

OVERVIEW OF THE LOCAL AREA PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS & DEVELOPING A NEW GENERATION OF LOCAL AREA PLANS FOR KILDARE

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Overview

- County Kildare in Context
- The Plan Hierarchy & Policy Context
- Role & Purpose of a Local Area Plan
- Local Area Plan Process
- Where did we come from... where did we go?
- The New Generation Local Area Plan
- Evidence Based Assessment
- Building Consensus with the Elected Members
- How it works in practice
- Engagement with the OPR
- Public Consultation
- Practical Advice for Plan-makers
- Concluding remarks

County Kildare in Context

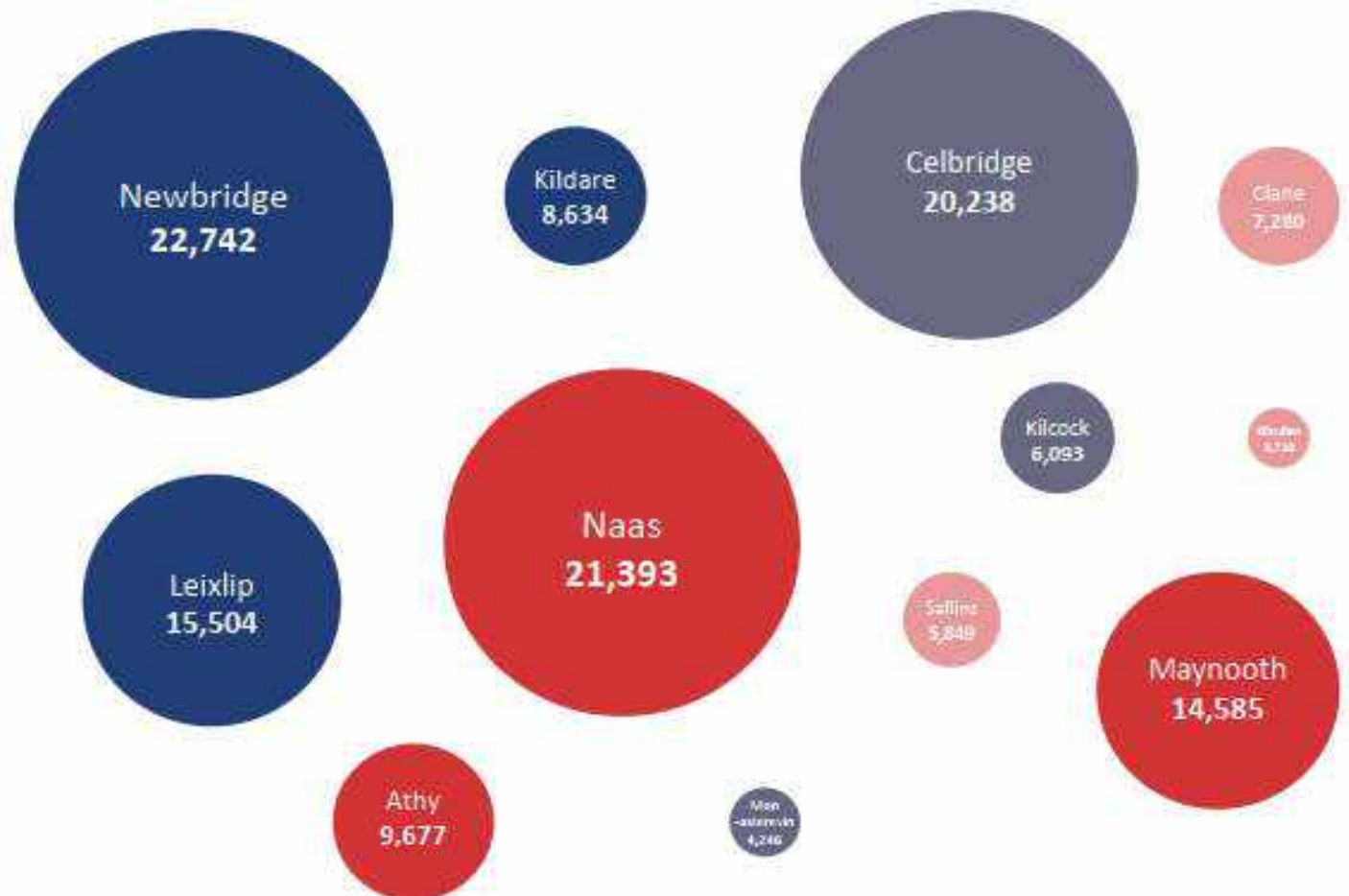
5 Settlements with populations in excess of 10,000 persons

+

5 Settlements with populations in excess of 5,000 persons

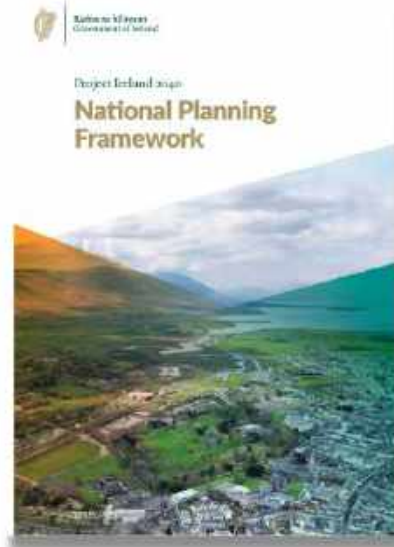
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2 Settlements which are designated as towns in the Census.



12 Mandatory Local Area Plan Settlements

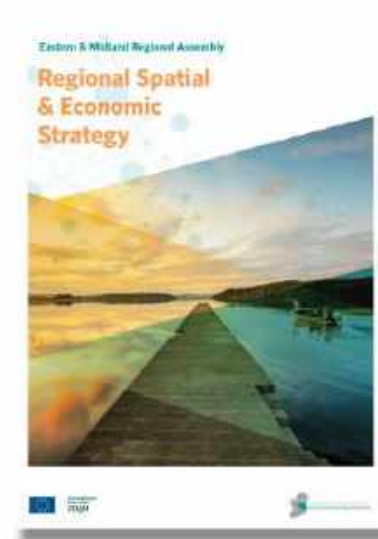
Plan Hierarchy



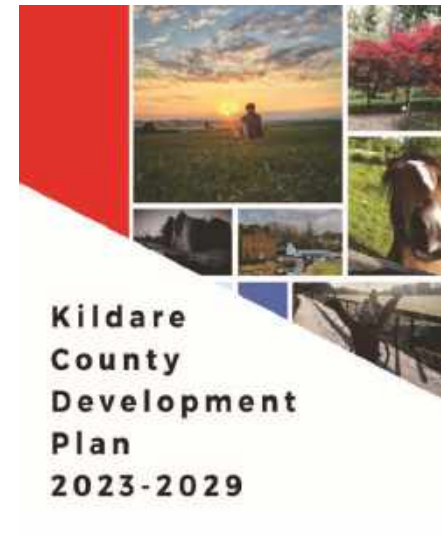
NPF



NPF Roadmap

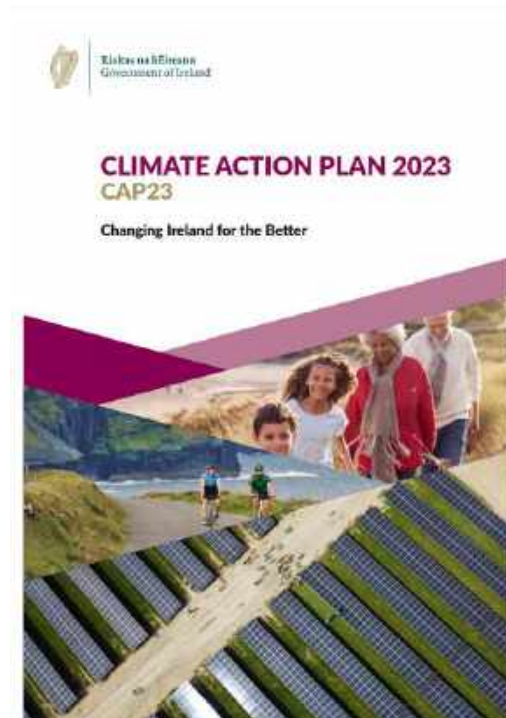
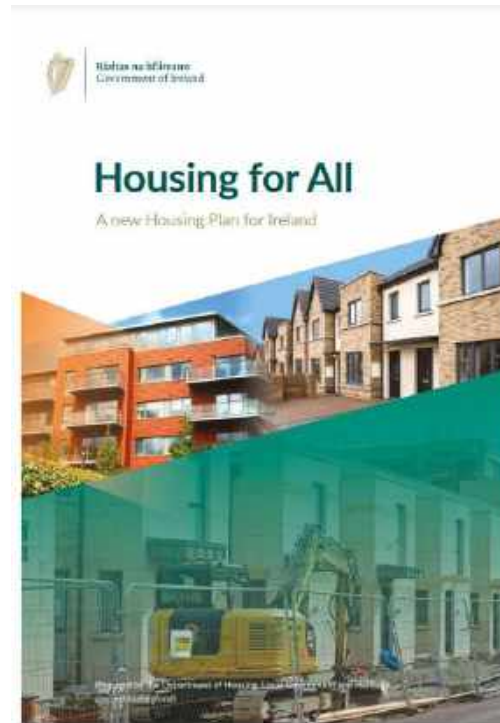


RSES



CDP

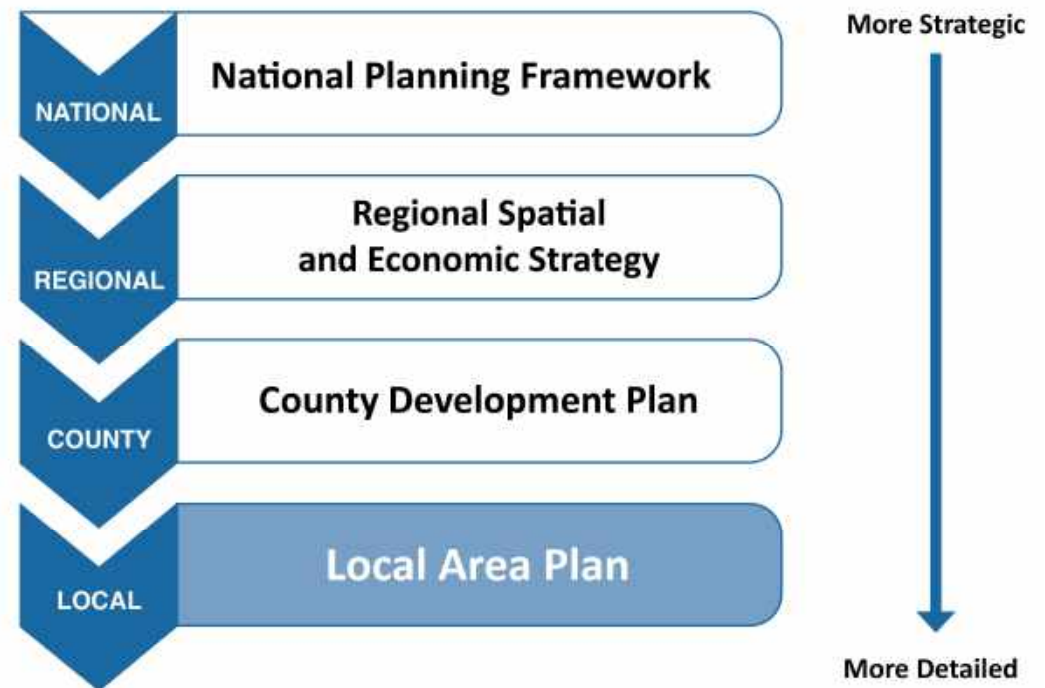
Policy Context



LAP within the Plan Hierarchy & Policy Context

The LAP is positioned at the bottom of the Plan hierarchy and it must be consistent with the County Development Plan, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the National Planning Framework.

Local Area Plans provide for locally tailored and site-specific objectives and actions, in response to a town's unique assets, features, circumstances and needs and are an enormous opportunity to bring to life the objectives of the County Development Plan at a local level.

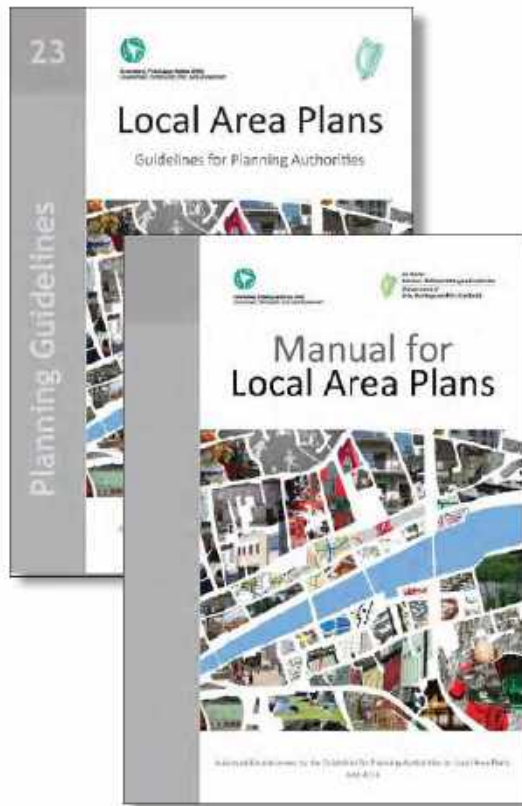


Role & Purpose of a Local Area Plan



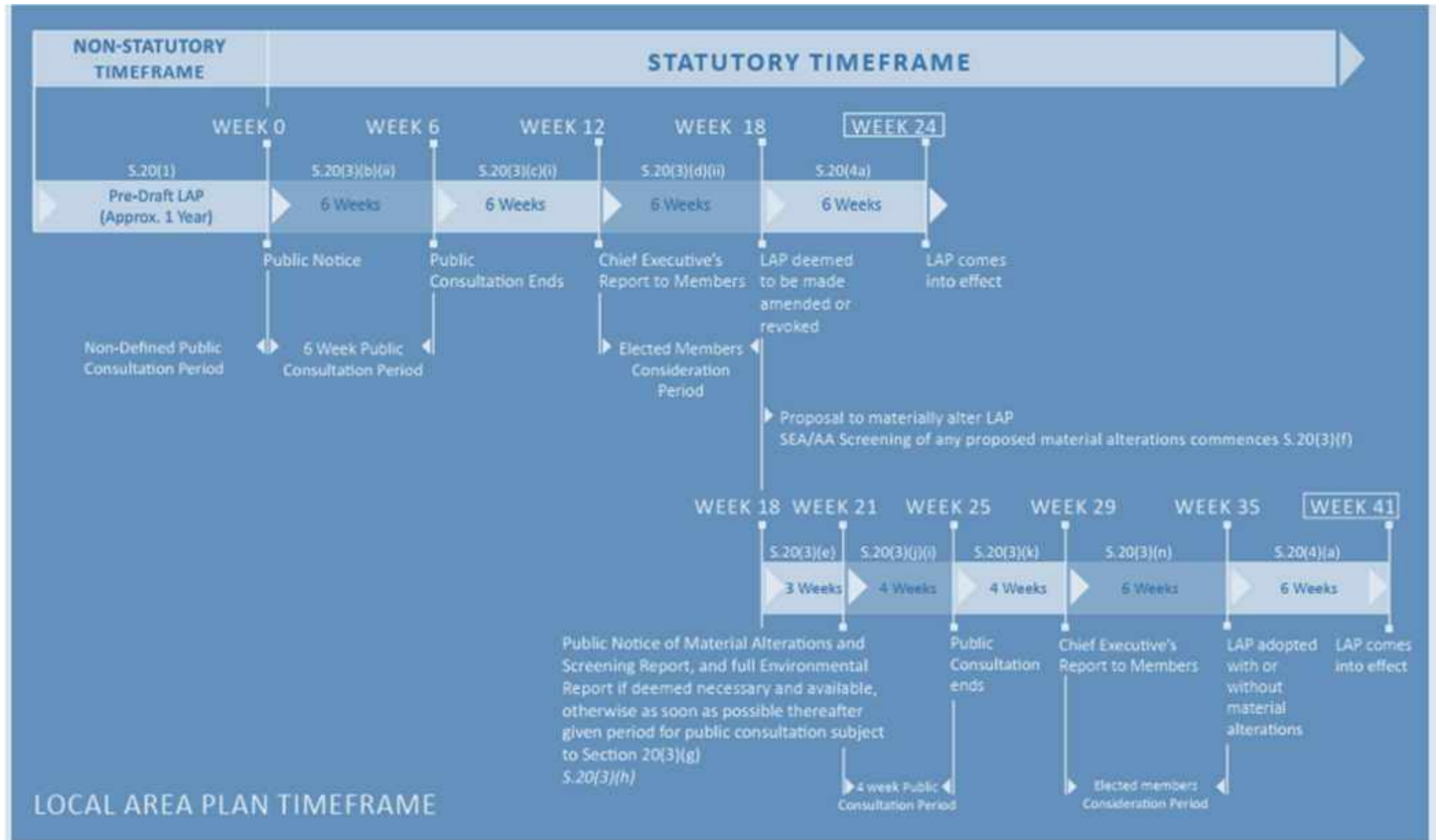
- A Local Area Plan (LAP) is a statutory planning policy document. Its primary function is to **guide, manage** and **direct** the spatial development of a town or area over a defined period of time.
- Consists of a written statement containing **statutory planning objectives** accompanied by a series of maps.
- Used alongside the County Development Plan to assess planning applications
- More recently being used to support funding applications (e.g. URDF/RRDF/NTA Active travel etc).

Role & Purpose of a Local Area Plan



- Preparation is guided by Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines on LAPs and accompanying Local Area Plan Manual.
- Generally a 41-week statutory process.
- *"In the case of more complex local area plans, it would be prudent that preparations commence at least one year from the date the planning authority intends to put a draft LAP on display."* (LAP Guidelines, p. 16)

Local Area Plan – the process



Where did we come from...where did we go?



NEW WAY OF
THINKING

A new generation of Local Area Plans

An Evidence-based approach involves the preparation of a series of assessments and/or audits to determine the most appropriate course of action which is based on the best available, current, valid and relevant data available.

A specific emphasis is placed on an evidence based and data-driven policy formulation to justify and tailor the appropriate development strategy for each settlement.

It is not a one size fits all approach. Irish towns and villages are so unique that it demands a custom built land use plan to respond to local needs, deficits and future requirements.

A suite of bespoke supporting documents are prepared to inform a particular aspect of the Local Area Plan and are published alongside the Draft Plan.



Building Consensus with the Elected Members

The preparation and formulation of a Local Area Plan which is informed by up to 10 individual audits and assessments requires a significant commitment from the Elected Members, at all stages of the Plan making process. Their local knowledge, understanding and engagement in the process can not be overstated and is a critical component to the success of a plan.

Athy Local Area Plan 2021-2027

40+ hours of briefings during plan preparation

- Information briefings (at MD level) at all stages of plan formulation and preparation
- Visioning and identifying strategic development principles exercise
- Special Municipal District Meetings

Naas Local Area Plan 2021-2027

25+ hours of briefings during plan preparation

- Information briefings (at MD level) at all stages of plan formulation and preparation
- Visioning and identifying strategic development principles exercise
- Special Council Meetings*

“Commitment is an act, not a word”

Evidence Based Assessments

- 1. Environmental Report**
– an output of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process
- 2. Natura Impact Report (NIR) *(if deemed necessary)***
– an output of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process
- 3. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)**
- 4. Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA)**
- 5. Statement of Character (SoC) for Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)**
- 6. Habitats Survey and Green Infrastructure Mapping**
- 7. Surface Water Management Study**
- 8. Urban Regeneration Framework**
- 9. Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA)**
- 10. Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) - Infrastructure Assessment**

How it works in practice – Social Infrastructure Audit

What is social infrastructure?

Social Infrastructure relates to the provision of services and facilities which are essential for health, well-being and social development of a town/place and include education and health services such as schools, surgeries and community specific services as well as areas which can offer active sports and passive recreational activities.

In addition, to the actual activity and function, social infrastructure facilities can provide an invisible platform of community and social interaction which some residents may rely upon for personal well-being.

The provision of the requisite levels of social infrastructure within any town or village, regardless of its population is vital to support the planned residential base in both physical facilities and social engagement.

***Note;** While the Local Area Plan cannot “deliver” schools, childcare and healthcare facilities the SIA identifies gaps/deficiencies in service provision and this informs zoning decisions in the LAP with respect to new school sites for example.*

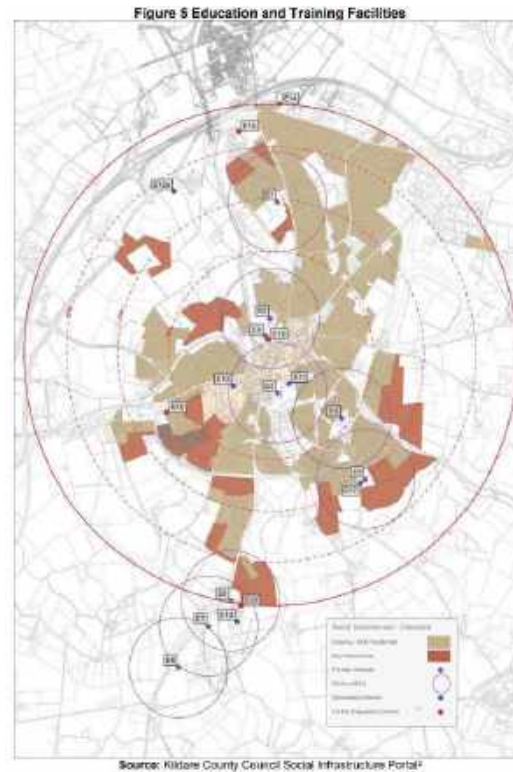


How it works in practice – Social Infrastructure Audit

The function of a Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA) is to examine and analyse the availability and capacity of existing social infrastructure facilities, and to determine future requirements, and make recommendations based on anticipated settlement growth.

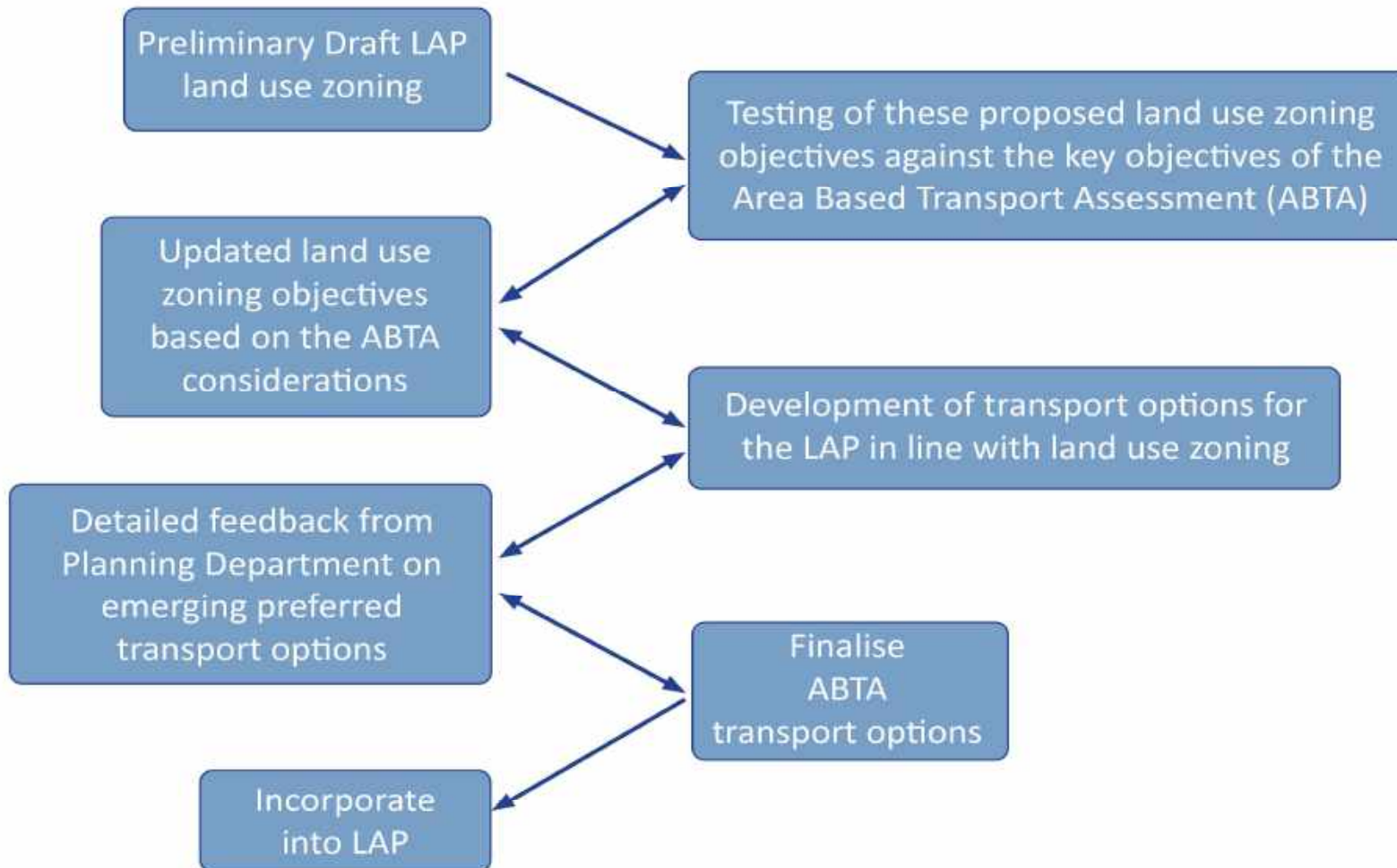
The SIA comprises three parts:

- assessment of the existing situation,
- future demand analysis and
- social infrastructure recommendations.



The SIA results are mapped and are used to determine spatially/geographically where deficits are and where the LAP should focus for example, land use zonings to facilitate education and training facilities

How it works in practice - ABTA



It is important that when drafting and preparing the evidence based assessments and audits that the documents “speak” to each other and where feasible provides a platform for the LAP to deliver the most appropriate land-use solution.

Engagement with the OPR during plan preparation

Predraft stage; informal discussions

- To agree approach, advise of local matters which were influencing the emerging development strategy
- To seek advice/guidance in implementation of NPOs/RPOs at a local level
- Timing eg Naas & Athy prior to CDP review
- Public consultation strategy

Draft Stage

- To discuss specific strategic issues including social infrastructure deficits, strategic land banks and regeneration area/site consolidation difficulties (see case study)
- Housing Allocations; choreography of plan making and development management processes

Material Amendments

- Make CE Report, Meeting Report & Minutes of Council (MD) Meetings available to “tell the **Local Area Plan**” story

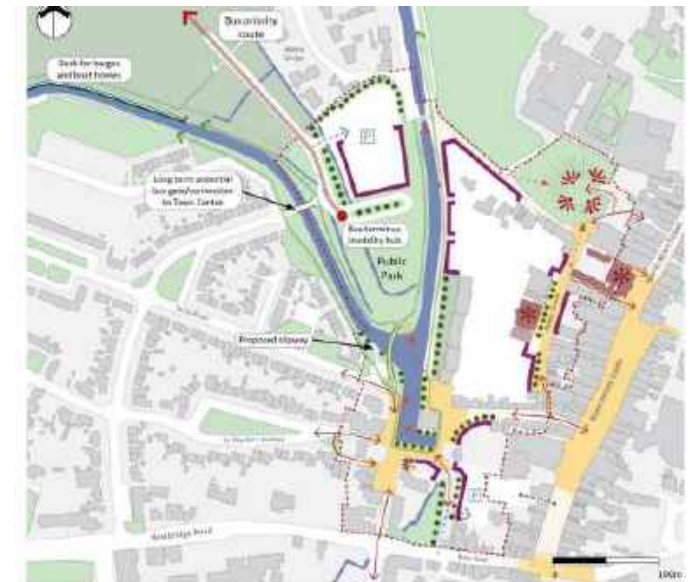
Adoption

- Requirement under the Act to advise OPR within 5 days. Include meeting reports and submit stated reasons as a record of any decisions taken during meetings

Case Study

Location; North West Quadrant Naas

Context; Key Town strategic expansion area



Key			
Existing landmark		Vehicular access route	
New landmark building		Public car parking	
Indicative building frontage		Pedestrian route	
New civic/community venue		New greenway route	
Potential extension to new civic venue		Potential new bridge	
Key public realm intervention		Soft landscaping measures	
Improved links		Key view	
Envisaged/potential routes		Panoramic view	
Canal Quarter masterplan area		Amenity Tower/Lookout	

Public Consultation & OPR Plan Assessment

By preparing the LAP on firm, data based principles, the public, stakeholders, interested parties and the Office of The Planning Regulator can see and understand the rationale for the decisions taken in formulating a particular development strategy.

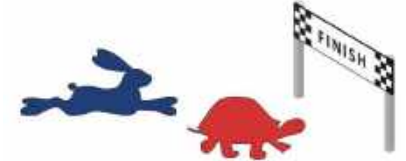
The public consultation and OPR plan assessment period is an important opportunity for the Planning Authority to provide that background, which is why Kildare County Council publish all documents which have been prepared to inform the Plan.



Practical Advice to Plan-makers

- **Less haste more speed...**

Take, and more importantly **make** the time to get the Draft Plan right. It is not a race!



- **The facts don't lie...**

With evidence-based assessments supporting and published with the plan, the Council *should* (where decisions are based in evidence) be able to justify and document all decisions taken during the plan process.

- **Consistency is key...**

Consistency in approach across plan making establishes a trust between Local Authorities and the OPR

- **Go the extra mile...**

While consistency is key, it is not a one size fits all plan making process; there will be local variances which the Plan should acknowledge but always justify. Hold firm on issues which can be justified at a local level, do the right thing for the town. Engage with the OPR at all stages in the process so as to avoid interventions post adoption.

- **Prioritise implementation**

Make the plan come to life with short/medium term actions and interventions.

Concluding Remarks

- Local Area Plans are the mechanism to bring the National Planning Framework to life, but will require hard choices.
- Good and sound plans take time, commitment to the common good and trust
- Stay the course... Rome wasn't built in a day.
- Implementation and delivery is key to success, the plan **must** be right to guide and provide a platform for that.

“The best way for our country to address the changes that we will continue to face, is to plan for that change”

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework

