



WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)

VARIATION 5
TO THE
WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010-2016

Variation 5 (i) – Adopted ASHFORD TOWN PLAN

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY BUILDINGS
WICKLOW

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SECTION 1

1.1 Core Strategy

Level 5 and 6 plans exist in a hierarchy of plans flowing from national level (National Spatial Strategy) to regional level (Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area) to County level (Wicklow County Development Plan). It is through the County Development Plan that these higher order strategies, as well as other national and regional policies (e.g. relating to transportation and the environment) are translated to a 'local level'.

The County Development Plan includes a 'Core Strategy' which sets out the 'direction' for the future growth of the County, in accordance with these higher level strategies, and in particular sets out the settlement and population growth strategy up to 2022, evaluates the demand for housing and adequacy of zoned lands to meet those needs, as well as providing strategies for infrastructure, environmental protection and retail development.

Table 1 below sets out the key elements of the Wicklow County Development Plan 'Core Strategy', as it applies to Level 5 and Level 6 settlements.

Core Strategy of the CDP	Application to Level 5	Application to Level 6
Settlement, Population & Housing Strategies	Level 5 settlements are designated 'Small Growth Towns' and generally have population targets in the range 1,550 – 3,000 ¹	Level 6 settlements are designated 'Rural Towns' and generally have population targets in the range 750 – 1,750 ²
Economic Development Strategy	The economic function of 'Small Growth Towns' is to be attractor's for local investment and to target investment in the form of product intensive industries particularly those related to rural resources.	The economic function of 'Small Growth Towns' is to be attractor's for local investment and to target investment in the form of product intensive industries particularly those related to rural resources.
Retail Strategy	Level 5 settlements are identified as either 'Level 3' or 'Level 4' in the County retail hierarchy, the majority being in 'Level 4'. All Level 6 settlements are identified as 'Level 4'. Level 3 retail centres are defined as 'sub County town centres'. Such centres will vary both in the scale of provision and the size of catchment, due to proximity to a Major Town / County Town centre. Generally where the centre has a large catchment (e.g. market town in a rural area) and is not close to a larger centre, there will be a good range of comparison shopping though no large department stores or centres, with a mix of retail types, leisure and cultural facilities and a range of cafes and restaurants. At least one supermarket and smaller scale department store are required to meet local needs. Such towns / centres would generally range in size from 10-25,000sqm of lettable retail space catering for a population of 10,000- 40,000.	Level 4 retail centres are defined as 'local centres / small towns' where the retail needs would be expected to include one supermarket / two medium sized convenience stores (up to 1,000sqm aggregate) and c. 10-20 smaller shops.
Social Development	In accordance with the County community facilities hierarchy, Level 5 settlements generally fall into the 2,000-7,000 population range and should be provided with: community/parish hall, multi purpose community space and / or meeting rooms, local town park and open spaces/nature areas, outdoor multi-use games areas, playgrounds, playing pitches and a library.	In accordance with the County community facilities hierarchy, Level 6 settlements generally fall into the <2,000 population range and should be provided with: community/parish hall, open Spaces/play areas, outdoor multi-use games area and playing pitches.

¹ Kilcoole, Rathdrum and Baltinglass in Level 5 have population targets exceeding 3,000, in the range 3,500-5,000. This is due to the fact that these towns have been identified in the RPGs as towns capable of sustaining higher growth either due to their location on a railway line (in the case of Kilcoole and Rathdrum) or because of the large rural hinterland served (in the case of Baltinglass).

² Dunlavin and Donard in Level 6 have population targets outside this range, reflecting their existing populations and development capacity.

Infrastructure Strategy - Wastewater - Water Supply - Roads	In accordance with the County Development Plan: - Sufficient wastewater treatment capacity is required to cater for the projected population within the plan area - Sufficient water supply is required capable of meeting the demands of projected population within the plan area. Measures to improve the capacity and efficiency of local roads and connections to national routes in close proximity to the plan area are required.
Environmental Strategy	To ensure the objectives of the plan are consistent with the conservation and protection of the Environment.

1.2 Population and housing

The 2022 population and housing targets for Level 5 and Level 6 settlements are provided in the County Development Plan.

The 2011 population and housing unit figures are derived from the 2011 Census. As the Census 'town boundaries' do not always necessarily match our plan boundaries, the Census figures have been amended where required, using additional data sources such as the CSO 'Small Area Population Statistics' and the An Post GeoDirectory.

The number of housing units required in 2022 is based on an assumed average household size of 2.3 in 2022 and the 'excess factor' of 6.5%.

	Population		Housing Units	
	2011	2022	2011	2022
Ashford	1484	3000	531	1389
Dunlavin	793	2500	313	1160

Table 2: Population and housing unit requirements up to 2022³

Population and housing objectives

PH1 *To adhere to the objectives of the Wicklow County Development Plan in regard to population and housing as are applicable to Level 5 and 6 settlements*

PH2 *Notwithstanding the zoning of land for residential purposes, the Planning Authority shall monitor and implement the population targets as set out in the County Development Plan and shall phase and restrict, where necessary, the granting of residential planning permissions to ensure these targets are not exceeded.*

1.3 Economic development

Depending on their degree of accessibility and their economic function, the hinterland towns (i.e. those outside the metropolitan area) have varying roles to play in acting as attractors for foreign and local investment. The towns of Arklow and Wicklow/Rathnew constitute higher order towns which are most likely to be successful in attracting a concentration of major employment generating investment from foreign as well as local investment. Having regard to their County level of economic importance, these towns should target a variety of investment types, ranging from 'product' to 'people' intensive industries; including foreign owned high technology manufacturing and services sector, local enterprise and general industrial processes. Blessington, Newtownmountkennedy, Rathdrum and Baltinglass constitute lower order settlements, which having regard to their strategic location on major transport infrastructure and their designation as growth centres, should also target a variety investment types.

³ For the purposes of the current exercise i.e. to adopt plans for Dunlavin and Ashford into the current County Development Plan, figures are only currently provided for these towns. The figures for the remaining towns will be provided as part of the draft County Development Plan in 2015.

Level 5 and 6 settlements generally perform a lesser function in terms of attracting investment than Level 2, 3 and 4 settlements, however these settlements perform an important role in attracting local investment and should aim to target investment in the form of local services, 'product intensive' industries, particularly those linked to rural resources, such as food processing, agricultural services and tourist facilities / accommodation.

An established measure of the employment 'health' of a settlement is a measure called the 'jobs ratio'. This is the relationship between the number of people in the labour force and the number of jobs in any defined area. A healthy area is considered to be one where the jobs ratio is around 70%-75%.

The County Development Plan sets out an objective to increase the average 'jobs ratio' in the County to 75% in 2022. Not all towns / areas will of course be able to reach this level and it is considered reasonable that the plan should aim to increase the jobs ratio proportionately in each area according to its characteristics and level in the County settlement / employment hierarchy.

For Level 5 towns, it is an objective to increase the 2011 jobs ratio by 50% by 2022 and for Level 6 towns, it is an objective to increase the jobs ratio by 25% by 2022.

		2011			2022		
		Population	Jobs	Jobs ratio	Population	Jobs	Jobs ratio
Level 5	Ashford	1484	265	0.44	3,000	802	0.66
Level 6	Dunlavin	793	240	0.51	2,500	949	0.64

Table 3: Jobs ratio and new employment growth required up to 2022⁴

Employment Objectives

- E1** *To ensure sufficient zoned land is available in appropriate locations capable of facilitating the development of appropriate employment opportunities in accordance with the provisions of the County Development Plan.*
- E2** *To facilitate and support the growth of Town Centres in accordance with the provisions set out in each plan and to encourage the development of new retail / retail services and business support services (such as solicitors, accountants, architects etc) within the TC zone.*
- E3** *To facilitate and support the development of the tourism industry and maximise each town's location as a destination and gateway between the tourism assets.*
- E5** *To facilitate home-working and innovative forms of working which reduce the need to travel but are subordinate to the main residential use of the dwelling and do not result in a disamenity in an area.*
- E6** *To encourage the provision of live-work units as part of mixed-use developments in appropriate locations.*

1.4 Town Centres & Retail

A strategy aimed at sustaining vibrant and attractive retail and commercial cores of Level 5 and 6 settlements, while also maintaining the distinctive character of the existing buildings and spaces, is vital in order for these towns to be capable of adequately meeting the demands of the projected population and their catchments.

⁴ For the purposes of the current exercise i.e. to adopt plans for Dunlavin and Ashford into the current County Development Plan, figures are only currently provided for these towns. The figures for the remaining towns will be provided as part of the draft County Development Plan in 2015.

The factors that make town centres economically viable and attractive to visitors are numerous and often hard to predict and influence, but for the purpose of this land use plan, the strategy for the retail and commercial core will be based around (a) protecting and enhancing the historic street pattern and buildings / features of heritage value and (b) identifying 'opportunity sites'⁵, which if developed could expand the retail offer and add vibrancy and allow for increased pedestrian connectivity between the town centre and proposed residential lands, and (c) encouraging a varied mix of uses in the core area.

Town Centres & Retail Objectives

- TC1** *To support and facilitate activities and developments that will improve the vitality, connectivity and vibrancy of the town centre area.*
- TC2** *To improve the 'public realm' in the designated town centre, with particular regard to footpath width and design quality, hard and soft landscaping, open spaces, street furniture, signage, street lighting and the on-street car parking layout, and any other aspects of the local environment that effect the attractiveness and accessibility of the town centre.*
- TC3** *To promote the development of opportunity sites⁶ within the town centre in accordance with the specific criteria set out for each identified area in each plan.*
- TC4** *To ensure that all new applications for retail development accord with the provisions of the "Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DOEHLG 2012), and any subsequent Ministerial Guidelines or directives and the Wicklow County Retail Strategy.*
- TC5** *To protect features that contribute to the town centres' overall appearance and heritage value and to ensure that new developments contribute positively any designated Architectural Conservation Area.*

1.5 Social & Community development

The provision of accessible social and community infrastructure, including open space and leisure / recreational facilities, contributes to the quality of life for all and it is important that existing and future residents of the town and its catchment are provided with such facilities. In particular, new community facilities will be required to be provided in tandem with the development of new dwellings and neighbourhoods.

There are four broad categories of social infrastructure as follows:

- Those providing education, including primary, secondary and third level schools and colleges and vocational or training centres;
- Those providing physical and mental care and development, such as health services, nursing homes, childcare / pre-schools, facilities for those with special needs etc;
- Leisure and recreational facilities including community / youth centres, indoor halls, dance / gymnastic studios, playing pitches, courts etc;
- Cultural facilities, such as arts centres, theatres, libraries and places of public worship and burial grounds etc.

Community Infrastructure and Open Space Objectives

- CD1** *To ensure sufficient lands are zoned for community needs within the plan area and to implement the objectives of Chapter 15 'Social and Community Infrastructure' of the Wicklow County Development 2010 - 2016 as applicable to each plan area.*

⁵ Illustrations for development of Opportunity Sites are strictly for indicative purposes only. All development within these areas including access arrangements, layout and design shall be subject to detailed analysis and agreement with Wicklow County Council.

⁶ Note. Indicative site layouts for opportunity sites are provided for illustrative purposes only. The actual development of these sites shall be subject to detailed design in accordance with criteria set out for each identified site.

CD2 *To require that new community and recreational facilities are developed in tandem with new housing, through the objectives contained in each plan for opportunity sites and action areas, and through the implementation of Objective CD5 of the County Development Plan which requires the carrying out of social infrastructure audits and addressing of community infrastructure needs of planned new residents.*

CD2 *To co-operate with the Department of Education & Skills, the Vocational Education Committee for Co. Wicklow and school management boards in the provision of additional school places and facilities where a need is identified.*

CD3 *To facilitate opportunities for play and sport and support the implementation of the County Council 'Play' and 'Sports & Recreation' policies and their objectives, including the collection of development levies.*

CD4 *The redevelopment for alternative uses of open space and recreational lands whether owned by private recreational clubs or publicly owned, will normally be resisted by the Council unless suitable alternative recreational facilities can be provided in a convenient location.*

1.6 Service infrastructure

The provision of transport and services infrastructure is essential to the development of any town, providing ease of movement within towns, connecting towns to surrounding areas and providing sufficient services infrastructure capable of meeting the demands of the resident, commercial and employment populations.

The County Development Plan, and various programmes of the Council's Roads and Environmental Services Departments, provide detailed strategies and objectives for a whole range of service infrastructure. As these provisions apply directly to towns in Levels 5 and 6 it is not considered necessary to restate all of these objectives; however, each plan will address a number of the specific local infrastructural issues in the area namely water, flooding and roads and transportation services.

Service Infrastructure Objectives

SI 1 *To implement the objectives and development standards of Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the County Development Plan as applicable to each town.*

SI 2 *To improve and expand water supply and wastewater treatment facilities sufficiently to ensure that no barriers exist to each town fulfilling its role as set out in the Wicklow 'Core Strategy' and Regional Planning Guidelines for the GDA.*

1.7 Heritage & Environment

The term 'heritage' includes monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscape, seascapes, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways. The County Wicklow Heritage Plan provides an agreed framework around which actions to conserve natural, built and cultural heritage, and increase appreciation and enjoyment of it, can be advanced. Each town plan will support the objectives and actions contained in the County Heritage Plan.

The protection and enhancement of heritage assets through these plans will help to safeguard the local character and distinctiveness of each town and its surroundings, providing local economic, social and environmental benefits.

Heritage Objectives

BD1 *To protect the natural, architectural and archaeological heritage of the town, in accordance with the objectives and development standards set out in Chapters 16 and 17 of the County Development Plan as are applicable to each town.*

1.8 Action Area Plans and Specific Local Objectives

Action Areas have been identified in each plan where necessary. Action Areas are to be the subject of comprehensive (not piecemeal) integrated schemes of development that allow for the sustainable, phased and managed development of the Action Area during the plan period. Separate applications for sections of each Action Area will not be considered until an overall Action Area Plan has been agreed in writing with the Planning Authority unless it can be shown that any application will not undermine the achievement of the overall objectives for that Action Area.

The position, location and size of the land use zonings shown on plan maps are indicative only and may be altered in light of eventual road and service layouts, detailed design and topography, subject to compliance with the criteria set out for the Action Areas.

Plans may also include 'Specific Local Objectives' (SLO) - the purpose of the SLO is to guide developers as to the aspirations of the plan regarding the development of certain lands where more than one land use is proposed, in a manner similar to Action Areas, but with the exception that no masterplan will be required to be agreed prior to the submission of a planning application.

By time related conditions, agreements or otherwise, the Council will regulate the building programme to ensure that the needs of the population do not exceed the provision of essential support systems and the Council will use its powers under the Planning & Development Acts to effect this control.

1.9 Zoning

Each plan map indicates the boundary of the Town Plan. All lands located outside the settlement boundary are considered to be within the rural area. Within these areas planning applications shall be assessed having regard to the objectives and standards for the rural area, as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan.

The purpose of land use zoning objectives is to indicate the Council's intentions for land uses in the town. The various land use zones and their objectives are identified on the maps of this Town Plan. Land use zoning objectives and the associated vision for each zone are as follows:

Zoning Objectives	
RE: Existing Residential	To protect, provide and improve residential amenities of adjoining properties and areas while allowing for infill residential development that reflects the established character of the area in which it is located
R20: New residential	To protect, provide and improve residential amenities at a density up to 20 units/ha.
R15: New residential Low Density	To protect, provide and improve residential amenities at a lower density not exceeding 15 units/ha.
R10: New residential Rural Fringe	To protect, provide and improve residential amenities at a lower density not exceeding 10 units/ha.
TC: Town Centre	To provide for the development and improvement of appropriate town centre uses including retail, commercial, office and civic use, and to provide for 'Living Over the Shop' residential accommodation, or other ancillary residential accommodation.
E: Employment	To provide for the development of enterprise and employment
FI: Film Industry	To facilitate proposals to strengthen and further develop the film industry
CE: Community & Education	To provide for civic, community and educational facilities
OS: Open Space	To preserve, provide and improve recreational amenity and passive open space.
AOS: Active Open Space	To provide for active recreational open space
pOS: Private Open Space	To protect private open space

Zoning Objectives

PU: Public Utility

To maintain lands providing services infrastructure

A zoning use table is not included in these plans. The planning authority shall determine each proposal on its merits, and shall only permit the development of uses that enhance, complement, are ancillary to, or neutral to the zoning objective. Uses that are materially inconsistent with and detrimental to the zoning objective shall not be permitted.

Uses generally appropriate for **residential** zoned areas include houses, apartments, residential open space, education, community facilities, retirement homes, nursing homes, childcare, health centres, guest house, bed and breakfast, places of public worship, home based economic activity, utility installations and ancillary development and other residential uses in accordance with the CDP.

Uses generally appropriate for **town centres** include retail, retail services, health, restaurants, public house, public buildings, hotels, guest houses, nursing/care homes, parking, residential development, commercial, office, tourism and recreational uses, community, including provision for religious use, utility installations and ancillary developments for town centre uses in accordance with the CDP.

Uses generally appropriate for **employment** zoned land include general and light industry, office uses, enterprise units, appropriate warehousing, petrol filling stations (as deemed appropriate), public transport depots, open space, community facilities, utility installations and ancillary developments for employment and industry uses in accordance with the CDP.

Uses generally appropriate for **community and educational** zoned land include community, educational and institutional uses include burial grounds, places of worship, schools, training facilities, community hall, nursing homes, health related developments, sports and recreational facilities, utility installations and ancillary developments for community, educational and institutional uses in accordance with the CDP.

Uses generally appropriate for **open space** zoned land include tourism and recreational uses, community facilities, open space, sports grounds, public utilities, civic amenity and ancillary developments for open space uses in accordance with the CDP.

Many uses exist where they do not conform to the designated zoning objective. When extensions to, or improvements of premises accommodating such uses are proposed, each shall be considered on its merits and permission may be granted where the development does not adversely affect the amenities of properties in the vicinity and does not prejudice the proper planning and development of the area.

Whilst the land-use zoning will give an indication of the acceptability or otherwise of particular uses in particular areas, proposed development will also be assessed in terms of compatibility with the development control guidelines and standards outlined in the Wicklow County Development Plan and the relevant town plan. Factors such as density, height, massing, traffic generation, public health regulations, design criteria, visual amenity, availability of services and potential nuisance by way of noise, odour and air pollution are also of importance in establishing whether or not a development proposal conforms to the proper planning and sustainable development of an area.

1.10 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Each draft plan and any proposed amendments thereto made during the adoption process, will be screened for the need to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment in accordance with the provisions of the Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations. Such screening takes into account the advice and inputs of the designated 'environmental authorities' and even where it is determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required, the screening process allows potential environmental sensitivities to be identified and addressed early in the plan making process. Where it is determined that Strategic Environmental Assessment is required, any draft plan will be accompanied by detailed 'Environmental Report', setting out the environmental consequences of making the plan and providing measures to address any potential adverse impacts.

1.11 Appropriate Assessment

Each draft plan and any proposed amendments thereto made during the adoption process, will be screened for the need to carry out an 'Appropriate Assessment' under the Habitats Directive. Where Appropriate Assessment cannot be screened out, each plan will be accompanied by a detailed 'Habitats Directive Assessment'.

HDA Objectives

HDA1 *No development will be permitted that adversely affects the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. All development proposals shall comply with the following objectives:*

- i. On lands designated a 'Natura 2000 Site' it is an objective of the Council to preserve and improve the integrity of the Natura 2000 site and to prohibit development that adversely affects the integrity of the Natura 2000 site, in light of the site's conservation objectives.*
- ii. Any proposed development with potential to impact upon a Natura 2000 site shall be subject to an Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive 1992 and 'Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects in Ireland-Guidance for Planning Authorities' (DoEHLG, 2009).*
- iii. Where the planning authority has determined that an Appropriate Assessment is required in respect of a proposed development, it may require the submission of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) for proposed developments. The NIS shall assess, on the basis of best scientific knowledge, the effect of a proposed development, on its own, or in combination with other plans or projects, on a Natura 2000 site, in view of the conservation objectives of the site. A NIS shall include all information as prescribed by any relevant legislation, and/or any information that the planning authority considers necessary in order to enable it to assess the effect of a proposed development on the integrity of a site.*
- iv. Avoid encroachment on a Natura 2000 site and implement an appropriate buffer zone on adjacent sites, as required, where feasible or as determined following consultation with NPWS or other relevant body.*

In order to ensure the protection of the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, the planning authority is not limited to the implementation of the above objectives, and shall implement all other relevant objectives of the CDP as it sees fit.

1.12 Flood Risk Assessment

As part of each plan, a Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out and is set out as an appendix to each plan, prepared in accordance with the provisions of 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management' Guidelines (DoEHLG 2009).

These guidelines require the planning system at national, regional and local levels to:

- 1) Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding by not permitting development in flood risk areas, particularly floodplains, unless where it is fully justified that there are wider sustainability grounds for appropriate development and unless the flood risk can be managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible, reducing flood risk overall;
- 2) Adopt a sequential approach to flood risk management based on avoidance, reduction and then mitigation of flood risk as the overall framework for assessing the location of new development in the development planning processes; and
- 3) Incorporate flood risk assessment into the process of making decisions on planning applications and planning appeals.

Flood Objectives

FL 1 *To have regard to the provisions of the 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management' Guidelines (DoEHLG 2009) and the Flood Risk Assessment carried out as part of this plan*