



# **APPENDICES**

## **CASTLEDERMOT TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN**

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# Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Castledermot Town Centre First Plan

05 December 2025



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## Executive Summary

This *Screening for Appropriate Assessment* report has been prepared by NM Ecology Ltd on behalf of Kildare County Council regarding the Castledermot Town Centre First (TCF) Plan. It is described as follows “*The Town Centre First policy is a national initiative launched by the Irish Government to support the regeneration and revitalisation of town centres across the country. It promotes a place-based approach to town development, prioritising the town centre as the heart of economic, social, and cultural activity. In Castledermot, this policy framework provides a strategic opportunity to build on the town’s historic character and strong community, strongly guided by the local Town Regeneration Team.*”

In accordance with their obligations under the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011* (SI 477/2011), Kildare County Council must assess whether the plan would be likely to have significant effects on any European sites. This document provides supporting information to assist the local authority with an Appropriate Assessment screening exercise, including: a description of the plan and its environmental setting, details of any European sites within the plan area, a review of potential source-pathway-receptor links to European sites outside the plan area, and an assessment of ‘ex-situ’ habitat suitability for birds associated with nearby SPAs.

The River Lerr passes through the south of the plan area; it is within the boundary of the *River Barrow and River Nore* SAC. However, there are only two references to the river in the TCF Plan: the creation of a river management plan for the protection and enhancement of the river, and the consideration of biodiverse spaces in the playground to link to the River Lerr. Neither poses any risk of negative impacts on the SAC. No feasible pathways for indirect impacts were identified to this SAC or any other European sites, and habitats within the plan area are unsuitable for any birds associated with SPAs. Therefore, we conclude that the plan poses no risk of direct or indirect impacts on any European sites, and that Appropriate Assessment is not required.

## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to Appropriate Assessment**

Approximately 14% of the land area of Ireland is included in the European Network of Natura 2000 sites (hereafter referred to as 'European sites'), which includes Special Protection Areas (SPAs) to protect key habitats for birds, and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to protect a range of other habitats and species. Legislative protection for these sites is provided by the *European Council Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)* and *E.C. Habitats Directive (1992/43/EEC)*, which are jointly transposed into Irish law by the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011, as amended)*.

Regulation 42 (1) states that: "*Screening for Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project for which an application for consent is received, or which a public authority wishes to undertake or adopt, [...] shall be carried out by the public authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the site, if that plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on [any European sites].*"

This document provides information to assist the competent authority with a Screening for Appropriate Assessment exercise for the plan. If it can be concluded that the plan poses no risk of likely significant effects on European sites, then the assessment can conclude at Stage 1: Screening. If likely significant effects cannot be ruled out, the assessment would need to proceed to Stage 2 of the Appropriate Assessment process.

### **1.2 Statement of authority**

This report has been prepared by Nick Marchant, the principal ecologist of NM Ecology Ltd. He has eighteen years of professional experience, including fifteen years as an ecological consultant, one year as a local authority biodiversity officer, and two years managing an NGO in Indonesia. He provides ecological assessments for developments throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland, including wind farms, infrastructure projects (water pipelines, greenways, etc.), and a range of residential and commercial developments.

He has an MSc in Ecosystem Conservation and Landscape Management from NUI Galway and a BSc in Environmental Science from Queens University Belfast. He is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, and operates in accordance with their code of professional conduct.

### 1.3 Methods

This report has been prepared with reference to the following guidelines:

- *OPR Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management* (Office of the Planning Regulator 2021)
- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009)
- *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, 2021*
- *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine* (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2018)

In accordance with Section 3.2 of *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland*, the screening exercise was conducted using the following steps:

- Description of the plan and local site characteristics
- Identification of relevant European sites, and compilation of information on their qualifying interests and conservation objectives
- Assessment of potential impacts upon European sites, including:
  - Direct impacts (e.g. loss of habitat area, fragmentation)
  - Indirect impacts (e.g. disturbance of fauna, pollution of surface water)
  - Cumulative / ‘in-combination’ effects associated with other concurrent projects
- Screening Statement with conclusions

A desk-based study was carried out using data from the following sources:

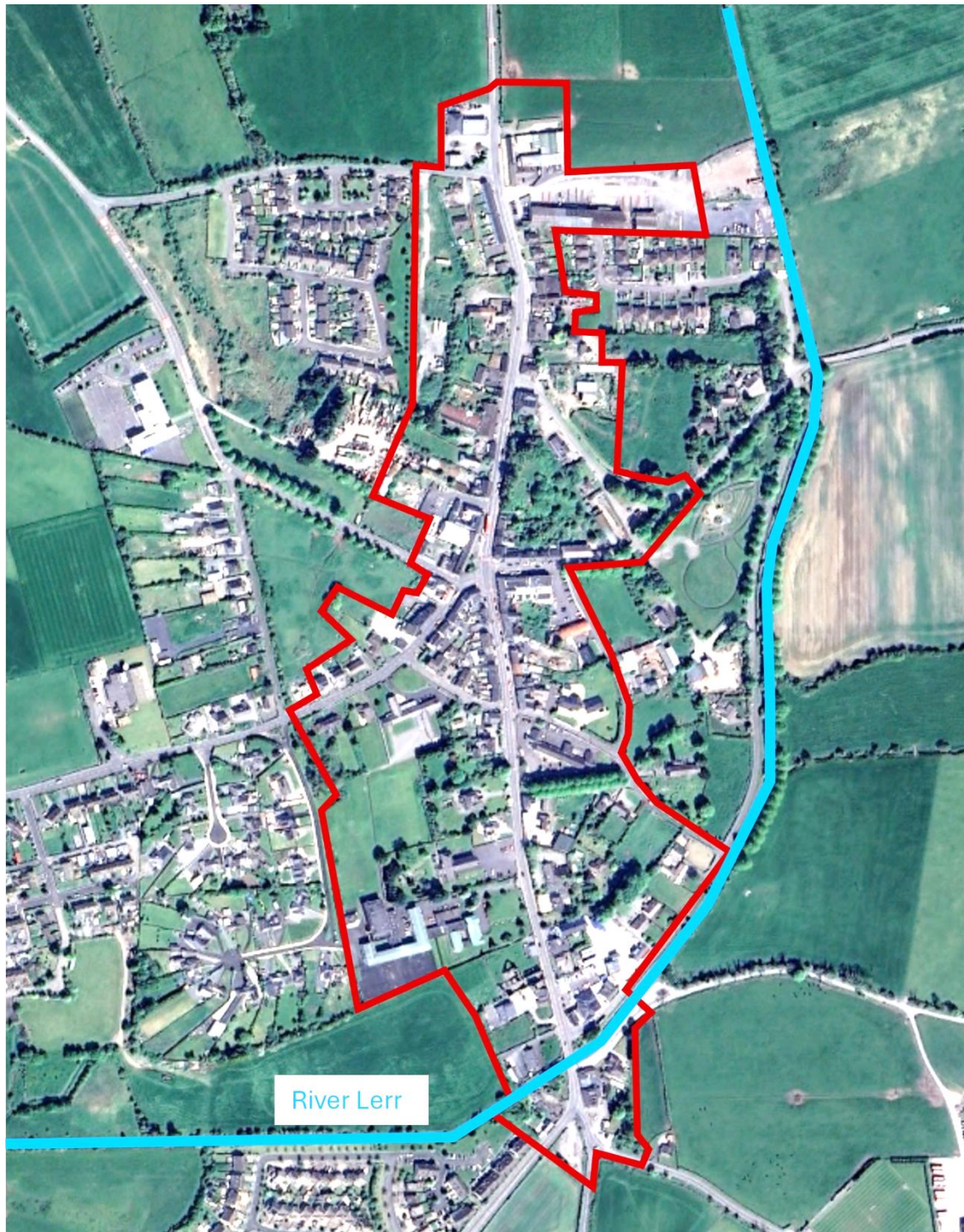
- Qualifying interests / conservation objectives of European sites from [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)
- Bedrock, soil, subsoil, surface water and ground water maps from the Geological Survey of Ireland, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Biodiversity Data Centre
- The *Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029*

All web-based resources were accessed in November 2025.

## 2 Description of the Project

### 2.1 Environmental setting

The area covered by the Town Centre First Plan is shown in red outline in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Boundary of the Plan Area (red outline).**

The town centre covers a range of small commercial buildings, urban / suburban dwellings and community facilities (schools, churches). Habitats in these areas would be classified as buildings, artificial surfaces, gardens, parks, sports fields and unmanaged former agricultural land (dry meadows).

### Geology and soils

The Plan Area is underlain by granite bedrock associated with the Wicklow Mountains. It provides a locally-important aquifer, with an additional gravel aquifer in the south of the town. Subsoils are limestone till, with alluvium in the vicinity of the river. Soils are predominantly made ground, with some pockets of fine loam and alluvium in undeveloped areas.

### Waterbodies

The River Lerr flows to the south and east of Castledermot: a short section is included in the south of the Plan Area. One of its tributaries – the Ballyvass Stream – passes through the western side of the town, joining the River Lerr to the north of the ‘Lerr View’ housing estate.

Downstream of Castledermot the River Lerr flows south-west and meets the River Barrow approx. 9 km downstream. The Barrow then flows south through Carlow, New Ross and Waterford City to meet the coast approx. 85 km downstream.

Water quality in rivers and streams is monitored under the Water Framework Directive, with the most recent status assessments undertaken in 2019 – 2024. The River Lerr downstream of Castledermot was of Poor status, and the River Barrow ranged from Poor to Moderate status.

## **2.2 Description of the plan**

The following is taken from the executive summary of the plan:

*“The Town Centre First Policy is a transformative initiative aimed at tackling vacancy, addressing dereliction, and revitalising town centres across Ireland. It sets out 33 targeted actions to equip towns with the tools and resources needed to become vibrant, attractive places to live, work, visit, and do business.*

*The policy is supported by substantial investment through major Government schemes, including:*

- *Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)*
- *Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)*
- *Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund*
- *Town and Village Renewal Scheme*

*These actions support key objectives such as social and economic renewal, housing provision, and the protection of the environment, heritage, and culture.*

*In Kildare, towns like Castledermot are already mobilising local efforts to improve their environment and economy. The Town Centre First Policy recognises the value of peer learning and shared experiences, especially among towns with similar characteristics. Exchanging best practices can lead to more effective and locally tailored solutions.*

*Kildare County Council is actively engaging with the local community through consultation to ensure proposals are informed by local knowledge. A core element of the policy is the development and support of Town Teams, which play a central role in delivering local regeneration. This, combined with technical support and access to funding, will help drive successful implementation of the future vision of the town.*

*The Castledermot TCF Plan calls for collective responsibility among stakeholders to support sustainable town centre development, reimagine their function, and respond to the evolving needs of residents, businesses, and visitors.*

*By promoting a Town Centre First approach, the TCF Plan aims to develop Castledermot into a thriving settlement with a vibrant mix of uses. It focuses on employment growth by leveraging the town's tourism potential, aligning with National Strategic Outcome No. 6 of the NPF: A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills.*

*The TCF Plan encourages better use of existing environmental assets, including underutilised sites and buildings within the town centre, to stimulate economic activity and enhance the town centre experience for both residents and visitors.*

*Key challenges such as vacancy, congestion, and car parking must be addressed to unlock the town centre's full potential. Castledermot continues to face pressures from changing retail trends, particularly the growth of online shopping. To avoid persistent vacancy, the TCF Plan supports the development of new recreational, tourism, cultural, employment, and residential opportunities, offering alternative uses for the town centre in line with National Policy Objective No. 14 of the National Planning Framework First Revision."*

Actions proposed in the plan include:

- Defining key places, notably Market Square and Main Street
- Addressing vacancy
- Provision of facilities for children and youths
- Traffic management and provision of active travel infrastructure
- Provision of digital resources
- Management of green spaces and natural areas

### **3 Review of European Sites**

In this section we identify European sites that could potentially be affected by the proposed development. The primary consideration is whether the proposed development is within the boundaries of any European sites, because this could lead to direct effects. This is discussed in Section 3.1.

It is also possible that the proposed development could cause indirect effects on European sites located outside the boundary. This is considered using the *source-pathway-receptor* model, which identifies potential *pathways* (e.g. surface water) between the *source* (the Site) and the *receptor* (a European site). This is discussed in Section 3.2.

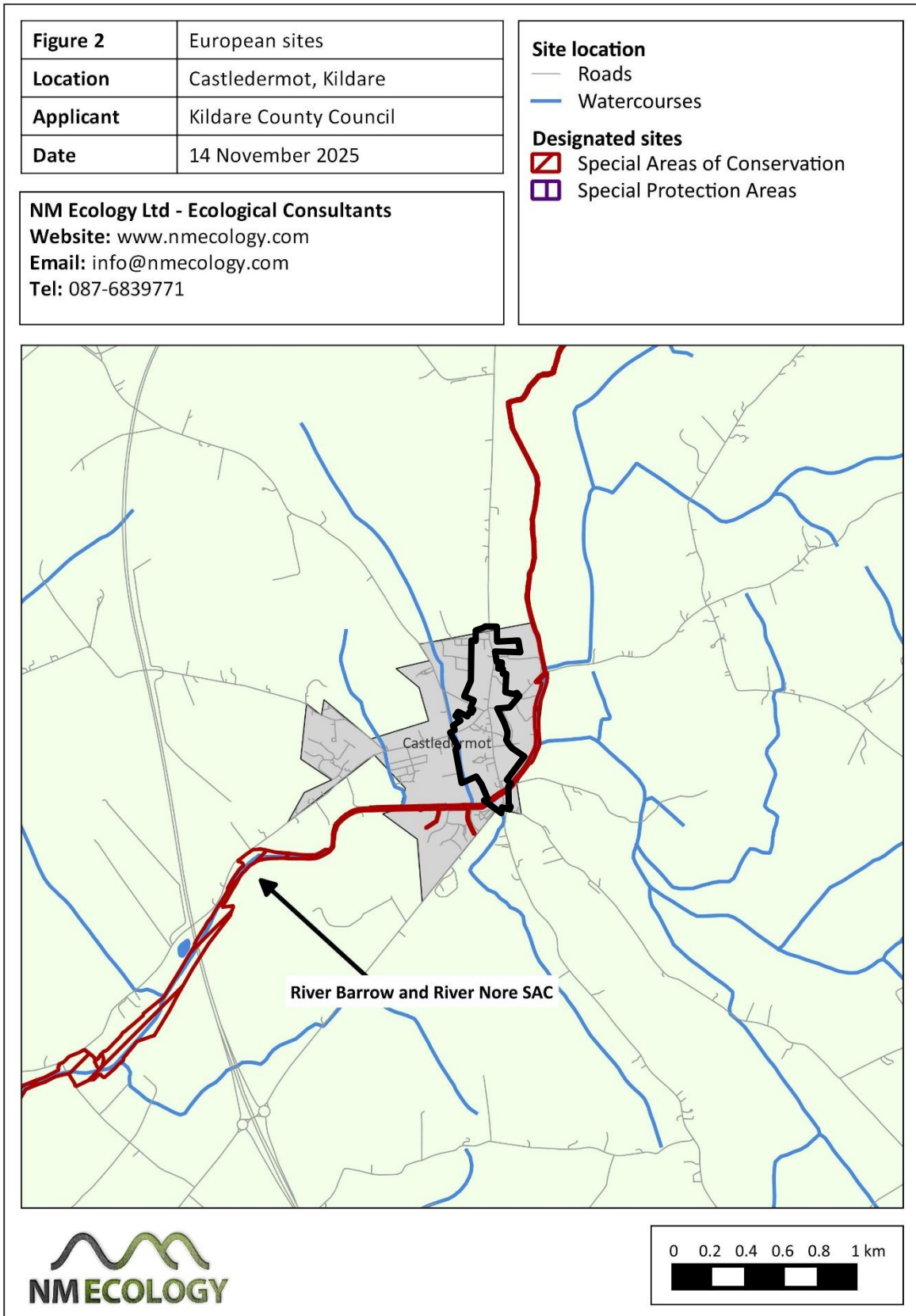
Some of the bird species associated with SPAs can use secondary habitats outside the SPA boundaries, e.g. brent geese feeding on urban grasslands. The suitability of habitats within the Site for SPA bird species is discussed in Section 3.3.

To support the above assessments, a map of European sites in the surrounding area is shown in Figure 2, and details of relevant European sites are provided in Table 1. For the avoidance of doubt, an arbitrary zone of influence (e.g. 15 km) has not been used for this assessment, as it is no longer considered to be best practice (OPR 2021).

**Table 1: European sites of relevance to the Site**

Site Name	Distance	Reasons for designation
River Barrow and River Nore SAC (2162)	Overlap	<p><b>Annex I habitats:</b> Estuaries, mudflats / sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand, Atlantic salt meadows, Mediterranean salt meadows, water courses of plain to montane levels, european dry heaths, hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains, petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion), old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum, alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i></p> <p><b>Annex II species:</b> Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>, freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>, Nore freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i>, white-clawed crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>, sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>, brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i>, river lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>, twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i>, Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i>, Killarney fern <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>, otter <i>Lutra lutra</i></p>

The Conservation Objectives of all European sites discussed in this report are available at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>. They are lengthy and repetitive documents, so in the interests of brevity they are not reproduced here.



### 3.1 European sites within the Plan Area (potential direct effects)

The River Lerr is within the *River Barrow and River Nore* SAC. It passes through the southern end of the Plan Area, passing under the bridge at Main Street (the R448 road).

However, the Plan will not involve any changes to the river. The only key action relating to the river is SU3: River Management Plan, which is described as follows:

*“Developing a comprehensive river management plan would help protect and enhance the River Lerr while supporting environmental sustainability and community amenity. The plan might include measures to improve water quality, manage flood risk, restore natural habitats, and create accessible riverside paths for walking and cycling”*

As the objective of this action would be to improve the ecological value of the river, and as it refers to a future plan rather than any specific action, it is not considered likely to have any negative effects on the river or the *River Barrow and River Nore* SAC. Screening for Appropriate Assessment would be carried out for the river management plan based on the detailed proposals presented within it. Therefore, any direct impacts on the SAC can be ruled out at the plan stage.

Under ID3: Improvements to Playground there is also an action to *“Consider biodiverse spaces to link with the River Lerr”*. As above, this is not considered likely to have any negative effects on the river or the *River Barrow and River Nore* SAC.

### 3.2 European sites outside the Plan Area boundary (potential indirect effects)

#### Surface water / storm drainage

Rainfall on the Plan Area is collected in gutters and underground storm drains, which are likely to drain indirectly to the River Lerr. This provides an existing pathway to the *River Barrow and River Nore* SAC. However, the storm drainage system will not be substantially altered as part of the Plan, other than small-scale relocations of drains for public realm improvements or changes to car parking. Therefore, there will be no new pathways to the river / SAC, nor any changes to the existing pathway.

#### Groundwater

One of the qualifying interests of the *River Barrow and River Nore* SAC is a groundwater-dependent terrestrial habitat: ‘petrifying springs with tufa formation’. This habitat occurs in a single location on the River Nore system near Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny, approx. 50 km south-west of the Site. There is no feasible groundwater pathway to this Site.

All other qualifying interests of the SAC are terrestrial or freshwater habitats that have little or no association with groundwater. Therefore, a groundwater pathway can be ruled out.

### Land

As noted previously, the Plan will not involve any changes to the river nor any major works on its banks, so this pathway can be ruled out.

### Air

The Plan will not result in any emissions to air, so this pathway can be ruled out.

### Summary

In summary, no feasible pathways were identified to the *River Barrow and River Nore* SAC or any other European sites.

## **3.3 Habitat suitability for SPA birds**

Birds are highly mobile. Although SPAs have been designated to protect their primary habitats, some species also rely on secondary habitats outside the SPAs, e.g. brent geese feeding at urban grasslands.

However, the Site consists mainly of buildings and artificial surfaces, which have low suitability for rare / protected birds. The closest SPA – the *Wicklow Mountains* SPA – is approx. 22 km from Castledermot. Therefore, there is no risk that any birds associated with SPAs could use the Site.

## **4 Conclusion of Stage 1: Screening Statement**

In Section 3 of the OPR guidance (OPR 2021), it is stated that the first stage of the AA process can have two possible conclusions:

### **1. No likelihood of significant effects**

Appropriate assessment is not required and the plan can proceed as normal. Documentation of the screening process including conclusions reached and the basis on which decisions were made must be kept on file.

### **2. Significant effects cannot be excluded**

Appropriate assessment is required before the plan can be approved. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be required in order for the plan to proceed.

Having considered the details of the Castledermot Town Centre First Plan, the first conclusion can be reached, because there is no likelihood of significant impacts on any European sites. This is based on three key considerations:

- The Plan Area is not within or adjacent to any European sites, so there is no risk of direct effects

- There will be no new pathways linking the Site to any European sites, so there is no risk of indirect effects
- Habitats are unsuitable for any birds associated with nearby SPAs

Appropriate Assessment Screening must consider the potential implications of a plan both in isolation and in combination with other plans and projects in the surrounding area. An ‘in-combination effect’ can occur when a plan will have a perceptible but non-significant residual effect on a European site (when considered in isolation), that subsequently becomes significant when the additive effects of other plans and projects are considered. However, as the proposed plan poses no risk of impacts on European sites in isolation, the risk of in-combination effects can also be ruled out.

Therefore, with regard to Article 42 (7) of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011*, it can be concluded that the plan will not be likely to have a significant effect on any European sites. The assessment can conclude at Stage 1 of the Appropriate Assessment process, and it is not necessary to proceed to Stage 2.

## References

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2018. *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the U.K and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal* (2nd Edition). C.I.E.E.M., Hampshire, England.

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009. *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland*. National Parks and Wildlife Service, DAHG, Dublin, Ireland.

European Commission. 2021. *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

Office of the Planning Regulator 2021. *Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management*. Available online at opr.ie

# SEA Screening Report

*Castledermot Town Centre First Plan*

*3 December 2025*



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<b>Document status</b>					
<b>Job Number: 2328</b>					
<b>Job Title: <i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan SEA Screening</i></b>					
<b>Version</b>	<b>Purpose of document</b>	<b>Authored by</b>	<b>Reviewed by</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Review date</b>
<b>0</b>	Draft for Review	LC	JB	JB	03/12/2025

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Appropriate Assessment
CDP	County / City Development Plan
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DECC	Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
EC	European Commission
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
KCDP	Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029
LA	Local Authority
LAP	Local Area Plan
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
PDA	Planning and Development Act
P/P	Plans and Programmes [should also be read to include the full range of studies, strategies, frameworks, etc.]
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SDZ	Strategic Development Zone
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
S.I.	Statutory Instrument
S-P-R	Source-Pathway-Receptor
WFD	Water Framework Directive

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

This report has been prepared by MacCabe Durney Barnes on behalf of Kildare County Council, to support it in undertaking a screening determination for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in respect of a Town Centre First (TCF) Plan for Castledermot.

SEA is the formal evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt it. The SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) requires that SEA is undertaken for certain plans, programmes or alterations to these.

The purpose of an SEA Screening is to ensure that environmental assessment is carried out at the earliest possible stage before a P/P, for which SEA is not mandatory, has been implemented and before the opportunity to influence decisions has passed. This report considers whether the relevant plan or programme (P/P) is likely to cause significant effects on the environment, and assesses and provides a conclusion on the requirement for an SEA of the TCF Plan.

## 1.2 Legislation and Guidance

The SEA Screening Report has had regard to the following:

- Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended
- Directive 2001/42/EC of 27 June 2001 as amended
- S.I. No. 435/2004 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, amended by S.I. No. 200/2011
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities, DHLGH 2022
- SEA Screening Good Practice 2021, EPA 2021

## 1.3 Data Sources

The information is obtained from review of several online databases and public sources including:

- Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) online dataset - <https://www.gsi.ie>
- EPA - <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>
- GeoHive – <http://map.geohive.ie/mapviewer.html>.
- Office of Public Works (OPW) - <http://www.floodinfo.ie/map/floodmaps>

In addition to the above the following reports have informed this screening:

- Appropriate Assessment Screening, prepared by NM Ecology Ltd.
- *Castledermot Town Centre First Plan*, prepared by Metropolitan Workshop

## 2. SEA SCREENING METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Legislation and Guidance

For a specific range of land-use plans, the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) is transposed into Irish law by Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 436 of 2004 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011). For all other relevant plans and programmes in Ireland (including other types of plans in the land-use planning sector), the SEA Directive is transposed into Irish law by S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

Regulation 3 of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 provides the following definition of plans and programmes (P/P), as well as any modifications to them:

- (a) which are subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government, and
- (b) which are required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions;

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2022) provides a decision tree which visualises whether a proposed plan is considered a P/P and subsequently a) if a plan is exempt from the Directive’s requirements; b) if SEA is mandatory or c) if screening for SEA is required. This aligns with Stage 1 ‘Applicability (including mandatory requirement)’ of The SEA Screening Good Practice Guidelines 2021 which provides guidance specific to the Irish context which is focused primarily on screening of P/P other than statutory land use plans.

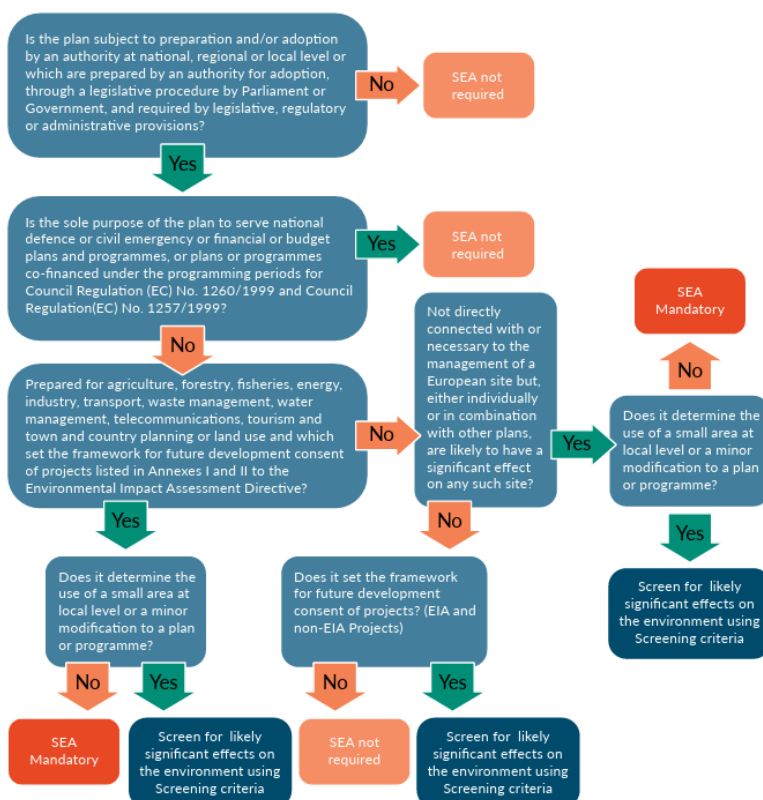


Figure 1: Requirements for SEA Under S.I. 435 of 2004 Decision Tree (Source: DHLGH, 2022)

- 1. Applicability** (including mandatory requirement): To determine the applicability of SEA to the P/P-maker and P/P and/or where relevant to confirm if mandatory SEA is required.

Regulation 9(1)(a) indicates that an environmental assessment is mandatory for P/Ps:

- (a) which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU), or*
- (b) which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but, either individually or in combination with other plans, are likely to have a significant effect on any such site.*

Where there is uncertainty with regards to whether the P/P falls within the scope of the SEA Directive, a Stage 2 – Screening exercise In deciding whether a P/P is likely to have significant environmental effects, regard must be had to the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive – which is reproduced in Schedule 1 of S.I. 235/2004.

- 2. Screening:** To examine whether a P/P which relates to use of a small area at local level, or a minor modification to a plan or programme listed under the SEA Directive, or a P/P other than those listed under the SEA Directive but which sets the framework for development consent, is likely to have significant effects on the environment.
- 3. Determination:** Where screening of non-mandatory P/P is required, a formal determination on the outcome is required.

### 3. PLANNING CONTEXT

#### 3.1 Introduction

The *Castledermot Town Centre First Plan* is a non-statutory plan prepared on behalf of Kildare County Council. The Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (KCDP) came into force in January 2023. The former Castledermot Local Area Plan (2009) has lapsed, and the town is currently covered by the provisions of the County Development Plan. The study area for this TCF Plan follows the same boundary as the CDP. A full SEA has been undertaken for the KCDP 2023-2029. Furthermore, a non-statutory Town Centre Renewal Masterplan for Castledermot was published in 2024, for which an SEA Screening was also undertaken.

#### 3.2 Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029

The KCDP is the statutory plan for Kildare County. The settlement of Castledermot is within the administrative boundary of Kildare County Council and is considered as one of the 'Small Towns'. Volume 2 of the Kildare Development Plan provides a planning framework for the development of small towns and villages. Section 2.2 describes Castledermot's form, context and objectives for future development.

Small towns have been designated to develop as key local centres for services, with levels of growth to cater for local need at an appropriate scale and to support local enterprise. Growth in small towns will be managed to limit pressure on the environment and to avoid further unsustainable commuting patterns, business and retail development will provide for the local catchment and essential services will be provided.

The Plan for Castledermot contains lands which are to be the subject of site specific flood risk assessment appropriate to the type and scale of the development being proposed. Proposed developments within the Castledermot plan area shall be subject to EIA Screening (and subsequent stages as required), AA screening and where applicable Stage 2 AA to minimise the risk of likely significant effects on European Sites and their qualifying interest species and their hydrological connections.

Specific Town Centre objectives of relevance for the *Castledermot TCF Plan* are:

**ST C1** *Improve the quality of the Market Square with new paving, mature trees, streetlamps, high quality seating and street furniture to mark the importance of this area as the heart of the town centre.*

**ST C2** *Encourage and promote development within the town centre which is of a high standard of design, has an appropriate mix of uses, enhances the built environment and delivers a high quality public realm.*

**ST C3** *Actively encourage the rehabilitation, restoration and re-use of vacant, derelict and underutilised properties in the town centre.*

Specific Regeneration/Public Realm objectives of relevance for the *Castledermot TCF Plan* are:

**ST C7** *Improve the streetscape around Castledermot Abbey to highlight this important landmark feature (See STC 7 of Map V2 – 1.1B).*

**ST C9** *Improve the town entry points at the Gateway locations (See Map V2 – 1.1B) in order to strengthen Castledermot's identity and give a better overall first impression of the town.*

**ST C10** *Require that any development along Church Lane and Ivors Lane be 2/3 storeys in height in order to reinforce and complement the existing relationship between St. James' Church and Round Tower, The Laurels, and the Parochial House.*

**ST C11** *Support the objectives and priority projects of the forthcoming Castledermot Town Renewal Plan.*

Social and Community Infrastructure objectives of relevance for the *Castledermot TCF Plan* are:

**ST C15** *It is an objective of the Council to protect the following trees / groups of trees (See Map V2 – 1.1B) (i) 'The Laurels', avenue of mature lime trees between Abbey St. and Church Lane; (ii) Row of lime trees on Keenan's Lane; (iii) Lime trees bounding two sides of Fairgreen; (iv) Mixture of lime, alder and hawthorn on Hamilton Road along the riverbank. (v) Row of trees along St. James Church.*

Movement and Transport objectives of relevance for the *Castledermot TCF Plan* are:

**ST C16** *Prepare a Local Traffic Plan for Castledermot that will identify the requirement for, and outline specific recommendations for, walking and cycling routes, new road schemes, improvements to existing roads and the location and quantum of cycle and car parking facilities.*

**ST C17** *Provide a high-quality footpath/ cycleway network throughout Castledermot by improving pedestrian facilities through the refurbishment or reconstruction of existing footpaths, construction of new footpaths and the provision of appropriate crossing facilities on the following routes (See Map V2 – 1.1B). (i) Along the R448 regional road (old N9) between the development boundaries, including the village centre along Main Street and Abbey Street; (ii) Along the R418 regional road (Athy Road) between the village centre and the L8054 local road at Skenagun; (iii) Along the L8095 local road (Hamilton Road) adjacent to the River Lerr; (iv) Along the L8054 local road between the R448 and R418 regional roads; (v) Along The Dales and Keenans Lane from the R448 regional road to the Green Bridge; (vi) Along Ivors Lane from Church Lane to Keenans Lane.*

**ST C23** *Examine the feasibility of using existing off street public car parking within close proximity to the town centre.*

**ST C21** *Implement safety improvements at the following locations.: (See Map V2 – 1.1B). (i) The junction between the L8095 local road and the St. Johns housing estate at the Green Bridge, to include the realignment of the Green Bridge if necessary; (ii) The junction between the R448 regional road (old N9) and the R418 Tullow Road; (iii) The junction between the L4009 local road (Maganey Road) and the L4011 local road.*

Further policies and objectives relating to Architectural and Archaeological Heritage are contained in volume 1 of the KCDP 2023-2029:

**Objective GO 17** *Preserve and protect the structures and items listed in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) identified in the County Development Plan and as may be amended during the lifetime of the Plan; and ensure an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Report prepared by an accredited conservation architect or equivalent accompany planning applications for works to protected structures.*

**Objective GO 18** *Require archaeological impact assessment, prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist for any development within or in close proximity to Zones of Archaeological Potential.*

**Policy AH P2** *Protect and enhance archaeological sites, monuments and where appropriate and following detailed assessment, their setting, including those that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or newly discovered archaeological sites and/or subsurface and underwater archaeological remains*

**Objective AH O3** *In co-operation with the National Monuments Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage require archaeological impact assessment, surveys, test excavation and/or monitoring and/or underwater archaeological impact assessments for planning applications in areas of archaeological importance and where a development proposal is likely to impact upon in-situ archaeological monuments, their setting and archaeological deposits, based on recommendations of a suitably qualified archaeologist and the Council will seek and have regard to the advice and recommendations of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.*

**Objective AH 023** Require an Architectural Heritage Assessment Report, as described in Appendix B of the Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011), to accompany all applications with potential for visual or physical impacts on a Protected Structure, its curtilage, demesne and setting. This report should be prepared by a person with conservation expertise that is appropriate to the significance of the historic building or site and the complexity of the proposed works

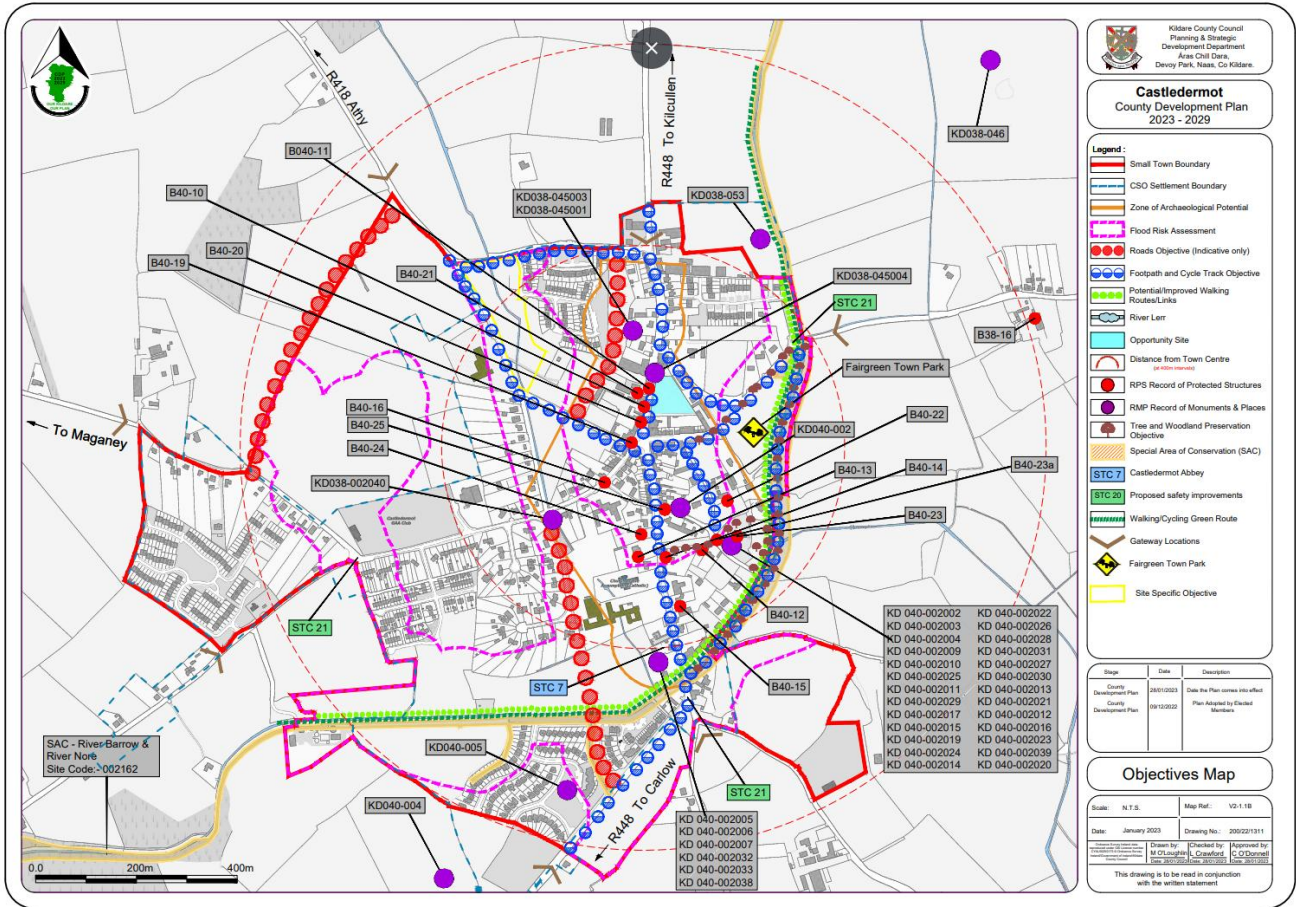


Figure 2: Castledermot Objectives Map (source: KCDP 2023-2029)

### 3.3 Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 SEA Statement

An SEA of the KCDP 2023-2029 was undertaken on behalf of Kildare County Council by Arup on 23 January 2023. This process also resulted in two addendums to the SEA.

The Environmental Report completed in the process evaluated the likely environmental effects of implementing the development framework contained in the Draft KCDP, including its alterations. The final appraisal sets out how environmental considerations were integrated into the adopted KCDP. The Final Appraisal included the following:

- Identification of environmental constraints
- SEA Scoping
- Assessment of alternatives
- Assessment of Plan Provisions
- Proposed Mitigation Measures
- Required environmental monitoring programme

- Consultation

The objectives and Material Amendments made to the KCDP were assessed for their potential to result in significant negative impacts on the environment. Most of the policies objectives and Material Amendments were found to support the strategic environmental objectives and would not result in any significant negative impacts on the environment. Some policies and Material Amendments were found to present such a risk and were subject to full SEA as part of the Environmental Report. The SEA Environmental Report contains adequate mitigation measures to avoid or reduce any potential negative environmental effects.

### 3.4 Castledermot Small Town Renewal Masterplan (STRM) 2024

The non-statutory Castledermot STRM underpins the TCF Plan. This document supports the objectives of the CDP and is viewed as a long-term plan of action for the town. The projects to be incorporated into the TCF Plan may link, reference and/or further develop the 9 no. key delivery projects identified in the Castledermot STRM, to which greater priority for funding is given. These are conceptual in nature and subject to appropriate planning consents, project specific assessments and consultation.

The key delivery projects identified are:

- Public Realm Design
- Castledermot Heritage
- Vacancy & Dereliction
- Market Square
- Main Street
- St. James' Church/Church Lane
- Walking/Cycling Potential at the Green and River Lerr
- Fairgreen Town park
- Scoil Diarmada School Zone

#### 3.4.1 Castledermot Small Town Renewal Masterplan SEA Screening

An SEA Screening was undertaken for the Castledermot STRM and concluded that the proposed Masterplan does not require an SEA. The principal reasons for this determination are as follows:

- *The Proposed Masterplan does not provide a framework for plans/projects listed on Annex I or Annex II of the EIA Directive.*
- *All individual planning applications made with consideration of the Proposed Masterplan framework are subject to the appropriate environmental assessments (i.e., AA, SEA, EIA, AIA) where required under the KCDP 2023-2029.*

It is noted in response to comments received from the Development Applications Unit ("DAU"), Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, that the identification of key projects does not involve the preparation of advanced design stages or put forward works. The assessment of natural and heritage related implications is

covered higher in the planning hierarchy and will be addressed appropriately at detailed design stages for any projects included in the masterplan.

- *The Proposed Masterplan does not require Stage 2 AA (see AA Screening Report accompanying this report under separate cover).*

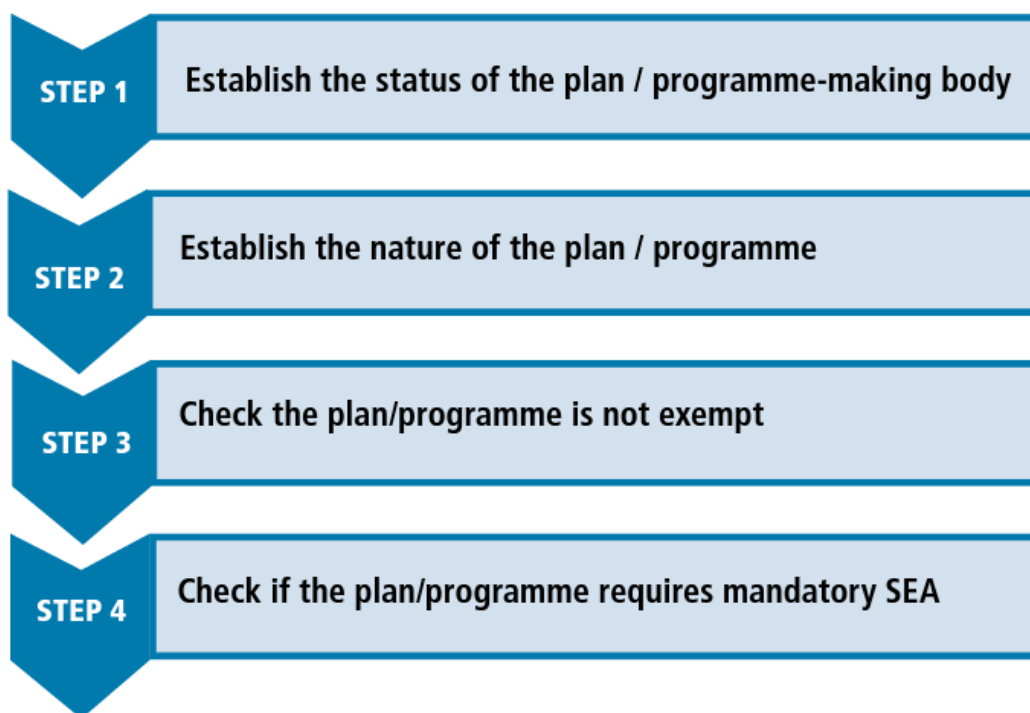
### 3.4.2 Castledermot Small Town Renewal Masterplan Appropriate Assessment Screening

The AA Screening conducted by Enviroguide concluded that *'Upon the examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information and applying the precautionary principle, it is concluded by the authors of this report that, on the basis of objective information; the possibility may be excluded that the Proposed Masterplan will have a significant effect on any European sites.'*

## 4. SEA APPLICABILITY

### 4.1 Introduction

The SEA Screening Good Practice Guidelines 2021 provides guidance specific to the Irish context which is focused primarily on screening of P/P other than statutory land use plans. The Guidelines detail the three-stage of which the first stage is the Applicability Stage and aligns with the decision tree developed by DHLGH (see Figure 1). This is to determine if the P/P falls within the scope of the SEA Directive. This consists of four-steps. These steps will determine whether the SEA Directive applies to the relevant plan, which is the *Castledermot Town Centre First Plan*. This determination is made by establishing the status of the plan making body, Kildare County Council.



**Figure 3: Applicability Stage (Source: EPA)**

The nature of the plan must be established after this. The plan must then be checked if it is exempted from the SEA Directive requirements. The final step of the Applicability stage is to check if the plan requires a mandatory SEA.

### 4.2 Applicability Stage Assessment

The applicability assessment is detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Stage 1 – Applicability (Adapted EPA Template 1 – Text in blue EPA advise notes)**

General Details	
Type and title of P/P:	<i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i>
Name of P/P Maker:	Kildare County Council
Date:	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2025

Step 1: Status of P/P Maker	
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>The <i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i> has been prepared by Kildare County Council, which is the planning authority for the area. The Plan will not be adopted through any legislative procedure, but will act as a non-statutory guiding document for future urban development in Castledermot Town.</p>
Step 2: Status of the Plan / Programme	
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>The <i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i> is not required by legislative or regulatory requirements under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) or the associated Planning and Development Regulations. While it is not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions, the Town Centre First Policy (2022) recommends the preparation of TCF Plans and therefore it is considered that there is '<i>something by way of formal provision which could be said to govern or regulation the production</i>' of the TCF Plan (EPA, 2021). It can be considered that the plan is required to deliver on the administrative functions of Kildare County Council acting as planning authority in the planning and regeneration of certain areas. The proposed TCF Plan is considered a P/P under S.I. 435/2004.</p>
Step 3: Exemptions	
Is the sole purpose of the P/P for national defence, civil emergency or finance / budget?	<p><b>No</b></p> <p>The <i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i> is not for the sole purpose of any of the exclusion categories.</p>
Step 4 – Does the P/P fall under Mandatory provision for SEA	
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>The <i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i> can be considered a P/P prepared for town and country planning purposes. Although it is not a statutory plan under the Planning and Development Act, it can be considered a plan for town planning purposes and is covered under S.I. 435/2004.</p>

<p>Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?</p>	<p><b>Uncertain</b></p> <p>The non-statutory <i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i> contains an action plan and lists 7 no. key delivery projects (EIA and non-EIA) inclusive of Market Square, Main Street, Keenan’s Lane, St. James’ Square, Community Centre, Church of the Assumption Parking and Abbeylands Junction.</p> <p>It may be the provisions of the plan would support the framework for development consents as the planning authority may place some consideration on how development applications have incorporated/addressed the vision provided in their designs. However, the plan does not provide consent and will not be binding on any decisions relating to the granting of consent. In order to be realised, examples of projects identified in this Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sectors) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework.</p> <p>As the TCF Plan acts as a non-statutory document to guide future urban development, it is uncertain whether it “sets a framework for future development consent of projects (EIA and non-EIA projects)”, and thus Screening for SEA is required.</p>
<p>Will the P/P require assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the EU Habitats Directive?</p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p><i>Screening for Appropriate Assessment Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i> (NM Ecology) concludes that “the plan will not be likely to have a significant effect on any European sites. The assessment can conclude at Stage 1 of the Appropriate Assessment process, and it is not necessary to proceed to Stage 2.”</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	
<p>Summarise the relevant information informing the assessment and the main reasons the P/P does or does not fall within the scope of the SEA Directive.</p>	<p>The <i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i> applies to the town and country planning sector of the SEA Directive, however there is uncertainty as to whether it provides a framework for future development consent of EIA and non-EIA projects. The plan is not considered likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>As stipulated by Regulation 9(2) of S.I. 435/2004, as amended, for a P/P which determines the use of a small area at local level an environmental assessment is required of ‘only where the competent authority determines that it is likely to have significant effects on the environment and, for this purpose, the competent authority shall make any necessary determination’. This non-statutory plan is prepared to guide the</p>

regeneration and revitalisation of Castledermot Town. The spatial extent is limited to the town centre of a small settlement, considered a lower tier 'small town' under the Kildare County Council County Development Plan's (CDP) core strategy with a population of 1,685 persons (CSO, 2022).

Thus, having regard to the this uncertainty about the nature of the P/P and Article 3(3) of the SEA Directive, it is determined that the *Castledermot TCF Plan* constitutes a plan for a small area at local level which may provide a framework for EIA and non-EIA projects and it is recommended to 'screen for likely significant effects on the environment using screening criteria' and proceed to Stage 2 – Screening of the EPA Good Practice Guidance (2021).

## 5. SEA SCREENING

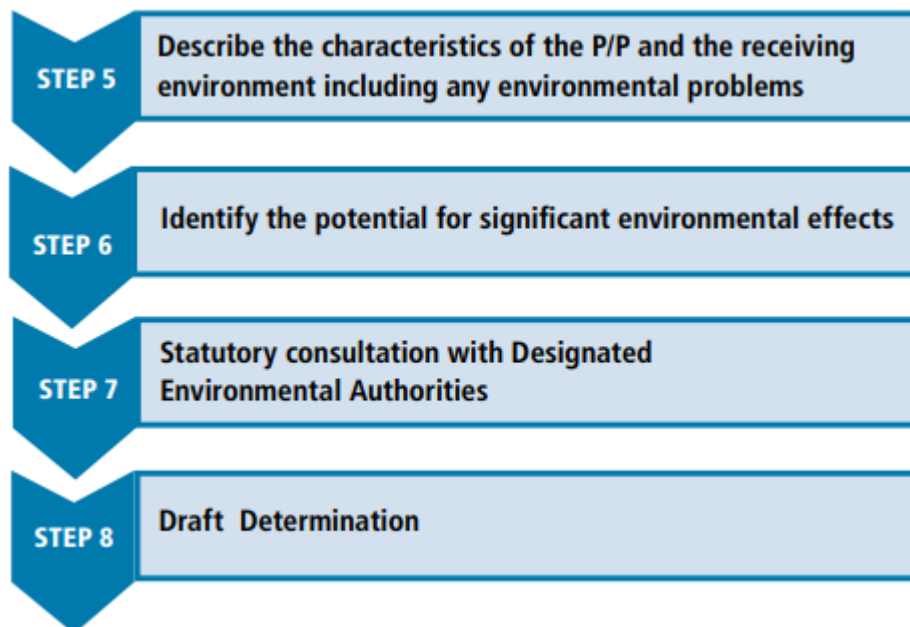
### 5.1 Introduction

The next stage of the SEA Screening process is the Screening stage. The EPA Guidelines describe this as a case-by-case basis to determine if an SEA is required for a P/P. The guidelines state the output of the screening stage should be a Screening Report.

The Screening Stage consists of four steps. The first step requires an outline of the characteristics of the P/P and the receiving environment including any environmental issues. The second step involves identifying the potential for significant environmental effects. The third step in the screening stage consists of a statutory consultation with Designated Environmental Authorities. The final step of the Screening Stage involves a Draft Determination.

Currently, the SEA Environmental Authorities for the purposes of S.I. 435/2004, as amended are:

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Development Applications Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications



**Figure 4: Stage 2 Screening Stage, Steps (Source: EPA, 2021)**

The final step in the Stage 2 Screening Stage is the Draft Determination. This step seeks to answer if the draft plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment. This stage uses the Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) concept to identify significant environmental effects where: the source relates to the origin of the risk, e.g. actions / policies / measures in the P/P; the pathway typically relates to the route of transfer, usually through air, water and soils; and the receptor is the entity that may be impacted, e.g. aquatic organisms in a river, communities in a region etc.

## 5.2 Screening Stage Assessment

This Screening Requirement for the Castledermot Town Renewal Masterplan has been prepared having regard to the SEA Legislation and Guidelines outlined earlier in this document.

The format of the Screening for Requirement for SEA in Section 5.2 utilises the best practice template recommended in the 2021 EPA Guidelines.

**Table 2: The Characteristics of the Plan**

Step 5: Key Characteristics of the P/P
<p><b>Background and Context for P/P</b></p> <p>The <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> is a non-statutory plan prepared on behalf of Kildare County Council. The link between TCF Plans and statutory spatial plans is outlined within the Town Centre First Policy (TCFP; 2022). This Plan is informed by the national and regional policy; local policy including: Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029; and local non-statutory plans including: Castledermot STRM 2024. The Plan will not have a significant influence on other plans in the hierarchy, rather it complies with the land use plans of higher order.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>
<p><b>Figure 5: Hierarchy position of Castledermot TCF Plan</b></p> <p>The TCFP 2022 recommends the preparation of town centre revitalisation plans (master plans, vision plans, action plans, frameworks or strategies) which are referred to as TCF Plans. As described by the Town Centre First Policy, TCF Plans are to be focussed on placemaking and aim to guide the Council in the upgrade of the public realm. The <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> builds on the work of the Castledermot STRM 2024, which was created under the framework of the TCFP pursuant to specific objective '<b>UD A3 Prepare and implement on a phased basis Town/Village Renewal Masterplans for the following settlements: ... Castledermot...</b>' of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029. It will provide further analysis and appraisal of the objectives contained within the TCFP, elaborating on the strategies and actions contained within the Castledermot STRM 2024 and developing further strategies and actions.</p>

### **Purpose of P/P**

TCF Plans are underpinned by an assessment of the current position of the town and the development of a plan which provides a vision for the future direction of the town. The formulation of such a plan is comprised of an extensive process of analysis, collaboration and conceptualisation which occurs prior to the detailed design process. This plan will provide a vision and guidance for the future development of Castledermot Town.

The key objectives are firstly to establish an evidence base for TCF projects through review of previous work, reviewing existing guidance and data, collecting data, mapping and analysis of movement and connectivity, nature and landscape, land use and economy, social, community and culture and built form. Emerging themes based on this analysis will lay the foundation for a series of objectives and actions along with an overarching drawings to aid in their communication. The vision for Castledermot will then be refined, integrating the strategies into a cohesive action plan comprising a total of 7no. projects and 22no. actions.

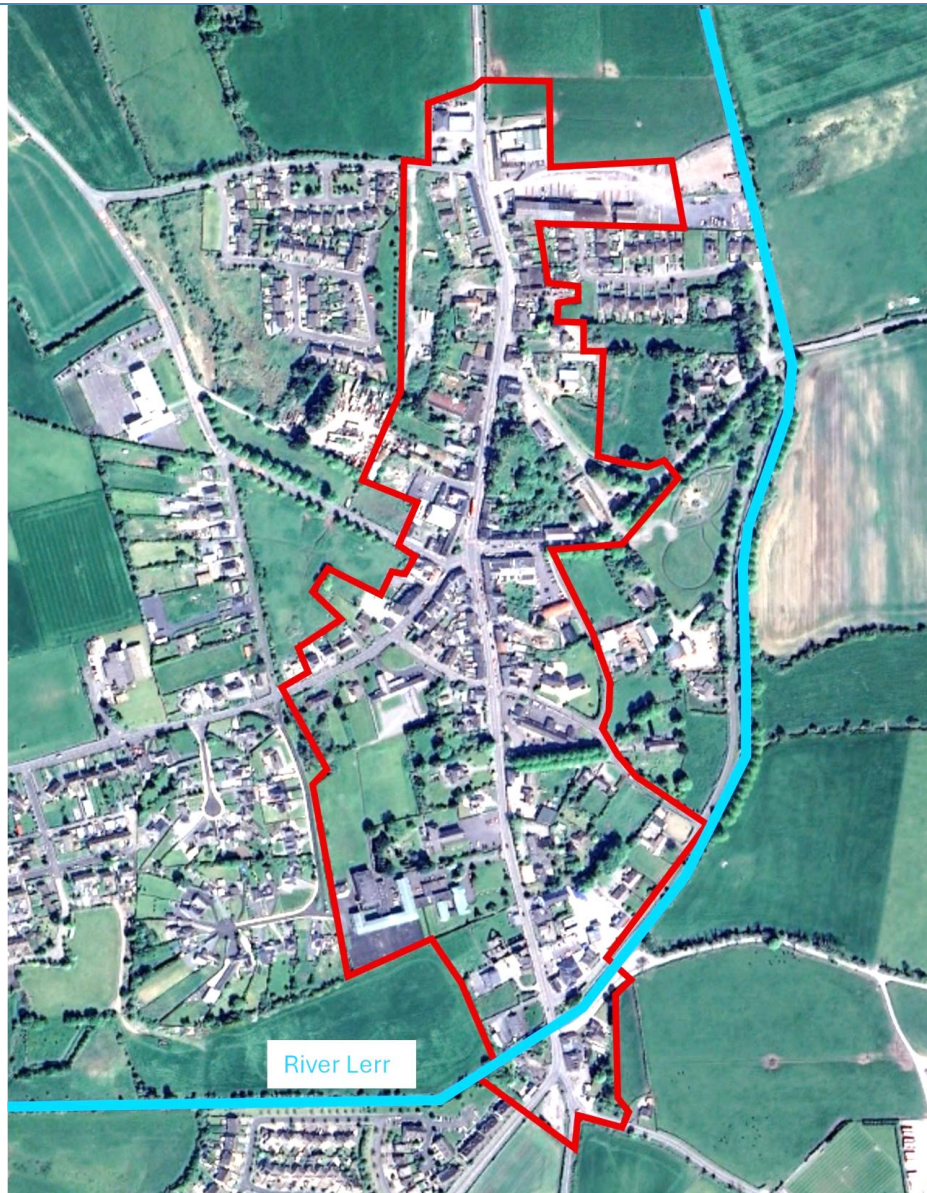
### **Geographical Area Covered by P/P**

Castledermot town is located in southern County Kildare and is accessed by the M9 which bypasses the town to the west extending towards Dublin and Waterford. The R448 (Main Street) extends from north to south of the town and connects to Kilcullen in the north and with the M9. It is situated 10km from Carlow Town to the south-west and 11km from Athy to the north-west. Castledermot is served by bus route 736, providing services to Carlow and Waterford in the south and to Dublin Airport and City Centre. The town is also served by Kildare Local Link route 880 providing services between Carlow and Naas town centre.

The town acts as the service centre for the surrounding rural areas, which are primarily agricultural in nature. The town's current population is 1,685 persons (CSO, 2022). Current prime land uses in the town are residential, retail and commercial with some community, sporting and agricultural land uses. The zoning objectives for Castledermot include new residential, industry and warehousing, enterprise and employment and agriculture.

The key destinations to and within the town include two schools (Coláiste Lorcáin and Scoil Diarmada), the health centre, community centre (Teach Diarmada), the retail/ commercial core focused around Market Square and Main Street and historically significant sites such as Castledermot Round Tower and St. James' Church. Arterial Streets lead off the Main Street. The Castledermot Playground, library and GAA are important destinations for youth and community uses. The periphery of the town is comprised of residential estates inclusive of Abbeylands to the South, Ard a' Laoi to the west and Saint John's to the north of the town.

The town is a historic walled town which developed from a monastic settlement founded c. 600AD and contains features which are considered to be of historical, architectural, archaeological and natural significance. Some of the old wall remains standing. The River Lerr, a tributary of the River Barrow, flows along the east of the town and is a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The lands on which the town is situated are reasonably low lying (c.80m).



**Figure 6: Castledermot Town Boundary (Source: NMEcology)**

### **Content of the P/P**

The Town Centre First Plan includes the following:

- An overview of the town and historical features, urban design, transport, landscape, demographic and community analysis, opportunity analysis and conclusions that inform the Town Centre First Plan.
- A summary of the community engagement process, surveys and events underpinning the Town Centre First Plan.
- The identification of opportunities and definition of themes, key actions, and objectives formed on the basis of the analysis that lay the foundation for the TCF Plan. This will contribute to the creation of a vision for the town. Practical issues relating to the town's development are addressed at this stage.
- Projects and actions are defined as follows:

**7 No. projects** developed with sufficient detail to understand the scheme including concept sketches and street views illustrating the analysis and proposal, with reference images and supporting text. These projects comprise defined spatial interventions, many of which address multiple objectives simultaneously and serve as key nodes within the framework

**22 no. actions** representing interventions for broader, more general issues. These are categorised within the four themes of identity, mobility, economy and sustainability and outline specific actions to be progressed in order to address a key issue identified for the town.

- A TCF Plan translating the themes, objectives and actions into a cohesive action plan, and identifying recommended / proposed changes to the spatial configuration of the town. This will result in the proposal of 7 no. delivery projects, based on previous plans (KCC CDP, Castledermot STRM etc.) site analysis and the results of the previous stages. A clear path to delivery is identified for each of the projects with context, a description and an outline of the potential benefits.
- Key stakeholders are identified and engaged with to identify concerns early and gain support while indicative costings inform the feasibility of interventions and projects.

**Table 3: The Potential for Significant Effects**

Step 6: Potential for Significant Environmental Effects	
The characteristic of the Plan having regard, in particular, to:	Assessment
The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions, or by allocating resources	<p>The Plan is situated alongside the hierarchy of statutory documents (NPF, RSES, KCDP 2023-2029) which have been subject to environmental assessment/screening for environmental assessment, as appropriate, and which forms the decision-making and consent-granting framework. The <i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i> is a non-statutory plan. It sets out an indicative framework for the future development of Castledermot Town, providing details and clarity on the development strategy contained in the KCDP and the Castledermot STRM 2024 (SEA Screening determined that this masterplan did not require an SEA).</p> <p>This TCF Plan is consistent with the land use zoning policies, objectives and strategy established in the adopted KCDP and builds on a selection of the key delivery projects of the Castledermot STRM 2024. It provides a vision and guidance for 7 no. future projects including Market Square, Main Street, Keenan’s Lane, St. James’ Square, Community Centre, Church of the Assumption Parking and Abbeylands Junction in Castledermot Town and will likely have an impact on the provision of future development projects as the planning authority may place some consideration on how development applications have incorporated/addressed the guidelines in their designs. The likelihood of project delivery will likely also be improved through assessing the viability of projects, garnering support, the</p>

Step 6: Potential for Significant Environmental Effects	
The characteristic of the Plan having regard, in particular, to:	Assessment
	<p>identification of funding streams and developing paths to delivery under the TCF Plan.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the Plan does not provide consent or establish a framework for granting consent and will not be binding on any decisions relating to the granting of consent. Future developments within the site of the <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> will be considered under the SSFRA, SEA, EIA and/or AA processes as appropriate.</p>
Will it set out locations, rules, standards or criteria that will guide developments later in the planning hierarchy? This could include guidelines, legislation, plans, masterplans etc	The <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> could potentially guide decisions in relation to the Council's own Part 8 proposals, or through normal planning applications.
The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy	The <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> is a non-statutory plan prepared on behalf of Kildare County Council. The link between TCF Plans and statutory spatial plans is outlined within the Town Centre First Policy (TCFP; 2022). This Plan is informed by the national and regional policy; local policy including: Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029; and local non-statutory plans including: Castledermot STRM 2024. The Plan will not have a significant influence on other plans in the hierarchy, rather it complies with the land use plans of higher order.
The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	<p>This Plan sits in parallel with the wider framework of statutory plans and strategies and is consistent with national, regional and local policy, all of which have been subject to the necessary processes of environmental assessment or screening. Unlike those higher-level documents, the Plan does not create a consent mechanism, nor does it establish the framework for granting permission. It therefore has no binding role in decisions on development consent.</p> <p>As a result, the Plan is subordinate to, and must operate within, the provisions already set out in these frameworks, including those relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and management, and measures integrated through SEA and AA.</p>
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	The <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> has not been prepared in response to a particular environmental problem, nor are any major environmental problems known from the site of the plan.

Step 6: Potential for Significant Environmental Effects	
The characteristic of the Plan having regard, in particular, to:	Assessment
	<p>The receiving baseline environment for the <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> has been reviewed having regard to the SEA Environmental Report for the KCDP 2023-2029. It considers the baseline environment in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population and Human Health;</li> <li>• Biodiversity, Flora and fauna;</li> <li>• Land and Soils;</li> <li>• Water Resources;</li> <li>• Air, Noise and Climatic Factors;</li> <li>• Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage;</li> <li>• Landscape and Visuals;</li> <li>• Material Assets.</li> </ul> <p>The <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> is subordinate to, and must operate within, the provisions set out by the CDP, including those relating to environmental protection and management and measures integrated through SEA and AA. With regards to Castledermot, the KCDP SEA concludes that <i>'the overarching aims and objectives for the rural settlements of County Kildare are likely to result in overall positive and neutral environmental effects'</i>.</p> <p>It is specifically noted within the KCDP SEA that <i>'any level of development and increased footfall along waterways or areas or habitat importance could result in a negative environmental effect, particularly with regard to biodiversity'</i>.</p> <p>Specific environmental sensitivities that are of relevance to the Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Watercourses</b> – The River Lerr (EPA Name: LERR_020) is considered of 'poor' and 'at risk' status under the WFD 2016-2021 to the east of Fairgreen Park and of 'moderate' and 'at risk' status to the north-east of the town. The River Lerr is noted by the NPWS as follows: <i>"Nitrates are high due to intensive tillage in South Kildare - recent data indicates that nitrate levels are levelling off. Biological data indicates borderline conditions. Overall quality is mediocre"</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Habitats</b>– Rivers, Canals and Associated Habitats: there are a number of habitats associated with the River Lerr (River Barrow and River Nore SAC). The stretch of the river adjacent to Castledermot is not specifically mentioned in NPWS Site Synopsis.</li> <li>• <b>Species</b> – Species associated with the River Barrow and River Nore SAC are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ [1016] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>)</li> <li>▪ [1029] Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>)</li> <li>▪ [1092] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Step 6: Potential for Significant Environmental Effects

The characteristic of the Plan having regard, in particular, to:	Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ [1095] Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>)</li> <li>▪ [1096] Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>)</li> <li>▪ [1099] River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>)</li> <li>▪ [1103] Twaite Shad (<i>Alosa fallax</i>)</li> <li>▪ [1106] Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)</li> <li>▪ [1355] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> <li>▪ [1421] Killarney Fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bats:</b> All bat species are protected under Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive, while the lesser horseshoe bat is listed under Annex II. Member states are required to designate Special Areas of Conservation for all species listed under Annex II in order to protect them.</li> <li>• <b>Geology and soils:</b> The Plan Area is underlain by Tullow Type 2 Equigranular Granite. It provides a locally-important aquifer. Subsoils are made ground and limestone sands and gravels (Carboniferous) within much of the town's built-up footprint, Limestone till (Carboniferous) to the north of the town and east of the River Lerr and alluvium along river corridors. Soils are made ground, fine loam and alluvium.</li> <li>• <b>Archaeology</b> - Within the boundary of the Plan, numerous archaeological and cultural heritage features are identified, including ecclesiastical buildings, rare and folk gravestones, vernacular architecture, and sites of archaeological excavation. Further significant sites, such as holy wells, barrows and raths (likely Neolithic) are found within a 1km radius of the town. See Figure 2 for visual reference of structures on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). The town centre has additionally been designated as a 'zone of archeological potential'.</li> <li>• <b>Architectural Heritage:</b> There are 15 no. protected structures within the boundary of the town. See Figure 2 for visual reference of structures on the RPS. There are c. 35 no. NIAH buildings within Castledermot.</li> <li>• <b>Flood Risk:</b> There is a recognised history of flooding in Castledermot. Flooding (fluvial) in Castledermot is noted by the KCDP 2023-2029 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment as a periodic recurring problem specifically adjacent to Doyle's Bridge on the R448. Significant pluvial flood risk is not highlighted, though low lying areas could be subject to runoff from higher ground. Following a justification test, all zonings were considered appropriate. Any development of the New Residential 'C' zoned lands to the north of the town are to incorporate a 10m 'open</li> </ul>

Step 6: Potential for Significant Environmental Effects	
The characteristic of the Plan having regard, in particular, to:	Assessment
	<p>space/amenity' buffer either side of the stream that runs in a north-south direction through the subject lands.</p> <p>Environmental problems occur where there is a conflict between environmental conditions and the objectives of a P/P. Through its consideration of the underlying environmental features in the town along with provisions which relate to environmental protection and management the plan contributes future development in Castledermot not worsening existing environmental conditions. Specific actions included within the plan are inclusive of sustainability themed actions including the protection of lime trees within the town, street greening, the development of a river management plan, sensory garden and creation of biodiverse parkland. Future developments within the site of the <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> will operate within the provisions set out by the KCDP 2023-2029 and will be considered under the SSFRA, SEA, EIA and/or AA processes as appropriate.</p>
The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)	<p>The <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> is a non-statutory plan which outlines potential development arrangements for Castledermot town in a manner which is entirely consistent with the specific policies, objectives and land use zoning for the town as contained in the KCDP 2023-2029.</p> <p>The <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> will not have a material impact upon the implementation of The Eastern River Basin District River Basin Management Plan, National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024–2030, or the Eastern-Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021.</p> <p>This Plan therefore will comply with the European Union legislation on the environment already contained within the higher order land use plans including the KCDP 2023-2029.</p>

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected	Assessment
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	<p>This Plan provides a framework to guide future development in Castledermot, however it does not provide consent or establish a framework for granting consent and will not be binding on any decisions relating to the granting of consent. All future developments within the site of the <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> will be subject to the appropriate environmental assessments. In the event of its implementation, the probability that the <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> will result in <u>significant long-term positive</u> environmental impacts is considered likely. The effects of implementing Plan proposals will</p>

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected	Assessment
	<p>generally be permanent. Environmental features to which this applies are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population and Human Health - enhanced public realm, augmented economic and/or day and night activity, increased cycling and pedestrian routes, improved traffic management, development of green spaces and improved access to heritage assets</li> <li>• Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna – local, native and biodiverse landscaping, protection of mature lime trees, street greening and enhanced green spaces. There a consideration of biodiverse spaces to link the Castledermot Playground with the River Lerr. This is not considered to result in significant negative impacts</li> <li>• Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage – conservation of and improved access to heritage assets</li> <li>• Landscape and Visual – the activation of under-utilised and derelict sites, public realm upgrades,</li> <li>• Air, Noise and Climatic Factors – improved active travel facilities. It is considered likely that slight negative impacts on noise will occur during construction, this will be short term and will be minor due to the scale of the plan</li> </ul> <p>Further <u>not significant long-term negative</u> effects on the following features are also considered likely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land and Soils – a low probability of negative effects associated with the construction of future developments may occur to soil. However, all works will be undertaken according to KCDP zoning and in any event these effects will be managed and mitigated according to the appropriate development management standards and will be considered under SEA, EIA and/or AA processes as appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>The effects will be typical of other such developments for the approved uses and likely to be of short -medium term duration, recurring with each phase of development. The effects are not likely to be significant or adverse. As there are no changes in the land uses / development strategy outlined in the KCDP 2023-2029, the effects on the environment of implementing the proposed changes to the spatial configuration of the town is consistent with the effects considered in the SEA completed for the KCDP and the SEA completed for Castledermot Small Town Renewal Masterplan 2024.</p>

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected	Assessment
<p>The cumulative nature of the effects</p>	<p>The implementation of the proposals within the <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> will have cumulative effects with other proposals and policies contained in the KCDP 2023-2029. These have been assessed as part of the SEA for the CDP, as the subject Plan will comply with the provisions from the CDP and associated environmental assessments.</p> <p>The <i>Castledermot Town Centre First Plan</i> will compliment and build on the Castledermot STRM 2024. The strategies, opportunity areas, actions and key projects identified within the STRM will be considered and where relevant incorporated and further developed by the TCF Plan.</p> <p>The KCDP has identifies an objective to facilitate a masterplan for the Fairgreen town park (ST C13). The lands are within the study area for this Town Renewal Masterplan. These lands will be subject to the drafting of separate masterplans. The cumulative nature of the effects of designating the masterplan lands, in addition to the effects of the <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> has been considered in the making of the KCDP.</p> <p>As a small section of the European site River Barrow and River Nore SAC is located within the plan boundary, any future proposed developments put forward with cognisance to the Plan need to be carefully assessed with regards to significant in-combination effects on any European sites in line with the KCDP 2023-2029 Development Standards. However, it is considered that the projects identified together with any current plans / projects within the town are not likely to result in significant negative cumulative effects on any environmental sensitivities.</p> <p>The proposed <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> is not varying any of the parameters previously assessed and therefore there will be no change to the cumulative effects previously considered and accepted in the KCDP SEA.</p>
<p>The trans-boundary nature of the effects</p>	<p>The implementation of this Plan will have no transboundary effects</p>
<p>The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)</p>	<p>The <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> is a non-statutory plan which sets the framework for the development of the lands in accordance with the provisions of the KCDP.</p> <p>Compliance with standard planning and development provisions (e.g. planning conditions, building regulations, health and safety provisions) will mitigate against possible risks to human health or the environment.</p>

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected	Assessment
	<p>There are no significant or adverse effects identified due to accidents or otherwise as a result of implementing this Plan.</p>
<p>The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)</p>	<p>The area of the Proposed Masterplan Site encompasses the Castledermot town centre and the immediate residential areas adjacent to the settlement core. Any potential environmental effects are expected to be largely confined to the area within and in the immediate vicinity of the Site of <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i>.</p> <p>A total of 7 no. projects and 22 no. actions will be proposed under the plan.</p> <p>The current population within the Site of the Proposed Masterplan is estimated to be approximately 1,685 persons.</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</li> </ul>	<p>Within the boundary of the Plan, numerous archaeological and cultural heritage features are identified, including ecclesiastical buildings, rare and folk gravestones, vernacular architecture, and sites of archaeological excavation. Further significant sites, such as holy wells, barrows and raths (likely Neolithic) are found within a 1km radius of the town. See Figure 2 for visual reference of structures on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). The town centre has additionally been designated as a 'zone of archaeological potential'.</p> <p>There are 15 no. protected structures within the boundary of the town and 37 no. structures on the RMP. See Figure 2 for visual reference of structures on the RPS. There are c. 35 no. NIAH buildings within Castledermot.</p> <p>As the Proposed Masterplan does not propose direct works or development, no impacts on any protected structures or heritage features are anticipated as a result of the preparation of the Plan. However, any future development proposal with potential for visual or physical impacts on a Protected Structure, its curtilage, demesne and setting that is considered to have potential for impacts (both positive and negative) shall require an Architectural Heritage Assessment Report, as described in Appendix B of the Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011). This report should be prepared by a person with conservation expertise that is appropriate to the significance of the historic building or site and the complexity of the proposed works.</p> <p>This additionally applies to development that is considered to have potential for impacts (both positive and negative) on protected structures on recorded or previously unknown archaeological heritage</p>

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected	Assessment
	<p>within the TCF Plan area should be subject to project specific Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) as per Development Management Standard (DMS) 15.16.3 of the KCDP 2023-2029 and Section 3.6.2 of 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage' (Government of Ireland 1999).</p> <p>The River Lerr (EPA Name: LERR_020) is considered of 'poor' and 'at risk' status under the WFD 2016-2021 to the east of Fairgreen Park and of 'moderate' and 'at risk' status to the north-east of the town. The River Lerr is noted by the NPWS as follows: <i>"Nitrates are high due to intensive tillage in South Kildare - recent data indicates that nitrate levels are levelling off. Biological data indicates borderline conditions. Overall quality is mediocre"</i>. Specific works which might lead to emissions into the river are not proposed under the Plan and it is therefore not anticipated that any environmental quality standards will be worsened.</p> <p>The proposed Plan envisions the development of a comprehensive river management plan for the River Lerr and there is a consideration of biodiverse spaces to link the River Lerr with Castledermot Playground. Such works to improve linkages between the River Lerr and the playground potentially increase the anthropogenic pressures felt on the river from the baseline. However, it is unlikely that any increases in the intensity of use of this amenity arising from the Proposed Masterplan will be of sufficient scale to result in significant adverse impacts on the species and habitats of the river. The enhancement in biodiversity would furthermore benefit the natural environment of the River Lerr.</p>
<p>➤ exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values</p>	<p>Due to the nature of the development proposed in the <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i>, it is not foreseen that there will be any development of a nature which would exceed environmental quality standards or limit values.</p>
<p>➤ intensive land-use</p>	<p>A density of 30-35 units per hectare (target) is proposed for the town of Castledermot. The extent of development proposed in the <i>Castledermot TCF Plan</i> are within the intensities provided for in the KCDP. There would be a moderate increase in use of the built and natural environment, through public realm improvements in the town centre.</p> <p>The KCDP has been subjected to its own SEA and there are no changes proposed in this Plan which would impact on its outcome.</p>

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected	Assessment
<p>➤ The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status</p>	<p>The AA Screening by NM Ecology concludes with regards to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC along with European sites outside the Plan Area using the <i>source-pathway-receptor</i> model that <i>'no feasible pathways were identified to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other European sites'</i>.</p> <p>No scenic routes were identified in proximate to the plan area by the KCDP 2023-2029. A landscape character assessment (LCA), which considers natural features, historical, cultural and religious features was undertaken as part of the KCDP. The area of the Plan is identified as Eastern Transition. The sensitivity of the Eastern Transition is deemed to be of 'Class 2 Medium Sensitivity' and is defined as an area 'with the capacity to accommodate a range of uses without significant adverse effects on the appearance or character of the landscape having regards to localised sensitivity factors.'</p>

## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Following assessment of the criteria on Schedule 1 to S.I. 435/2004 as amended and having regard to the nature of the *Castledermot Town Centre First Plan* and the potential for likely significant environmental effects from implementation of the Plan, it is concluded that the plan will not give rise to likely significant effects on the environment.

The principal reasons why the *Castledermot TCF Plan* does not require an SEA are as follows:

- The *Castledermot TCF Plan* is a non-statutory plan. It will provide a vision and guidance for 7 no. future development projects and 22 no. actions in Castledermot Town and will likely have an impact on the provision of future development projects as the planning authority may place some consideration on how development applications have incorporated/addressed the guidelines in their designs. It may establish a framework for part 8 consent, however it does not provide consent and will not be binding on any decisions relating to the granting of consent;
- The *Castledermot TCF Plan* does not satisfy the conditions for mandatory SEA under S.I. 435/2004, as amended;
- An Appropriate Assessment of the Plan is not required;
- The environmental policies and objectives of the KCDP 2023 – 2029 and will apply to future development of Castledermot Town, which have been the subject of full SEA;
- With reference to Article 9(2), 9(3) or 9(4) of S.I. 435/2004, as amended, the P/P has not been shown to have significant effects on the environment with reference to the criteria laid out in Schedule 1 and therefore SEA is not required; and
- All individual planning applications made with consideration of the *Castledermot TCF Plan* are subject to the appropriate environmental assessments (i.e., SSFRA, AA, SEA, EIA, AIA) where required under the KCDP 2023-2029.



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Department of Rural and  
Community Development

# Digital Town Blueprint Report Castledermot, Co. Kildare

*February 2025*



**An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail**  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development

# **Digital Town Blueprint**

## **Castledermot, Co. Kildare**

### **February 2025**

A study prepared for the Department of the Rural and Community Development by the Irish Institute of Digital Business, University of Galway, and .IE

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Acknowledgments: The authors would like to acknowledge the contribution of Aoife Lynn, Jamie Lynn, Guy Tattan, Brian Waugh, Harry Begg, Charlotte Recktenwald, Michel Jijon, David Kearns, Ryan Hagerty and Conner Malone to the project.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1. ABOUT THE DIGITAL TOWN BLUEPRINT

The .IE Digital Town Blueprint<sup>1</sup> (DTB) is an entry-level assessment for local authorities, chambers of commerce, and other local community groups interested in understanding the current digital readiness of their town. It was originally designed by the Irish Institute of Digital Business at Dublin City University (DCU) with funding from .IE. The DTB used in this report is an updated version based on Lynn et al. (2022).<sup>2</sup>

The DTB has been designed to help towns rapidly and cost-effectively:

- Understand their current digital town readiness and digital competitiveness
- Compare their town against Irish and international benchmarks
- Stimulate stakeholder engagement on digitalisation

The National Planning Framework<sup>3</sup> and Our Rural Future<sup>4</sup> policies set out a vision to develop thriving Irish Towns which are integral to Ireland's national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development. This vision is built on the interdependence of urban and rural areas, and recognises the diversity of individual towns, the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in places and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain a shared environment. The Town Centre First policy seeks to support the delivery of this vision and complement a wide range of Government policies impacting on Irish towns. It provides a cross-cutting and collaborative framework for central government, Local Authorities, public and private sector stakeholders, and especially communities, to build sustainable vibrant town centres. The Town Centre First policy explicitly recognises that successful places utilise digital technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, enabling greater choices in terms of location and lifestyle. The Town Centre First policy (p.19) states:

*“There is also the opportunity to utilise technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, and to integrate digital technology into daily commercial and social life. Digital technology can improve the quality and accessibility of services, and can be used to address challenges faced by our towns, providing them with new roles in the digital economy.”*

The DTB analyses digital readiness across seven dimensions. This is accomplished through a combination of primary research, desk research, secondary data, key informant interviews and automated data collection techniques. The findings of the assessment are synthesised into a digital town readiness score and assessment report. The seven dimensions are:

- I. Infrastructure for connectivity - the deployment of fixed and mobile broadband infrastructure and the availability of free public Wi-Fi and digital rural hubs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.weare.ie/ie-digital-town-blueprint/>

<sup>2</sup> Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O’Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

<sup>3</sup> <https://npf.ie/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://assets.gov.ie/132413/433aebac-f12a-4640-8cac-9faf52e5ea1f.pdf>

- II. The Digital Economy and Digital Business – the use of digital technology by local businesses and their level of sophistication.
- III. Digital Public Services – the use and sophistication of digital technology by both local government and health, and the availability of local open data.
- IV. Digital Education – the support for and use and sophistication of digital technology by education providers, and the provision of training and education in digital technologies across all levels.
- V. Digital Technologies and Civil Society – the use and sophistication of digital technologies by community and voluntary groups in a town.
- VI. Digital Tourism – the use and sophistication of digital technology to attract tourists and deliver a distinctive tourism experience.
- VII. Governance of Digital Town Initiatives – the degree of coordination across the town on digitalisation including (a) integration across different elements of policy making, and across policy and other stakeholders, and (b) integration across different levels within the governance or policy sphere.

The selected dimensions and variables can provide towns with useful insights on their digital readiness, and allow them to compare across time and to benchmark against other towns.

As agreed with the DRCD, this abridged report does not include subsections of analysis on e-government in Digital Public Services and analysis of pre-primary, primary and secondary education in Digital Education.

## **1.2. OBJECTIVES**

The objectives for this report are:

- Assessment – to obtain an initial characterisation of the digital readiness of infrastructure and service providers in Castledermot.
- Comparative Analysis – to undertake a comparison of DTB assessments (a) between an initial selection of towns, and (b) regional, national and EU benchmarks, where appropriate and possible.

This report is an assessment of Castledermot, Co. Kildare. For the purposes of this report and to be consistent with Town Centre First, measurements are calculated within a 2km radius of the town centre for each town. Data was collected from June to October 2024 unless otherwise stated. Feedback and clarifications on a draft report were requested from Town Regeneration Officers in December 2024 and January 2025. Such feedback was included, as deemed appropriate.

## 2. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CONNECTIVITY

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure for connectivity includes broadband and mobile connectivity, free public Wi-Fi, rural digital hubs, amongst others. Increased connectivity can contribute positively to economic growth and household income levels, and can result in increased employability, retail transactions, time-savings, and other community benefits.<sup>5</sup> Free public Wi-Fi provides both access to the Internet and consumer cost savings. Research suggests that free municipal public Wi-Fi access can provide benefits including economic development, community branding, collaboration between other public service providers in a municipality, provision of internet connectivity (and associated services) to low-income and underserved citizens, and revenue generating activities.<sup>6</sup> Free public Wi-Fi forms part of the European Tourism Manifesto for Growth and Jobs which encourages free Wi-Fi for visitors in tourist attractions, events and destinations.<sup>7</sup> Rural digital hubs have been proposed as a potential solution to improve broadband connectivity, improve digital literacy for individuals, workers and businesses, attract new residents and visitors, and stimulate economic activity.<sup>8</sup> Rural digital hubs are a physical space, which can be fixed or mobile, focused on digital connectivity, digital skill development and/or emergent technologies.<sup>9</sup> In 2021, the Irish government launched a National Hub Network and has supported funding for over 500 remote working hubs ('connected hubs') to date.<sup>10</sup>

The connectivity dimension of the DTB presented in this report consists of five indicators weighted as follows:

- Fixed broadband (35%)
- Mobile broadband (35%)
- Competition (10%)
- Free public Wi-Fi (10%)
- Rural digital hubs (10%)

No data at the town-level was available from Comreg or the CSO for broadband or mobile take-up at the time when this research was carried out. It is important to note that broadband coverage and quality statistics may not always reflect user experience due to disparities in actual vs. advertised speeds, the quality and setup of equipment, local interferences, building construction, network congestion, service outages, amongst other factors.

<sup>5</sup> <https://cebr.com/reports/tinder-foundation-and-go-on-uk-call-for-urgent-digital-skills-funding-to-support-government-2020-fast-broadband-for-all-pledge/>

<sup>6</sup> Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

<sup>7</sup> <https://tourismmanifesto.eu/>

<sup>8</sup> European Network for Rural Development. (2017). Revitalising rural areas through digitisation the experience of three rural digital hubs. [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/tg\\_rural-businesses\\_case-study\\_rural-digital-hub\\_0.pdf](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/tg_rural-businesses_case-study_rural-digital-hub_0.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Rundel, C., Salemink, K., & Strijker, D. (2018). CORA diagnostic survey results: Results and guiding measures. <https://northsearegion.eu/media/7485/corareport-diagnostic-survey-results.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Department of Rural and Community Development, 'Our Rural Future Progress Report 2 '(2022) <https://assets.gov.ie/133735/6bbb1ebf-2a7a-4948-9ae2-fe0e1f5e2805.pdf>, p. 9

Table 1 Irish Broadband Coverage (DESI, 2022) <sup>11</sup>

	Ireland			EU
	DESI 2022	DESI 2023	DESI 2024	DESI 2024
Overall internet take-up (% of households)	97.50%	NA	93.92%	93.09%
Share of fixed broadband subscriptions (>=100 Mbps) (% of fixed subscriptions)	46.56%	53.46%	61.04%	66.17%
Share of fixed broadband subscriptions (>=1 Gbps) (% of fixed subscriptions)	4.27%	7.97%	9.48%	18.52%
Fixed Very High Capacity Network (VHCN) coverage (% of households)	89%	83.82%	86.99%	78.81%
Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) coverage (% of households)	62%	72.07%	78.48%	63.99%
5G spectrum (Assigned spectrum as a % of total harmonised 5G spectrum)	29%	62.50%	62.50%	73.40%
5G coverage (% of households)	72%	83.92%	85.32%	89.30%
5G coverage in the 3.4-3.8 GHz band (% of households)	NA	55.97%	56.68%	50.60%
5G SIM cards (% of total population)	46.56%	53.46%	24.43%	24.62%
Mobile broadband take-up (% of individuals)	98%	98.39%	93.07%	89.94%

## 2.2. DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

### 2.2.1. Fixed Broadband Coverage

A snapshot of fixed broadband coverage in Castledermot can be gleaned from the interactive mapping tool provided by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. As illustrated in Figure 1, commercial operators deliver high-speed broadband (colour-coded blue in Figure 1) in the urban centre around the Castledermot area. Areas in light blue, extending outwards from the urban centre, indicate areas where a commercial provider has committed to commercial rural deployment plans to roll out high speed broadband. The remainder of Figure 1, shaded in amber, are target areas for the State intervention under the National Broadband Plan (NBP).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [https://digital-decade-desi.digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/datasets/desi/charts/desi-indicators?period=desi\\_2024indicator=desi\\_iuse&breakdown=ind\\_total&unit=pc\\_ind&country=AT,BE,BG,HR,CY,CZ,DK,EE,EU,FI,FR,DE,EL,HU,IE,IT,LV,LT,LU,MT,NL,PL,PT,RO,SK,SI,ES,SE](https://digital-decade-desi.digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/datasets/desi/charts/desi-indicators?period=desi_2024indicator=desi_iuse&breakdown=ind_total&unit=pc_ind&country=AT,BE,BG,HR,CY,CZ,DK,EE,EU,FI,FR,DE,EL,HU,IE,IT,LV,LT,LU,MT,NL,PL,PT,RO,SK,SI,ES,SE)

<sup>12</sup> <https://nbi.ie/>

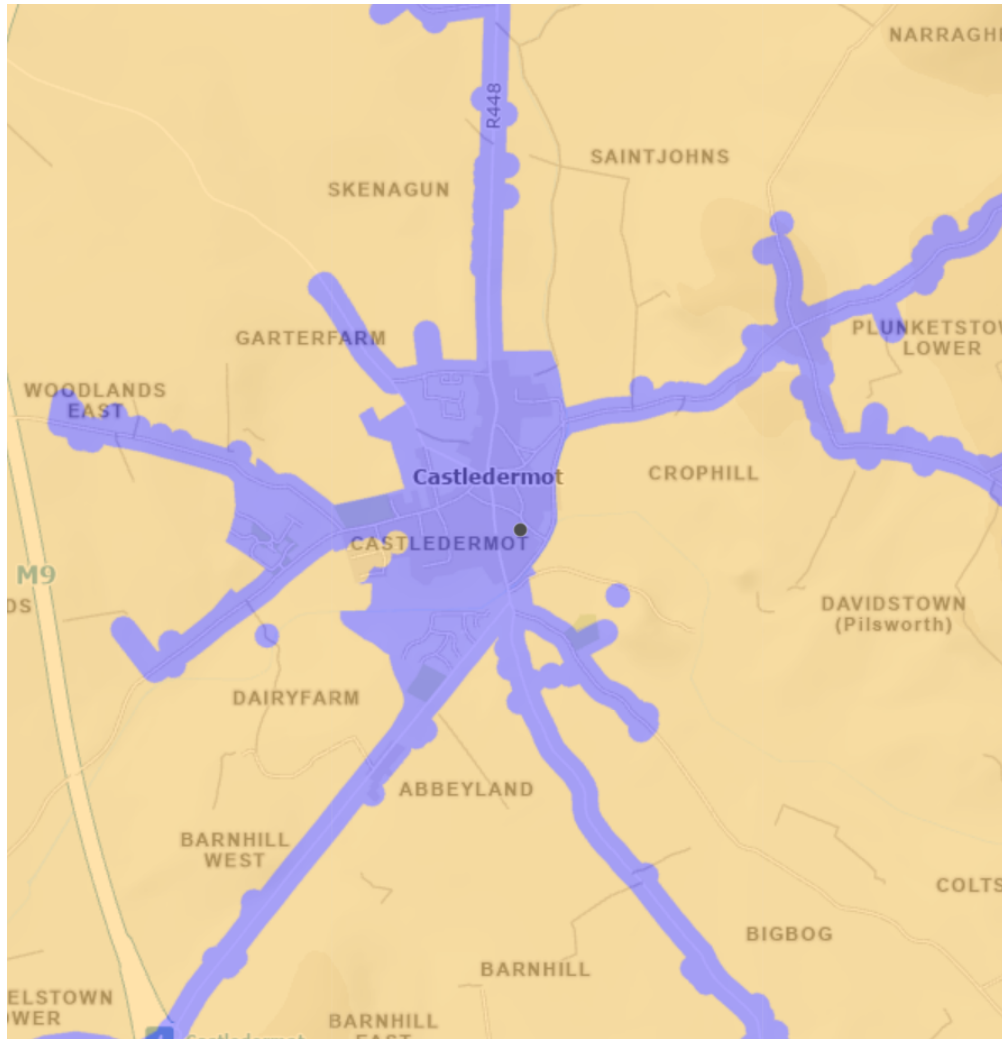


Figure 1 High-speed broadband rollout in Castledermot and adjacent townlands (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment)<sup>13</sup>

Table 2 provides further details regarding the number of premises in each townland which are either covered by commercial broadband or are designated as forming part of the intervention area. The figures provided in Table 2 indicate a 100% level of fixed broadband coverage across the Castledermot townlands in question. This figure compares favourably to the average fixed broadband coverage across EU member states (97.7%) and at a rural level (92.5%). Ireland's overall fixed broadband coverage was measured at 97.2% in June 2023.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.dcae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/high-speed-broadband-map/Pages/Interactive-Map.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> Broadband Coverage in Europe 2023. Mapping progress towards the coverage objectives of the Digital Decade - Final Report: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/digital-decade-2024-broadband-coverage-europe-2023>, p. 52.

*Table 2 Townlands – Premises within commercial broadband coverage or NBP intervention (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment)*

<b>Townland</b>	<b>Premises</b>	<b>NBP Intervention</b>	<b>Covered by Operators</b>
Castledermot	359	8	351
Garterfarm	5	2	3
Skenagun	111	1	110
Ballyvass	31	16	15
Hobartstown West	21	17	4
Hobartstown East	13	13	0
Saintjohns	60	7	53
Knockaphuca	9	0	9
Crophill	8	0	8
Plunketstown Lower	42	5	37
Davidstown (Pilsworth)	11	2	9
Coltstown	17	17	0
Mullarney	11	0	11
Townparks	41	0	41
Ballyvannan	10	0	10
Abbeyland	109	0	109
Dairyfarm	3	3	0
Barnhill East	8	8	0
Barnhill West	20	2	18
Woodlands East	90	11	79
Halfmiletown	1	1	0
Woodlands West	9	7	2
Hallahoise	33	33	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1022</b>	<b>153 (14.97%)</b>	<b>869 (85.03%)</b>

### 2.2.2. Mobile Broadband Coverage

The European Commission's DESI measures mobile broadband coverage and take-up (see Table 1) as part of its connectivity dimension. In 2024, 90% of people in the EU used a mobile device to access the internet (up from 73% in 2016). During 2024,

Ireland ranked eighth among the EU Member States for the uptake of mobile broadband with 93% compared to an EU average of 90%. Ireland has a higher 5G coverage than the EU average, however this is primarily in the most populous areas. Ireland ranks 18th among the EU Member States on the 5G spectrum indicator at 62.5% (the EU average is 73.4%).

Castledermot also appears to have near universal mobile broadband coverage. However, this coverage displays variability across townlands when classified in terms of data speed. The Commission for Communications Regulation (Comreg) provides an interactive mapping tool that visualises mobile broadband quality across Ireland. For mobile technology types 2G (voice calls and text messages), 3G (voice calls, text messages and data), 4G (smart phone for data and voice), and 5G (data and voice) coverage provided by commercial providers is ranked as very good; good; fair; fringe; and no coverage (see Table 3 for descriptions of each category). There are eleven mobile service providers in total currently operating in Castledermot, though only four provide 5G broadband (see 2.2.3 below).

Table 3 Comreg classifications of mobile broadband coverage (Comreg)<sup>15</sup>

Rating	2G coverage	3G coverage	4G coverage	5G coverage
Very Good (=5)	Strong signal with very good connections	Strong signal with maximum data speeds	Strong signal with maximum data speeds	Strong signal with maximum data speeds
Good (=4)	Strong signal with good connections	Strong signal with good data speeds	Strong signal with good data speeds	Strong signal with good data speeds
Fair (=3)	Fair signal may be attained, but disconnections may occur at weaker signal levels	Fast and reliable data speeds may be attained, but marginal data with drop-outs is possible at weaker signal levels	Fast and reliable data speeds may be attained, but marginal data with drop-outs is possible at weaker signal levels	Fast and reliable data speeds may be attained, but marginal data with drop-outs is possible at weaker signal levels
Fringe (=2)	Disconnections likely to occur	Disconnections likely to occur	Disconnections likely to occur	Disconnections likely to occur
No Coverage (=1)	Likely to have no coverage in this area	Likely to have no coverage in this area	Likely to have no coverage in this area	Likely to have no coverage in this area

Eir offers 5G coverage in 460 towns and cities in all 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland, claiming to reach over 70% of the population.<sup>16</sup> Three claims to reach over 90% of the population.<sup>17</sup> The Comreg Outdoor Mobile Coverage Map shows that 5G coverage is available in Castledermot.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See COMREG <https://coveragemap.comreg.ie/faq/>. Codes added by authors.

<sup>16</sup> <https://eirevo.ie/communications/mobile/5g/#:~:text=We%20are%20Ireland's%20Largest%205G%20Network&text=We%20currently%20offer%205G%20coverage.of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Ireland.>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.three.ie/why-choose-three/5g.html>

<sup>18</sup> Comreg interactive broadband coverage mapping tool, <https://coveragemap.comreg.ie/map>

In order to assess mobile broadband quality across commercial providers for each of the Castledermot townlands in question, we code the Comreg classifications from 1-5 (with 5 denoting “very good”). We then calculate the average coverage quality for each townland, as well as across townlands (see Table 4).

*Table 4 Average classification of mobile coverage in Castledermot Townlands (Comreg)<sup>19</sup>*

Townland	2G Coverage	3G Coverage	4G Coverage	5G Coverage
Castledermot	5	4.73	4	1.64
Garterfarm	4.64	4	4	1.82
Skenagun	4.64	4	3.64	2
Ballyvass	3.64	3.64	3	1.55
Hobartstown West	3.64	3.64	3	1.73
Hobartstown East	4	3.64	3	1.73
Saintjohns	4.45	4	3.18	1.82
Knockaphuca	4.18	4	3.45	1.82
Crophill	4.64	4	3.64	1.64
Plunketstown Lower	4	4	3	1.55
Davidstown (Pilsworth)	4	3.64	3	1.45
Coltstown	4	4	3	1.82
Mullarney	4.64	4.64	3.64	1.82
Townparks	4.64	4.64	4.27	1.91
Ballyvannan	4.64	4.55	3.64	1.82
Abbeyland	4.64	4.64	4.64	1.91
Dairyfarm	5	5	5	1.91
Barnhill East	5	4.64	4.09	1.82
Barnhill West	5	5	4.64	1.91
Woodlands East	5	4.36	4.27	1.82
Halfmiletown	4.64	4.45	4	1.82
Woodlands West	4.45	3.64	3.55	1.82
Hallahoise	4	3.36	3	1.73
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>1.77</b>
<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>4.67</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>1.79</b>

<sup>19</sup> Comreg interactive broadband coverage mapping tool, <https://coveragemap.comreg.ie/map>

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fringe</b>
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Mobile broadband coverage in Castledermot may extend across townlands but broadband speeds decrease as one moves out from the town centre. In particular, focusing on 4G provision in Castledermot highlights variations in digital connectivity within Castledermot and surrounding townlands.

### 2.2.3. Competition

As can be seen from Table 1, broadband in Ireland (based on broadband price index scores) has become more competitive over time. Notwithstanding this, recent EU research carried out by Empirica and TUV Rheinland<sup>20</sup> suggests that compared to all EU27 countries:

- Prices for fixed broadband in Ireland are much higher than the EU average.
- Prices for household broadband baskets in Ireland are somewhat higher than the EU average.

In both cases, no commercial offers were found to be less expensive than the EU average. Prices for mobile broadband in Ireland show a different pattern compared to EU27 countries overall. Whereas consumers requiring 20GB mobile data with 300 calls find offers very much lower than the EU average, those seeking 0.5 GB mobile data with no calls find prices somewhat higher than the EU average.

Competition among Irish telecom providers is evident from recent consumer price movements. From January 2022 to September 2024 the communication prices component of the consumer price index (CPI) increased by 3.1 percentage points, while the overall CPI index increased by 14.4 percentage points over the same price period (see Figure 2).

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<sup>20</sup> Source: Mobile and Fixed Broadband Prices in Europe 2021: <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/88311>

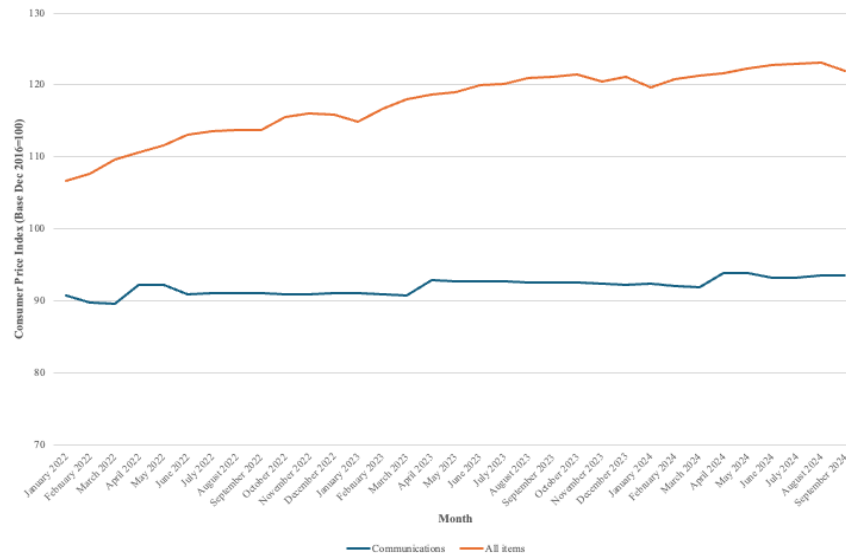


Figure 2 Consumer Price Index and Communications Sub-Component (Central Statistics Office)<sup>21</sup>

Castledermot is relatively well-serviced for both fixed broadband and mobile connectivity with four fixed broadband providers, eleven 2G, 3G and 4G mobile providers, but only four 5G mobile providers (Table 5). It should be noted that Vodafone and other providers will sunset 3G access by the end of 2024. 2G is likely to be retained as a backstop network that uses low amounts of energy, and in the event that other forms of connection fail, 2G will be used to allow people to continue communicating using calls and SMS messages. The sunsetting of 3G may negatively impact members of the community with older phones and are likely to be members of marginalised groups, such as the elderly and those in poverty.

Table 5 Fixed Broadband and Mobile Providers in Castledermot (Comreg, Switcher.ie)

Provider	Fixed Broadband	2G	3G	4G	5G
48	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
An Post Mobile	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Clear Mobile	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Eir	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
GoMo	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Lycamobile	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Tesco Mobile	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Three	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Virgin Media	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Vodafone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

<sup>21</sup> Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Consumer Prices Monthly Series - CPM16 - Consumer Price Index: <https://data.cso.ie/table/CPM16>.

Digiweb	Yes	No	No	No	No
Pure Telecom	Yes	No	No	No	No
Magnet Networks	No	No	No	No	No
Imagine	No	No	No	No	No
Rural Wifi	No	No	No	No	No
Sky	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

### 2.2.4. Public Wi-Fi

The Public Wi-Fi indicators (Table 6) in DTB measure the availability of municipal and free public Wi-Fi at various sites in a given town including municipal, retail, accommodation, hospitality and tourism sites. Penetration in tourism-related businesses is specifically measured i.e., for accommodation and hospitality.

*Table 6 Public Wi-Fi indicators*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Castledermot</b>
Availability of Municipal public Wi-Fi (outdoor)	No
Availability of free public Wi-Fi in municipal buildings (incl. libraries)	Yes
Availability of free public Wi-Fi at tourism sites	No
Availability of free public Wi-Fi in retail outlets	No
Availability of free public Wi-Fi in accommodation	No
Percentage of Tripadvisor accommodation listings with free public Wi-Fi (n=1)	0%
Availability of free public Wi-Fi in hospitality	No
Percentage of Tripadvisor hospitality listings with free public Wi-Fi (n=4)	0%

### 2.2.5. Rural Digital Hubs

Connected Hubs is an initiative under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme operated by the Department of Rural and Community Development.<sup>22</sup> The National Hub Network provides a vehicle for individual hubs to come together under a shared identity to maximise the economic opportunity of remote working. Four indicators are used to measure rural digital hubs - (i) the availability of a connected hub, (ii) the number of connected hub desks available for use, (iii) the number of connected hub meeting rooms available for use, and (iv) availability of other spaces dedicated to co-working (see Table 7).

*Table 7 Rural digital hub indicators*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Castledermot</b>
Connected hub in town	No
Number of connected hub desks available for use	0
Number of connect hub meeting rooms available for use	0
Availability of other co-working spaces	No

<sup>22</sup> <https://connectedhubs.ie/>

### 2.3. OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for infrastructure for connectivity is **3.6**.

*Table 8 Infrastructure for Connectivity Dimension Scores*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Score</b>
Fixed broadband	35%	4.5
Mobile broadband	35%	3.5
Competition	10%	4.8
Free public Wi-Fi	10%	3.5
Rural digital hubs	10%	0.0
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3.6</b>

### 3. DIGITAL BUSINESS

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

The adoption and use of digital technologies provides clear benefits to businesses in rural towns including cost savings, operational efficiency, information technology (IT) resilience and scalability, easier access to new markets, and marketing effectiveness, amongst others.<sup>23</sup> Digital technologies can represent the basis for a competitive advantage for small to medium sized businesses and enable them to compete with larger firms.<sup>24</sup>

The digital business dimension comprises three sub-dimensions with equal weighting:

- Website Technology Intensity Score
- Digital technology take-up
- E-commerce take-up

No data at the town-level was available from Comreg or the CSO for digital business at the time when this research was carried out.

Research suggests that websites represent a 'digital footprint' of organisations and website data and metadata on technologies used in websites can be used to study the digital competences and sophistication of a given organisation (Lynn et al. 2020<sup>25</sup>; Mazzone et al. 2023)<sup>26</sup>. We use an organisation's decision to use a website and associated technologies as a proxy for its degree of digitisation as per Thonipara et al. (2020). A Web Technology Intensity Score (WTIS) was developed to measure business-level availability of eleven different web technologies:

1. A website or homepage
2. A website with evidence of sophisticated functions (e.g., live chat, recommender system, online booking etc.)
3. A website with evidence of basic analytics (e.g., visitor tracking, advertiser tracking etc.)
4. A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics (e.g., A/B testing, conversion optimisation, customer relationship management (CRM) system)
5. A website with evidence of basic online advertising (e.g., transactional email marketing, remarketing etc.)
6. A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising (e.g., use of advertising networks, affiliate marketing, multichannel advertising etc.)
7. A website with evidence of selling online (e.g., payment acceptance, online shop, checkout functions etc.)

<sup>23</sup> Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

<sup>24</sup> Mehrtens, J., Cragg, P. B., & Mills, A. M. (2001). A model of internet adoption by SMEs. *Information & Management*, 39(3), 165–176; Richmond, W., Rader, S., & Lanier, C. (2017). The 'digital divide' for rural small businesses. *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship*, 19(2), 94–104.

<sup>25</sup> Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Fox, G., Curran, D., O'Gorman, C. and Conway, E., 2022, January. Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on website technology penetration on businesses in rural towns. In *Proceedings of the 55th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*.

<sup>26</sup> Leonardo, M., Fabio, P. and Massimo, R., 2023. Measuring Corporate Digital Divide with web scraping: Evidence from Italy. arXiv preprint arXiv:2301.04925.

8. A website with evidence of social media integration (e.g., social management, blog, social video platform etc.)
9. A website with evidence of international activity (e.g., multiple languages, international currencies etc.)
10. A website with evidence of mobile targeting (e.g., mobile app, mobile optimisation etc.)
11. A website with evidence of cloud computing (e.g., cloud hosting, Platform-as-a-Service etc.)

The value for the score ranged from 0 to 11 where 0 (Non-existent), 1-2 (Very Low), 3-4 (Low), 5-7 (Medium), 8-9 (High) and 10-11 (Very High). Separately, presence on social media was collected. E-commerce adoption, use of cloud computing and social media presence are all measured at the EU level. Digital technology take-up was measured by the percentage of businesses adopting the different technologies in the WTIS in addition to a social media presence. A list of organisations within a 2km radius of Castledermot town centre was sourced from GeoDirectory, resulting in 55 businesses. Following data cleaning, 19 businesses had to be removed from this list due to duplication, non-commercial operation (e.g., public service or civil society), or inactivity. As well as a manual check, a commercial website profiler was used to extract technology information.

### 3.2. DIGITAL BUSINESS

83% of the 36 businesses analysed had some sort of online presence, that is they have either a website or a social media profile. While 25% of them are only on social media, 44% of them have both a website and social media accounts. There is significant room for improvement. Furthermore, mere presence does not infer successful online trading or marketing. Table 9 presents the relative frequency of businesses with a website in Castledermot by WTIS level.

*Table 9 Businesses Website Technology Intensity Score - Businesses (n=36)*

<b>Website Technology Intensity Score</b>	<b>% of Businesses</b>
Non-existent (0)	41
Very low (1-2)	3
Low (3-4)	14
Medium (5-7)	25
High (8-9)	14
Very high (10-11)	3

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of businesses by Website Technology Intensity Score level and by economic activity based on NACE Rev. 2 industry codes. The results are consistent with EU studies that suggest that relatively small percentages of firms in the agriculture, construction and transport and storage industries have high or very high Website Technology Intensity Scores. The high percentage of businesses

in the information and communication industry with a non-existent level of sophistication is due to the low number of businesses included in this category (1).

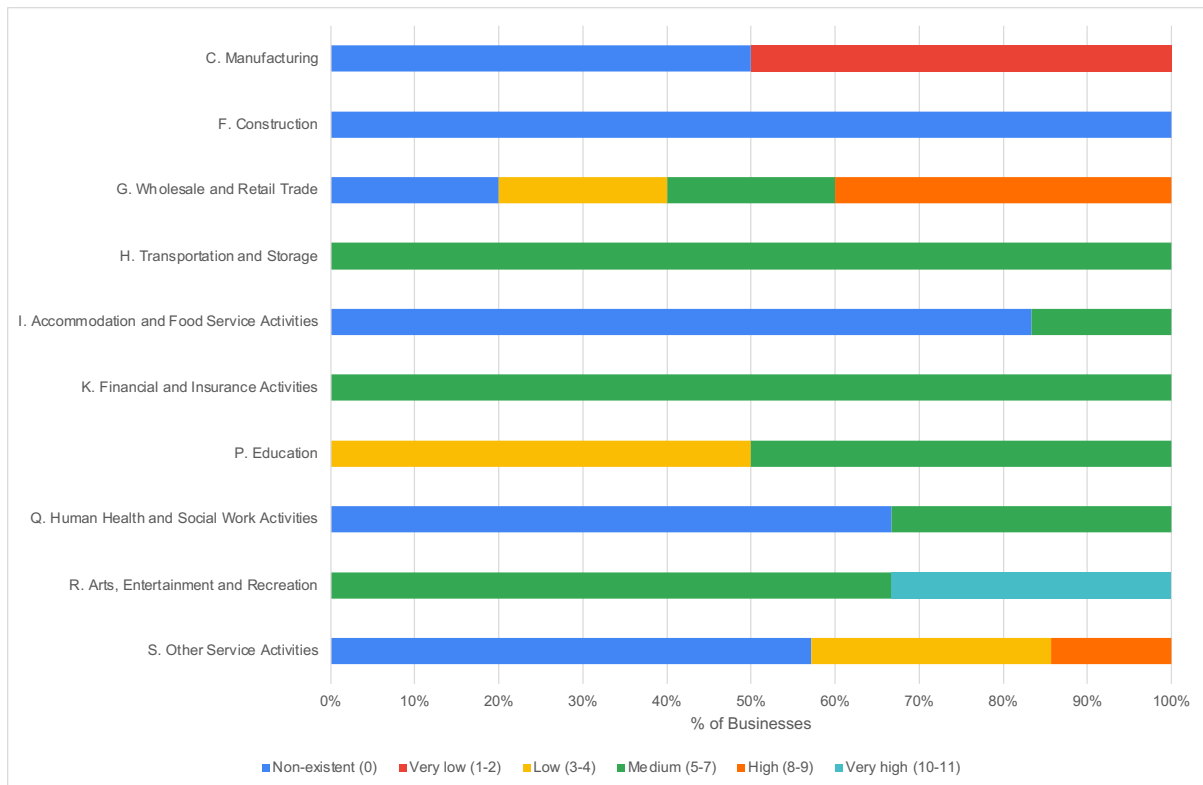


Figure 3 Businesses Website Technology Intensity Score by Economic Activity

Table 10 presents the degree of penetration of different digital technologies featured in the WTIS with comparative data, where available. It is important to note that DESI only includes firms that employ ten persons or more in their analysis. As rural businesses employ less than ten persons, they are typically under-represented in DESI analysis.

Table 10 Key Digitisation Take-up Indicators - Businesses (% of businesses) (n=36)

Indicator	Castledermot 2024	Ireland DESI 2024	EU DESI 2024
A website or homepage	58	NA	NA
A website with evidence of sophisticated functions	25	NA	NA
A website with evidence of basic analytics	39	37.10	33.20
A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics	36	NA	NA
A website with evidence of basic online advertising	22	NA	NA
A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising	6	NA	NA
A website with evidence of selling online	19	30	19.1
A website with evidence of social media integration	33	NA	NA
A website with evidence of international activity	33	NA	NA
A website with evidence of mobile targeting	50	NA	NA
A website with evidence of cloud computing	36	53.1	38.9
Social media presence	69	31.5	31.5

### 3.3. OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for digital business is **1.6**.

Table 11 Digital Business Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Website Technology Intensity Score	33.3%	2.2
Digital technology take-up	33.3%	0.6
E-commerce take-up	33.3%	2.0
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1.6</b>

## 4. DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

Governments play a key role in our society by providing citizens and businesses with access to a range of essential public services. Digital technologies can improve transparency, responsiveness and efficiency in the delivery of these services. As discussed earlier, this abridged report does not include subsections of analysis on e-government in Digital Public Services as per the full DTB and only includes analysis on e-health and open data.

E-health is a specific type of service that is a high priority for digitalisation, and this digitalisation accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local healthcare providers (e.g., general practitioners and pharmacists), play a central role in facilitating access to and delivery of care in rural areas as they represent the main point of contact between the healthcare system and citizens. Another aspect of digital public services that is often not considered explicitly is the availability of open data. This involves making data, in this case public sector information (PSI), freely available in open formats and ways that enable public access and facilitate exploitation. A host of benefits are associated with open data which includes providing the scope for faster government decision-making, better resource allocation, efficient and effective delivery of more personalised public services, increased citizen participation, and greater private sector innovation.<sup>27,28</sup>

Following DESI, the digital public services dimension comprises two sub-dimensions:

- E-health
- Open data

They are weighted as follows – e-health (66.6%) and open data (33.3%).

E-health was measured using the WTIS presented in Section 3 and an additional three domain-specific items:

- Support for e-prescriptions
- Availability of online consultations
- Electronic exchange of medical data

The additional items are based on similar items used by DESI. Unlike DESI, evaluation was not limited to general practitioners but also included pharmacies and other human healthcare providers. Healthcare providers were identified through GeoDirectory and manual searches on Google and local online directories.

Open data was assessed based on the extent to which an open data policy is easily accessible on the county council website, the publisher status of the county council on

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<sup>27</sup> Ubaldi, B. (2013). Open government data: Towards empirical analysis of open government data initiatives. OECD Working Papers on Public Governance.

<sup>28</sup> Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

data.gov.ie, and the availability of local datasets specific to the town on five open data portals.

#### 4.2. E-HEALTH WEB INTENSITY SCORE

6 healthcare providers were identified in Castledermot. These included general practitioners, pharmacists and other healthcare providers e.g. dental practices, opticians, and physiotherapists. Table 12 compares healthcare providers with the overall business community.

*Table 12 Website Technology Intensity Score - Healthcare Providers (n=6)*

<b>Website Technology Intensity Score Level</b>	<b>% of Healthcare Providers</b>	<b>% of Businesses</b>
Non-existent (0)	38	41
Very low (1-2)	17	3
Low (3-4)	17	14
Medium (5-7)	0	25
High (8-9)	33	14
Very high (10-11)	0	3

Table 12 presents the degree of penetration of different general web technologies featured in the Website Technology Intensity Score with comparative data against the general business population in Castledermot.

*Table 13 Key Digitisation Take-up Indicators – Healthcare Providers (n=6)*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>% of Healthcare Providers</b>	<b>% of Businesses</b>
A website or homepage	67	58
A website with evidence of sophisticated functions	33	25
A website with evidence of basic analytics	33	39
A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics	17	36
A website with evidence of basic online advertising	17	22
A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising	33	6
A website with evidence of selling online	33	19
A website with evidence of social media integration	33	33
A website with evidence of international activity	50	33
A website with evidence of mobile targeting	50	50
A website with evidence of cloud computing	17	36

6 health service providers were contacted and they all responded to the survey. Since COVID-19, DESI has ceased reporting detailed e-health data. No EU data is available for online consultations.

Table 14 presents e-health services take-up by healthcare providers in Castledermot.

*Table 14 E-health Services Take-up (% of healthcare providers) (n=6)*

Indicator	Castledermot 2024	DESI Ireland 2019	DESI EU 2019
Use e-prescriptions	67	8	50
Using an electronic network to exchange medical data with other healthcare providers	67	63	43
Providing online consultations	17	NA	NA

### 4.3. OPEN DATA

S.I. No. 376 of 2021, the European Communities (Open Data & Re-use of Public Sector Information) Regulations 2021 emphasises that Irish public sector bodies should adhere to the principle that public sector data should be open by design and default, and requires that where data is made available for re-use in open format, this data must be linked to the national open data portal, data.gov.ie. These regulations apply to all public sector bodies including local authorities. There is a very limited amount of open data available on Castledermot. A review of the two main open data portals in Ireland identified only two data sets.<sup>29</sup> Kildare County Council is listed as a publisher on data.gov.ie, the Irish national open data portal.

*Table 15 List of Town Open Data Available*

Name	Description	Publisher	Source
Castledermot Kilkea House Rainfall Data	Daily and monthly rainfall records for our station at Castledermot Kilkea House in Co. Kildare.	Met Éireann	data.gov.ie
Castledermot G.S. Rainfall Data	Daily and monthly rainfall records for our station at Castledermot G.S. in Co. Kildare. This station is now closed.	Met Éireann	data.gov.ie

<sup>29</sup> The following sources were checked: AIRO, data.gov.ie, data.epa.ie, eHealth Ireland, OSI Open Data

#### 4.4. OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for digital public services is **1.9**.

*Table 16 Digital Public Services Dimension Scores*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Score</b>
E-health	67%	2.4
Open data	33%	1.0
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1.9</b>

## **5. DIGITAL EDUCATION**

### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

Digital education refers to the use and sophistication of digital technologies for teaching and learning in formal and non-formal education within a community, and the infrastructure required to support such provision.<sup>30</sup> The adoption and use of digital technologies in education is driven by a variety of rationales. They can help prepare citizens to participate, work and function more fully in a society permeated by digital technologies, increase accessibility to education, differentiate educational institutions, and increase the efficiency, cost effectiveness and quality of education delivery, amongst others.<sup>31</sup> As discussed earlier, this abridged report does not include subsections of analysis on pre-primary childcare providers, primary education and secondary education as per the full DTB and only includes analysis on the availability of general training across the town.

This abridged digital education dimension comprises four sub-dimensions with equal weightings:

- Availability of digital skills courses for young people
- Availability of vocational and further education digital skills courses
- Availability of digital skills courses for seniors
- Availability of other digital skills courses

This abridged section examines the availability of digital skills education and training in Castledermot outside of the primary and post-primary education system at all levels from basic to advanced. Education businesses are included in Section 3 where appropriate.

### **5.2. DIGITAL SKILLS EDUCATION AVAILABILITY**

Table 17 presents the digital skills education availability indicators for Castledermot.

Based on publicly available data, digital skills provision in Castledermot is limited, with a lack of availability for all cohorts.

The inclusion of e-learning options at Castledermot Library (e.g., cybersecurity, web development, Microsoft Office, Adobe Captivate, and SEO skills, amongst others) offers additional resources for all age groups to access independently.

Outside of these training options, the data does not show any specific digital skills provision targeting young people. For example, Colaiste Lorcaín does not offer computer science at junior or senior cycle although Design and Communication Graphics is offered. Boosting the development of digital skills from an early age and in a continuous manner is essential for influencing the level of digital skills of the population and the number of male and female students that will consider studies and career in the ICT.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> [https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/calls-proposals/boosting-digital-skills-young-pupils-particular-girls\\_en](https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/calls-proposals/boosting-digital-skills-young-pupils-particular-girls_en)

There is no evidence of vocational and further education digital skills courses on offer. Data from the EU's Agency for the Development of European Vocational Education and Training shows the importance of digital skills for jobs, and shows that digital skills are explicitly mentioned by employers in close to 40% of online job advertisements.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, the data does not show any specific digital skills provision targeting seniors. While the e-learning offered by Castledermot Library may be accessible to all, there is no clear indication that these programs are designed or marketed specifically for older adults. This could represent a gap in provision, as older individuals often need tailored digital literacy programs to overcome barriers like limited prior exposure to technology.

*Table 17 Digital Skills Education Availability Indicators*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Availability</b>
Availability of digital skills courses for young people	No
Availability of vocational and further education digital skills courses	No
Availability of digital skills courses for seniors	No
Availability of other digital skills courses	Yes

### 5.3. OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for education is **1.7**.

*Table 18 Digital Education Dimension Scores*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Score</b>
Availability of digital skills courses for young people	25%	1.7
Availability of vocational and further education digital skills courses	25%	1.7
Availability of digital skills courses for seniors	25%	1.7
Availability of other digital skills courses	25%	1.7
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1.7</b>

<sup>33</sup> <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/latest/briefs/digital-skills-deep-dive>

## 6. DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY

### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

Salamon and Anheier (1998, p. 216)<sup>34</sup> define civil society as collection of entities that share five characteristics:

- organisations, i.e., institutionalised to some meaningful extent
- private, i.e., institutionally separate from government
- non-profit distributing, i.e., not returning profits generated to their owners or directors
- self-governing, i.e., equipped to control their own activities
- voluntary, i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation

Civil society includes a wide range of organisations with varying roles and purposes including those involved in culture and recreation, education and research, health, social services, environmental sustainability, development and housing, law advocacy and politics, philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion, international activities and promotion, religion, business and professional etc.<sup>35</sup> They play an important role in society by promoting community engagement and citizenship values, advocating distinct interests and diverse points of view, delivering services, and creating economic value. For example, in 2018, there were over 19,500 such organisations registered in Ireland with nearly 200,000 voluntary directors or trustees and paid employees; they are a significant economic force with over €10.9 billion in annual turnover.<sup>36</sup> Civil society is a critical part of the social fabric throughout Ireland, and one might argue especially in rural communities whose identity may be linked to a local parish, sports club, or other social activity.

The civil society dimension measures the use of digital technologies by voluntary bodies or social groups serving the needs of the Castledermot community. It includes sports clubs, charities, political organisations, and other community groups. The civil society dimension comprises three sub-dimensions - WTIS, digital technology take-up, and e-commerce take-up as per Section 3.

Given the nature of these organisations, web intensity, digital technology and e-commerce take-up were weighted evenly at 33.3%.

### 6.2. DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY

A WTIS was calculated for each digital civil society organisation. Table 19 summarises the findings for digital civil society in Castledermot. 16 voluntary and social groups were identified. 13% had a discrete website. A small number featured on an affiliate website e.g. a political party.

*Table 19 Website Technology Intensity Score - Civil Society and Businesses (n=16)*

<sup>34</sup> Salamon, L. M., & Anheier, H. K. (1998). Social origins of civil society: Explaining the nonprofit sector cross-nationally. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 9(3), 213–248.

<sup>35</sup> Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O’Gorman, C. (2022). *Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies* (p. 213). Springer Nature.

<sup>36</sup> The Wheel, 2018, *Enabling Citizens - Powering Civil Society*. [https://www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2018-08/Powering%20Civil%20Society\\_0.pdf](https://www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2018-08/Powering%20Civil%20Society_0.pdf)

<b>Website Technology Intensity Score</b>	<b>% of Civil Society Organisations</b>	<b>% of Businesses</b>
Non-existent (0)	56	41
Very low (1-2)	0	3
Low (3-4)	13	14
Medium (5-7)	6	25
High (8-9)	25	14
Very high (10-11)	0	3

Table 19 presents the degree of penetration of different digital technologies featured in the Website Technology Intensity Score compared to businesses in Castledermot.

*Table 20 A comparison of WTIS Indicators – Civil Society and Businesses (n=16)*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>% of Civil Society Organisations</b>	<b>% of Businesses</b>
A website or homepage	44	56
A website with evidence of sophisticated functions	19	31
A website with evidence of basic analytics	31	44
A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics	31	44
A website with evidence of basic online advertising	13	38
A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising	0	6
A website with evidence of selling online	31	13
A website with evidence of social media integration	44	31
A website with evidence of international activity	31	38
A website with evidence of mobile targeting	44	50
A website with evidence of cloud computing	19	38
Social media presence	94	75

### 6.3. OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for civil society is **2.0**.

*Table 21 Digital Civil Society Dimension Scores*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Score</b>
Website Technology Intensity Score	33.3%	2.1
Digital technology take-up	33.3%	1.9
E-commerce take-up	33.3%	2.0
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2.0</b>

## **7. DIGITAL TOURISM**

### **7.1. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is a significant economic sector in Ireland. It is often the only major source of employment outside of agriculture in many rural areas. It is a key element of Irish rural development policy and features prominently in both the National Planning Framework,<sup>37</sup> Our Rural Future,<sup>38</sup> and Town Centre First.<sup>39</sup> Digital tourism is often confused with smart tourism although they share the same goals i.e. supporting innovation and driving positive transformation within destinations using technology, data analysis and digitalisation. Whereas smart tourism is concerned with connecting the digital and physical world, digital tourism is building wider digital connections between organisations, people, and places. In this sense, digital technologies not only play an important role in helping visitors discover, experience, and develop a long standing relationship with a place, in this case, a rural town.

The tourism dimension seeks to measure the use and sophistication of digital technology to attract tourists and deliver a distinctive tourism experience. The digital tourism dimension comprises three sub-dimensions:

- Digital readiness of tourism businesses
- Smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure
- Tourism destination website and maturity

The digital readiness of tourism businesses was weighted at 60% with the other two dimensions weighted equally at 20%.

Digital readiness of tourism businesses is assessed using the WTIS, digital technology take-up and e-commerce take-up measurements as per Section 3 and comprises of accommodation, hospitality and retail businesses.

Smart tourism and infrastructure assess the degree to which there is evidence of smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure in the town and at primary tourist destinations within the town. This includes public Wi-Fi, digital transport signage, digital information points/kiosks, availability of online itineraries, voluntary tourism alert systems, mobile apps, event websites, and use of augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) or QR codes etc.

Tourism destination website and maturity assesses the availability and maturity of a dedicated tourism website.

### **7.2. DIGITAL READINESS OF TOURISM BUSINESSES**

A WTIS was calculated for each tourism business website. Table 22 summarises the findings for tourism businesses in Castledermot and compares the percentages for all businesses in the town. 16 accommodation, hospitality and retail businesses were assessed.

<sup>37</sup> <https://npf.ie/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4c236-our-rural-future-vision-and-policy-context/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/473d3-town-centre-first-policy/>

Table 22 Website Technology Intensity Score - Tourism Businesses (n=16)

<b>Website Technology Intensity Score</b>	<b>% of Tourism Businesses</b>	<b>% of Businesses</b>
Non-existent (0)	43.8	41
Very low (1-2)	0	3
Low (3-4)	12.5	14
Medium (5-7)	18.8	25
High (8-9)	25	14
Very high (10-11)	0	3

Table 22 presents the degree of penetration of different digital technologies featured in the WTIS with comparative data, where available. In addition, the degree of penetration of general businesses in Castledermot is provided to compare tourism businesses with business as a whole in the town.

Table 23 Key Digitisation Take-up Indicators – Tourism Businesses (n=16)

Indicator	% Castledermot Tourism Businesses 2024	% Castledermot Businesses 2024	% DESI Ireland 2024	% DESI EU 2024
A website or homepage	56	58	NA	NA
A website with evidence of sophisticated functions	31	25	NA	NA
A website with evidence of basic analytics	44	39	37.10	33.20
A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics	44	36	NA	NA
A website with evidence of basic online advertising	38	22	NA	NA
A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising	6	6	NA	NA
A website with evidence of selling online	13	19	30	19.1
A website with evidence of social media integration	31	33	NA	NA
A website with evidence of international activity	38	33	NA	NA
A website with evidence of mobile targeting	50	50	NA	NA
A website with evidence of cloud computing	38	36	53.1	38.9
Social media presence	75	69	31.5	31.5

As this report is designed to support the Town Centre First programme, tourism attractions and destination sites listed on TripAdvisor and Google Travel (Things to Do) within 2km of the town centre were also assessed for digital readiness. We recognise that this may exclude tourist attractions that benefit towns in the study however in many cases such tourist attractions also benefit other towns in proximity to the attraction. Consequently, a decision was made to limit it to a 2km distance from the town centre. The tourist attractions assessed include natural amenities or heritage sites, festivals and events, and commercial businesses, amongst others. The DTB assesses whether these destination sites have a discrete web presence and the sophistication of those websites based on the WTIS. 2 such attractions and destination sites were identified for Castledermot; none of which had a discrete website (Table 24).

Table 24 Website Technology Intensity Score - Tourist Attractions (n=2)

Website Technology Intensity Score	% Castledermot Tourism Attractions	% Castledermot All Businesses
Non-existent (0)	0	41
Very low (1-2)	0	3
Low (3-4)	0	14
Medium (5-7)	0	25
High (8-9)	50	14
Very high (10-11)	50	3

### 7.3. SMART TOURISM AND DIGITAL TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

Smart tourism and infrastructure assess the degree to which there is evidence of smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure in the town and at primary tourist destinations within the town. Table 25 presents the list of Smart Tourism and Digital Tourism Infrastructure indicators.

Table 25 Smart Tourism and Digital Tourism Infrastructure Indicators

Indicator	Castledermot
Availability of free public outdoor Wi-Fi	No
Availability of other free public Wi-Fi	Yes
Availability of digital transport or other digital signage	No
Availability of tourism information outside of normal working hours e.g. via a digital kiosk	Yes
Availability of online itineraries	Yes
Availability of town-specific tourism mobile apps	No
Availability of voluntary tourism alert systems	No
Availability of augmented reality tourism services	No
Availability of virtual reality tourism services	No
Availability of QR code-based information services	No

#### 7.4. TOURISM DESTINATION WEBSITE AVAILABILITY AND MATURITY

Tourism destination website availability and maturity measures the extent to which common tourist information and services are available through the town website and the WTIS scores for the town website(s). Castledermot does not have a town destination website. Table 26 summarises the tourism destination website availability and maturity indicators for Castledermot, respectively.

*Table 26 Tourism Destination Website Availability and Maturity Indicators*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Castledermot</b>
Availability of town website or portal	No
Availability of contact form or contact details for town website	No
Availability of local tourist office information	No
Availability of town social media presence	No
Availability of accommodation information	No
Availability of hospitality information	No
Availability of retail information	No
Availability of information on tourist activities or attractions	No
Availability of information on transport to and from the town	No
Availability of information on public Wi-Fi	No
Ability to subscribe for town updates	No
Ability to complete transactions on the town website	No

#### 7.5. OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for digital tourism is **1.7**.

*Table 27 Digital Tourism Dimension Scores*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Score</b>
Digital readiness of tourism businesses	60%	2.6
Smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure	20%	0.9
Tourism destination website and maturity	20%	0.0
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1.7</b>

## 8. GOVERNANCE OF DIGITAL TOWN INITIATIVES

### 8.1. INTRODUCTION

The delivery of complex and multifaceted policy objectives such as digitalisation requires significant coordination among a wide range of stakeholders. As such, it requires appropriate governance mechanisms that enable widespread participation while also guiding the implementation of the policy objectives. The Governance of Digital Town Initiatives measures two types of governance mechanisms - horizontal and vertical integration (Table 28). Horizontal integration refers to integration across different elements of policy making, and across policy and other stakeholders. Vertical integration of policy making refers to the integration across different levels within the governance or policy sphere.

Table 28 Indicators for the Governance of Digital Town Initiatives (Lynn et al. 2022)<sup>40</sup>

	Indicator	Description
Horizontal integration	Coordination of digitalisation	The extent to which different digitalisation initiatives within a town are coordinated
	Citizen participation plan	The extent to which there is a defined plan for involving citizens into digital town initiatives
	Representation and scope	The extent to which different stakeholder types are represented and involved in the planning phase.
	Technical expertise	The extent to which technical expertise is used to assist with the design and development of a community engagement strategy
	Commitment to public engagement	The extent to which digital town initiatives are accessible and communicated to the public
	Commitment to local capacity building	The extent to which digital town initiatives are committed to local capacity building by collaborating with other organisations and communities
	Town-level platform availability	Availability of an integrated town-level platform availability to promote digital initiatives
	Town-level platform maturity	Maturity of the integrated town-level platform availability to promote digital initiatives
Vertical integration	Cross departmental integration	The extent to which different administrative departments contribute to digital town initiatives and management
	Establishment within the local authority	The extent to which digital town initiatives are assigned to one department and resources allocated
	Monitoring and evaluation	The extent to which progress toward a digital town and compliance with requirements is being monitored and reported
	Multilevel government	The extent to which the local authority cooperates with other authorities from different levels

<sup>40</sup> Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Description</b>
	Alignment	The extent to which digital town initiatives are aligned with government policy

For the purposes of the DTB, horizontal integration is weighted 75% and vertical integration is weighted 25%.

## 8.2. HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION

Coordination of digitalisation measures the extent to which different digitalisation initiatives within a town are coordinated. As per 7.4, Castledermot does not have a town destination website. Castledermot has been selected as a target town under the Department of Rural and Community Development. A Kildare County Council Town Regeneration Officer has been appointed, and a Town Centre First Committee comprising local stakeholders is being established indicating representation and a commitment to public engagement. Funding for Castledermot has been allocated by the Department of Rural and Community Development to Kildare County Council. Town Centre First Committees may include local capacity building and digital initiatives.

Table 29 summarises the indicators for horizontal integration of digital town initiatives in Castledermot.

*Table 29 Indicators for Horizontal Integration of Digital Town Initiatives*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Castledermot</b>
Coordination of digitalisation	No
Citizen participation plan	No
Representation and scope	Yes
Technical expertise	No
Commitment to public engagement	Yes
Commitment to local capacity building	No
Town-level platform availability	No
Town-level platform maturity	No

## 8.3. VERTICAL INTEGRATION

A wide number of local authority departments and state agencies contribute to digital initiatives that may impact Castledermot including Kildare County Council, the Department of Rural and Community Development, Fáilte Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, amongst others. Furthermore, Kildare County Council has allocated funds to Castledermot to support its participation in the Town Centre First programme. Eleven

relevant plans and reports were reviewed for evidence of coordination with regards to digitalisation (Table 30). These included:

1. Castledermot Small Town Renewal Masterplan January 2024
2. Kildare Digital Strategy 2020-2025
3. Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029
4. Kildare Corporate Plan 2019-2024
5. County Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan 2024-2029
6. 2020 Vision for Kildare Tourism
7. Kildare County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024
8. Kildare Age Friendly County Strategy 2023-2027
9. Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy
10. Kildare Rural Development Programme
11. Kildare Hub Strategy 2022 to 2025

Digitalisation is well-referenced in many regional reports however Castledermot is not referenced widely in the context of these initiatives with the exception of the Kildare Digital Strategy 2020-2023. In that case, Castledermot is referenced in the context of the BCP and connected communities. While these are notable, digital projects for Castledermot could be more established in other regional thematic reports for prioritisation. Conversely, digitalisation is not a significant consideration in the Castledermot Small Town Renewal Masterplan.

*Table 30 Summary of Digitalisation References in Selected Town-related Reports and Plans*

<b>Document</b>	<b>Geographic Focus</b>	<b>Digital Reference</b>
Castledermot Small Town Renewal Masterplan January 2024	Town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No references to digitalisation.</li> </ul>
Kildare Digital Strategy 2020-2025	County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital strategy organised around five pillars - (1) digital economy, (2) digital infrastructure and connectivity, (3) digital skills, (4) digital society, and (5) digital services. Castledermot is not specifically referenced in the strategy.</li> <li>• Reference to BCP, connected communities, including Castledermot.</li> </ul>

<p>Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029</p>	<p>County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References to developing Kildare as a digital economy hub and leadership ‘hot spot’ by building on the critical mass that exists in the region and capitalising on other assets including education and research sectors.</li> <li>• References to strengthening and supporting Kildare’s digital tourism marketing capability, online presence, and social media platforms.</li> <li>• References to developing the LECP socio-economic baseline data into a Kildare Data Hub.</li> <li>• References to IAA online facility for guidance on aeronautical restrictions.</li> <li>• Reference to support the roll out of Broadband and digital infrastructure, especially in rural areas of the country.</li> <li>• Reference to support the rollout of the National Broadband Plan and the Government’s Digital Ireland Framework, especially in regard to 5G rollout.</li> <li>• Reference to the delivery of high capacity ICT infrastructure, broadband network and digital broadcasting.</li> <li>• Reference to the provision of public Wi-Fi zones.</li> <li>• Reference to the provision of open access fibres connections.</li> <li>• No references to Castledermot.</li> </ul>
<p>County Kildare Local Economic and Community Plan 2024-2029</p>	<p>County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to the Covid-19 pandemic having embedded a more digitized way of working.</li> <li>• Reference to accelerating and expanding digital reforms and transformation as a priority of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.</li> <li>• Reference to County Kildare Digital Strategy 2022-2025.</li> <li>• Reference to improved digital connectivity as part of a supportive framework for Ireland’s Rural Development Policy.</li> <li>• Reference to digital hubs.</li> <li>• Reference to the development of smart economy and digital upskilling on developing towns and villages.</li> <li>• Reference to social media platforms as used for a short online qualitative survey to capture the views of stakeholders.</li> <li>• Reference to Kildare having good broadband connectivity, with some areas identified a key for intervention.</li> </ul>

Kildare Corporate Plan 2019-2024	County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References to accelerating digital delivery of services including greater use of social media, e-payments, mobile apps and online consultative platforms.</li> <li>• References to using ICT to reduce costs, improve operational efficiency, expand online and Cloud enabled services to make it easier for customers to access services and information.</li> <li>• References to delivering enabling infrastructure for a connected community including the development of a Digital Strategy, and enabling the rollout of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure.</li> <li>• References to publishing council documents online, making data available on AIRO and using the online National Building Control Management System.</li> <li>• References to monitoring digital progress e.g. trading online vouchers and online motor tax payments.</li> <li>• No references to Castledermot.</li> </ul>
2020 Vision for Kildare Tourism	County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References to transformation of the existing Into Kildare website into a comprehensive digital marketing platform for Kildare tourism.</li> <li>• References to supporting tourism SMEs to build marketing, sales and digital marketing capabilities.</li> <li>• No references to Castledermot.</li> </ul>
Kildare County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024	County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References to developing a communication infrastructure maintenance plan that considers climate change risks and environmental impacts.</li> <li>• No reference to Castledermot.</li> </ul>
Kildare Age Friendly County Strategy 2023-2027	County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to the difficulty experienced by older people in a digital world, creating problems in accessing public services.</li> <li>• Reference to the provision of digital equipment and community-based digital skills classes to older people.</li> <li>• No reference to Castledermot.</li> </ul>

Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy	County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic strategy designed around three enabling actions - (1) investment in place (placemaking, quality of life, enabling infrastructure, and digitally supported communities), (2) investment in people (education, training and skills), and (3) bidding capacity for funds (strengthen bidding capacity in utilising competitive based funding resources at national and EU level).</li> <li>• References to supporting Kildare SMEs undertake transformational digitalisation and develop digital proficiencies through training and other support.</li> <li>• References to enabling retailers to adopt online business models and accelerate online retail.</li> <li>• References to identifying suitable locations and support for the provision of co-working facilities incl. 10 connected innovation and digital hubs.</li> <li>• References to creating bespoke digital marketing material to promote Kildare.</li> <li>• References to supporting the rollout of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure throughout the County and creating a Digital Strategy.</li> <li>• Reference to a network of connected digital hubs/eHubs and eWorking centres.</li> </ul>
Kildare Rural Development Programme	County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No substantive reference to Castledermot.</li> <li>• Reference to improving services in rural communities through digital innovation.</li> <li>• Reference to weakness in digital connectivity in rural areas compared to urban ones.</li> </ul>
Kildare Hub Strategy 2022 to 2025	County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References to Broadband Connection Point (BCP) at Bigstone Community Centre in Castledermot.</li> <li>• Reference to the importance of a website and branding as a component to promoting a network of hubs.</li> <li>• Reference to several of the other plans, as well as the National Broadband 2019.</li> <li>• Reference to a Broadband Officer in Kildare County Council.</li> <li>• Reference to supporting digitalisation in SME's.</li> <li>• Reference to supporting a 'Smart or Digital Recovery'.</li> <li>• Reference to a network of connected Innovation and Digital Hubs in the county.</li> <li>• Reference to the key focus areas for Local Digital Strategies include implementation of the National Broadband Plan; enhancement of the digital economy, employment and enterprise through digitalisation and innovation and technology transfer; and the development of digital &amp; ICT skills in the labour force and among citizens.</li> <li>• Reference to bringing exposure to digital content and technology into a community</li> <li>• Reference to DRCD using the Digital Innovation Programme.</li> <li>• Reference to adapting library services, particularly, assistive technologies, innovation spaces, digital suites and hot-desk facilities.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References to local connections including local business community, local authority, diaspora, digital champions and other stakeholders that would bring benefit and visibility to the individual hubs and the network.</li> <li>• Reference to hubs as focal points for building digital economy networks &amp; ecosystems.</li> <li>• Reference to Digital First as part of the Guiding Principles.</li> <li>• Reference to Investment Action Items; BCPs, Digital Innovation Funding/ Disruptive Tech Fund, Local Digital Strategies and developing a tech toolkit for new and upgrading hubs.</li> <li>• Reference to Central procurement of a suite of cloud based information technology systems, including online automated booking engine for hot-desk rental, support &amp; training, network events, a CRM toolkit for external communications and client engagement.</li> <li>• Reference to suggested training supports for modules such as Digital &amp; Creative Skills.</li> <li>• Reference to Digital Campaigns content development for K-Hub Awareness Campaigns.</li> <li>• References to the development of Hub network throughout.</li> <li>• Reference to Hubs providing high value employment as clients start, grow, scale and exit.</li> </ul>
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Table 31 summarises the indicators for vertical integration of digital town initiatives in Castledermot. While the score for vertical integration is high, this reflects the fact that Castledermot was designated for Town Centre First Team and this DTB assessment is being completed in support of this effort.

*Table 31 Indicators for vertical integration of digital town initiatives*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Castledermot</b>
Cross departmental integration	Yes
Establishment within the local authority	Yes
Monitoring and evaluation	Yes
Multilevel government	Yes
Alignment	Yes

#### 8.4. OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for governance is **3.1**.

*Table 32 Governance of Digital Initiatives Dimension Scores*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Score</b>
Horizontal integration	75%	2.5
Vertical integration	25%	5.0
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3.1</b>

## 9. DIGITAL TOWN SCORE

A key objective of this analysis is to provide an insight into key indicators for improvement at a town-level. The numbers individually have very little meaning without comparators however as presented do show gaps between performance today and potential in the future. Table 33 provides a guideline for interpreting the readiness score and dimension levels in Figure 4 and Table 34. Please note that as this abridged report does not include subsections of analysis on e-government in Digital Public Services and analysis of pre-primary, primary and secondary education in Digital Education, the calculations for weightings for the dimensions (W2) differ from the full Digital Town Blueprint in TCF Phase 1. Specifically, Digital Public Services is weighted at 5% (compared to 15%) and Digital Education is weighted at 5% (compared to 15%). To counter this, Vertical and Horizontal Integration is weighted higher at 30% (compared to 10%) as this dimension recognises alignment with local and national government initiatives and priorities.

Table 33 Guideline Readiness Descriptions by Readiness Score and Dimension Level

Dimension Level	Readiness	Guideline Description
1	Non-Existent	<p><b>Digital Readiness is Non-Existent or at a Very Low Level.</b></p> <p>The use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities likely do not exist. If they do exist, they are at very low levels of use and sophistication, largely informal and not documented, managed or measured at a town level. KPIs are significantly below regional, national or EU averages.</p>
2	Ad Hoc	<p><b>Digital Readiness is Ad Hoc and Mostly Not Documented.</b></p> <p>Some evidence of digital readiness in the use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities. Most are not documented and not managed. Performance may be measured and reviewed periodically but mostly informally. KPIs are below regional, national or EU averages.</p>
3	Defined Competitive	<p><b>Digital Readiness is Clearly Defined and Documented</b></p> <p>There is clear evidence of digital readiness. Use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities are documented and planned. KPIs are competitive relative to peer towns and regional, national and EU averages.</p>
4	Significant Differentiating	<p><b>Digital Readiness is Clearly Differentiating and Significant</b></p> <p>The use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities and levels of digitalisation are significant and clearly differentiating compared to peers. KPIs are higher relative to peer towns and regional, national and EU averages.</p>

5	Leading	<b>Digital Readiness is Leading</b> The use and sophistication of digital technologies and sophistication and levels of digitalisation are best-in-class and approaching optimum states/full digitisation with clear plans for further optimisation. KPIs are at the highest levels when compared to peers and regional, national and EU averages.
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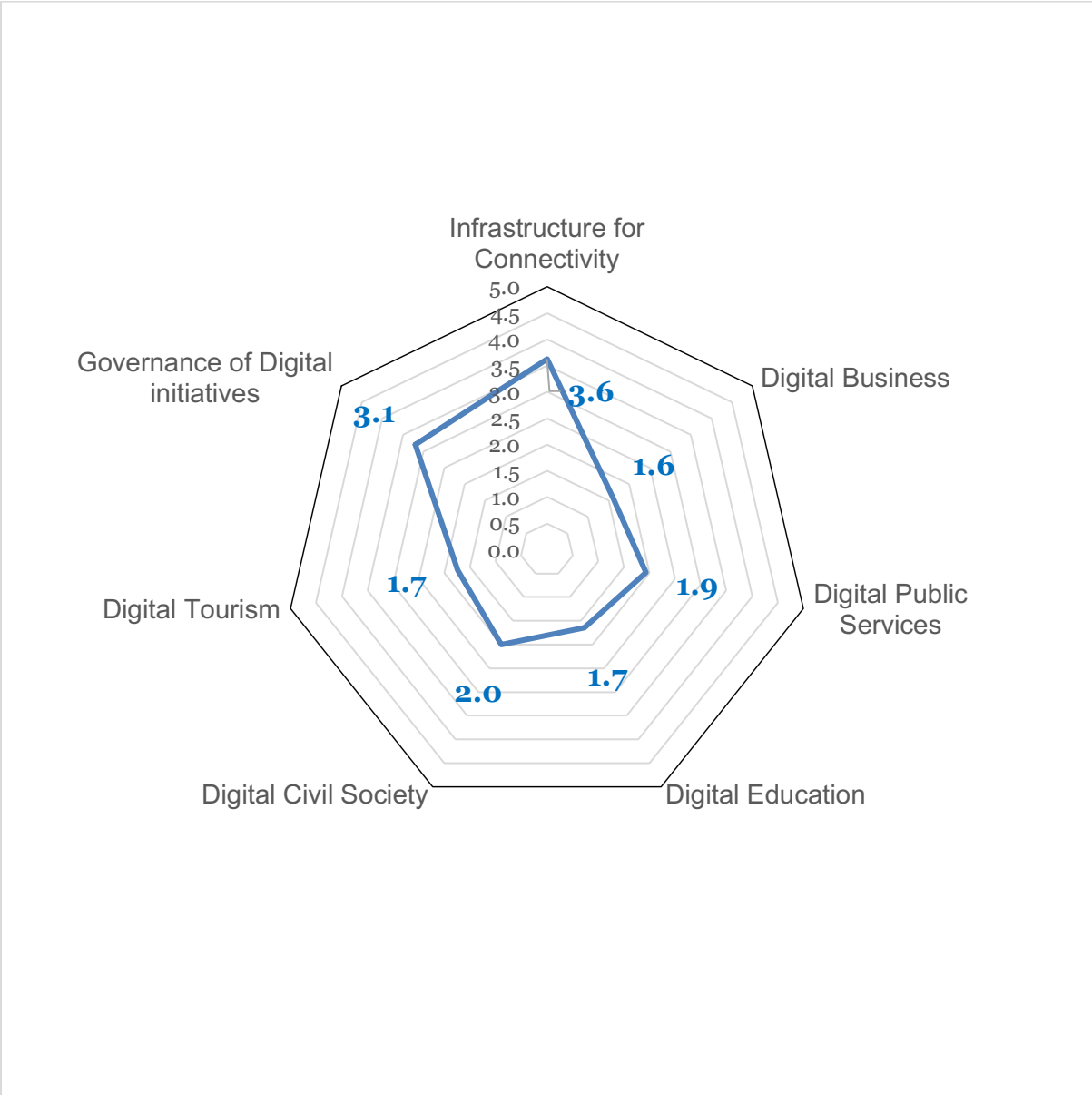


Figure 4 Castledermot Digital Town Readiness Dimension Score

Table 34 Digital Town Readiness Index with Weightings

Digital Town Dimension	Sub-dimension			Dimension	Readiness Score			Readiness
	Score (out of 5)	W1 Weighting	Weighted score	Score	W2 Dimension Weighting	Weighted score	out of	Score Contribution by each dimension
<b>Infrastructure for Connectivity</b>								
Fixed broadband	4.5	35%	1.58	3.6	20%	0.7	1.0	14.5
Mobile broadband	3.5	35%	1.23					
Competition	4.8	10%	0.48					
Free Public WiFi	3.5	10%	0.35					
Digital rural hubs	0.0	10%	0.00					
<b>Digital Business</b>								
Website Technology Intensity Score	2.2	33%	0.73	1.6	20%	0.3	1.0	6.4
Digital technology take-up	0.6	33%	0.20					
eCommerce take-up	2.0	33%	0.67					
<b>Digital Public Services</b>								
e-Health	2.4	67%	1.60	1.9	5%	0.1	0.25	1.9
Open data	1.0	33%	0.33					
<b>Digital Education</b>								
Digital skills courses for young people	1.7	25%	0.41	1.7	5%	0.1	0.25	1.7
Vocational and further education digital skills course	1.7	25%	0.41					
Digital skills courses for seniors	1.7	25%	0.41					
Other digital skills courses	1.7	25%	0.41					
<b>Digital Civil Society</b>								
Website Technology Intensity Score	2.1	33%	0.70	2.0	10%	0.2	0.5	4.0
Digital technology take-up	1.9	33%	0.63					
eCommerce take-up	2.0	33%	0.67					
<b>Digital Tourism</b>								
Digital readiness of Tourism Businesses	2.6	60%	1.56	1.7	10%	0.2	0.5	3.5
Smart Tourism & Digital Infrastructure	0.9	20%	0.18					
Tourism destination website and maturity	0	20%	0.00					
<b>Governance of DT initiatives</b>								
Horizontal integration	2.5	75%	1.90	3.1	30%	0.9	1.5	18.6
Vertical integration	5.0	25%	1.30					
					100%	2.5	5.0	50.6



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development

# Digital Town Blueprint 2024

SUMMARY REPORT

Castledermot, Co. Kildare





# Contents

- 2 Introduction
- 3 Understanding your Digital Readiness Score
- 4 Visualisation of Dimension Scores
- 5 Castledermot's Digital Readiness Score
- 9 Comparison of the 26 Phase 2 Towns
- 10 Digital Town Case Studies
- 12 About .ie and the Researchers

# Introduction

To help town leaders and policymakers embed their own digital town programmes and action plans in empirical data, we partnered with the Irish Institute of Digital Business at DCU to fully explore the concept and value of the 'digital town' through a comprehensive research project. It is the first research of its kind in Europe.



Our goals were to define the digital town; develop the metrics to measure a town's digital readiness; and explore the potential impacts of digitalisation on a town from a variety of socio-economic perspectives.

The Department of Rural and Community Affairs (DRCD), recognising the value and impact of this approach, has funded a Digital Town Blueprint assessment for 26 additional towns as part of the Town Centre First Policy.

In doing so, we created the .ie Digital Town Blueprint, a framework that uses primary and secondary data to measure a particular town's digital readiness. The Digital Town Blueprint is designed to be used by town leaders and policymakers to assess their own towns, thereby facilitating the creation and effective rollout of a local digital strategy and action plan.

**The Digital Town Blueprint has been designed to help towns rapidly and cost-effectively**



Understand their current digital town readiness and digital competitiveness



Compare their town against Irish and international benchmarks



Stimulate stakeholder engagement on digitalisation

“There is also the opportunity to utilise technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, and to integrate digital technology into daily commercial and social life. Digital technology can improve the quality and accessibility of services, and can be used to address challenges faced by our towns, providing them with new roles in the digital economy”

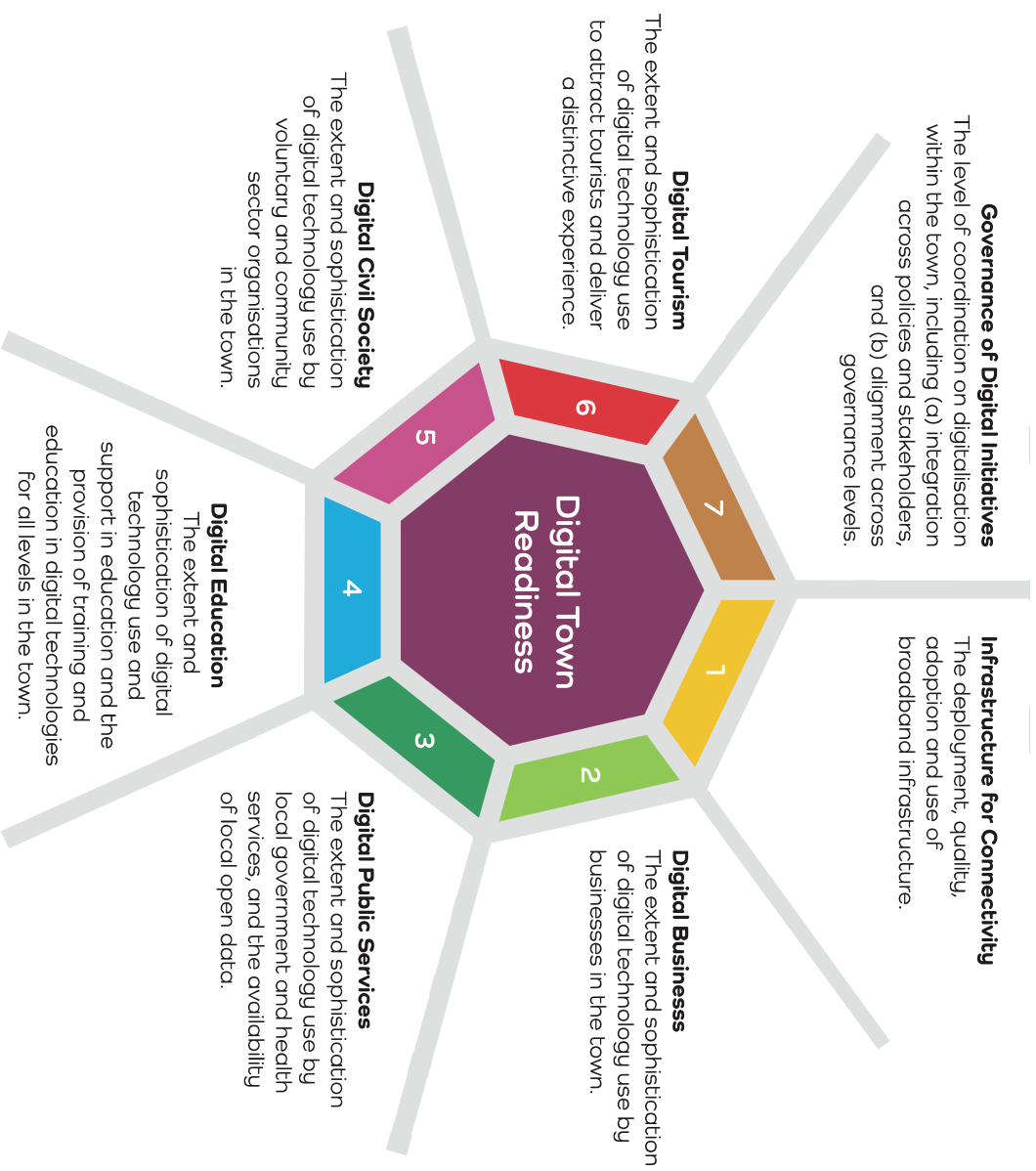
**Town Centre First, A Policy Approach for Irish Towns**

# Understanding your Digital Readiness Score

## Digital Town Blueprint Dimensions

The Digital Town Blueprint analyses digital readiness across seven dimensions. This is accomplished through a combination of primary research, desk research, secondary data, key informant interviews and automated data collection techniques. The findings of the assessment are synthesised into a digital town readiness score and assessment report.

**Note:** For the purposes of this report and to be consistent with Town Centre First, measurements are calculated within a 2km radius of the town centre for each town.

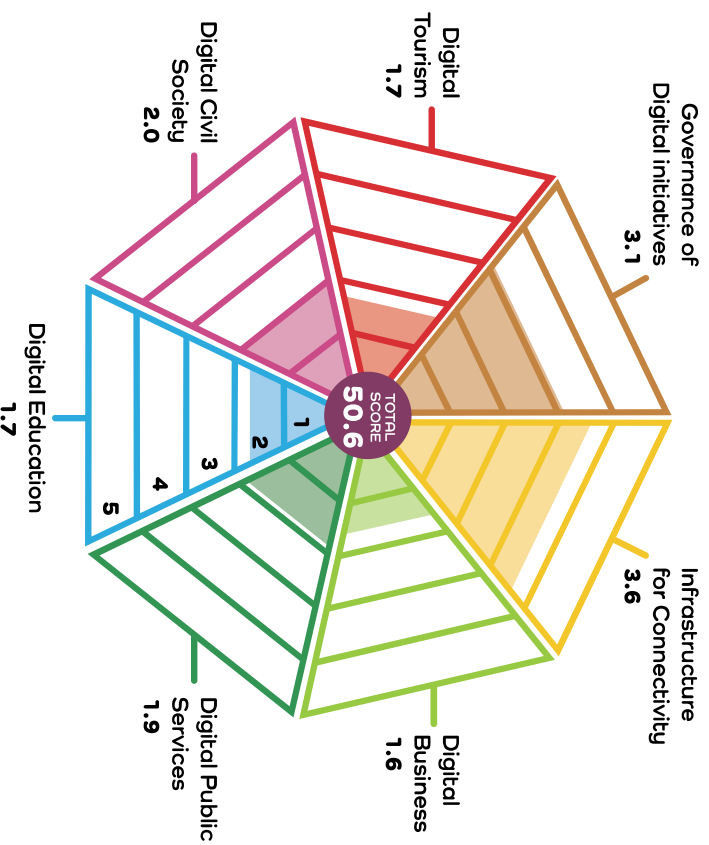


## Visualisation of Dimension Scores

Based on the analysis of the Digital Town Blueprint, an overall Digital Town readiness score can be attributed to the town. This score, and supporting observations, provides an important insight into key indicators for improvement at town level.

This final score is a weighted average of each of the dimension scores (1-5), rescaled out of 100 for easier interpretation. The weighting for each dimension is applied based on the peer-reviewed academic analysis and assessment.

### Castledermot, Co. Kildare



## Website Technology Intensity Score

The Web Technology Intensity Score (WTIS) seeks to use an organisation's decision to use a website and associated technologies as a proxy for its degree of digitalisation. At its core, the WTIS comprises eleven indicators that measure the digital readiness of organisations in Ireland applying widely used signals for digital sophistication. These include:

### WTIS: 11 digital readiness indicators



# How the Dimensions are weighted

Digital Town Dimension	Score out of 5	% Weighting	Weighted score	Score	Maximum % Score	Castledermot's % Score
<b>Infrastructure for Connectivity</b>						
Fixed broadband	4.5	35%	1.58	<b>3.6</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>14.5</b>
Mobile broadband	3.5	35%	1.23			
Competition	4.8	10%	0.48			
Free Public WiFi	3.5	10%	0.35			
Digital rural hubs	0.0	10%	0.00			
<b>Digital Business</b>						
Website Technology Intensity Score	2.2	33%	0.73	<b>1.6</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>6.4</b>
Digital technology take-up	0.6	33%	0.20			
eCommerce take-up	2.0	33%	0.67			
<b>Digital Public Services</b>						
e-Health	2.4	67%	1.60	<b>1.9</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1.9</b>
Open data	1.0	33%	0.33			
<b>Digital Education</b>						
Digital skills courses for young people	1.7	25%	0.41	<b>1.7</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Vocational and further education digital skills courses	1.7	25%	0.41			
Digital skills courses for seniors	1.7	25%	0.41			
Other digital skills courses	1.7	25%	0.41			
<b>Digital Civil Society</b>						
Website Technology Intensity Score	2.1	33%	0.70	<b>2.0</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>4.0</b>
Digital technology take-up	1.9	33%	0.63			
eCommerce take-up	2.0	33%	0.67			
<b>Digital Tourism</b>						
Digital readiness of Tourism Businesses	2.6	60%	1.56	<b>1.7</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>3.5</b>
Smart Tourism & Digital Infrastructure	0.9	20%	0.18			
Tourism destination website & maturity	0	20%	0.00			
<b>Digital Governance</b>						
Horizontal Integration	2.5	75%	1.90	<b>3.1</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>18.6</b>
Vertical Integration	5.0	25%	1.30			
					<b>100%</b>	<b>50.6%</b>

Each dimension is allocated a percentage out of 100, based on the relative importance of the dimension. For example, Infrastructure for Connectivity is given 20% whereas Digital Civil Society is allocated 10%.

Each (sub) dimension has a number of indicators, each of which is allocated a percentage weighting out of a total of 100. See 'W1 Weighting' column.

Scores are calculated from 1-5.



# Key Findings: Castledermot

## Infrastructure for Connectivity

### ➤ Fixed broadband

There is 100% Fixed broadband coverage in Castledermot. This compares well with the EU average of 97.7%.

### ➤ Mobile broadband

There is near universal mobile broadband coverage in Castledermot. However, this coverage displays variability across townlands in relation to data speed.

### ➤ Competition

There are 11 providers offering their services in Castledermot. Of these, 4 offer 5G.

### ➤ Free Public WiFi

Public WiFi is available in municipal buildings. However, it is not available outdoors, at accommodation, hospitalty, retail or tourism sites.

### ➤ Digital rural hubs

There is no connected hub in the town.



## Digital Business

### ➤ Website Technology Intensity Score

83% of the 36 businesses analysed had some sort of online presence. 42% scored medium, high or very high in relation to digital sophistication.

### ➤ Digital technology take-up

69% have a social media presence. 50% show evidence of mobile targeting.

### ➤ eCommerce take-up

19% show evidence of the ability to sell online.



## Digital Public Services

### ➤ e-Health

6 healthcare providers were analysed. 67% use e-prescriptions as well as digital data transfer. 17% offer online consultations.

### ➤ Open data

Irish public sector bodies are required to adhere to the principle that public sector data should be open by design and default. A review of relevant plans and reports showed two open datasets, which related to weather data.



# Key Findings: Castledermot

## Digital Education

- **Digital skills courses for young people**  
E-learning courses are available at Castledermot, but there is no evidence that these are targeted at young people. Colaiste Lorcain does not offer computer science at junior or senior cycle.
- **Vocational and further education digital skills courses**  
There is no evidence of vocational or further education in digital skills. Digital skills are crucial for the economy. 40% of all job adverts explicitly mention digital skills.
- **Digital skills courses for seniors**  
There is no evidence of digital skills aimed specifically at seniors.
- **Other digital skills courses**  
Yes.



## Digital Tourism

- **Digital readiness of Tourism Businesses**  
16 accommodation, hospitality and retail businesses were assessed. 100% scored high or very high in relation to digital sophistication.
- **Smart Tourism and Digital Infrastructure**  
While free public WiFi is available in municipal buildings, other smart tourism infrastructure such as digital signage and kiosks, online itineraries, mobile apps, augmented and virtual reality and QR codes are not used.
- **Tourism destination website and maturity**  
Castledermot does not have a destination website.



## Digital Civil Society

- **Website Technology Intensity Score**  
16 social and voluntary groups were identified. 69% have a low, very low or non-existent score in relation to digital sophistication.
- **Digital technology take-up**  
94% use social media. 44% show evidence of mobile targeting.
- **eCommerce take-up**  
31% show evidence of the ability to sell online.



## Governance of Digital Initiatives

- **Horizontal integration**  
Coordination of digitalisation measures the extent to which different digitalisation initiatives within a town are coordinated. While the evidence does not show digital coordination, Castledermot has been selected as a target town under the Town Centre First Initiative.
- **Vertical integration**  
This refers to cross-departmental integration. Nine relevant plans and reports were analysed. Castledermot was mentioned, specifically in relation to BCP and connected communities.



# This report can be used to...



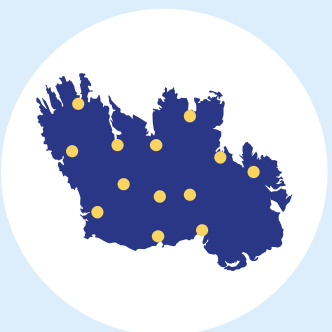
**1**

**Stimulate stakeholder engagement and empower towns on digitalisation.**



**2**

**Prioritise digital initiatives and apply for funding**



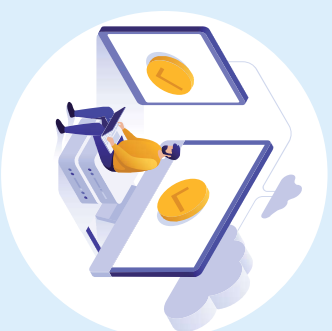
**3**

**Align activities with national and county-level strategies, plans and initiatives**



**4**

**Benchmark progress and performance**



**5**

**Understand their current digital town readiness and digital competitiveness and address the gaps**

## **For Town Teams**

The Blueprint provides empirical data on the potential of digital to shape the future of local communities and local businesses.

## **For Town Regeneration Officers**

The Blueprint's findings can be used to support and develop the digital vision of the Town Teams and help prioritise local digital initiatives.

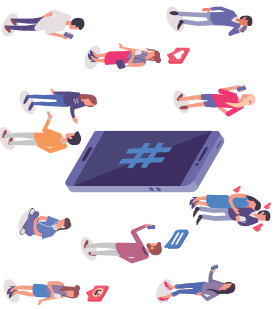
## **For Local Authorities**

Local authorities can use the Blueprint reports to identify digitalisation strategies to help regenerate and develop local towns and villages.

## Comparison of the 26 Towns in Phase 2

Town	Infrastructure for Connectivity (out of 5)	Digital Business (out of 5)	Digital Public Services (out of 5)	Digital Education (out of 5)	Digital Civil Society (out of 5)	Digital Tourism (out of 5)	Governance of Digital Initiatives (out of 5)	Overall Score (out of 100)
Athenry	4	2.4	2.1	2.7	2.3	1.3	2.2	51
Baginbinstown	3.9	2.3	1.7	2.2	1.8	1.6	2.2	49
Ballybay	3.5	1	2.1	2	1.7	1.8	3.1	48
Ballyhaunis	3.7	1.7	1.8	2.6	0.9	1.7	3.6	53
Ballymahon	3.4	2.4	1.6	2.2	0.4	1.6	2.2	44
Ballymote	3.5	1.2	1.6	2.6	1.2	1.3	2.2	41
Carrick-on-Suir	3.8	1.2	1.8	2.7	2.1	2	2.9	50
Castledermot	3.6	1.6	1.9	1.7	2	1.7	3.1	51
Castlepollard	3.5	0.9	1.7	1.7	2.8	1.8	2.3	44
Castlerea	4	2.2	1.9	2.5	1.5	2	2.4	51
Clogherhead	3.5	0.7	2.2	2.2	3	1.9	2.9	49
Courtown-Riverchapel	3.5	2.3	1.7	1.3	2.2	1.8	4.1	59
Dunmore East	3.7	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.1	2.1	2.7	48
Dunshaughlin	4.1	2.3	2.3	2.7	2.3	1.8	2.7	55
Ferbane	3.7	0.8	1.9	1.9	1.7	2	3.1	48
Glenties	3.7	0.6	1.7	1.8	2.1	1.7	2.4	43
Graiguenamanagh	3.7	0.9	1.7	2.2	1.8	1.5	2.2	42
Kanturk	4	0.7	1.4	1.8	2.2	2	2.7	47
Kenmare	4.2	2.3	1.8	2.5	1.9	2.3	3.6	60
Killeshandra	3.6	0.6	1.7	1.7	1.9	1	2.2	39
Kilrush	4.1	1.7	1.6	2.5	0.7	1.5	2.7	48
Manorhamilton	4.3	2	1.6	1.9	1.4	2	3.1	54
Mounthellick	3.5	1.3	1.7	2.2	1.9	2	3.6	52
Newtownmounthkennedy	4.2	2.5	1.8	0	2.6	1.4	2	49
Rathkeale	3.5	0.8	1.8	2.1	1.7	2.2	3.6	50
Rush	3.8	2.3	1.9	2	2.5	1.7	2.2	50
Average	3.8	1.6	1.8	2.1	1.8	1.8	2.8	49
TCF 1 Average	3.8	1.2	2.8	2.5	1.2	0.9	2.4	45

# Digital Town Case Studies



## Mobile Coverage Blackspot

MALINBEG, CO. DONEGAL

<b>FUNDING BY</b>	<b>DRCD Digital Innovation Programme</b>
<b>FUNDING AWARDED</b>	<b>€35,000</b>

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Improve cellular range and minimise blackspots
- ▶ Add positively to rural society and economy via digital connectivity

### WHAT

The project was initiated as part of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. The taskforce was set up to develop mobile phone coverage of benefit to the local community and enterprise. Partnering with telecoms operator Vodafone, Malinbeg was connected to the mobile broadband network via a new mast. Giving all relevant stakeholders equal share of voice was critical to the project's successful and expedited implementation.



## 'Digital Points'

WILD ATLANTIC WAY

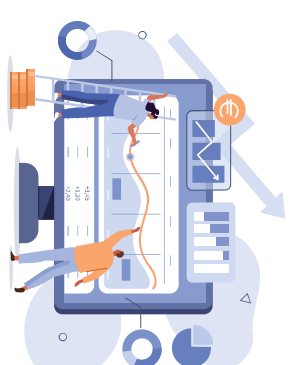
<b>FUNDING BY</b>	<b>DRCD Digital Innovation Programme</b>
<b>FUNDING AWARDED</b>	<b>€35,000</b>

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Map the area on a user-friendly and accessible digital platform
- ▶ Establish and create a greater number of digital points for tourists to access information about the sites they visit
- ▶ Digitally enhance the tourist experience through innovative use of digital technology to bring real, sustainable benefits to local communities

### WHAT

This project features interactive digital mapping on different signs along the Wild Atlantic Way. The signs have visible QR codes or iTags that connect to an interactive platform with information, facts, activities, and amenities specific to the local area and points of discovery. The best sights to visit on the route, such as Blasket's View, are known as Discovery Points.



## Asset Mapping

CO. WESTMEATH

<b>FUNDING BY</b>	<b>DRCD Digital Innovation Programme</b>
<b>FUNDING AWARDED</b>	<b>€52,600</b>

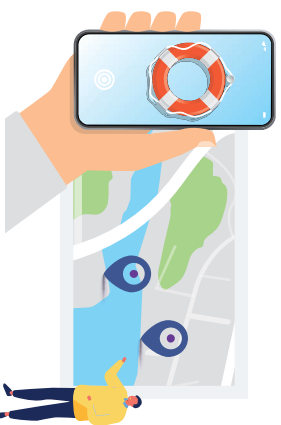
### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Combine datasets across the county into a digital reporting tool with the express purpose of monitoring funding effectiveness
- ▶ Implement geocodes for assets and information streamlining
- ▶ Provide Business Intelligence (BI) dashboards for County Council decision makers and a public web portal to enhance communications

### WHAT

All funding assets will be assigned a geocode to create an overall "digital Funding system". This digital tool will record details of all items funded, their funding source, allocation, receiving communities, photos/ images/ video reels, celebration/ launch and impact.

# Digital Town Case Studies



## Ring Buoy Theft Prevention

CO. SLIGO

<b>FUNDING BY</b>	<b>DRCD Digital Programme</b>
<b>FUNDING AWARDED</b>	<b>€120,000</b>

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To reduce and prevent the theft of life buoys in order to lower the risk of drowning and save lives.
- ▶ To reduce the cost of replacing stolen life buoys.

### WHAT

The Smart Ring Buoy technology works through low-cost sensors paired with a mobile, map-based platform with real time monitoring. It will alert Water Safety officers when ring buoys are tampered with or go missing and ensure their timely replacement. The technology will also reduce the number of manual checks that need to be made annually.



## Smart Skills for Farming

CO. TIPPERARY

<b>FUNDING BY</b>	<b>Not clear on website who funded</b>
<b>FUNDING AWARDED</b>	<b>€24,000</b>

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ The purpose of this project is to support the implementation of a new Digital Skills Training Programme in the use of new digital technologies in Irish agriculture in rural County Tipperary.
- ▶ To enable access to the use of digital technologies for smart farming in rural County Tipperary.

### WHAT

The programme will support the production of a number of YouTube training videos on all aspects of Smart Agriculture IoT- (Internet of Things) based Network Solutions will be produced which will initially be shown and launched in the BCPs (Broadband Connection Points).



## Trim Air Quality Monitoring

CO. MEATH

<b>FUNDING BY</b>	<b>DRCD Programme 2021 and Meath County Council</b>
<b>FUNDING AWARDED</b>	<b>€163,518</b>

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Prevent the development of health issues related to exposure to urban air pollution.
- ▶ Develop an air quality index for Trim.

### WHAT

By collecting this data, it will be possible to inform further policy on climate change solutions and interventions likely to be successful. Thereby air quality will improve and emissions will be lower. Enhancing the experience of living in a town, Trim is an exemplar in utilising digitalisation for improved quality of life delivery.

# Town Centre First

The Town Centre First (TCF) policy is a major cross-government policy that aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into our town centres. It supports “Our Rural Future”, Ireland’s rural development policy which is integral to our national economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being.



**Lár Baile ar dtús**  
**Town Centre First**

It advocates for a holistic, place-based approach to sustainable rural development.

The policy seeks to support towns of all sizes, recognising each town is unique and diverse and acknowledges that a “one size fits all” approach will not achieve sustainable and thriving communities.

The Digital Town Blueprint research was funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development 2024 to support the objectives of the Town Centre First suite of supports.

## About the Researchers

The Irish Institute of Digital Business is a University Designated Research Centre located in Dublin City University. It is an internationally recognised centre of excellence for theoretical and applied research that investigates and accelerates the adoption of digital technologies and the transformation of business and society using these technologies.

J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics at University of Galway is energised by its regional edge on the west coast of Ireland. It is a globally engaged School of Business and Economics for the public good that makes a transformative impact for students, society and business.

As the trusted national registry for over 330,000 domain names, .ie protects Ireland’s unique online identity and empowers people, communities and businesses connected with Ireland to thrive and prosper online. A positive driving force in Ireland’s digital economy, .ie serves as a profit for good organisation with a mission to elevate Ireland’s digital identity by providing the Irish online community with a trusted, resilient and accessible .ie internet domain.







# Castledermot Town Centre First Plan

## Mobility Report

Issue P01 – 06 November 2025  
Doc Ref.: 4421-MHT-T-RPT-01-P1

Prepared For:

Metropolitan Workshop on behalf of Kildare County Council



# CASTLEDERMOT TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN

## MOBILITY REPORT

### Quality Assurance Page

Issue	Date	Prepared By	Checked By	Approved By	Remarks
P01	06/11/2025	Mr. L. Murren	Ms. C. Forsyth	Ms. C. Rollo	Draft for project / client team review

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

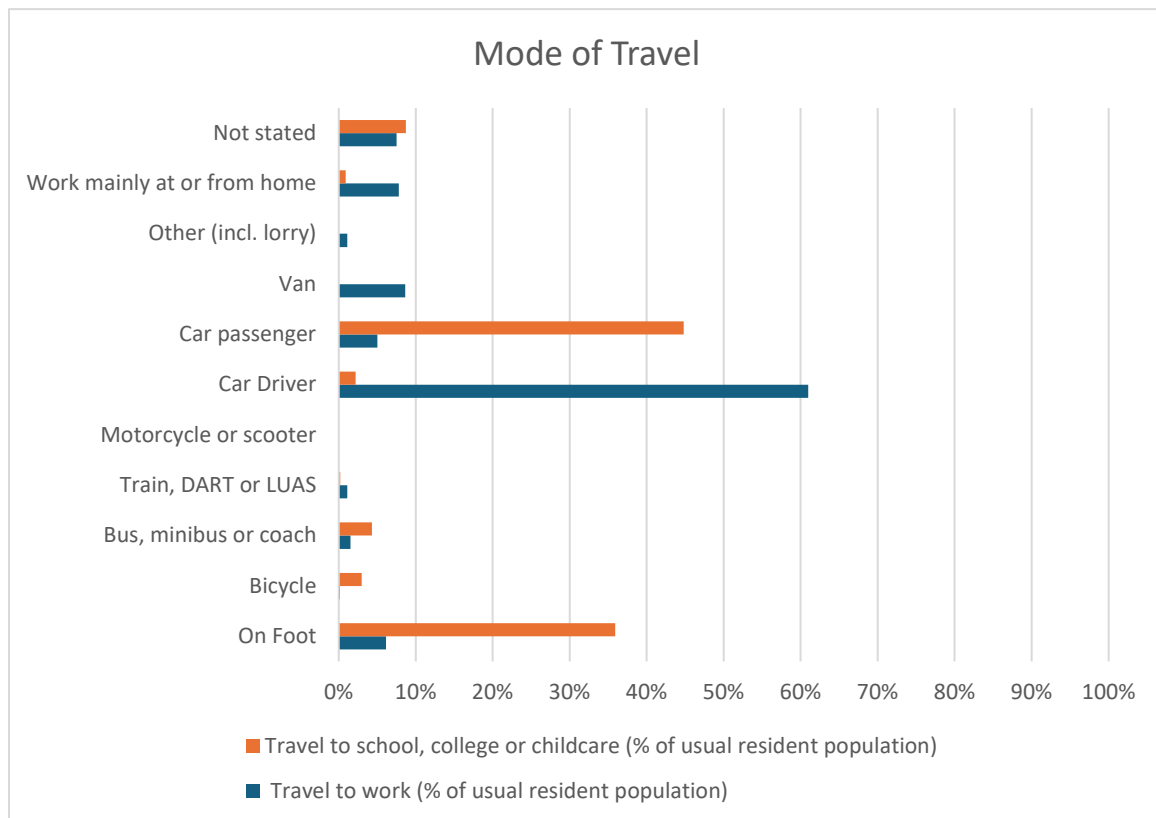
Meinhardt has been commissioned by Metropolitan Workshop on behalf of Kildare County Council (KCC) to provide mobility planning input in support of the Castledermot Town Centre First Plan (Castledermot TCFP). This report summarises the context setting for getting things moving in Castledermot along with the mobility approach / next steps for relevant Castledermot TCFP Projects and Actions.

## 1.2 Castledermot Context

Castledermot has a population of 1,685 people (Census, 2022) and is a Service Centre for the wider hinterland; this means people who don't live in the town are travelling to Castledermot to access schools, health, retail and community facilities.

Castledermot is a compact town with most homes less than a 20-minute walk (circa 1,600m) from the town's Market Square. The R448 bisects the town; this Regional Road not only serves the town but accommodates through traffic including Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs).

Figure 1-1 shows how Castledermot residents are travelling to work and school. This figure shows that approximately 6% of residents walk to work, the State equivalent figure is 9%<sup>1</sup> thus demonstrating that residents are living and working in the town and are already embracing walking for short journeys. For those travelling to school walking is the dominant mode.



**Figure 1-1: Mode of Travel to Work and School / College / Childcare**

Source: Census, 2022<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2023pressreleases/pressstatementcensus2022resultsprofile7-employmentoccupationsandcommuting/>  
<sup>2</sup> Census data is from <https://www.cso.ie/>

Figure 1-2 shows the context of Castledermot in relation to nearby major population centres – Athy, Carlow and Tullow. Castledermot is situated approximately 63km southwest (as the crow flies) of Dublin City Centre. Figure 1-3 shows the local Castledermot town context.



Figure 1-2: Strategic Context

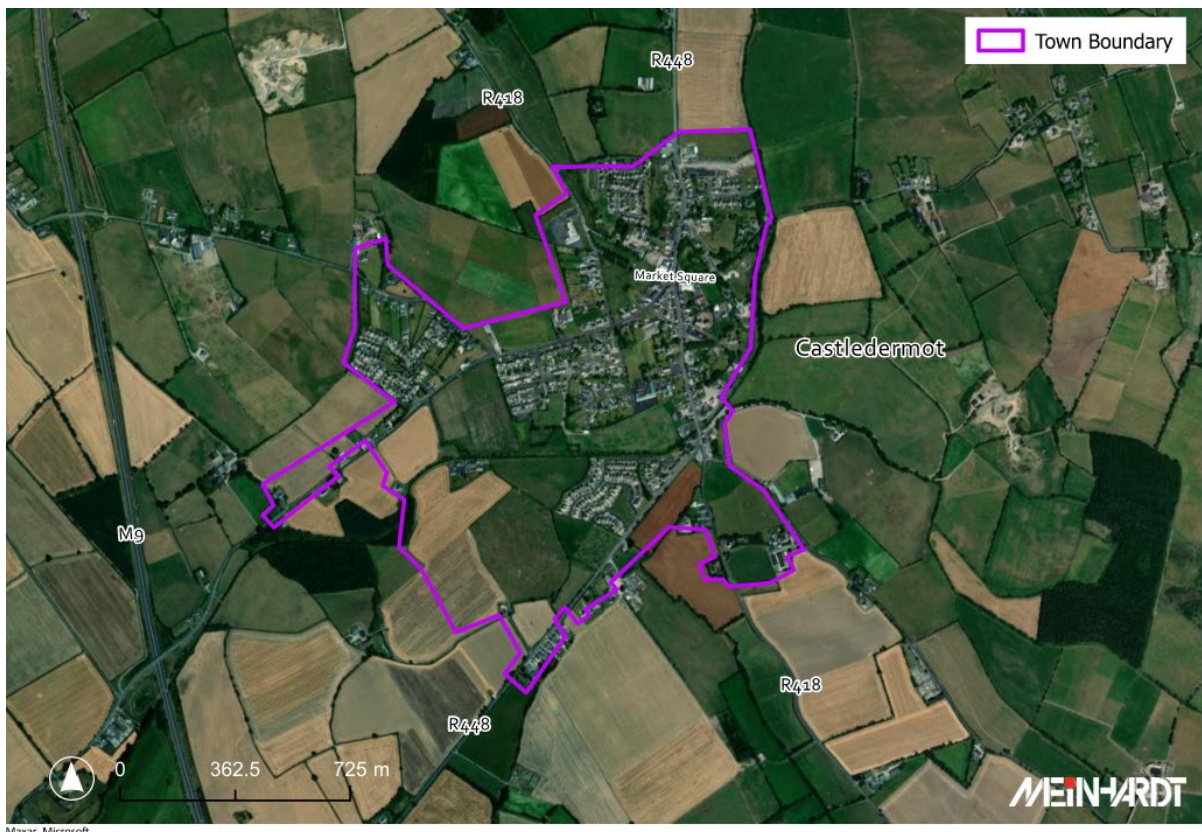


Figure 1-3: Local Context

Figure 1-4 provides an overview of key amenities and facilities in Castledermot.



**Figure 1-4: Castledermot Points of Interest**

### 1.2.1 Active Travel

As Castledermot is a compact town, walking and cycling are viable modes for short local journeys. Catchment maps shown in Figures 1-5 to 1-9 show walking distances and routes from key residential areas to points of interest in the town. Note 400m is an approximate 5-minute walk, 800m is an approximate 10-minute walk. Natural severance in the form of the River Leer limits integration opportunities for walking and cycling and means traffic is intensified at key points on the road network. Moreover, the nature of new housing estates with only one point of access is also not conducive to active travel permeability.



Figure 1-5: Walking Catchment from Coill Diarmada



Figure 1-6: Walking Catchment from St Johns





**Figure 1-9: Walking Catchment from Abbeylands**

For those travelling from beyond Castledermot cycling is possible on the road carriageway however distance from other population centres, vehicle speeds and the undulating nature of the road network is not conducive to supporting cycling across all age groups or abilities from out-with the town boundary. Thus, the focus of Castledermot TCFP Projects and Actions is on encouraging and supporting active travel for local journeys.

Active travel infrastructure availability and quality is mixed in the town and there are challenges in terms of footway width, street furniture, crossing points and dropped kerbs. A Walkability Audit was undertaken in June 2025 by the Town Team, a summary of the Audit findings is included in Chapter 3.

### 1.2.2 Public Transport

Figure 1-10 shows bus routes, services and stops in Castledermot. Bus stop infrastructure is of a good standard with seating (north and southbound) and shelter (northbound only) provided however there are only two stops serving the town. Timetable information is shown in Table 1-1. Bus passengers were observed as part of the data collection exercise informing the Castledermot TCFP and are summarised in Chapter 3.



**Figure 1-10: Bus Stops, Routes and Services**

Route	First Bus	Last Bus	Approximate Frequency
No. 736 – Northbound Dublin Airport – Waterford (Via Castledermot)	Monday-Sunday: 17:10	Monday-Sunday: 19:20	Monday-Sunday: 3 services (PM)
No. 736 – Southbound Waterford – Dublin Airport (Via Castledermot)	Monday-Sunday: 02:50	Monday-Sunday: 06:40	Monday-Sunday: 3 services (AM)
No. 880 – Northbound Carlow – Naas (Via Castledermot)	Monday-Saturday: 07:16 Sunday: 08:46	Monday-Thursday: 19:46 Friday & Saturday: 22:01 Sunday: 17:16	Monday-Sunday: Every 120 minutes
No. 880 – Southbound Naas – Carlow (Via Castledermot)	Monday-Saturday: 08:21 Sunday: 09:36	Monday-Thursday: 20:36 Friday & Saturday: 00:17 Sunday: 18:06	Monday-Sunday: Every 120 minutes

**Table 1-1: Bus Stops, Routes and Services (timetable information correct as of November 2025)**

### 1.2.3 Vehicles and Parking

The R448 and R418 are key regional routes serving Castledermot connecting with Carlow and Naas, and Athy and Tullow, respectively. Traffic data has been collected for these routes, and others serving the town, and is summarised in Chapter 3.

There are no municipal off-street car parks in the town i.e. publicly owned car parks which are designed to accommodate the parking demand for a variety of town centre functions. There are off-street car parks in the town serving the Community Centre, Supermarket (Rath’s), Church of the Assumption and Bread and Beer restaurant. There are approximately 135 no. off-street car parking spaces<sup>3</sup> across these four locations.

On-street parking is available along the R418, R448, Keenans Lane and Carlowgate which provides parking for those visiting town centre amenities as well as accommodating residents parking demand. Parking survey data is summarised in Chapter 3.

<sup>3</sup> Estimated from aerial mapping

### 1.3 Report Structure

Following this introductory chapter, this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 – sets out the policy and strategy context influencing mobility planning at a national and local level.
- Chapter 3 – details the methodology and findings of the mobility data collection exercise completed in June 2025 as well as stakeholder feedback.
- Chapter 4 – sets out mobility related Strengths Challenges Opportunities and Threats (SCOT) relating to Castledermot and the TCFP, as well as the mobility objectives.
- Chapter 5 – describes relevant Castledermot TCFP Projects and Actions from a mobility perspective including next steps.
- Chapter 6 – summarises the report.

## 2 Policy and Strategy

This chapter sets out national, regional and local policy and strategy from a mobility perspective and applicable to Castledermot.

### 2.1 Ireland's National Climate Targets<sup>4</sup>

*“Under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, Ireland’s national climate objective requires the State to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable, and climate-neutral economy. The 2021 Act also provides for a reduction of 51% in GHG emissions by 2030, compared to 2018 levels”.*

*“Meeting our 2030 transport abatement targets will require transformational change and accelerated action across the transport sector. Key targets to remain within the sectoral emissions ceiling include a 20% reduction in total vehicle kilometers travelled relative to business-as-usual, a 50% reduction in fossil fuel usage, a significant behavioural shift from private car usage to increase the total share of journeys undertaken by walking, cycling or public transport, and continued electrification of our vehicle fleets”.*

### 2.2 National Development Plan (NDP) 2021 – 2030

The following mobility related National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) are included in the NDP:

- Enhanced Regional Accessibility
  - Protection and renewal programme for National Roads
  - Investment in regional and commuter bus fleet
  - Various national road schemes
  - Protection and renewal of the railway network
- Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
  - Greenways Strategy
  - Active travel in towns and villages
  - “Connecting Ireland” public transport programme
- Sustainable Mobility
  - Safe Routes to School programme

### 2.3 National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is defined as:

*“The Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the further growth and development of our country out to the year 2040”*

The NPF prioritises ten National Strategic Outcomes which are as follows:

1. *“Compact Growth*
2. *Enhanced Regional Accessibility*
3. *Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities*
4. *High-Quality International Connectivity*

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<sup>4</sup> Climate Action Plan 2024

5. Sustainable Mobility
6. A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
8. Transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate Resilient Society
9. Sustainable Management of Environmental Resources
10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services”

The NPF states that:

“Regional opportunities to leverage growth include national and international connectivity...This must be based on infrastructure and quality of life, rather than long distance commuting to Dublin.”

## 2.4 National Transport Authority (NTA) Statement of Strategy 2023-2025

The NTA’s mission is to: “connect Ireland’s people and places, by providing sustainable transport infrastructure and services as well as working to reduce transport demand, all helping to lower carbon emissions”. Figure 2-1 sets out the NTA’s Goals.

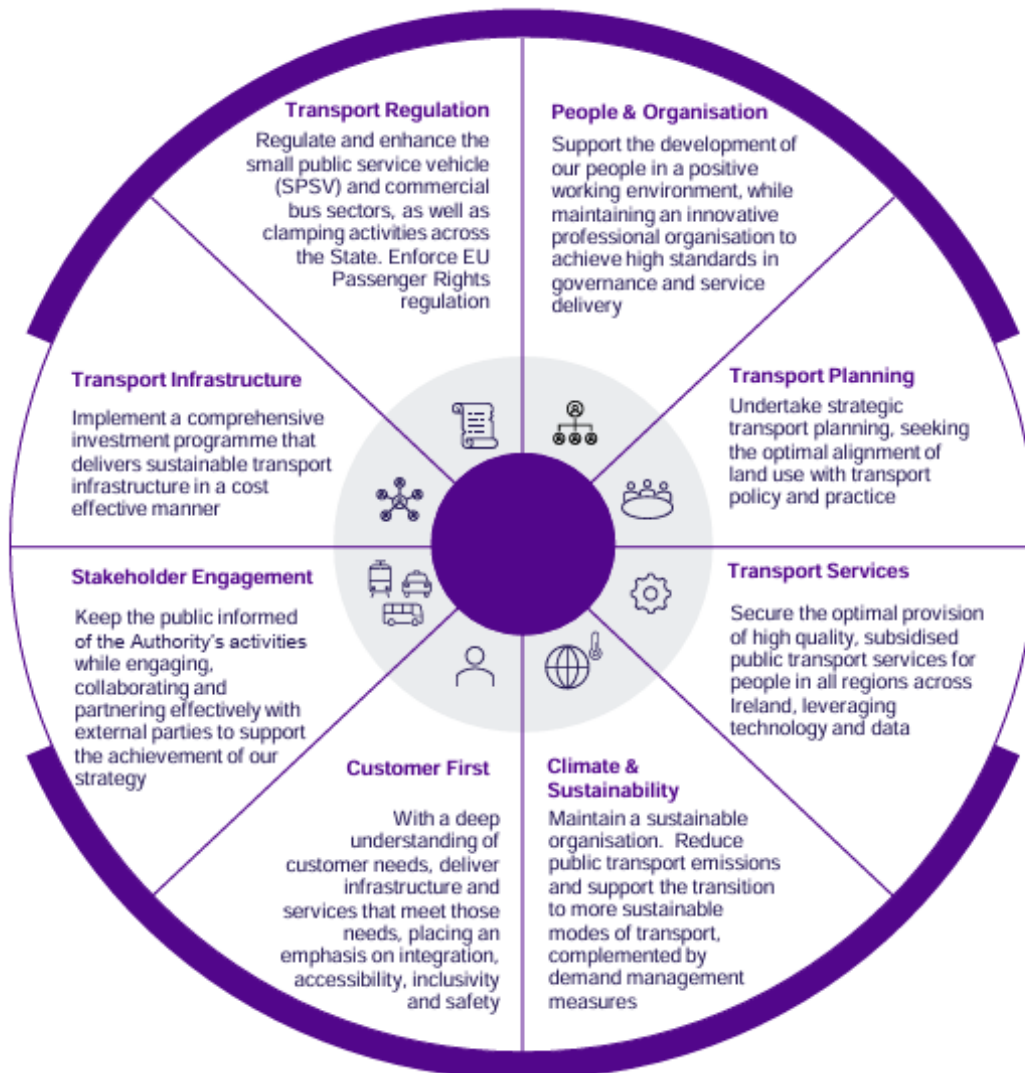


Figure 2-1: NTA Statement of Strategy Goals

## 2.5 Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022 – 2024

The aim of the Strategy is to “provide a sustainable, accessible and effective transport system for the Greater Dublin Area which meets the region’s climate change requirements, serves the needs of urban and rural communities, and supports the regional economy.”

Strategy Measures applicable to Castledermot include:

- Reallocation of road space.
- Green Schools travel.
- Accessible infrastructure.
- Enforcement of road traffic laws.
- Decluttering footpaths.
- Maintaining footpaths.
- Connecting Ireland – public transport improvements.
- Regional and rural bus services.
- Reduced speed limits.
- Safe Routes to School.

## 2.6 Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns 2022

The Town Centre First policy recognises that every town is unique. It lays the foundation for each town to develop, at a local level, their own planned path forward.

The Vision for Town Centres is as follows:

- *Places that are shaped by the communities that live there, where local residents and the business community are enabled to plot the future for their own towns and villages.*
- *Towns that embrace the opportunities presented by technology, climate action and demographic change.*
- *Places that are the fulcrum of economic, social, cultural and recreational activity, with a sustainable mix of commercial, retail, service and hospitality offerings.*
- *Town centres that reflect the current and future needs of the local community, with quality public realm, sustainable mobility infrastructure and green spaces that facilitate vibrant, connected local communities and economies.*
- *Vibrant, accessible and lived-in town centres that are home to young and old, which are not seen as a second-best option to more peripheral locations.*

## 2.7 Kildare County Development Plan 2023 -2029

Volume 2 of the Development Plan sets out specific mobility objectives as follows for Castledermot:

- *Prepare a Local Traffic Plan for Castledermot that will identify the requirement for, and outline specific recommendations for, walking and cycling routes, new road schemes, improvements to existing roads and the location and quantum of cycle and car parking facilities.*
- *Provide a high-quality footpath/ cycleway network throughout Castledermot by improving pedestrian facilities through the refurbishment or reconstruction of existing footpaths, construction of new footpaths and the provision of appropriate crossing facilities on the following routes (i) Along the R448 regional road (old N9) between the development boundaries, including the village centre along*

*Main Street and Abbey Street; (ii) Along the R418 regional road (Athy Road) between the village centre and the L8054 local road at Skenagun; (iii) Along the L8095 local road (Hamilton Road) adjacent to the River Lerr; (iv) Along the L8054 local road between the R448 and R418 regional roads; (v) Along The Dales and Keenans Lane from the R448 regional road to the Green Bridge; (vi) Along Ivors Lane from Church Lane to Keenans Lane.*

- *Co-operate with bus operators to ensure that adequate transport services including bus stops and shelters are provided for Castledermot to enhance bus links to Naas, Newbridge, Athy and Carlow.*
- *Construct the following transport links and to preserve these routes free from development (i) From the R418 Regional Road (Athy Road) (A) to the L4009 local road (Maganey Road) (B); (ii) From the L4009 local road at Carlowgate (C) to the R448 regional road (old N9) (D).*
- *Complete the construction of a new link street between the L8054 local road at Skenagun (E) and the R418 regional road at Barrack Road (F), including a potential link to Main Street, in order to facilitate the development of the adjacent lands.*
- *Implement safety improvements at the following locations (i) The junction between the L8095 local road and the St. Johns housing estate at the Green Bridge, to include the realignment of the Green Bridge if necessary; (ii) The junction between the R448 regional road (old N9) and the R418 Tullow Road; (iii) The junction between the L4009 local road (Maganey Road) and the L4011 local road.*
- *Investigate the feasibility of implementing a one-way system through the narrow lanes in the town centre (the L40091 local road, Church Lane and Ivors Lane) in order to facilitate the provision of improved facilities for vulnerable road users.*
- *Examine the feasibility of using existing off street public car parking within close proximity to the town centre.*

## 2.8 Castledermot Small Town Renewal Masterplan 2024

Although not a statutory document, the following points summarise the mobility related findings of a public consultation exercise used to inform the Masterplan.

- The majority of respondents felt walking and cycling in Castledermot was either Very Safe or Safe.
- The majority of respondents felt it was Easy or Usually Okay to find a parking space in the town.

The Masterplan set out a series of projects designed to support local living and sustainable mobility in Castledermot. The Castledermot TCFP is designed to build on previous work and take cognisance of intervening policy and strategy.

## 2.9 Summary

This chapter demonstrates that at a national and local level there is a strong policy framework which seeks to support: local living, reduced car journey dominance and promotion of sustainable transport alternatives; all designed to meet greenhouse gas emission 2030 and 2050 targets. Castledermot TCFP Projects and Actions (Chapter 4) have been designed to take cognisance of and address this policy framework as well as capturing identified localised Kildare County Development Plan objectives.

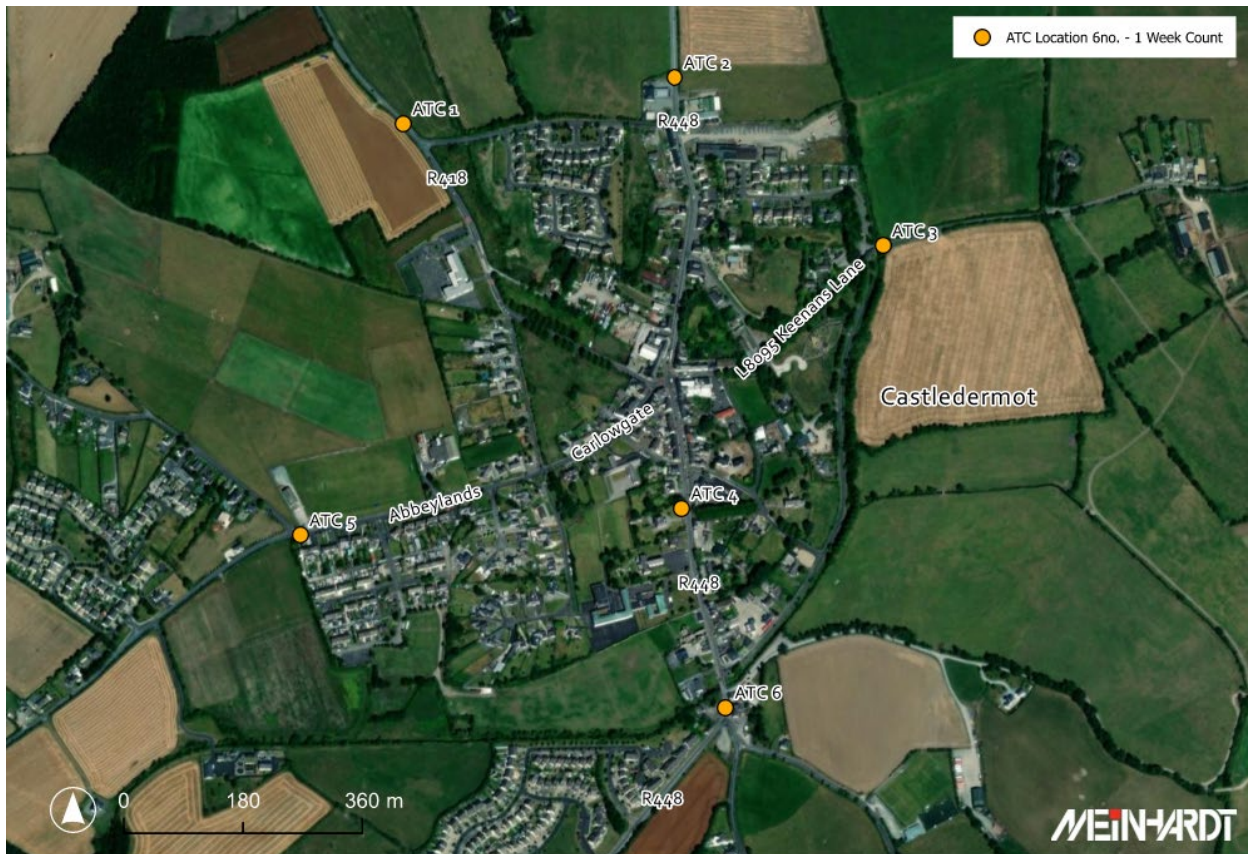
### 3 Mobility Data and Feedback

#### 3.1 Methodology

A data collection exercise was undertaken in June 2025 as follows:

- The installation of Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs) at 6 no. locations over the course of one week commencing on 11 June 2025. The ATCs collect traffic volume, classification (type of vehicle e.g. car or HGV) and vehicle speed.
- On-street parking surveys on R448, R418, Carlowgate and Keenans Lane undertaken in 30-minute beats on Saturday 14 June and Tuesday 17 June over a 10-hour period each day to record stress (measure of supply v demand), duration of stay and turnover.
- Erection of 7 no. cameras across the town to record Non-Motorised User (NMU) movements with the camera footage reviewed for a weekday and Saturday over a 10-hour period each day. The camera footage was also used to understand vehicle movements to / from off-street car parks at the Supermarket, Community Centre and Church of the Assumption.

Figures 3-1 to 3-4 demonstrate the location / scope of the data collection exercise.



**Figure 3-1: ATC Locations**

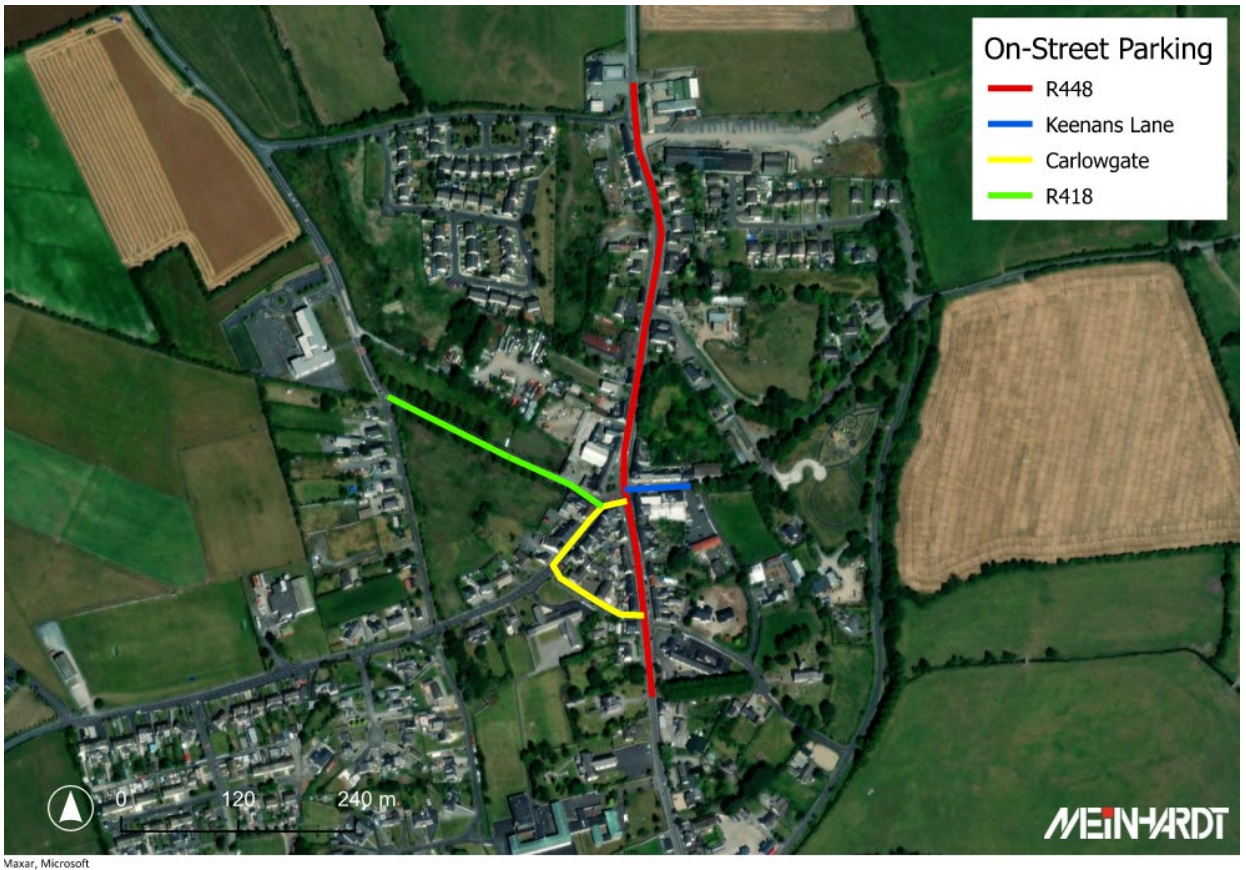


Figure 3-2: On-Street Parking Survey Locations



Figure 3-3: Camera Locations



**Figure 3-4: NMU Movement Count Locations**

### 3.2 Traffic Flow, Vehicle Classification and Speed

Figure 3-5 provides as summary of the ATC data. The following conclusions are drawn from this data:

- Volumes of traffic are not high (from the perspective of the carrying capacity of the road network) and are in keeping with the nature of the town and surrounding area.
- As anticipated the R448 carries the highest volume of traffic.
- There is a significant volume of through traffic (i.e. vehicles not accessing Castledermot).
- Speed is an issue on the R448 north of Market Square.
- The volume of HGVs is as expected and in keeping with the nature of the area and the function of the Regional Road network.
- Cycling on road accounts for a small volume of movements to / from the town, again this is characteristic of the surrounding environs.



Figure 3-5: Summary of Traffic Flow, Composition and Speed

### 3.3 NMU Movements

Using the camera data, the number of NMU movements were recorded at the locations shown in Figure 3-4. Figure 3-6 and Figure 3-7 illustrate the NMU data for a weekday (Tuesday 17 June) and Saturday (14 June) respectively.

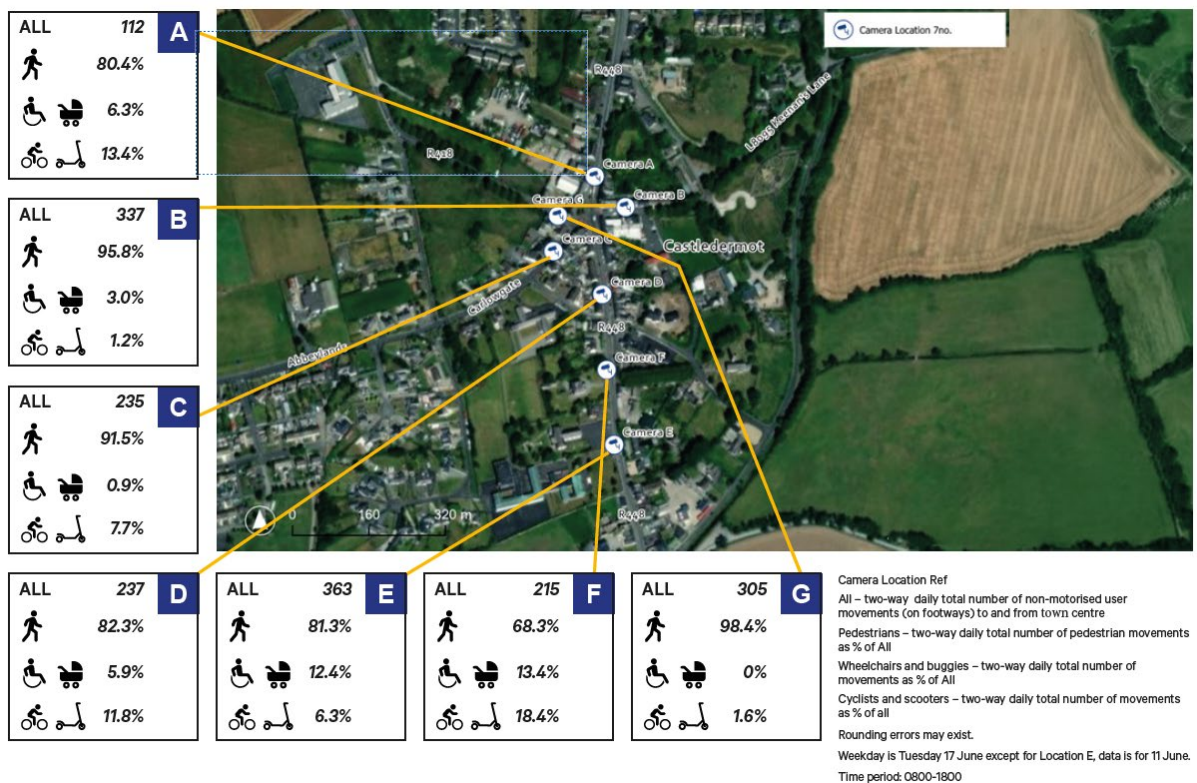


Figure 3-6: Weekday NMU Movements



**Figure 3-7: Saturday NMU Movements**

It is important to recognise these are NMU movements not the number of people moving around the town, as the same person could be picked up at multiple cameras and will also make a return journey.

The NMU data illustrates:

- Weekdays are busier than the weekends for NMU movements.
  - This is predominately attributed to school / nursery related NMUs especially at Camera E.
  - It is important to recognise at Camera E that a large number of NMUs were actually users who parked in the Church of Assumption Car Park and then walked to the adjacent school.
  - Camera B and Camera G movements include a high proportion of nursery children for an outing to the Playground on Keenans Lane. Circa 50% of the NMUs recorded at these cameras were associated with this 'outing'.
- Cameras A, B, C and G give us a good understanding of NMU movements into the town and are users who are more likely to have undertaken their full journey on foot, scooter or bike.
- The percentage of buggies and wheelchairs is also higher on the weekday again attributed to school / nursey.
- At the weekends there is a steady and noticeable volume of cyclists and scooters suggesting recreational use of these modes by residents; these NMUs were observed as predominately teenagers.
- In general, pedestrian NMU movements are strong relative to the population of the town.

At Market Square the number of people observed sitting on the public benches or reading the information board was negligible indicating the space is not well utilised.

From the camera footage it was possible to record the number of people waiting for a bus over the course of a 10-hour period as follows:

- Northbound bus stop – Saturday 3 no. people, Tuesday 8 no. people

- Southbound bus stop – Saturday 17 no. people, Tuesday 18 no. people

Bus passengers (boarding) indicate travel by bus to Carlow is more popular than northbound travel and that weekday bus trips are more prevalent than Saturday travel. However, bus passenger numbers are low.

Mapping of how people move around the town (based on camera footage) accords with existing facilities i.e. the vast majority of people walk on footways and cross at designated points except at Keenans Lane where many pedestrians (who had parked their cars in the Supermarket car park) would cross at a non-designated location to access the Mad Hatter Café.

### 3.4 Parking

Figure 3-8 and Figure 3-9 show on-street car parking data for a Saturday (14 June) and Tuesday 17 June respectively. Parking stress is a measure of demand and supply in designated parking bays only. Inappropriate parking was observed. The duration of stay for inappropriate parking was short likely demonstrating pick-up / drop-off activity. If inappropriate parking demand is measured against supply the stress does not exceed capacity.

#### On Street Parking - Demand (Saturday 14th June 2025)



Survey duration between 08:00 to 18:00

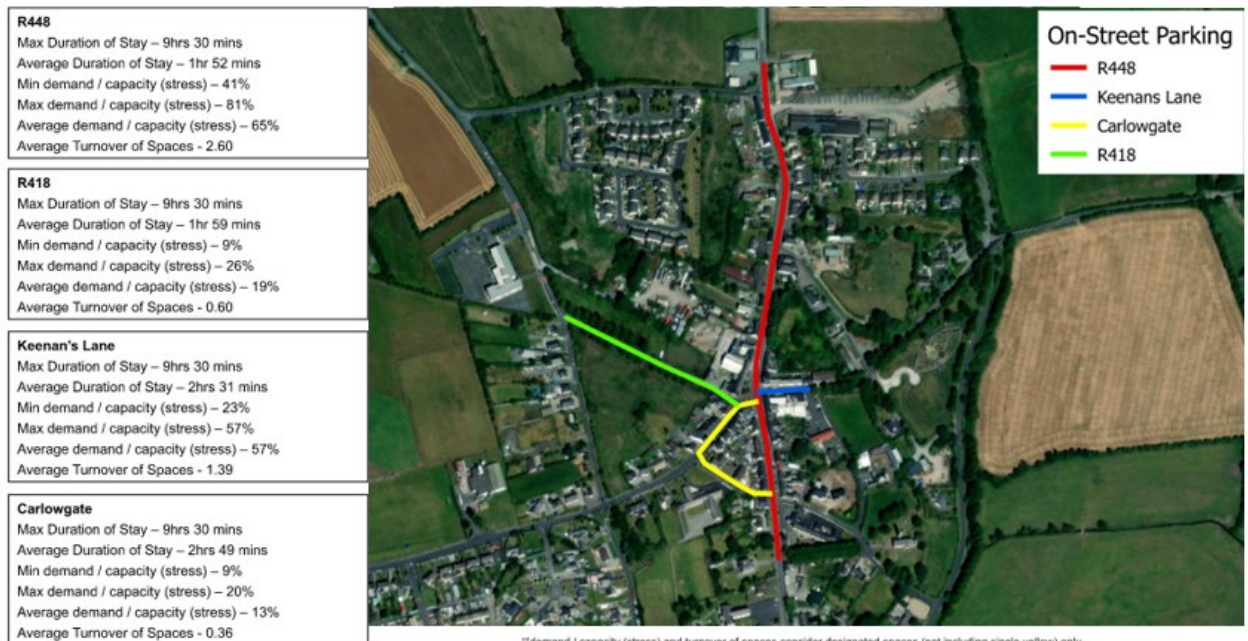
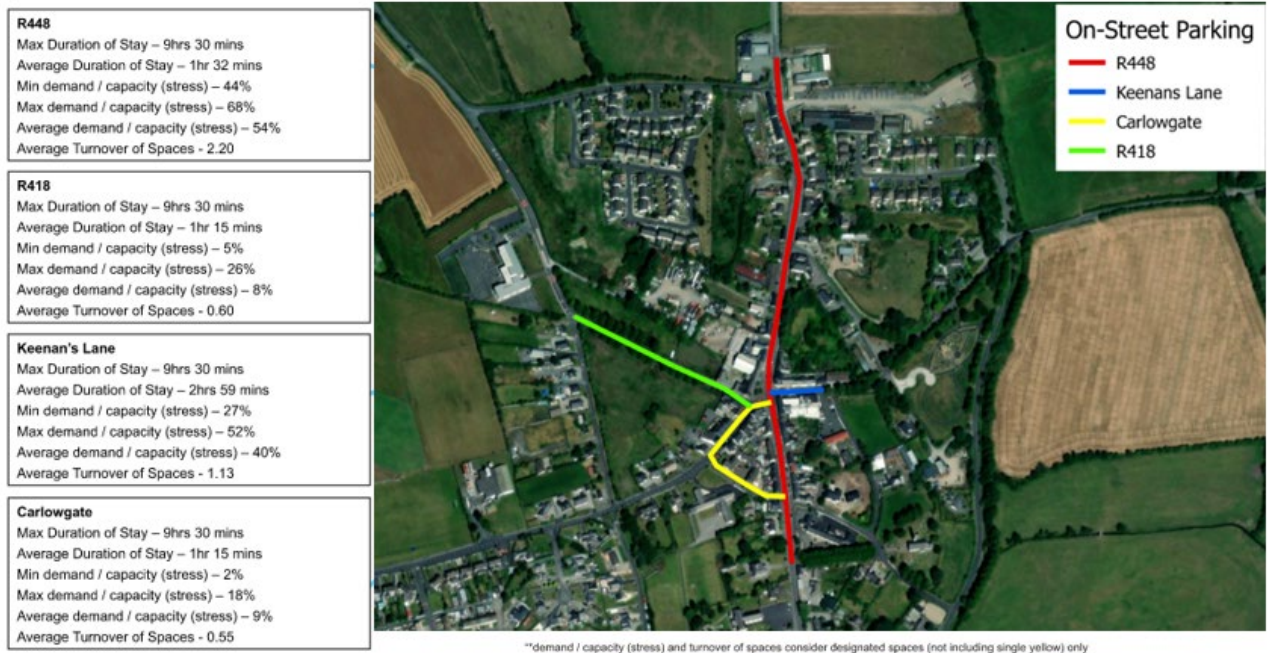


Figure 3-7: Saturday On-Street Parking

### On Street Parking - Demand (Tuesday 17th June 2025)

Survey duration between 08:00 to 18:00



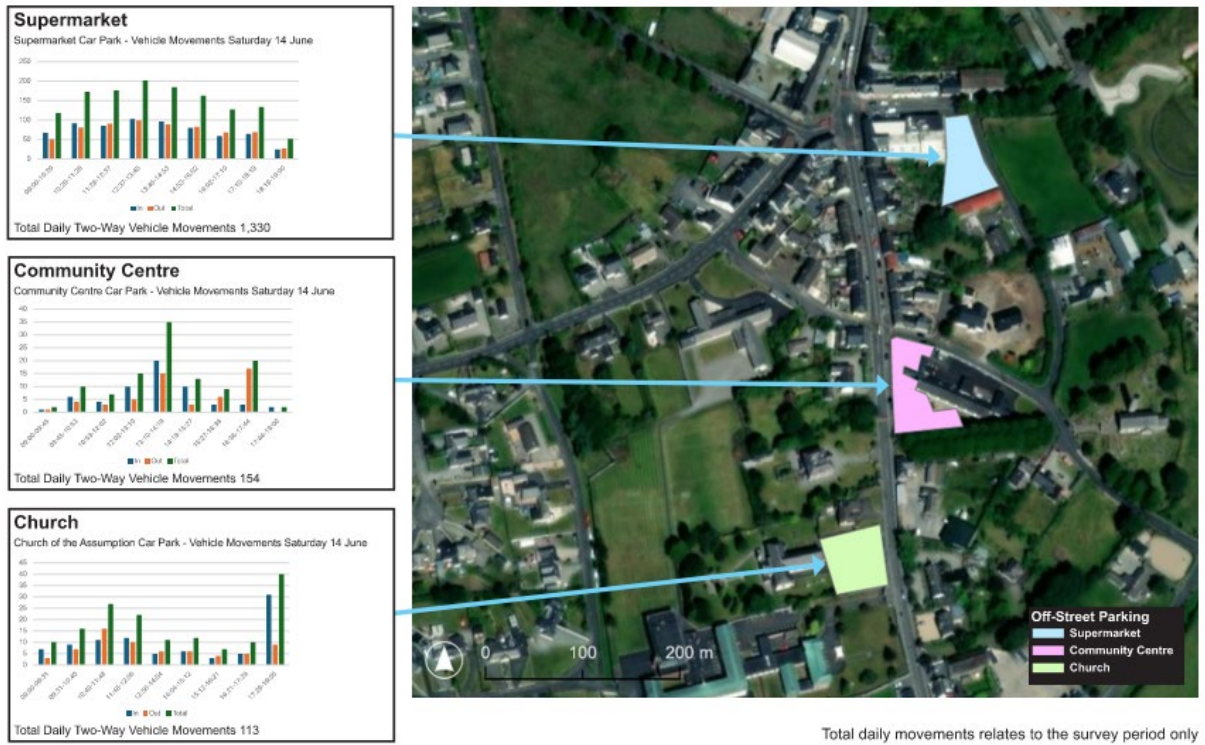
**Figure 3-8: Weekday On-Street Parking**

What this data tells us:

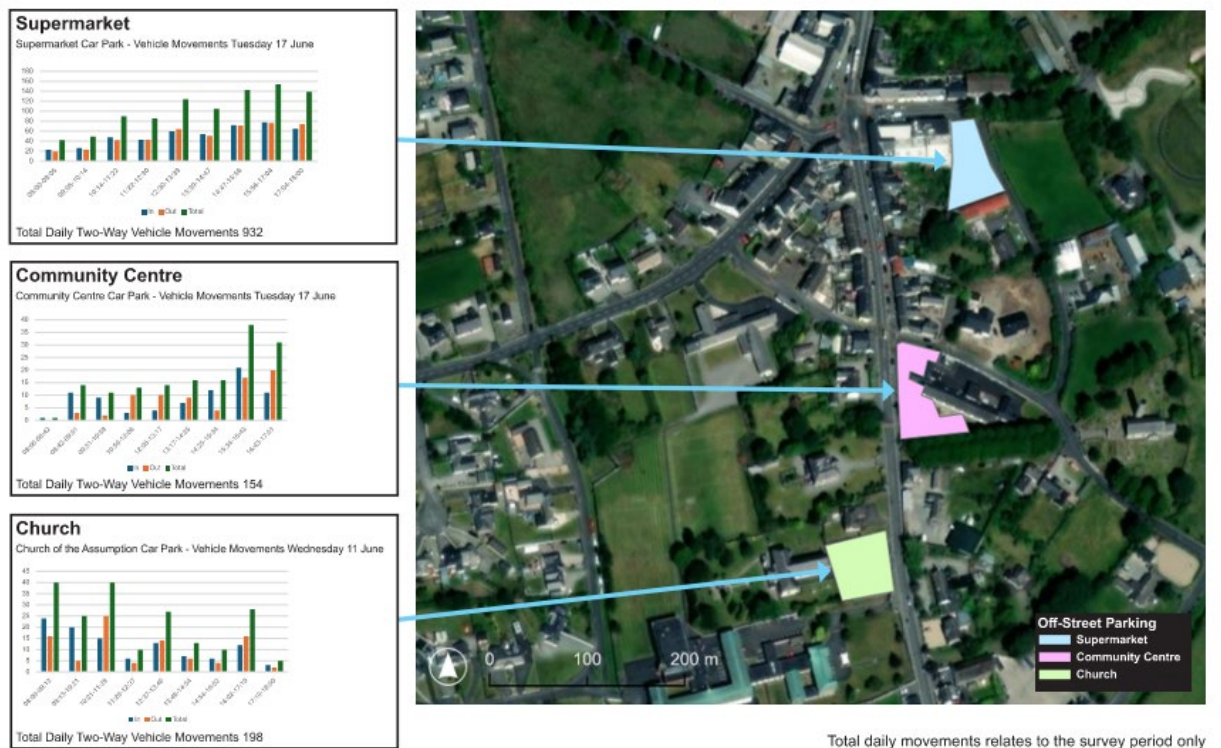
- The maximum duration of stay is high on each road link.
- Stress (occupancy) is highest along the R448, as is the turnover of spaces. Turnover is the number of times the space is used.
- Stress (occupancy) above 85% is the industry standard trigger to recognise demand outweighs supply. This is not an issue in the town based on the recorded data.
- Stress (occupancy) is higher on Saturday.

### 3.5 Off-Street Parking Movements

Formal parking surveys were not undertaken at off-street car parking locations however using the camera footage it was possible to observe the number of vehicles entering and exiting three of the four off-street parking locations as shown in Figure 3-9 and Figure 3-10.



**Figure 3-9: Off-Street Parking Vehicle Movements Saturday**



**Figure 3-10: Off-Street Parking Vehicle Movements Weekday**

What this data tells us:

- The Supermarket car park is the busiest of the car parks and noticeably so at the weekend.
- The Church car park is noticeably quieter at the weekend (as schools are not open).
- Church peak periods in the day correspond to Mass times and school peak periods.

- The Community Centre Car Park is busier at the weekend.

### 3.6 Data Summary

Considerations for the Castledermot TCFP based on the mobility data include:

- Strengthen / create Gateway features into the town to help reduce speed and define the character of the town.
- Recognise there will be a need for balancing the priorities given to each transport mode while taking cognisance of the regional importance of roads in the town.
- Recognise that education land uses are key drivers of NMU movements in the town and the need to cater for vulnerable user groups (children) with good quality footways, safe crossing points, etc.
- The playground on Keenan's Lane is an asset for nursery aged children, thus the routes to / from this playground should be of good quality and / or more greenspaces could be considered closer to nurseries.
- Consideration needs to be given to accessible parking across the town (on and off-street).
- The long maximum duration of stay at each of the monitored locations implies residents are parking on-street, thus there will be a need to protect parking for residents.
- There is an opportunity to review how the road space is used in the town and any changes to this will require balancing of basic access (e.g. for deliveries and emergency vehicles) against safety and accessibility.
- The town is clearly drawing people to its amenities and facilities from further afield than Castledermot.
- The car parks especially at the supermarket are well utilised, provide a functionality to the town and should be maintained, however they are not owned and operated by KCC.

The following paragraphs summarise stakeholder feedback.

### 3.7 Place Standard<sup>5</sup>

The lowest score was recorded for Traffic and Parking highlighting:

- Absence of bike racks or designated cycle parking.
- General congestion.
- Limited infrastructure supporting active travel.

Moving Around and Public Transport also scored low due to:

- Limited bus stops.
- Poor pedestrian crossings.
- Lack of footpaths, particularly on Keenans Lane.

### 3.8 Town Team Feedback

- In part, through traffic contributes to the town's vibrancy.
- Perception that HGV traffic is disruptive – noise and safety related.
- Requirement to take cognisance of working farms in the area / town which require access by heavy vehicles.

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<sup>5</sup> Please refer to Main Document prepared by Metropolitan Workshop

- Difficulty in making a right turn from the R448 to the R418 means HGV drivers are travelling through Castledermot as opposed to using the M9.
- Previous town car parks have been repurposed due to lack of use.
- Lack of car parking at the Playground.
- Difficulty in making a right turn from Carlowgate to the R448 at the pharmacy.

### 3.9 Community Sentiment Surveys<sup>6</sup>

- 70% of respondents visit the town centre daily.
- Most residents live within a 5–10-minute walk of the town centre.
- Walking is the most common mode of travel, followed by car / motorcycle.
- Issues raised include:
  - Limited parking near businesses and the playground
  - Dangerous parking on corners
  - Poor wheelchair accessibility
  - Lack of awareness about Community Centre parking
- Increasing public transport frequency was viewed as an area for improvement.

### 3.10 Business Sentiment Surveys<sup>7</sup>

Challenges faced:

- Parking difficulties.
- Heavy goods traffic.

Suggested solutions:

- Improved parking.

### 3.11 Walkability Audit

The Town Team completed a Walkability Audit in June 2025. The Audit included the R448, Keenans Lane, Abbeylands / Carlowgate, Woodlands and the Unnamed Road connecting the R448 north of the town with the R418. Table 3-1 provides a summary of Audit findings.

Footpaths	Facilities	Crossing the Road	Road User Behaviour
Missing sections	Not enough rest points	Not enough pedestrian crossings	Driving too fast
Not wide enough for everyone	Not enough cycle parking	No tactile paving or audible cues at crossings	Parking on footpaths out-with marked bays
Only available on one-side of the road	No designated parking for those with disabilities	Vehicle speeds and volume make it hard to cross	
Restricted by parked vehicles and vegetation	No designated vehicle loading bays		
Outside the School Gates	Safety	Look and Feel	Score
Not enough safe crossings	Poor road user behaviour	Vehicle noise and air pollution	<b>13/18 Walkability Audit</b>
No 'School Street' initiatives	Street furniture clutter		<b>14/21 Walkability Audit plus Outside the School Gates</b>

**Table 3-1: Summary of Walkability Audit**

<sup>6</sup> Please refer to Main Document for Survey scope

<sup>7</sup> Please refer to Main Document for Survey scope

## 4 SCOT and Mobility Objectives

### 4.1 Mobility SCOT

Strengths	Challenges
Compact nature of the town.	Getting the balance right in mobility infrastructure and services which support local active travel journeys but does not impact the vibrancy of the town by reducing footfall by non-residents.
Popularity of some of the town’s existing amenities and facilities.	
Existing resident culture and propensity for active travel for local journeys.	
Opportunities	Threats
Policy and strategy position which supports the bold change needed to tackle climate change and prioritise local living.	As the Castledermot TCFP is a strategic plan there remains a requirement to undertake detailed testing and appraisal of Projects and Actions.
	The delivery of Projects and Actions requires formal approval through processes such as but not limited to Part 8 Application.

**Table 4-1: Mobility SCOT**

### 4.2 Mobility Objectives



Based on the findings of the data collection exercise and feedback from residents and businesses the following mobility objectives have been established to help focus the development of emerging Castledermot TCFP Projects and Actions:

- To support and encourage active travel trips for local short journeys in the town.
- To reduce the volume of HGV traffic routing through Castledermot.
- To reduce vehicle speeds within the town.
- To manage the demand for car parking and drop-off pick up vehicle activities.
- To support those with disabilities to access and move around the town.
- To support Castledermot residents who do not have an off-road car parking space to transition to EVs.

## 5 Castledermot TCFP Projects and Actions

### 5.1 Projects

Table 5-1 lists proposed TCFP Projects and sets out the associated mobility approach and next steps for delivery. It is important to note that a number of Projects have dependencies namely the introduction of a one-way network of streets which is Action MO1 (see Table 5-2). Also note all Projects and Actions are high level and remain subject to detailed appraisal and surveys. Moreover, in terms of next steps there will naturally be a requirement for consent to be sought for change. Next steps listed in Table 5-1 are mobility specific and / or required prior to the formal consenting process.

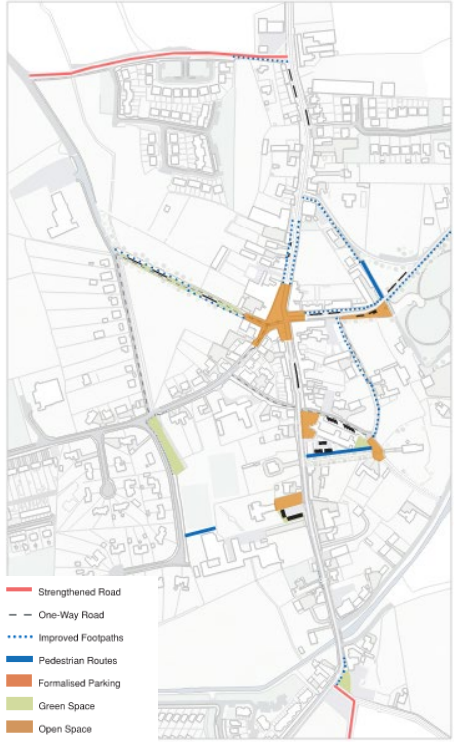

Location / Project Overview	Mobility Approach	Next Steps
<p>Market Square</p> 	<p>Introduction of one-way network of roads (Carlowgate, R418 and Market Square).</p> <p>This one-way road network results in a change in road space which can be repurposed to include improved active travel and public realm.</p> <p>On-street parking would still be retained (Carlowgate and R418) however there would be a small net loss of some spaces.</p> <p>On-street parking would be formalised and opportunities explored for designated loading bays and accessible spaces.</p> <p>Different road surface materials and raised tables could be introduced to slow traffic especially along the R448.</p> <p>Corner radii would also be reduced to slow traffic and improve the crossing experience for pedestrians.</p> <p>Existing bus stops would be retained and improved especially for southbound travel (e.g. provision of a shelter).</p>	<p>Undertake vehicle tracking exercise.</p> <p>Review and amend traffic signal timings.</p> <p>Engage with businesses and residents relating to parking implications.</p> <p>Engage with bus operators.</p> <p>Undertake utility / topographical surveys.</p> <p>Action dependencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MO1</li> <li>• MO6</li> </ul>
<p>R448 Main Street</p> 	<p>Road space would be repurposed to increase footway widths, provide green space, formalise parking and realigned to reduce vehicle speeds.</p>	<p>Undertake vehicle tracking exercise.</p> <p>Engage with businesses and residents relating to parking implications.</p> <p>Undertake utility / topographical surveys.</p> <p>Action dependencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MO1</li> <li>• MO6</li> </ul>
<p>Keenans Lane</p>	<p>The proposals for Keenans Lane include improving the pedestrian connection between the R448 and the Playground and formalising and increasing the number of car parking spaces.</p> <p>Public realm improvements would support reduction in traffic speeds and support pedestrians crossing the road especially from the Supermarket car park.</p> <p>A new footway connecting the Playground with St Johns would</p>	<p>Undertake vehicle tracking exercise.</p> <p>Undertake utility / topographical surveys.</p> <p>Action dependencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MO1</li> <li>• MO6</li> </ul>

	<p>provide better connections for residents.</p>	
<p>St James' Square and Community Centre</p>	<p>The Project proposals involve the introduction of one-way streets, strengthening active travel links between the R448 and the Round Tower, on-street municipal public parking along Church Lane, new footway along Ivor's Lane and change to internal Community Centre car park.</p>	<p>Undertake vehicle tracking exercise.</p> <p>Engage with businesses and residents relating to parking implications.</p> <p>Undertake utility / topographical surveys.</p> <p>Action dependencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MO1</li> <li>• MO6</li> </ul>
<p>Church of the Assumption Parking</p>	<p>This proposal seeks to improve the look of the car park by reducing hard standing and formalising existing parking.</p>	<p>Engage with Archdiocese of Dublin.</p>
<p>Abbeylands Junction</p>	<p>This junction serves as an access to the school and improvements are proposed to increase and improve the space available for active travel journeys while providing greenspace which is easier to maintain than the current situation.</p>	<p>Undertake utility / topographical surveys.</p> <p>Action dependencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MO2</li> <li>• MO4</li> </ul>

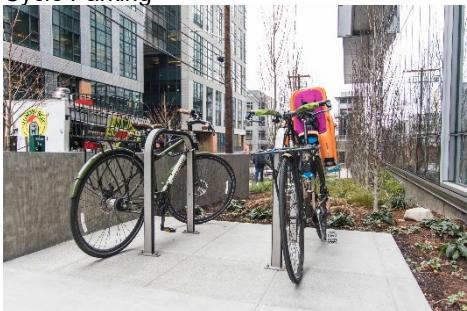
Table 5-1: TCFP Projects

## 5.2 Actions

Table 5-2 sets out proposed Mobility Actions.

Action <sup>8</sup>	Mobility Approach	Next Steps
<p><b>MO1</b> Traffic Configuration</p> 	<p>A network of one-way streets are proposed. This network would address challenges at existing junctions while providing road space to be repurposed for active travel and public realm improvements. Moreover, the proposals would focus HGV traffic on the R448 and away from the school.</p>	<p>Undertake vehicle tracking exercise.</p> <p>Review traffic signal timings.</p> <p>Model the impacts of traffic redistribution.</p> <p>Collect junction turning count data.</p> <p>Undertake origin destination surveys to better understand volume of through traffic.</p>
<p><b>MO2</b> Traffic Calming</p> 	<p>To reduce the attractiveness of the town for through traffic and to improve safety for residents and visitors traffic calming is proposed. This traffic calming would take the form of: applying for a special 30 kph speed limit, the introduction of Gateway features into the town, reduced turning radii and raised tables.</p>	<p>Undertake Road Safety Review</p>
<p><b>MO3</b> Increasing Bus Use</p>	<p>There is already a national focus on supporting bus connections for rural Ireland and this action seeks support from the NTA and KCC to review and improve service frequency, timetables and destinations for the benefit of Castledermot residents and visitors.</p> <p>This action also includes the opportunity to provide additional bus stops to serve the town, for example at location of MO5. Additional bus stops would reduce</p>	<p>Engage with NTA and bus operators.</p>

<sup>8</sup> Please refer to Main Document for all images

 <p>Increasing Bus Use</p>	<p>walk times and support those with restricted mobility.</p>	
<p>MO4 Safe Routes to School</p> 	<p>Extensive and comprehensive advice, guidance and support is available to support local authorities and schools in improving access. This covers 'hard' improvements such as improved footways and parking to 'soft' initiatives such as travel planning initiatives.</p>	<p>Undertake a Safe Routes to School review of the town.</p>
<p>MO5 R448 / R418 / L405 Junction</p> 	<p>To facilitate a right turn for HGVs from the R448 to the R418 / L405 an Action has been identified which would involve a realignment of the road at this location. A benefit of this Action is improved active travel integration and the creation of areas of green and public realm and potentially car parking.</p>	<p>Undertake vehicle tracking exercise.</p> <p>Undertake utility / topographical surveys.</p> <p>Collect junction turning count data.</p>
<p>MO6 Cycle Parking</p> 	<p>For new public realm to include cycle parking which is of a high quality and standard at key destinations such as Playground, Market Square and the Community Centre.</p>	<p>See Projects</p>
<p>MO7 Public EV Charging Points</p>	<p>Proposed new municipal parking (Project St James Square /</p>	<p>See Projects</p>

	<p>Community Centre) to include EV charging facilities.</p>	
<p>MO8 Underground Utilities</p>	<p>Existing utility infrastructure in the town is visually intrusive and clutters footpaths reducing space for active travel users. This Action seeks to investigate the feasibility of removing any redundant infrastructure and 'undergrounding' required infrastructure.</p>	<p>Engage with utility providers.</p>

**Table 5-2: TCFP Mobility Actions**

## 6 Summary

### 6.1 Summary

Meinhardt has been commissioned by Metropolitan Workshop on behalf of Kildare County Council (KCC) to provide mobility planning input in support of the Castledermot Town Centre First Plan (Castledermot TCFP). This report summarises the context setting for getting things moving in Castledermot, in particular the data collection exercise undertaken in June 2025. Based on the data collection and stakeholder engagement process mobility objectives were developed as follows to provide focus for the TCFP:

- To support and encourage active travel trips for local short journeys in the town.
- To reduce the volume of HGV traffic routing through Castledermot.
- To reduce vehicle speeds within the town.
- To manage the demand for car parking and drop-off pick up vehicle activities.
- To support those with disabilities to access and move around the town.
- To support Castledermot residents who do not have an off-road car parking space to transition to EVs.

The next steps for relevant Castledermot TCFP Projects and Actions are summarised in Table 6-1.

	Market Square	R448 Main Street	Keenans Lane	St James' Square and Community Centre	Church of the Assumption Parking	Abbeylands Junction	MO1 Traffic Configuration	MO2 Traffic Calming	MO3 Increasing Bus Use	MO4 Safe Routes to School	MO5 R448 / R418 / L405 Junction	MO6 Cycle Parking	MO7 Public EV Charging Points	MO8 Underground Utilities		
Next Steps	Projects						Actions									
Undertake vehicle tracking exercise.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	Deliver as part of Projects	Deliver as part of Projects			
Review traffic signal timings	✓						✓									
Undertake utility / topographical surveys.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					✓					
Model the impacts of traffic redistribution.							✓									
Collect junction turning count data.							✓				✓					
Undertake origin destination surveys to better understand volume of through traffic.							✓									
Engage with businesses and residents relating to parking implications.	✓	✓		✓												
Undertake Road Safety Review								✓								
Engage with bus operators.	✓										✓					
Engage with Archdiocese of Dublin.					✓											
Undertake a Safe Routes to School review of the town.										✓						
Engage with NTA and bus operators.									✓							
Engage with utility providers.														✓		

**Table 6-1: TCFP Next Step Summary**



The Greenway  
Block C Ardilaun Court  
St. Stephens Green  
Dublin 2

# Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool for Roads and Streets



## Introduction

**Government policy seeks the transition to more sustainable forms of transport. To facilitate this, we need to check that our neighbourhoods and streets are places where people of all ages and abilities can walk safely, conveniently and independently.**

A Universal Design approach, which caters for the broadest range of users, can result in streets and neighbourhoods that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. Increased walking activity contributes to a wide range of societal and health benefits including improved levels of fitness, cleaner air, safer environments and better social inclusion.

The Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool was developed as a collaboration between the National Transport Authority, Age Friendly Ireland, Green-Schools and the National Disability Authority's Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. This Audit will be used to capture the existing conditions of a specified walking route in relation to its walkability. Walkability is the extent to which the built environment is friendly to the presence of people walking, living, shopping, visiting, engaging or spending time in an area. The Audit is intended to be carried out by a wide range of people of various ages and abilities including disability and older people's organisations, advocacy organisations, school travel planners, members of the public and Local Authority officers.

The Audit process will enable the identification of a priority list of recommendations for the route. The recommendations from the audit will be taken into account when local authorities are planning improvements to roads and streets in the future.

## Undertaking the Audit

**To reflect a Universal Design approach, it is desirable to have participants with a diverse range of ages and abilities undertaking the Audit. This includes for example: parents with buggies, children, wheelchair users, older people and people with impaired vision. Participants with local knowledge, who use the route regularly, will enrich the Audit process.**

Audits will typically be carried out by a group of participants, working with a trained coordinator, such as those engaged with the Age Friendly Ireland or the Green-Schools Travel programmes. However, Audits can also be carried out independently by individuals.

Typically, the Audit should cover a walking trip and route of up to an approximate 20-30 minute walking distance. Allowing for stops and short discussion, the Audit itself should take around 45 minutes but can be longer or shorter depending on the group.

Additional time either side of the Audit itself, should be catered for to provide an information briefing (prior to the commencement of the Audit) and a discussion to inform the final report at the end of the Audit.

The following items are generally required to inform your audit;

- A map of the route
- A pen or pencil to complete responses
- A measuring tape or trundle wheel
- A recording device such as a camera or mobile phone
- A pedometer and
- A stopwatch.

## Role of the Coordinator

In most cases, the coordinator is likely to be tasked with;

- Consulting local participants to identify the route(s) to be audited
- Explaining the audit process
- Co-ordinating maps and photographs
- Assisting participants to complete the audit tool, if required
- Facilitating a discussion with participants after the audit is complete
- Analysing the completed audit tools and compiling an audit report, complete with maps and photographs of the route.

Prior to the Audit, coordinators should consider walking the route to familiarise themselves with the surroundings, to identify rest areas and anticipate safety issues. A suitable location for the briefing session should also be identified.

The coordinator may wish to delegate specific tasks to individuals within the group, for example having a dedicated photographer or time-keeper.

After the audit, the coordinator should facilitate the discussion and seek to gain an understanding of the key issues identified by the participants under the different headings in the audit tool.

There should be a broad consensus of the key recommendations and suggestions that are required to improve the route. After the group discussion, the coordinator should allow additional time to analyse the feedback from participants and write the audit report.













## Photographs

Space has been provided at the end of the Audit Tool to allow for additional comments and useful information including supporting photographs, maps and text. Please ensure that all personal data collected, including photographs, is compliant with data protection requirements.

## Final Report

The completed audit report will include analysis of the feedback received from participants and a series of recommendations to improve the route. This audit report will be submitted to the relevant local authority for its consideration.

## Contents

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# Participant's Details

Please tick all that apply in each section

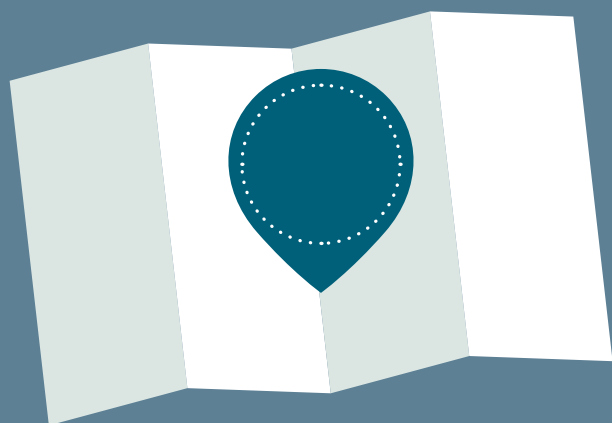
Please Indicate the Number of Participants in the following Categories:

Age	Number of Participants	Sex	Number of Participants
<input type="radio"/> Up to 4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/> Female	<input type="text" value="6"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> 5-12	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="radio"/> Male	<input type="text" value="5"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> 13-18	<input type="text" value="2"/>		
<input type="radio"/> 19-25	<input type="text"/>		
<input checked="" type="radio"/> 26-64	<input type="text" value="7"/>		
<input checked="" type="radio"/> 65-79	<input type="text" value="1"/>		
<input type="radio"/> 80+	<input type="text"/>		

## Participants and Ability Range

Ability	No. of Participants
<input type="radio"/> A person who is using a wheelchair	<input type="text"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> A person who has reduced mobility	<input type="text" value="1"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> A person who is blind or with low vision	<input type="text" value="2"/>
<input type="radio"/> A person who is Deaf or has a hearing loss	<input type="text"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> A person who has cognitive difficulties	<input type="text" value="1"/>
<input type="radio"/> A person with a buggy or stroller	<input type="text"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> A person with a young child	<input type="text" value="1"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> A carer	<input type="text" value="1"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> None of the above	<input type="text" value="5"/>
<input type="radio"/> Other, please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

## Details of the Route



Please include a map of the route in the space provided at the end of the Audit

<b>Town / City</b>	Castledermot
<b>County</b>	Kildare
<b>Distance of Route</b>	2 no. routes provided
<b>Date of Audit</b>	20/06/2025
<b>Start Time</b>	10:30
<b>End Time</b>	15:00
<b>Weather Conditions</b>	Sunny & Dry conditions



## Footpaths

### What are the main problems with footpaths?

- There are no real problems
- There is no footpath
- They are not always continuous (they stop and start in places)
- They are not wide enough for everyone to use
- People need to step off the footpath and onto the road at busy times
- There is a footpath on one side of the street only

## Surface Condition

### Are there any problems with the condition of footpaths?

- There are no real problems
- Ponding or flooding on the footpath
- Splashes from the road due to poor drainage
- Cracks on the footpath
- Evidence of poor repair work
- Damage caused by tree roots
- Litter
- Dog poo
- Uneven surfaces (e.g. entrances, driveways)
- Slippery surfaces in wet conditions
- Steps that cause difficulty

## Obstacles on the Footpath

### Are there any problems with obstacles on the footpath?

- There are no real problems
- The footpaths are generally clear of obstacles
- Advertising boards/ shop signage
- Outdoor tables and chairs from businesses
- Permanent litter bins
- Domestic / commercial bins on bin collection days
- Bicycles
- Lighting columns/ poles
- Guardrail / bollards
- Vehicles either fully or partially parked on the footpath
- Overgrown hedging / trees
- Street furniture (seating, bins, poles) that is hard to see (no colour contrast)
- Edge of footpath is hard to see (no colour contrast)

## Overall Score for Footpaths

Please identify any problem areas

- Poor  
In general the footpaths were in an acceptable means of state. However, in some location the footpath has been damaged due to vehicles parking on and traversing the footpath.
- Ok  
Some footpaths are too narrow.
- Good  
Some overgrowth from hedgerows have impaired the footpath, which prevents pedestrians from utilising the footpath, therefore, forcing the pedestrian to use the roadway in order to continue their journey.



## Access to Local Shops and Services

On this route, it is too far to walk to the following services:

- There are no real problems
- Shops and cafés
- Childcare facilities / crèches
- Community facilities such as post offices, community centres and ATMs
- Doctor surgeries, medical centres or chemists
- Places of worship
- Sports facilities and clubs

## Public Seating and Rest Areas

Are there any problems with resting and seating facilities?

- There are no real problems
- There are not enough places to stop and rest
- There is no seating
- The seating is not suitable for some people (e.g. does not provide back/arm support)
- The seating is not in areas that provide shade and shelter
- The seating is located too near heavy traffic
- The seating faces the wrong way
- Surface materials are too hot or cold

## Public Bins

Are there any problems with public bin facilities?

- There are not enough bins
- Bins are full and over-flowing

## Public Toilets

Are there any problems with public toilet facilities?

- There are no problems with the availability of toilets
- Toilets are not suitable for wheelchairs or those with mobility impairments
- Toilets lack suitable baby changing areas
- Toilets are poorly maintained
- Toilets cannot be used by the general public
- There are no toilets available on this route
- Sports facilities and clubs

## Parks and Playgrounds

Are there any problems with parks and playgrounds?

- There are no parks and / or playground facilities
- Seating areas do not enable supervision of children by parents or guardians
- Facilities are not well-maintained
- No opportunities for informal play (e.g. ball games, running)
- Dogs are not under control by their owners

## Parking Issues

Are there any problems with parking facilities?

- There is not enough cycle parking
- There is no designated car parking for older people or persons with disabilities
- Paying for parking is difficult
- There are no safe, designated loading and delivery facilities for larger vehicles

## Overall Score for Facilities

Please identify any problem areas

- Poor
- Ok
- Good

Lack of parking facilities at the playground.

Chemist car parking spaces, vehicles have to reverse onto the public roadway.

No parking near the school.



## Formal Pedestrian Crossing Areas (Traffic Lights)

The main problems at pedestrian crossings with signals (for example, a green man signal) are:

- There are no real problems
- There are not enough pedestrian crossings
- Crossings do not offer direct connection to where I need to go
- It takes too long to wait for the green man to appear
- There are no pedestrian crossings near the bus stop
- Pedestrian signals do not give me enough time to cross the road
- Pedestrian guard railings restrict movement of buggies, wheelchairs etc.
- There are no countdown facilities on crossings
- There are no pedestrian push buttons to stop motor traffic
- Drivers do not give enough time to cross at zebra crossings or flashing ambers
- The crossings are not level (i.e. there are kerbs)
- There is no tactile paving at crossings
- There are no audible cues at crossings

## Informal Pedestrian Crossing points (without traffic lights/ signals)

Where there are no pedestrian crossing signals, the main problems with crossing the road are:

- There are no real problems
- The speed of traffic makes it hard to cross the road
- The amount of traffic makes it hard to cross the road (no gaps in traffic)
- The road is too wide to cross in one go
- There are no step-free crossings for people using wheelchairs and buggies
- There is no tactile paving at informal pedestrian crossing points
- Obstacles (such as parked cars) block my view of traffic where I need to cross
- There is mud or grass at the point where I need to cross
- The road surface is uneven/has potholes

## Overall Score for Crossing the Road

Please identify any problem areas

Poor

Traffic calming required to GAA pitch.

Ok

HGVs make it difficult to cross.

Good

6 seconds at traffic lights, in order to cross the street on main street.



## Driver Behaviour

### What are the main problems with driver behaviour?

- There are no real problems
- Driving too fast
- Failing to stop at red lights or stop signs
- Failing to yield to pedestrians on zebra crossing or flashing amber lights
- Using beeps and car horns regularly
- Leaving engines running while waiting outside schools and shops
- Using mobile phones while driving or while stationary at red lights
- Stopping in traffic to set-down or pick-up passengers
- Driving too close to cyclists or pedestrians

## Poor Parking Practices

### What problems with poor parking practices are there?

- There are no real problems
- Parking outside of designated car parking areas
- Parking on footpaths (either fully or partially blocking them)
- Parking in accessible/designated parking spaces without a disabled persons parking permit
- Parking on double yellow lines
- Parking at junctions obstructing people crossing
- Parking across dropped kerbs used by wheelchairs and buggies
- Parking across cycle lanes
- Blocking driveways
- Blocking buses, bus stops or bus lanes
- Blocking emergency vehicles

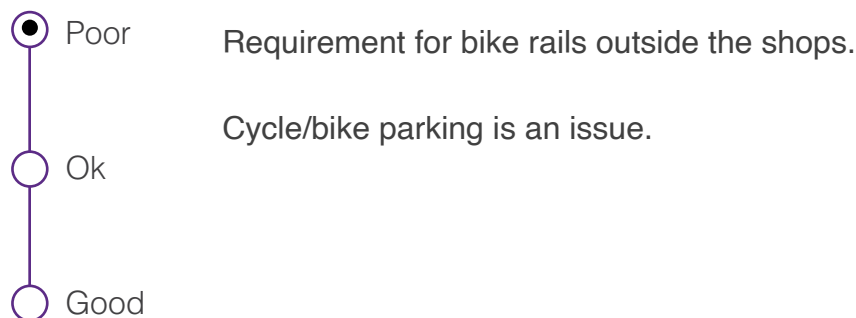
## Cycles and Scooters

### Are there any issues with cyclist and scooter-user behaviour?

- There are no real problems
- Failing to stop at red lights or stop signs
- Cycling on footpaths
- Scooting on footpaths
- Travelling dangerously on shared footpaths/greenways
- Manoeuvres that put other road users in danger
- Parking bikes or scooters in places that block the footpath

## Overall Score for Road-user behaviour

Please identify any problem areas



## Personal safety and Feeling of Safety in Surroundings.

### Some of the safety issues with the route include:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> There are no real problems                             | <input type="radio"/> I feel unsafe at night time                  |
| <input type="radio"/> A lack of visible Garda presence                       | <input checked="" type="radio"/> A lack of activity and people     |
| <input type="radio"/> Area is too isolated                                   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Derelict and unoccupied buildings |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Poor road user behaviour                    | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Long stretches of blank walls     |
| <input type="radio"/> Groups of people making me feel intimidated            | <input type="radio"/> High walls and fences along it               |
| <input type="radio"/> Anti-social behaviour (e.g. street drinkers, drug use) | <input type="radio"/> Hidden alleyways and blind corners           |
| <input type="radio"/> Stray or noisy dogs                                    | <input type="radio"/> Other (please comment below)                 |

## Layout and Clarity

### It is not clear and obvious where I need to walk to:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> There are no real problems  | <input type="radio"/> Street signage is damaged  |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Street is cluttered and confusing                                      | <input type="radio"/> Street signage is overly complicated   |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Street signage is difficult to read (e.g. faded, dirty, small letters) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Street signage is wrong (e.g. pointing wrong way, out of date etc.) |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Street signage is not needed and could be removed                      |  |

## Lighting

### What are the problems with street lighting when dark?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> There are no real problems                     | <input type="radio"/> Street lights are too bright                                |
| <input type="radio"/> There are no street lights                     | <input type="radio"/> Street lights only cover the road and not the footpath      |
| <input type="radio"/> Street lights are broken                       | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Lack of street lighting in some areas            |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Street lights are not bright enough | <input type="radio"/> Lighting is blocked by trees (especially when in full leaf) |

## Overall Score for Safety

Please identify any problem areas

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Poor          | Public lighting at the playground.   |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Ok | Lack of footpaths and no pedestrian crossings on Main Street and at the GAA club, concerns regarding speed of vehicle along this section of the roadway. |
| <input type="radio"/> Good          | Adequate signage for the playground required.  |

## Attractive and Pleasant

### Some problems with the route include:

- There are no real problems
- A lack of things to see and do
- Poorly-maintained building façades and shopfronts
- Connections to other streets are poor
- Litter
- No public places to chat with friends
- I don't feel relaxed on the street
- A lack of street trees and planting
- Neglected properties (e.g. evidence of dumping)
- Vacant/ derelict buildings
- Street clutter (e.g. unnecessary signage, bins, utility boxes, poles)
- Little evidence of community initiatives (e.g. Tidy Towns)
- A lack of places for shade and shelter (e.g. awnings, trees)

## Clean Air and Air Quality

### Are there any issues with air quality on the route?

- There are no real problems
- Unpleasant smells
- Chimney smoke
- Construction dust
- Fumes from traffic
- Persistent smoking at certain locations e.g. bus shelters
- I have breathing difficulties in this location
- I have coughing problems in this location

## Noise

### Are there any sources of excessive noise on the route from the following?

- There are no real problems
- Motor traffic
- Music from nearby shops or cafes
- Street performers
- Demolition and/or construction
- Road works
- Crowds or gatherings of people
- Industry
- Other noises (please comment below)

## Overall Score for Look and Feel

Please identify any problem areas

- Poor
- Ok
- Good

Overgrowth on hedgerows need to be cut back.

Lorries and noise from traffic.



## Walking to School

What are the main problems when walking to school?

- There are no real problems
- There is too much traffic
- Footpaths are lacking at both sides of the road
- There are not enough safe crossings to get to school
- The footpaths are not wide enough to walk with family and friends
- I sometimes need to step onto the road when the footpath is busy
- There is no lollypop person at school times
- There are no 'Walking Buses' or 'Park and Stride' initiatives

## Student Safety and Air Quality

What issues are there with Student Safety and Air Quality?

- There are no real problems
- Drivers are driving too fast
- Students get in or out of cars while car is in traffic
- Drivers park on footpaths
- Drivers park in cycle lanes
- Drivers leave the engine running when parked and waiting for pupils
- Drivers park or wait on double yellow lines/at bus stops
- No 'School Street' initiative to improve safety and reduce emissions

## Parking and Traffic Arrangements

What problems are there with parking and traffic arrangements?

- There are no real problems
- There are not enough cycle parking spaces within the school
- There is not enough space for buses to safely drop-off pupils
- There are no direct crossings to school from bus stops
- There are no dedicated drop-off/set-down areas for the school
- There are no designated spaces for disabled parking
- Pupils must cross a car park or moving traffic to access the school
- There are no 'No Stopping' signs or double yellow lines around the school gate
- There is not a separate entrance (away from cars) for pedestrians or cyclists
- There are no sheltered waiting areas for parents or guardians

## Behavioural Change

If conditions improved, students would:

- Walk more to school with friends and family
- Use the bus or train to go to school
- Use the car less
- Feel safer around the school gates

## Overall Score for Outside the School Gates

Please identify any problem areas



Vehicles parking on double yellow lines outside the school.





# Recommendations

## What improvements could be made to the route?

Please list them in order of priority.

1. More pedestrian crossings and better footpaths required.
2. Improved footpaths and parking to the playground area.
3. Better signage to the toilets/ playground etc.
4. Heritage trail, considering the historical assets and heritage of the town.  
(These are 12 no. National Monuments)
5. More refuse bins.
6. Lack of street greening and floral displays.

---

If these recommendations were implemented, would you consider walking the route more?



No

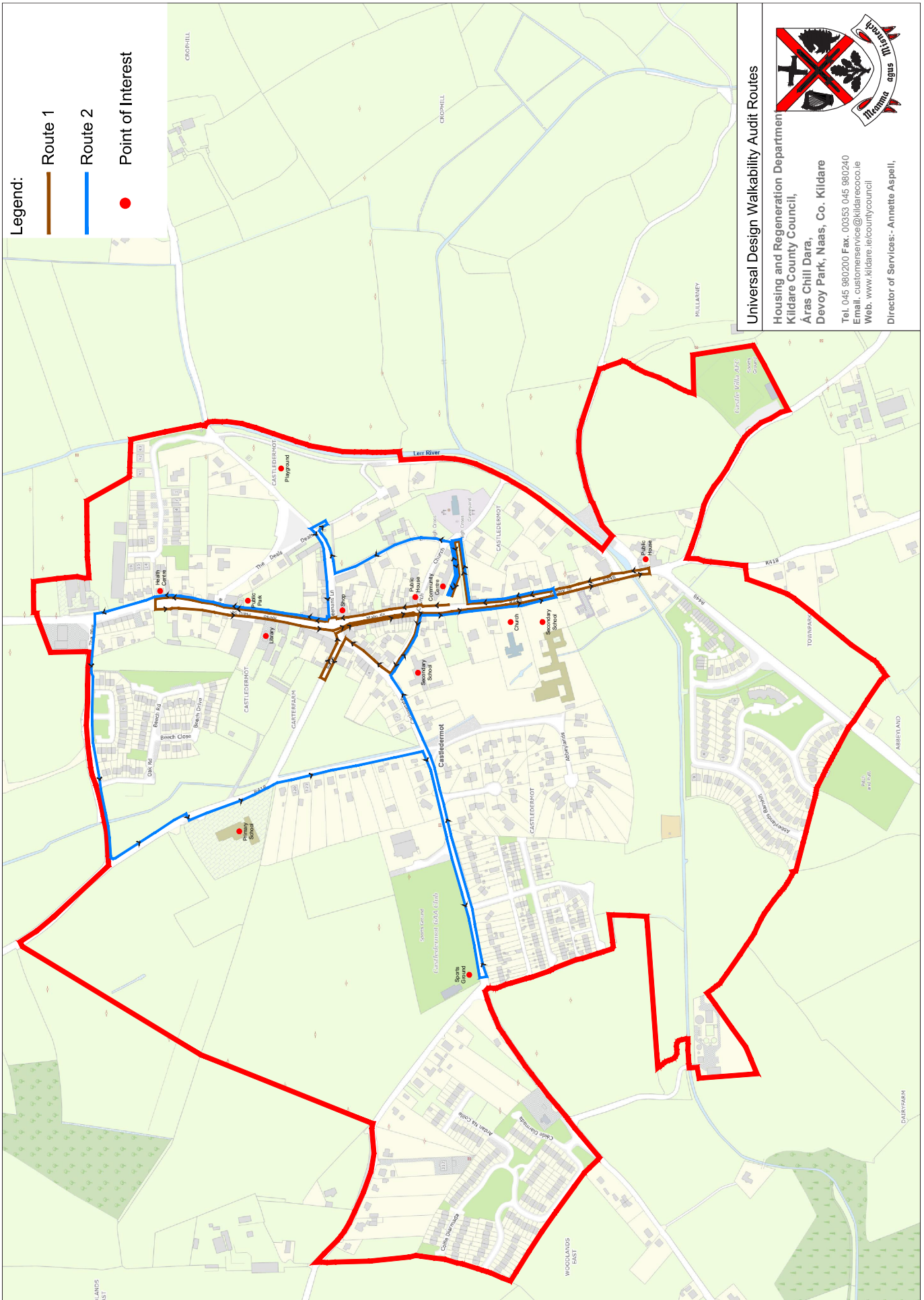


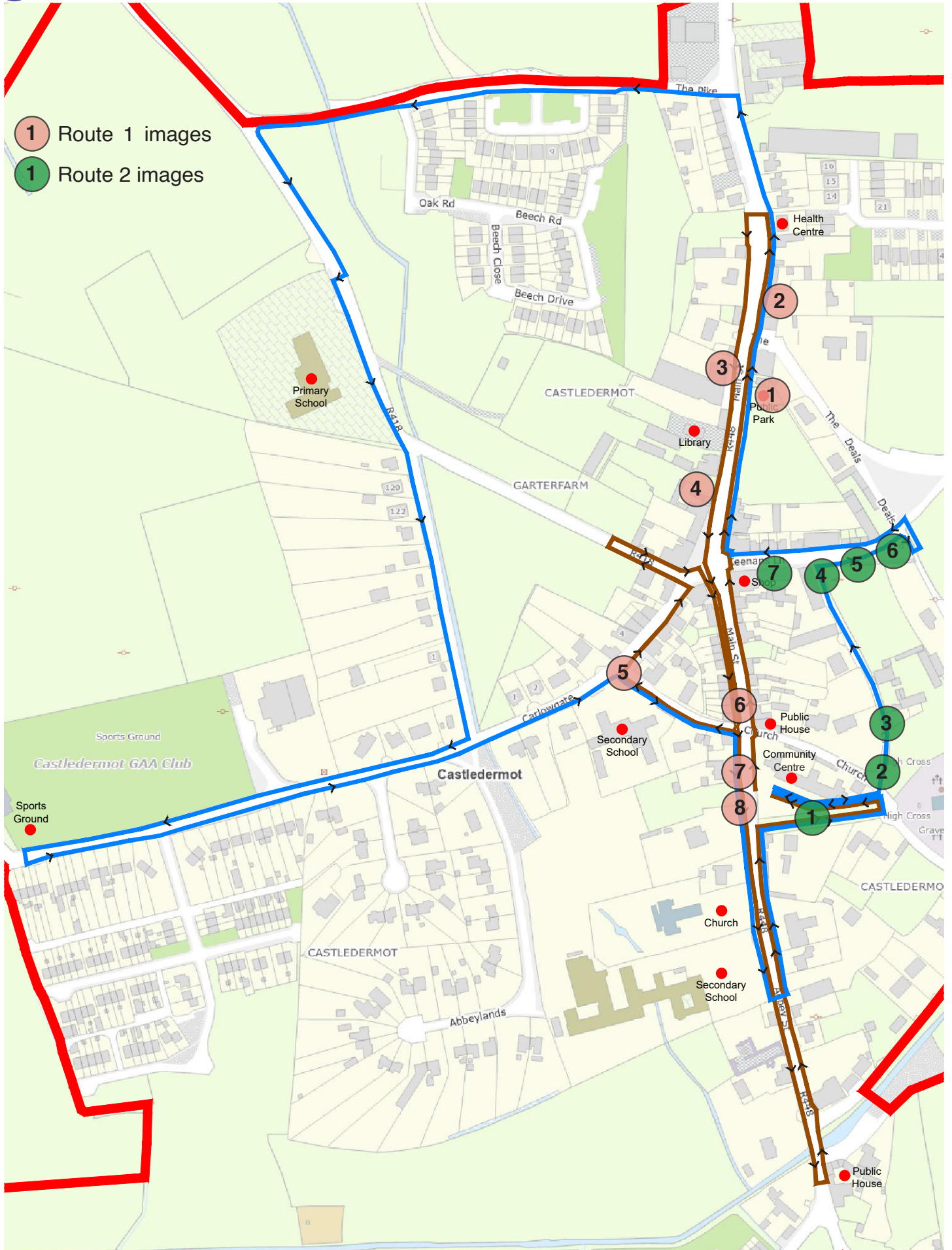
Maybe



Yes









## Route 1

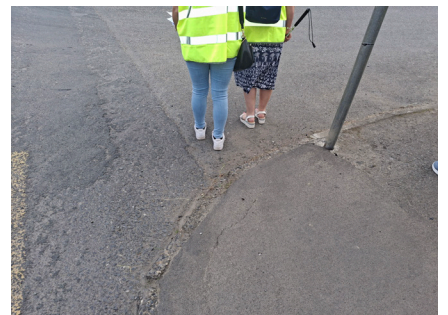


## Route 2





## Reference images



# Thank you for completing this Audit.

The responses to this Audit will be compiled and analysed to determine whether improvements should be made to the route. Any suggested improvements will be subject to further analysis and consideration by the relevant Local Authority.

