



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

6th March 2026

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

**Re: Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) of the Kildare
County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied)**

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work in preparing the Proposed Variation No. 4 (proposed Variation) of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (County Development Plan) (as varied).

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 pursuant to Part 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Act) and its functions under section 546 and this submission has been prepared accordingly.

Recommendations issued by the Office further to section 58(9) of the Act relate to clear breaches of the relevant legislative provisions, of the national or regional policy framework and/or of the policy of Government. 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 issued by the Office pursuant to section 546 of the Act may take the form of a request for further information or justification on a particular matter, or clarification regarding particular provisions of a plan on issues that are considered necessary to ensure alignment

with policy and legislative provisions. Planning authorities are requested by the Office to action an observation.

A submission can also 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 Variation, the Office will assess it in accordance with the statutory framework in section 63 of the Act.

The Office welcomes the updated Landscape Character Assessment prepared in response to County Development Plan Objective LR A1. The identification of ten distinct landscape character areas, along with the associated objectives to protect and enhance their special qualities, is supported. The proposed updates also align with the strategic objectives of both the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) and the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025), which is welcomed by the Office.

The Office also welcomes the updated Wind Energy Strategy and acknowledges the positive steps taken to facilitate renewable energy development within the county. In particular, the expansion of areas designated as Acceptable in Principle for wind energy development will enhance the county's capacity to contribute to national renewable energy and climate targets.

As the Planning Authority will be aware, the RSES for the EMRA is due to be reviewed. This review will include the preparation of a regional landscape character assessment (RPO 7.27) and the identification of Strategic Energy Zones (RPO 7.35). In this context, the landscape character assessment may require further consideration during the County Development Plan review process to ensure full alignment with emerging regional policy.

As you are aware, the report of the Chief Executive of your authority prepared for the elected members under section 58(11) of the Act must summarise these recommendations and how the Chief Executive proposes they should be dealt with.

Where the Planning Authority makes a variation, it is required to notify the Office **within one week** of the decision to adopt the Variation. Where your authority decides not to

comply with the recommendations of the Office, then it shall inform the Office as soon as practicable and provide reasons for the decision not to so comply.

Your authority is also required to send the Office a copy of the Variation and any submissions made by the Minister, the relevant regional assembly and the National Transport Authority during the Variation preparation process.

Please be advised that planning authorities are also required to publish notice of the Variation within a week of the adoption, stating that a copy of the County Development Plan as varied will be available for inspection on a website and at a place specified in the notice no later than five weeks after the date of adoption.

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,

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Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluation

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015