



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

29th May 2026

Senior Planner,
Planning Department,
Kilkenny County Council,
John Street,
Kilkenny.

Re: Proposed Variation No. 8B to the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work in preparing the Proposed Variation No. 8B (proposed Variation) to the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021 (Development Plan).

As Kilkenny County Council (Planning Authority) is aware, a key function of the Office of the Planning Regulator (Office) is to evaluate and assess statutory plans to ensure consistency with legislative requirements and national and regional planning policy. The Office has undertaken this evaluation and assessment pursuant to Part 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Act) and its functions under section 546, and this submission sets out the outcome.

In this context, the submission includes recommendations and observations.

Recommendations arise where the Office identifies clear inconsistencies with legislative provisions or policy frameworks and are intended to be addressed to ensure compliance. Observations highlight areas where further clarification, justification, or refinement would strengthen the plan. The submission may also include advice to support the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Following adoption of the Variation, the Office will carry out a further assessment under section 63 of the Act.

Overview

The proposed Variation introduces a number of changes to the Development Plan to support the implementation of the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (2025) (Housing Growth Guidelines). These include:

- amendments to the core strategy to reflect the Housing Growth Guidelines in relation to three settlements: Callan, Thomastown and Graiguenamanagh;
- policy amendments including a site-specific objective relating to Callan site D shown on figure no. 4.26 Callan; and
- proposed rezoning of eleven sites to facilitate additional residential development.

The Office welcomes the work undertaken by the Planning Authority and considers that the overall approach provides a positive basis for supporting compact growth and alignment with national and regional policy. In particular, the rezoning of lands within existing settlement boundaries to higher density New Residential uses will provide additional capacity for housing in the county. The inclusion of an Infrastructure Assessment is also commended as it supports an evidence-based approach to the zoning of lands.

A small number of areas have however been identified where further refinement would strengthen the proposed Variation.

Most significantly, a recommendation is made in relation to flood risk management at Callan site D, to ensure that a clear and effective site-specific objective is incorporated into the written statement. A recommendation is also made to strengthening active travel and permeability connections at Graiguenamanagh sites A and B and Thomastown site E with their town centres and local services.

In addition, one observation and comments are set out to improve the effectiveness of the proposed Variation. These relate to enhancing surface water management through area-based Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), ensuring alignment with local area plans, and addressing a minor inconsistency in the Infrastructure Assessment.

The following recommendations and observations set out below are intended to support the Planning Authority in further strengthening the proposed Variation and ensuring its effective implementation:

Subject	Recommendation	Observation
Flood risk management	Recommendation 1	Observation 1
Sustainable mobility	Recommendation 2	-

1. Flood risk management

The Office welcomes the preparation of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). However, one issue has been identified that should be addressed to ensure material consistency with the objectives of the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Regional Assembly, and in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009).

Specifically, the response to criteria 3 of the Plan Making Justification Test in the SFRA relating to the proposed rezoning at Callan site D, indicates that a site-specific objective should be included. Correspondingly, figure no. 4.26 (Callan) includes an asterisk and footnote text which states that access to the River Tullamaine Channel is to be provided to allow for channel maintenance. While this inclusion is welcomed, in the interests of clarity, the text of this objective should also be included in the proposed Variation. In addition, the proposed objective would also benefit from additional wording to specify how the access is to be provided and to clarify any associated setback or restriction distances from the channel that may be required. The Planning Authority is therefore recommended to update the proposed Variation accordingly.

The Office also considers that the proposed Variation would be strengthened by incorporating an area based approach to SuDs, rather than relying solely on individual site-by-site solutions. The Planning Authority is advised to reflect this approach in both the SRFA and proposed Variation.

Recommendation 1 - Flood Risk Management (Callan site D)

Having regard to flood risk management, and having considered:

- NPO 78 of the NPF to promote sustainable development by ensuring flooding and flood risk management informs place-making;
- RPOs 114, 115 and 116 of the RSES to incorporate flood risk management into the planning system; and
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009),

the Office recommends that the Planning Authority include a site-specific objective for Callan site D within the written statement of proposed Variation No. 8B to the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021 to:

- (i) state that access to the River Tullamaine Channel is to be provided to allow for channel maintenance; and
- (ii) clearly set out how access to the River Tullamaine Channel is to be provided and specify any appropriate setback or development restriction distances from the channel.

The Planning Authority should consult with the Office of Public Works in addressing this recommendation.

Observation 1 - Flood Risk Management (SuDS)

Having regard to:

- NPO 77 of the NPF to integrate sustainable water management solutions such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDs) and nature-based solutions;
- NPO 78 of the NPF to promote sustainable development by ensuring flooding and flood risk management informs place-making;

- RPO 116 of the RSES to include consideration of potential impacts of flood risk arising from climate change and integrate sustainable water management solutions; and
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009),

the Planning Authority is advised to amend the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to incorporate an integrated and area-based provision of Sustainable urban Drainage Systems related to the proposed rezoned lands in order to avoid reliance on individual site-by-site solutions.

2. Sustainable mobility

The proposed Variation provides a valuable opportunity for the Planning Authority to strengthen permeability linkages between the proposed New Residential zoned lands and local services, including town centres. Providing and enhancing these connections will help to ensure that both existing and future communities can readily access active travel options such as walking and cycling, while supporting more sustainable and integrated travel patterns.

In particular, the accessibility of the proposed New Residential rezonings at Thomastown site E and Graiguenamanagh sites A and B to their respective town centres could be improved, taking account of local constraints such as severance with the R705 and local gradients at sites A and B Graiguenamanagh (which restrict cycling), and distance to town centres and services at Thomastown site E and Graiguenamanagh sites A and B.

In this context, the Office recommends that the Planning Authority give consideration to how accessibility can be improved and include site-specific objectives to support improved active travel measures, including high-quality and universally accessible connections where appropriate.

Recommendation 2 - Sustainable Mobility and Permeability

Having regard to the need to integrate land use and sustainable transport planning and healthy placemaking and having considered:

- RPO 174 of the RSES relating to walking and cycling;
- RPO 181 of the RSES to improve equal access for all through universal design;
- Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended;
- Climate Action Plan 2025;
- the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022); and
- section 6.2 of the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021 relating to the Making of Place and Strategic Objective 6B relating to embodying inclusive and universal access design principles,

the Planning Authority is recommended to identify measures to provide permeability linkages for walking and cycling between the proposed New Residential lands at the locations listed below and local services and town centres. Where appropriate, specific local objectives should be included in the proposed Variation in relation to the following:

- (i) Thomastown site E;
- (ii) Graiguenamanagh site A; and
- (iii) Graiguenamanagh site B.

3. Consistency with the local area plans

While noting the proposed Variation seeks the rezoning of specific lands, the Planning Authority should ensure consistency between the land use zoning maps within local area plans for the settlements and the figures provided within the proposed Variation. This includes all elements shown such as local objectives, active travel measures, masterplan areas identified within the local area plans zoning maps.

It would also be beneficial to update the proposed Variation (including to figure no. 4.26 Callan, figure no.4.28 Thomastown and the Infrastructure Assessment) to reflect the masterplan requirements for Callan site C, as identified in the Callan Local Area Plan, and Thomastown site C, as identified in the Thomastown Local Area Plan.

Addressing these points would further strengthen consistency and clarity across the planning framework.

4. Other Matters

In relation to the Infrastructure Assessment enclosed with the proposed Variation, as a matter of consistency, the Planning Authority should identify the proposed zoning for Thomastown site E as New Residential and amend the table accordingly.

Summary

The Office requests that the Planning Authority addresses the recommendations and observations set out above.

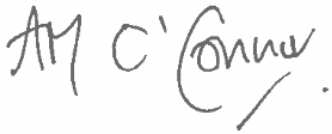
As part of this process, the Chief Executive's report to the elected members, prepared under section 58(11) of the Act should summarise the Office's recommendations and outline how it is proposed to address them.

Following adoption of the Variation, the Planning Authority is required to:

- notify the Office within **one week** of the decision to adopt the Variation;
- inform the Office, as soon as practicable, where it decides not to comply with a recommendation, including the reasons for this decision;
- provide the Office with a copy of the adopted Variation, together with any submissions received from the Minister, the relevant Regional Assembly, and the National Transport Authority during the plan preparation process; and
- publish notice of the Variation within **one week** of adoption, confirming that the Development Plan as varied will be available for inspection (online and at a specified location) no later than **five weeks** after adoption.

The Office looks forward to continued constructive engagement with the Planning Authority. If further clarification or discussion would be helpful, the Office would be pleased to assist and can be contacted at plans@opr.ie.

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "AM O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluation

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015
