

CHAPTER 2 - VISION AND CORE STRATEGY

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the vision for the future of the County and to provide a 'Core Strategy' for its spatial organisation over the plan period.

2.2 Strategic Policy Context

The Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022 (CDP) is consistent with higher order strategic policy documents including the 'National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020', the 'Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022' and the National Transport Authority's 'Draft Transportation Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2011-2030'. While strictly speaking not a 'higher order strategy' document, in the crafting of the 'Core Strategy' for Wicklow, particular regard has also been taken of the Ministerial guidance 'Rural Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DoEHLG 2005), having regard to the mainly rural nature of the County. The strategic policies included in these documents are key to informing the 'Core Strategy' of the development plan.

Other national plans, policies or strategies that influence the objectives of the development plan are considered within the main chapters of the development plan where they relate to a particular topic or land use.

In addition, there are a number of environmental considerations that have a significant bearing on the overall development objectives of the plan. Under the Habitats and Birds Directive and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, both an Appropriate Assessment and a Strategic Environmental Assessment were carried out for the entire development plan including the written statement, maps, objectives and appendices. The plan had regard to both assessments with resultant changes being made to the Plan throughout the plan process.

In addition, the plan has had regard to other relevant environmental legislation. Legislation is outlined in the relevant chapters of the plan and includes, but is not exclusive to, the Water Framework Directive, Floods Directive, Shellfish Directive, Waste Water Treatment Directive, the Wildlife Acts, National Monuments Acts and Waste Management Acts. It is considered that the development objectives in the plan are consistent, in as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment.

National Spatial Strategy 2002–2020 (NSS)

The strategic vision for the spatial development of Ireland for the twenty year period from 2002 to 2020 is outlined in the 'National Spatial Strategy' (NSS). This NSS aims to achieve balanced regional development over the country of Ireland within the period up to 2020, in a way that is internationally competitive, socially cohesive and environmentally sustainable. The NSS is now some thirteen years old. Central Government has indicated its intention to review or replace the NSS but when a successor document will be available is unclear.

The NSS envisages the establishment of a national spatial structure based around a series of 'gateways' and 'hubs', which will act as engines of growth into the future. The NSS includes a set of policy recommendations that aim to strengthen rural areas in recognition of the role that they play in supporting and driving the attainment of more balanced regional development.

Under the NSS, County Wicklow is included in the 'Dublin and Mid East Region' (the Greater Dublin Area). The strategy sets out the following role for the region:

"Enhancing the competitiveness of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), so that it continues to perform at the international level as a driver of national development, means physically consolidating the growth of the metropolitan area i.e. Dublin City and suburbs. At the same time, development in the hinterland of the metropolitan area is to be concentrated in strategically placed, strong and dynamic urban centres, i.e. the 'Primary Development Centres' identified in the Strategic Planning Guidelines. These development centres have a unique role in Irish terms, given the scale of the Dublin City region and the need for internal balance between the city and its surrounding counties."

The NSS recognises that the rural areas of the region vary substantially from strong rural areas to weak rural areas. The NSS categorises the north of County Wicklow as a 'stronger rural area' (including villages close to the main urban areas experiencing strong pressure for development) where urban generated housing should be directed into the urban centres and minimised in the rural area. Any development within the villages of the stronger rural area should be respectful of the character of the villages. The rural area of south west Wicklow is identified as a 'weaker' area that is struggling to maintain population and an area of declining or marginal agriculture and falling population. In such areas, there should be a focus on boosting the development capacity of smaller villages and rural towns.

The NSS recognises the role of the towns across the County and identifies Wicklow Town as a 'Primary Development Centre' and Arklow as a town with 'Urban Strengthening Opportunity'. The N/M11 route is identified as a National Transport Corridor.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022 (RPGs)

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) provide for the implementation of the NSS at a regional level in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). The principal objective of the RPGs is to develop a broad, spatially-oriented planning framework for the GDA comprising the counties of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, South Dublin, Fingal, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow.

Within the GDA, a distinction is made in the guidelines between the existing built up area of Dublin and its immediate environs (the Metropolitan Area) and the remaining extensive areas of countryside containing a range of designated development centres specifically located on transportation corridors (the Hinterland Area). Bray and Greystones are located in the Metropolitan Area and the remainder of the County forms part of the Hinterland Area.

In brief, the settlement strategy for the GDA aims to:

- i. physically consolidate the growth of the metropolitan area of Dublin by focusing new housing within the existing footprint of the metropolitan area and planning expansion of the footprint in conjunction with new high quality public transport investment; and
- ii. to concentrate development in the hinterland into designated towns, along multi-modal transport corridors providing enhanced public transport linkages.

The guidelines set out a 'Settlement Typology' and 'Hierarchy' and designate certain settlements within County Wicklow as follows:

Table 2.1 Settlement Typology

Hierarchy	Location (as relates to County Wicklow)	Description
Gateway Core	Dublin city centre and immediate suburbs	International business core and high density population, retail and cultural activities
Metropolitan Consolidation Town	Bray	Strong active urban place within metropolitan area with strong transport links.
Large Growth Town I	Wicklow	Key destinations, economically active towns supporting surrounding areas, located on multi modal corridor in metropolitan hinterland
Large Growth Towns II	Greystones, Arklow	Smaller in scale but strong active growth towns, economically vibrant with high quality transport links to larger towns/city.
Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns	Newtownmountkennedy, Blessington	(i) In metropolitan area, strong edge of metropolitan area district service centres, high quality linkages and increased densities at nodes on public transport corridors (ii) In hinterland areas, 10km from large town on public transport corridor, serve rural hinterland as market town.
Small Towns	To be defined in development plan	Good bus or rail links; 10k from large growth towns.
Villages	To be defined in development plan	

The guidelines include the following recommendation for the preparation of the 'Core Strategy' of the Wicklow County Development Plan:

"The extension of the Luas line into Wicklow from Cherrywood opens up new opportunities for both new housing areas and supporting consolidation of the urban area of Bray and its environs. The recommended examination of possible improvements to the Wicklow rail route by the RPGs will assist in supporting economic and housing activity in the key towns of Greystones, Wicklow and Arklow; as well as the smaller rail served towns of Rathdrum and Kilcoole, and support the continued delivery of a strong defined settlement pattern for the County. The rural and particular landscape qualities of the County, which see a large rural hinterland to the south west more focused towards Carlow allows the town of Baltinglass to grow in a sustainable manner, meeting the needs of the local community and surrounding districts, and playing a critical local role."

The guidelines identify Wicklow/Arklow and Bray/Cherrywood/Greystones as 'Core Economic Areas', which are identified for economic development based around sectoral themes.

The guidelines sets out guidance on the future role and function of settlements throughout the region and includes population and housing targets. These matters are considered in detail in the Core Strategy section of this chapter.

The guidelines make recommendations with regard to the broad rural settlement and housing framework objectives set out in the NSS. The guidelines indicate that rural housing policies should take account of the differing types of rural housing demands in varying rural contexts (e.g. stronger rural areas vs structurally weak rural areas) and tailor policies accordingly. A distinction should be made between urban and rural generated housing demands as defined in the 'Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2005). In general, urban generated rural housing needs should be directed to existing settlements. Where local needs assessment criteria have been satisfied and subject to satisfying good planning requirements, rural generated housing should be accommodated where it arises. The guidelines make specific reference for the need for a renewed focus on quality design of rural housing and the need to protect the environmental and ecological sensitivities of the rural area.

The guidelines also provide a framework for future investment in environmental services, transportation and other infrastructure and make recommendations regarding rural development, social infrastructure and built and natural heritage.

From 1st June 2014 the GDA Regional Authority was replaced by a new Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly. The current 2010-2022 Regional Planning Guidelines, which were shaped and framed by the 2006 Census, are due to be replaced by a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) – to be drafted by the new Regional Assembly. There remains a lack of clarity as to when this replacement RSES document might be published.

NTA Greater Dublin Area Draft Transportation Strategy 2011-2030 '2030 Vision'

The Draft Transport Strategy for the GDA was produced by the National Transport Authority for the period 2011-2030. The strategy sets out policies and measures required to support the GDA in realising its potential as a competitive, sustainable city region with a good quality life for all.

A number of fundamental tenets underlie the draft strategy objectives. These include the adoption of a hierarchy of transport users with pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the top of the hierarchy. Consequently these users should have their safety and convenience needs considered first. A second key principle is the requirement that land use planning and transport planning be considered together in the overall development of the GDA region.

The strategy identifies a number of Designated Towns and Designated Districts, based on the RPG classifications. Bray and Wicklow are categorised as Designated Towns. Greystones, Arklow, Newtownmountkennedy and Blessington are categorised as Designated Districts. The strategy focuses on land use measures that promote sustainable travel patterns both within the Designated Towns and Districts and also between the centres. The land-use measures set out in the strategy seek to:

- focus person-trip intensive development, particularly to key destinations such as retail and offices, into Dublin City and Designated Town centres within the GDA (for Wicklow these include Bray and Wicklow); and
- focus any person-trip intensive development outside Dublin City and Designated Town centres to locations served by stations on the existing and proposed rail network (particularly Metro and DART).

In these areas densities should be higher and intensive development should take place in areas well served by rail. Development should take place at these locations in advance of other locations. The strategy identifies that mixed use development will be the primary pattern of growth in all areas, with an emphasis on commercial uses in centres and on residential uses in other areas served by public transport.

Key projects identified in the strategy, of relevance to County Wicklow, include:

- extension of the Luas Green Line from Bride's Glen to the Bray area, subject to the timing and scale of new development in the Bray-Fassaroe area and appraisal and economic assessment (this is identified as a 'longer term' priority);
- the finalisation and protection of a 'Leinster Orbital Route' corridor, with possible incremental implementation of this road;
- the provision of additional track and other measures on the single rail track south of Bray to facilitate additional rail services to Greystones, Wicklow and Arklow; and
- retention of local bus service in Wicklow Town, subject to anticipated population increases.

Subsequent to the submission of the Draft Transport Strategy in 2011 to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, the focus shifted to the short-term with the adoption of the Integrated Implementation Plan 2013-2018, in accordance with Section 13 of the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008. This plan set out a 6 year programme for transport investment in the GDA, including provision for Luas Cross City, the Phoenix Park Tunnel Link, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

The 2011 draft transport strategy is in the process of being superseded by the new 'Draft Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035' which was published for public consultation after this draft plan was crafted. Updates to this County Development Plan will be made when possible through the plan making process to reflect any new NTA strategy that is adopted.

Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Wicklow's proximity to Dublin, which allows for easy access to the main commercial and employment centres of the Metropolitan area, coupled with its beautiful landscape and amenities, has led to considerable pressure for housing in the open countryside. The Wicklow County Development Plan has, since 1999, included measures to manage rural housing, with a presumption against unnecessary rural dwellings and urban generated rural housing. This approach is supported the '*Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*'¹ which provide that:

- people who are part of the rural community should be facilitated by the planning system in all rural areas, including those under strong urban-based pressures;
- anyone wishing to build a house in rural areas suffering persistent and substantial population decline will be accommodated; and
- the development of the rural environs of major urban areas, including the gateways and hubs identified in the NSS and County and other larger towns over 5,000 in population needs to be carefully managed in order to ensure their orderly development and successful functioning into the future.

In accordance with these guidelines, planning authorities should aim to support the following overarching policy objectives in their policies, practices and actions:

- the importance of encouraging development needed to sustain and renew established rural communities, in both smaller rural towns and villages and wider countryside areas;
- the need to ensure that the planning system guides residential and other development to the right locations in rural areas in the interest of protecting natural and man-made assets in those areas; and
- the need to analyse the different types of economic, social and physical circumstances of different types of rural areas and to tailor planning policies to respond to these differing local circumstances.

¹ These guidelines constitute Ministerial guidelines under Section 28 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended). Section 28 provides that Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanala shall have regard to Ministerial guidelines in the performance of their functions.

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines stress the importance of research and analysis being carried out into population and development trends in rural areas before Planning Authorities draft their rural development policies and objectives. In particular, an analysis of rural area 'types' as set out in Section 5.3.2 of the National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020 should be carried out.

The rural area types identified by the NSS are:

- (1) Rural areas under strong urban influence. These areas will exhibit characteristics such as proximity to the immediate environs or close commuting catchment of large cities and towns, rapidly rising population, evidence of considerable pressure for development of housing due to proximity to such urban areas, or to major transport corridors with ready access to the urban area, and pressures on infrastructure such as the local road network.
- (2) Stronger rural areas. In these areas population levels are generally stable within a well-developed town and village structure and in the wider rural areas around them. This stability is supported by a traditionally strong agricultural economic base and the level of individual housing development activity in these areas tends to be relatively low and confined to certain areas.
- (3) Structurally weaker rural areas. These areas will exhibit characteristics such as persistent and significant population decline as well as a weaker economic structure based on indices of income, employment and economic growth.
- (4) Areas with clustered settlement patterns. As set out in the NSS, areas exhibiting these characteristics are generally associated with the western seaboard of counties such as Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Clare and some parts of Kerry and many parts of the Gaeltacht where there are comparatively fewer villages or smaller town type settlements compared with other rural areas; instead there tends in those areas to be a prevalence of housing clusters, groups of clusters and occasionally linear development.

For the review of this County Development Plan, the Planning Authority carried out an assessment in accordance with the approach outlined in the Guidelines, which included an evaluation of:

- population trends in the County between 2002-2011 in order to ascertain the pattern of population increase and decline in the County, and
- rural housing trends (i.e. location of rural applications and outcomes of such applications) since 2006.

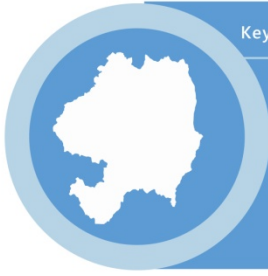
This assessment revealed:

- no evidence of persistent or significant population decline in any part of the County; while the 2011 Census found a number of areas had experienced population decline between 2006 and 2011 (including the centres of the main towns and the most highly populated eastern seaboard areas), only a small number had experienced population decline in the preceding period 2002-2006; and
- pressure for rural housing across the entire County, with the highest concentrations of applications on the fringes of major towns.

It is therefore concluded that there are effectively no 'structurally weak' areas in the County. Furthermore, when the 'zone of influence' of urban areas is considered (which includes the influence of Dublin as well as major towns in the County, namely the Bray–Greystones cluster, Rathdrum, Wicklow-Rathnew, Arklow, Blessington and Baltinglass), it is evident that the entire County can be considered an area under strong urban influence. This would be consistent with the preliminary analysis carried out as part of the National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020. This conclusion forms the basis for the rural housing objectives set out in this plan.

Given the likely future development patterns in major towns, improvements in accessibility and the attractiveness in quality of life and affordability terms, rural settlements face increasing development pressures from those wishing to move from large urban and city areas. This can in turn have knock-on repercussions for the affordability of housing and housing land in rural settlements for rural dwellers. There is therefore a major development challenge in harnessing the development potential of these centres on the one hand, while protecting these resources for essentially local or rurally derived housing needs on the other.

2.3 Vision and Goals



Key Strategic Goals underpinning the Vision of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022

VISION

For County Wicklow to be a cohesive community of people enjoying distinct but interrelated urban and rural environments; where natural surroundings and important resources are protected; where opportunities abound to live and work in a safe atmosphere, allowing people to enjoy the benefits of well paid jobs, a variety of housing choices, excellent public services, ample cultural and leisure opportunities, and a healthy environment.

1 CONSISTENCY

To be consistent, as far as is practicable, with higher order national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022, the NTA GDA Draft Transport Strategy 2011-2030 and national rural housing policy, and manage the spatial organisation of the county in an efficient sustainable manner.

2 EMPLOYMENT

To facilitate and encourage the growth of employment, enterprise and economic activity in the county, across all economic sectors and in all areas.

3 TRANSPORT

To integrate land use planning with transportation planning, with the dual aim of reducing the distance that people need to travel to work, shops, schools and places of recreation and social interaction, and facilitating the delivery of improved public transport.

4 HOUSING

To enhance existing housing areas and to provide for high quality new housing, at appropriate locations and to ensure the development of a range of house types, sizes and tenures in order to meet the differing needs of all in society and to promote balanced communities.

5 VIBRANT SETTLEMENTS

To maintain and enhance the viability and vibrancy of settlements, to ensure that towns and villages remain at the heart of the community and provide a wide range of retail, employment, social, recreational and infrastructural facilities.

6 ENHANCE THE RURAL AREA

To protect and enhance the county's rural assets and recognise the housing, employment, social and recreational needs of those in rural areas.

7 INFRASTRUCTURE

To protect and improve the county's transport, water, waste, energy and communications infrastructure whilst having regard to our responsibilities to respect areas protected for their important flora, fauna and other natural features.

8 COMMUNITIES

To promote and facilitate the development of sustainable communities through land use planning, by providing for land uses capable of accommodating community, leisure, recreational and cultural facilities, accessible to and meeting the needs of all individuals and local community groups.

9 HERITAGE

To protect and enhance the diversity of the county's natural and built heritage, including the protection of the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, the protection of ecological corridors under Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and the protection of protected species.

10 CLIMATE CHANGE

To address the climate change challenge, as a plan dynamic, throughout the county plan, directly in the areas of flooding and renewable energy, and indirectly by integrating climate change and sustainable development into statements of plan policy, strategies and objectives.

11 QUALITY DESIGN

To promote high quality design so that new developments complement their surroundings, are well connected to neighbourhoods, are functional and pleasant to experience, are accessible, attractive, secure and contribute to a 'sense of place'.



2.4 Core Strategy

The purpose of the Core Strategy is to articulate a medium to longer term quantitatively based strategy for the spatial development of the area of the planning authority and in so doing to demonstrate that the development plan and its objectives are consistent with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines and especially as regards:

- the hierarchy and role of gateways, hub towns, County towns, other towns and villages and rural areas outlined in the documents above; and
- the process of giving effect to the hierarchy above by setting regional and national population targets and associated requirements for housing land.

Whether zoning objectives are outlined in the relevant development plan or in subsidiary local area plans, the Core Strategy of the development plan must be sufficiently specific in setting population targets and housing requirements across the overall area of the planning authority and the elements of the settlement hierarchy outlined above thereby to act as a clear framework for amendments to existing zonings or new zonings in lower-level plans. In turn, the population targets and housing requirements of lower-level plans must accord with the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan and this will be achieved either in subsequent amendments to such plans or in the preparation of new local area plans.

2.4.1 Settlement Hierarchy

The Settlement Hierarchy for County Wicklow is set out in Table 2.2. The Settlement Hierarchy is in accordance with the settlement structure set out in higher order documents including the RPGs and NSS.

Table 2.2 County Wicklow Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement	National Spatial Strategy	Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area	County Development Plan 2016	County Development Plan Level
Bray	Dublin CZ	Metropolitan Area Consolidation Town	Metropolitan Area Consolidation Town	1
Wicklow / Rathnew	Dublin CZ	Hinterland Area Large Growth Town I	Hinterland Area Large Growth Town I	2
Arklow	Dublin CZ	Hinterland Area Large Growth Town II	Hinterland Area Large Growth Town II	3
Greystones / Delgany	Dublin CZ	Metropolitan Area Large Growth Town II	Metropolitan Area Large Growth Town II	3
Blessington	Dublin CZ	Hinterland Area Moderate Growth Town	Hinterland Area Moderate Growth Town	4
Newtownmountkennedy	Dublin CZ	Hinterland Area Moderate Growth Town	Hinterland Area Moderate Growth Town	4
Ashford	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Small Growth Town	5
Aughrim	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Small Growth Town	5
Baltinglass	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Small Growth Town	5
Carnew	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Small Growth Town	5
Dunlavin	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Small Growth Town	5
Enniskerry	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Small Growth Town	5
Kilcoole	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Small Growth Town	5
Rathdrum	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Small Growth Town	5
Tinahely	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Small Growth Town	5
Avoca	Dublin CZ	Key Village	Rural Town	6
Donard	Dublin CZ	Key Village	Rural Town	6
Kilmacanogue	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Rural Town	6
Newcastle	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Rural Town	6
Roundwood	Dublin CZ	Small Growth Town	Rural Town	6
Shillelagh	Dublin CZ	Key Village	Rural Town	6

The proposed minor deviations are the designation of Avoca, Donard and Shillelagh as ‘towns’ (albeit ‘rural towns’) rather than ‘villages’ as set out in the RPGs. The only difference in planning ‘character’ between these three settlements and three other towns in the ‘rural town’ category is their lower population (projected to be less than 1,000 in 2028) but otherwise all six towns defined as ‘rural towns’ share the same characteristics, that is, they are strong rural settlements, with a substantial rural catchment and good range of services, including shops, schools and community facilities, as well as mains water and sewerage.

2.4.2 Population

This County Development Plan must, in accordance with the provisions of the Planning Act and various Ministerial guidelines, set out population targets for the County and the settlements within the County.

National population targets are generally provided by the Government through the Minister for the Environment on a cyclical basis, following publication of Census results and CSO forecasts. The last set of national targets published was in 2009, and it was on the basis of these targets, that the RPGs in 2010 set out population and housing growth targets for each of the counties in the GDA.

A review of the current RPGs will commence in 2015-2016 and are hoped to be adopted by 2016. Until such new guidelines are produced, the current guidelines remain in force.

This presents a number of difficulties, given that this draft County Development Plan is being published in 2015, and a new plan adopted in 2016. In particular, the current guidelines only provide population and housing targets up to 2022, whereas the Wicklow County Development Plan will have a 12 year outlook, up to 2028.

Secondly, the current targets were based on 2006 Census results and population growth and population movement patterns that were prevailing at that time. In the intervening period since 2006, population patterns have shifted considerably, rendering the existing projections and targets outdated.

Therefore in order to progress the preparation and adoption of this plan, new population targets have been prepared, taking into account (a) population growth patterns since 2006, (b) more recent CSO regional population projections based on the 2011 Census and (c) the principles of the existing NSS and RPGs. In particular, cognisance has been taken of the current 2022 RPG population target for Wicklow of 176,800. The RPG office has advised that while it may no longer be reasonable to expect this level of growth by 2022, the option of extending the achievement of this target to 2028 may be considered substantially consistent with the spirit of the existing guidelines.

Table 2.3 Proposed population targets

Year	2006	2011	2022	2025	2028	2031
Existing	126,196	136,640				
Target			158,000	167,000	176,000	185,000

2.4.3 Population Distribution

The RPGs require that 42% of the total growth allocated to County Wicklow be allocated to the Metropolitan Area settlements and that the ‘majority’ of the remainder be allocated to the Growth Towns, weighted towards the Large Growth towns in the settlement hierarchy and also particularly towards towns with rail based public transport i.e. c. 70% of total population growth to be directed towards the ‘growth towns’.

As in the previous County Development Plan, rigid adherence to these distribution requirements has lead to difficulties – once the allocation for the metropolitan and other growth towns is distributed, and natural rural

growth is taken into account, there is very little growth left to allocate to the 15 other towns in the County (Levels 5 and 6 in the hierarchy). The majority of these towns have capacity for growth, and to severely restrict development due to strict adherence to these population distribution requirements is considered a retrograde step, considering especially the investment in infrastructure that has been undertaken in these towns.

Furthermore, it is never possible to manage growth in any particular settlement to come in at an exact population figure at a set time, which is 2028 for the purposes of this plan. As development in 3 of the 6 growth towns, representing towards 35% of the projected County growth, is reliant on the cooperation and financing of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly National Roads Authority and the Railway Procurement Agency), as is the case in Bray, or Irish Water (as is the case in Arklow and Blessington), it is not possible to predict this with any accuracy whatsoever. The town population allocations in this plan have thus incorporated 'compensatory headroom' of 15% to accommodate this uncertainty and to ensure that there will be sufficient capacity in other settlements if some growth towns are unable to deliver the necessary infrastructure to service their projected populations.

The population targets for the various settlements and areas of the County are set out in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Population targets for County Wicklow 2022, 2025, 2028

Designation	Town	2011	2022	2025	2028
Consolidation Town	Bray	29,339	36,237	38,119	40,000
Large Growth Town I	Wicklow / Rathnew	13,468	20,283	22,141	24,000
Large Growth Town II	Arklow	13,066	19,494	21,247	23,000
Large Growth Town II	Greystones/ Delgany	17,208	21,603	22,801	24,000
Moderate Growth Town	Blessington	4,780	6,540	7,020	7,500
Moderate Growth Town	Newtown	3,073	4,967	5,483	6,000
Small Growth Town	Ashford	1,484	2,675	3,000	3,250
Small Growth Town	Aughrim	1,315	1,758	1,879	2,000
Small Growth Town	Baltinglass	1,786	2,572	2,786	3,000
Small Growth Town	Carnew	1,145	1,698	1,849	2,000
Small Growth Town	Dunlavin	793	2,134	2,500	2,750
Small Growth Town	Enniskerry	1,940	2,302	2,401	2,500
Small Growth Town	Kilcoole	4,063	4,669	4,835	5,000
Small Growth Town	Rathdrum	1,638	2,843	3,171	3,500
Small Growth Town	Tinahely	956	1,308	1,404	1,500
Rural Town	Avoca	717	835	868	900
Rural Town	Donard	179	257	279	300
Rural Town	Kilmacanogue	799	897	923	950
Rural Town	Newcastle	817	1,065	1,132	1,200
Rural Town	Roundwood	780	1,052	1,126	1,200
Rural Town	Shillelagh	426	571	610	650
TOTAL		99,772	135,761	145,576	155,200
Compensatory headroom			15%	15%	15%
	Large Villages	3,296	3,620	3,710	3,800
	Small Villages	1,346	1,610	1,680	1,750
	Rural clusters	892	1,060	1,100	1,150
	Open countryside	31,334	33,375	33,938	34,490
RURAL TOTAL		36,868	39,665	40,428	41,190
COUNTY TOTAL		136,640	158,000	167,000	176,000

Even in the scenario where there are no impediments to growth in any towns, and no town is allowed to grow by an additional 15% to compensate for lack of growth elsewhere, the combined total growth in the 'growth towns' would equate to c. 70% of total growth. Therefore this distribution is considered to be generally consistent with the principles of the RPGs.

2.4.4 Housing

Assuming the following:

- (1) Average household size² for the various intervals between 2011 and 2028 at:

Table 2.5 County Wicklow Household Sizes

Year	2011	2012	2025	2028
Av HH Size	2.79	2.41	2.3	2.19

- (2) 'Excess factor', which encompasses vacancy rate, at 6.5% for all target years

These are the housing unit targets for the plan period and up to 2028:

Table 2.6 County Wicklow Housing Targets

Year	2011	2012	2025	2028
Population	136,640	158,000		
Housing Stock (existing)	54,351			
House Stock (required)		69,822	77,328	85,589
Increase (from 2011)		+15,471	+22,977	+31,238

While the proposed new 2028 population target is compatible with the existing 2022 target from the RPGs of 176,000, the 'housing stock' target differs slightly due to an assumption being made about household size – it is assumed that household size will continue to fall following national and international trends. The RPGs in 2010 allowed for a total housing stock in Wicklow of 82,012 units in 2022 to meet this 176,800 population target – this is proposed to be increased to 85,589 for 2028.

To reach this target, it will be necessary to deliver an annual average housing completion rate of 1,838 units per annum 2011-2028.

This is reasonably consistent with the housing growth rate allowed to Wicklow in the current RPGs – 2,058 units per annum 2006-2022, taking into account the much slower rate of development that has occurred in the period 2008-2014.

2.4.5 Zoning

This development plan sets the population and housing targets for all 21 'towns' in the County up to 2028. However, it only provides 'zoning' for 13 settlements, the remainder of the settlements having their own stand-alone 'Local Area Plans', which will be reviewed after the adoption of this County Development Plan.

² Ratio of enumerated population to the total number of housing units in categories A, B and C of the Census housing stock descriptions. Other categories of housing i.e. categories D, E and F are accounted for in the 6.5% 'excess factor' which includes the 'vacancy rate'.

Local Area Plans

It is planned that these LAPs will be adopted during 2017-2019 period, in order of timeline priority (i.e. according to the date when each existing plan is due to expire). Each LAP will cover a period of 6 years (the latest plan to be reviewed having a timeline of 2019-2025) and zoning will be provided on the basis of the land needed to meet a 6 year horizon, plus 3 years zoning 'headroom' or 'market factor'³, as recommended in the Development Plan Guidelines issued by the Minister. The horizons utilised for each plan will also be cognisant of the fact the LAPs have the potential to be extended to last for up to 10 years, but no plan will include a timeline beyond 2028.

Zoning Table 2.6 to follow shows the zoning requirements for the LAP towns, up to the year 2025, plus headroom.

This table shows that the majority of current LAPs do not have sufficient zoned land available to meet the 2025 population target (the exceptions being Blessington and Rathdrum which are very slightly 'over-zoned' to the tune of 2-3 hectares each). The review of each LAP will ensure that each plan is consistent with the County Development Plan 'Core Strategy'.

Other Town / Settlement Plans

With respect to the remaining towns and settlements, their plans form part of this County Development Plan and are therefore being adopted with a 2016-2022 horizon. Zoning is therefore provided on the basis of the land needed to meet the 2022 population and housing targets, plus 3 years 'headroom'.

Zoning Table 2.7 to follow shows the zoning requirements for these settlements / towns, up to the year 2022.

Level 5: The majority of the town plans adopted for these towns prior to the review of this County Development Plan had a surplus of zoned land having regard to the population and housing targets set out in this plan. This was in the main due to the revised population targets included in this plan, as well as previous take up of land for housing development altering the headroom proportion⁴. Where a surplus was identified, the surplus land has been either re-designated for an alternative, non-residential use, or as a 'Strategic Land Bank' (SLB). The only exception is Enniskerry where a deficit was identified. Therefore the new Enniskerry town plan forming part of this CDP includes additional zoned land to address this deficit.

Level 6: These are 'settlement plans' that don't have the same detailed zonings as LAPs or Level 5 'town plans'. The amount of residential development that is facilitated in these settlements is therefore not a function of the amount of 'zoned' land, but is dictated by the population and housing objectives set out in the CDP and the 'settlement plan' itself.

³ "Headroom" or "market factor" which is 'extra' land that should be zoned over and above the minimum amount needed to accommodate the population target. Headroom is provided so as to allow for greater location choice and deal with any land supply inflexibility which may arise.

⁴ For example, where it is determined that 100 acres of zoned housing land is required to achieve a certain housing target, a total of 150 acres may be zoned to allow for market choice or headroom (i.e. 50% headroom). If however 50 acres is developed, the 'headroom' proportion would increase to 100% (i.e. only 50 acres needed for development, yet 100 acres remain zoned).

Table 2.7 LAP Settlements

Future Plan Type	Settlement	Population 2011	Housing Stock 2011	Core Strategy Population Allocation 2025	Total Housing Unit Requirement 2025	Housing Unit Growth Requirement 2011-2025	Housing Unit Growth Requirement + headroom ⁵	Housing Yield of existing zoned land ⁶	Shortfall/surplus (UNITS)	Method of addressing shortfall / surplus
LAP	Bray	29,339	11,518	38,119	17,651	6,133	7,934	4,689	-3,245	Note 1
LAP	Wicklow – Rathnew	13,468	5,399	22,141	10,252	4,853	6,272	5,640	-632	Future LAP
LAP	Arklow	13,066	5,459	21,247	9,838	4,379	5,726	4,000	-1,726	Future LAP
LAP	Greystones – Delgany	17,208	6,637	22,801	10,558	3,921	5,034	3,767	-1,267	Future LAP
LAP	Blessington	4,780	1,865	7,020	3,251	1,386	1,782	1,840	+58	Future LAP
LAP	Newtownmountkennedy	3,073	1,078	5,483	2,539	1,461	1,840	2,056	+216	Note 2
LAP	Kilcoole	4,063	1,402	4,835	2,239	837	1,030	782	-248	Future LAP
LAP	Rathdrum	1,638	657	3171	1,469	812	1045	1,089	+44	Future LAP

Note 1: A future LAP for Bray town and environs shall address the zoning shortfall in Bray. This new plan shall comprise a ‘Bray Municipal Area Local Area Plan’ which shall replace the existing Bray Town Development Plan and the Bray Environs Local Area Plan, and shall encompass all settlements in the MD including Kilmacanogue and Enniskerry.

Note 2: The current Newtownmountkennedy LAP provides a potential yield on zoned housing land of 1,706 units. Additional lands have been zoned in this County Development Plan which have a housing yield of c. 350 units and in combination there is a zoning surplus of +216 units. There are no current proposals to address this zoning surplus in Newtownmountkennedy.

⁵ Equivalent of +3 years zoning i.e. to meet ‘2028’ target

⁶ As per plans adopted pre 2015 and any lands zoned through this plan

Table 2.8 Other Settlements

Future Plan Type	Settlement	Population 2011	Housing Stock 2011	Core Strategy Population Allocation 2022	Total Housing Unit Requirement 2022	Housing Unit Growth Requirement 2011-2022	Housing Unit Growth Requirement + headroom ⁷	Housing Yield of proposed zoned land ⁸	Shortfall/Surplus (UNITS)
Level 5 Town Plan	Ashford	1,484	531	2,675	1,182	651	858	858	Balance
Level 5 Town Plan	Aughrim	1,315	592	1,758	777	185	278	278	Balance
Level 5 Town Plan	Baltinglass	1,786	769	2,572	1,136	367	521	521	Balance
Level 5 Town Plan	Carnew	1,145	491	1,698	750	259	365	365	Balance
Level 5 Town Plan	Dunlavin	793	313	2,134	943	630	840	840	Balance
Level 5 Town Plan	Enniskerry	1,940	642	2,302	1,017	375	470	470	Balance
Level 5 Town Plan	Tinahely	956	419	1,308	578	159	231	231	Balance
Level 6 Settlement Plan	Avoca	717	282	835	369	87	120	120	Balance
Level 6 Settlement Plan	Donard	179	92	257	114	22	37	37	Balance
Level 6 Settlement Plan	Kilmacanogue	799	277	897	396	119	151	151	Balance
Level 6 Settlement Plan	Newcastle	817	313	1,065	471	158	211	211	Balance
Level 6 Settlement Plan	Roundwood	780	326	1,052	465	139	195	195	Balance
Level 6 Settlement Plan	Shillelagh	426	200	571	252	52	83	83	Balance

⁷ Equivalent of +3 years zoning i.e. to meet '2025' target

⁸ As per this County Development Plan

2.4.6 Transport

The transportation strategy set out in the National Spatial Strategy, of the development of 'Strategic Radial Corridors', 'Strategic Linking Corridors' and 'Strategic International Access Points' are translated to the regional level through the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and NTA Greater Dublin Area Draft Transportation Strategy 2011-2030.

Roads

The NSS identifies the N11 – M11 as **Strategic Radial Corridor** from Dublin to the south-east of Ireland. The RPGs identify the N11 – M11 as a **Multi-Modal Transport Corridor**.

The N11/M11 national primary route / motorway serves the eastern coast area of the County, while a second national route, national secondary route N81, serves the west of the County along the border with Kildare and Carlow.

The N11 / M11 is part of Euroroute 01 and has undergone significant investment in the last 20 years. The final section of dual carriageway between Bray to the north and the Wexford boundary to the south was completed in 2015 – the Rathnew to Arklow Scheme. Having regard to the limitations of the mainline rail route in the County (see below), the N11/M11 will continue to be the principal access corridor in the eastern side on the County.

The RPGs also identify the 'Leinster Outer Orbital Route', traversing the region from Arklow in the south-east, to the Naas-Kilcullen area in the west via a route similar to the existing R747 – N81 corridor.

The second national route in Wicklow, National Secondary Route N81, is not identified in the NSS or the RPGs as being of strategic or regional significance. The N81 has only undergone minor improvements over the last 20 years. The NRA National Road Design Office in 2012 published a 'preferred route' for improvements of the N81 from Tallaght to Hollywood, but this scheme has not been progressed as yet to consent or construction stage.

The County is served by a network of regional and local roads, which are essential for inter-County traffic and east-west connections and local movements.

In light of the likely continuing car dependency to access the metropolitan region in the short to medium term, it is the strategy of this plan to facilitate and encourage measures to improve capacity and efficiency of the national routes and facilitate the improved use of the national routes by public transport. The priority for strategic road improvement will be:

- the upgrade of the N11 in the north of the County, from the Dublin border as far as Kilpedder, in particular improvements to the M50 / M11 merge which is deficient in capacity, and all interchanges serving Bray;
- the upgrade of the N81 between the Dublin border and Hollywood; and
- the finalisation of and protection of the Leinster Outer Orbital Route corridor with possible incremental implementation of the road (in line with NTA Strategy).

The priority for regional road improvement will be with east-west connector routes i.e. Wicklow – Roundwood – Sally Gap – N81 (R763/4 – R759), Wicklow – Laragh – Wicklow Gap – N81 (R763 – R756) and the R747 (Arklow – Tinahely – Baltinglass).

Public Transport

The NSS identifies the Dublin – Rosslare rail line as a **Strategic Radial Corridor** from Dublin to the south-east of Ireland. The RPGs identify the rail line as a **Multi-Modal Transport Corridor**.

This is the only heavy rail line in the County, which is single track only from Bray and has only six functioning stations from Bray to Arklow. The settlement strategy exploits the towns along this route by allocating over two thirds of the population growth to these settlements.

It is proposed to extend the Luas light rail system to Bray – this extension is identified in the RPGs as a **critical strategic transport project** - and the vast majority of the population growth for Bray is allocated for areas to be served by Luas. This will reinforce the role of Bray as the primary settlement in the County and will provide an option for removing car traffic from the N11/M11 north of Bray with the provision of park-and-ride facilities.

It is the strategy of this plan to encourage and facilitate:

- significant improvements to heavy and light rail infrastructure, including the provision of new lines and new stations and the provision of improvements to the rail line south of Bray to facilitate additional rail services to Greystones, Wicklow and Arklow;
- improvements to the Dublin-Rosslare rail line, the extension of Luas to Bray – Fassaroe, the provision of car and bus park-and-ride facilities and improved penetration of local bus services in designated growth towns; and
- retention of local bus services.

2.4.7 Economic Development

While the Planning Act does not require the 'Core Strategy' of a development plan to address economic development explicitly, this is considered an essential element of the overall development strategy for the County. While the overall economic development strategy for the County is set out in the 'Local Economic and Community Plan', this land use framework plays a key role in the delivery of certain economic development goals.

A key economic aim of the NSS and the RPGs is to enhance the competitiveness of the Greater Dublin Area, so that it continues to perform at the international level as a driver of national development. In order to achieve this aim, these strategies include the following objectives, which have relevance to the economic development of County Wicklow:

- A key aim of the RPGs is to promote a balance between jobs and population in settlements throughout the GDA region. County Wicklow has a strong commuting pattern which is reflective of the imbalance that exists between the location of the labour force in the Dublin region and the location of jobs. The best indicator of the imbalances that exist is the 'jobs ratio', which is a measure of the number of jobs in the County as a proportion of the number of Wicklow residents in the labour force. A key goal of the RPGs is to improve the jobs ratio in County Wicklow.
- Support the development of key economic infrastructure, including transport, telecommunications, energy and waste management.
- Develop strategic reserves of land for enterprise development and adopt the least restrictive enterprise land use approach to the zoning of land.
- Increase land use densities in proximity to public transport.
- Improve capacity for innovation, with a focus on third level education and research facilities.
- Promote a high quality built and natural environment that is attractive to industry.

In these regards, the economic development hierarchy, as well as the jobs growth targets for the County are as set out in the tables to follow:

Table 2.9 County Wicklow Economic Development Hierarchy

Settlement Level	Settlement Type	Town	Economic Function	Investment Target
1	Metropolitan Consolidation Town	Bray	Main attractor for major investment	Foreign direct investment 'People' intensive, knowledge based industries
2	Large Growth Town Type 1	Wicklow / Rathnew	Main attractor for major investment	Foreign and local investment 'People' and 'product' intensive industries.
3	Large Growth Town Type 2	Arklow Greystones/Delgany	Subsidiary attractor for inward investment	
4	Moderate Growth Town	Blessington Newtownmountkennedy	Attractor for substantial investment	
5	Small Growth Towns	Ashford Aughrim Baltinglass Carnew Dunlavin Enniskerry Kilcoole Rathdrum Tinahely	Attractor for investment	Local investment 'Product intensive' industries, with some 'people' emphasis
6	Rural Towns	Avoca Donard Kilmacanogue Newcastle Roundwood Shillelagh		
7 & 8	Large & Small Villages		Small rural-based enterprises	Local investment Generally small scale non-intensive industry
9 & 10	Rural Clusters & Rural Areas i.e. any location outside the development boundary of any settlement in Levels 1-8	Objectives set out in Chapter 5 for rural employment and economic development		

Employment Growth

Table 2.10 below sets out a broad assessment of County Wicklow's employment requirements up to 2028. Wicklow residents are currently highly dependent on jobs located elsewhere in the region and therefore in order to make the County more self-sufficient and improve the quality of life of Wicklow residents by making their employment location closer to where they live, it will be necessary to increase the number of jobs available in the County.

A measure often used to determine what a sustainable target for job creation would be is the 'jobs ratio'. This is the ratio of the number of jobs in any given geographical area compared to the number of people in the labour force living in that same area. In 2011 (a time of low national levels of employment), the jobs ratio in County Wicklow was 42%.

The RPGs indicate that a healthy jobs ratio would be around 70% and in this regard, it is considered most realistic to aim to increase the County's job ratio to around 65% in 2028, given the low starting ratio. Clearly in order to achieve a jobs ratio of 65% overall in the County, some areas would need to have a higher jobs ratio than 70% as some areas will always be much lower (such as rural areas and villages).

For the purpose of this plan, it is assumed that the jobs ratio in Level 1-4 towns (the growth towns) will increase from 46% in 2011 to 80% in 2028 and in the small towns (Levels 5 and 6 in the settlement hierarchy) from 47% in 2011 to 70% in 2028. Along with national trends, it is assumed that rural employment will continue to decline from 32% in 2011 to 25% in 2028.

Table 2.10 County Wicklow employment growth targets

	2011			2028			2011 - 2028
	Labour Force	Existing Jobs	Jobs ratio	Target Labour Force	Target Jobs Ratio	Jobs Required	Jobs Growth / Decline
Levels 1-4	38,850	17,688	46%	51,870	80%	41,329	18,340
Level 5 & 6	9,041	4,220	47%	12,832	70%	8,984	4,764
Rural	17,695	5,666	32%	19,769	25%	4,942	-724
County	65,586	27,574	42%	84,472	65%	55,255	22,380

2.4.8 Retail

The development plan includes a retail strategy for the entire County, which is consistent with the GDA Regional Retail Strategy. In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines, the retail strategy for Wicklow will include the following:

- confirmation of the retail hierarchy, the role of centres and the size of the main town centres;
- definition in the development plan of the boundaries of the core shopping area of town centres;
- a broad assessment of the requirement for additional retail floorspace;
- strategic guidance on the location and scale of retail development;
- preparation of policies and action initiatives to encourage the improvement of town centres; and
- identification of criteria for the assessment of retail developments.

Table 2.11 GDA and County Retail Hierarchy

RETAIL STRATEGY FOR THE GREATER DUBLIN AREA	WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN	
	METROPOLITAN AREA	HINTERLAND AREA
LEVEL 1 METROPOLITAN CENTRE Dublin City Centre		
LEVEL 2 MAJOR TOWN CENTRES & COUNTY TOWN CENTRES Bray, Wicklow	Bray	Wicklow
LEVEL 3 TOWN AND/OR DISTRICT CENTRES & SUB COUNTY TOWN CENTRES Greystones, Arklow, Blessington, Baltinglass	Greystones	Tier 1 Towns serving a wide district: Arklow, Blessington, Baltinglass, Rathdrum Tier 2 Towns serving the immediate district: Newtownmountkennedy
LEVEL 4 NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES, LOCAL CENTRES – SMALL TOWNS & VILLAGES	Bray area: Boghall Road / Ballywaltrim, Vevay, Dargle Rd, Dublin Road / Little Bray, Albert Road & Walk, Fassaroe, Southern Cross Road Greystones area: Blacklion, Bellevue Road, Mill Road, Charlesland, Delgany Wicklow area: Broomhall, Rocky Road/Town Relief Junction Arklow area: Kilbride (AA3), Tinahask (AA2) The designation of neighbourhood centres within other towns is a matter for the relevant local plan.	Ashford, Aughrim, Avoca, Carnew, Donard, Dunlavin, Enniskerry, Kilcoole, Kilmacanogue, Newcastle, Rathnew, Roundwood, Shillelagh, Tinahely
LEVEL 5 CORNER SHOPS / SMALL VILLAGES	The identification of corner shops / small local centres is a matter for the relevant local plan.	Barndarrig, Ballinaclash, Coolboy, Glenealy, Hollywood, , Kilpedder / Willowgrove, Kiltegan, Knockananna, Laragh, Manor Kilbride, Redcross, Stratford

The only minor deviation from the Regional Retail Strategy is the inclusion of Newtownmountkennedy and Rathdrum in Level 3. The County Development Plan makes a distinction between Tier 1 and Tier 2 centres in Level 3 to reflect this deviation. Newtownmountkennedy is selected as being appropriate for this position having regard to its designation as 'Moderate Growth Town' in the RPGs whereas Rathdrum is selected in the main because of the level of growth planned in the settlement and its existing strong town centre.

Core Strategy Map

