

# Wicklow Planning Alliance



Administrative Officer,  
Planning Department,  
Wicklow County Council,  
County Buildings,  
Whitegates,  
Wicklow Town, A67 FW96

15th November 2022

## *County Development Plan*

Dear Sirs,

We write to support the Minister's proposed direction addressing the Wicklow county development plan. The Wicklow Planning alliance have been participating in the preparation of these plans for over 20 years, consistently advocating for consolidated development in the 4 major towns in the county. The population targets for most of these and the 14 rural towns have been met and even overshoot, with rural and one of houses still amounting to nearly a third of all development: if the National Planning Framework is to work it is essential to constrain dispersed, car dependent housing and businesses.

To quote the Regulator's submissions:

- *The Office PR also highlighted high population growth forecasted for both Newtownmountkennedy and Rathdrum and considered a more moderate growth rate for these settlements would better ensure alignment with strategic planning policy aims, including National Planning Objective 9 of the National Planning Framework;*
- *The Office also highlighted the intended growth forecast for Ashford as a concern, having regard to its Level 5 status within the county settlement hierarchy and also having regard to its low employment base, resulting in an unsustainable settlement and transportation strategy contrary to Section 10(2)(n) of the Act.*
- *Ashford. .. will be highly likely to encourage more car-dependent commuting patterns along the N11;*

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- *Recommendation 14 (ii) raised a similar issue in relation to provision being made to enable retail development in an uncompleted industrial area on the edge of Rathdrum village, well outside the centre of this attractive and sensitive location.*

We support all the proposals in the draft direction and in addition would like to put on record our disappointment that other items identified by the Office of the Planning Regulator were not pursued. It is difficult to understand the reasons for this as it is hard to interpret the meaning of phrases used by the Regulator such as

- *The circumstances that apply, including recent planning permissions and other policy considerations mean that on balance, the Office considers that there is **insufficient basis** to make a recommendation to the Minister to issue a draft Direction in respect of these matters.*
- *changes would not **unduly** impact*
- *While the Office's recommendation has not been complied with, the Office considers there is **insufficient basis** in national or regional policy to support a recommendation to the Minister.*
- *On balance, the Office considers that there is **insufficient basis** to make a recommendation to the Minister to issue a draft Direction in respect of this matter.*

It is the considered opinion of the Wicklow Planning Alliance that all forms of dispersed and car dependent development do not serve the common good and are contrary to our commitments to reduce carbon emissions. Not alone the lost opportunity costs of developing critical mass in designated growth centres and the cost of duplicating infrastructural resources, such dispersed development will choke up rural roads making active travel forever impossible.

In general terms the current Development Plan for County Wicklow provides for a more sustainable quantum and spatial spread of development than previous plans but we will continue to advocate for strict adherence to national policy and a climate friendly pattern of development..

KC Bishop  
Chairperson, WPA