment of a watercourse at Littleconnell Strategic Employment Area at section 7.1.2 of the SFRA, this watercourse has not been added to map 10.2 of the SFRA and therefore it is recommended that this is reviewed and updated.

MA Recommendation 1 - Flood risk management

Having regard to flood risk management, and in particular to:

- NPO 78 of the NPF;
- RPO 7.12 of the RSES to avoid inappropriate land use zonings and development in areas at risk of flooding;
- Policy Objective IN033 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 to manage flood risk in the county in accordance with the sequential approach and requirements of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) (Flood Guidelines) when preparing plans; and
- the Flood Guidelines,

the Office recommends that the Planning Authority:

- (i) makes the Variation without lands in Flood Zone A or B within MA 53 to rezone lands from Open Space and Amenity to New Residential;
- (ii) review and corrects the conclusion of the Plan-making Justification Tests for MA 65 in appendix C, Existing Residential/Infill, part (iii) within or adjoining the core of an established or designated urban settlement, and ensure that no new 'highly vulnerable development' can be located within Flood Zone A or B, or 'less vulnerable development" in Flood Zone A; and
- (iii) amends MA 52 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Map 10.2 to identify the watercourse and floodplain transversing the Littleconnell Strategic Employment area.

Summary

The Office requests that your authority addresses the recommendations outlined above. As you are aware, the report of the Chief Executive of your authority prepared for the elected members under section 13 of the Act must summarise these recommendations and the manner in which they will be addressed.

At the end of the process, your authority is required to notify this Office within **five working days** of the decision of the Planning Authority in relation to the proposed Variation. Where your authority decides not to comply with the recommendations of the Office, or otherwise makes the plan in such a manner as to be inconsistent with the recommendations made by this Office, then the Chief Executive shall inform the Office and give reasons for this decision.

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 plans@opr.ie.

Is mise le meas,

AM O'Connor.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluation

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015
