



Who are you:	State Body
Name:	Department of Education and Youth
Reference:	ARKLPF-153610
Submission Made	November 11, 2025 3:38 PM

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- Proposed Changes to Volume 1 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Proposed Changes to Volume 2 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028

Local Planning Framework PART B Settlement Specific Objectives.

- B.6 Social & Community Development
- B.9 Zoning & Land Use

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20251111 Submission to Variation No 5.pdf, 0.26MB



Administrative Officer,
Planning Section,
Wicklow County Council,
Station Road,
Wicklow Town

11 November 2025

Re: Proposed Variation No. 5 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 / Draft Arklow Local Planning Framework 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

I refer to the above. The Department of Education and Youth wishes to make the following submission to proposed Variation No. 5 of the Wicklow CDP 2022-2028.

The department has considered the above document and notes that the purpose of the variation is to integrate the draft and final Arklow Local Planning Framework into the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and to ensure consistency of the draft and final Arklow Local Planning Framework with the County Development Plan 2022-2028.

In the context of future population trends and their potential impact on school place requirements, the department notes that this draft Framework refers to the population growth identified for Arklow in the recent draft Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028. The department notes that the population scenario envisaged in Wicklow overall is the high NPF target of 173,500 by 2031. The department made its submissions to the CDP regarding Arklow on the basis of the potential population growth within the settlement and its environs between 2023 and 2031.

In terms of future population growth in Arklow as identified in the draft LPF, the department notes that Table A:2.1 outlines a proposed 2031 population target of 16,441 for Arklow. Table A:2.1 contains housing growth targets for 2031, allowing for the Census 2022 average per household figure of 2.84 identified for County Wicklow, these proposed 6,627 units could see a population increase to 16,358 in Arklow. In terms of other potential population targets, it is noted that Table 3-2 in the draft Local Transport plan identifies a potential 2042 population of 28,000 for Arklow. Furthermore, the department is equally mindful that the current NPF review has the potential to allocate a further projected population increase that could go beyond 16,441. Such targets have the potential to impact on future school place provision, both in the medium and long term future beyond the lifetime of the proposed plan.

There are currently 9 schools (five primary and four post-primary schools) located in Arklow. The department's preference would be to expand these existing facilities (if



possible) should there be a requirement for additional school places resulting from planned population increases.

The population targets identified in the Arklow LPF would see the demand for primary and post primary school places increase and could place pressure on existing schools to cater for the extra school place requirement. In this regard, the statement in the section B:6.1 Education is noted *“It is considered that demand in the town could quickly surpass supply during the lifetime of this LPF if residential development significantly and quickly increases. This is a particular consideration noting the pause in development in Arklow Town over the last 10 years due to the lack of a waste water treatment facility which has now been rectified. It is considered that towards the end of the lifetime of the LPF the existing primary schools in Arklow may start to reach saturation if the 2031 population target is achieved. This would indicate that there will be a need for schools to either expand or a fifth primary school to be planned for and built”*. The department also notes that it states the following in relation to post-primary school provision: *“If growth in the settlement exceeds the 2031 target there will be a need to plan for a fifth post primary school in the settlement. In order to ensure that such a school can be planned for in the medium to long term, this LPF shall ensure that there is appropriate zoned land to accommodate at least 1 new post primary school”*. In relation to the above, the department acknowledges the list of existing school sites and the proposed “community & education” zoned sites as identified in Table B:6.1. The department understands that the requirement for these potential new school facilities may not materialise within the lifetime of this County Development Plan.

It is important to add that it is generally considered that schools are enabling infrastructure for housing and as such, schools should be positioned in the heart of new and expanding sustainable communities, allowing for the maximum benefit to the community inside and outside school hours. Further to this, other community facilities and amenities should also be positioned close to school facilities to allow for all community facilities be complimentary to each other for the benefit of the whole community. All enabling infrastructure required to develop and operate school facilities should be provided in advance of the need for such schools. This infrastructure includes road, electricity, water infrastructure, sustainable transport links, active travel networks, road safety measures and safe routes to school facilities. It should be noted that it is not within the remit of the Department of Education and Youth to develop or fund this enabling infrastructure.

In relation to other aspects of the draft plan, the department notes that the Council plans a range of Safe Routes to School improvements to deliver safe, accessible and child-friendly walking and cycling infrastructure. The department notes and welcomes Active Travel Objective ARK68 to support the implementation of the recommendations of the (Draft) Local Transport Plan with regard to the delivery of proposed road safety measures and safe active travel routes along the existing road network and along new off-road routes and to continue to promote and encourage the “Safer Routes to School”



and the 'Green Schools Programme' within Arklow. The department supports the development of sustainable travel links between schools and residential areas.

The department notes and acknowledges the following Social and Community Infrastructure Objectives;

ARK 43 Having regard to the potential longer term education needs in the Arklow area which have not been determined at this time but may arise; the physical and environmental constraints present in the area; and the space required particularly for new secondary schools, the development of new schools shall be permissible in principle in all land use zones (other than OS1 and OS2) subject to sufficient spatial separation from any existing primary school.

ARK 44 The Planning Authority will resist developments that entail the loss of existing community, education and open space/recreation lands or buildings unless it can be demonstrated that (a) adequate community, education and open space/recreation lands and buildings would be retained in the settlement having regard to the planned future population of the settlement or (b) the particular lands or buildings are not suitable or needed for current or future educational, community or open space / recreational usage. In particular, developments that would unduly constrain the ability of existing schools to expand will not be permitted.

ARK 46 To facilitate and encourage the co-location of childcare facilities with other educational facilities such as schools. Applications for the development of new educational facilities, or the significant redevelopment or extensions of existing facilities, should consider the provision of co-located childcare facilities within the development.

The department also anticipates that additional Special Education Needs (SEN) provision at both Primary and Post Primary level will be required in the future throughout the country and this may result in schools requiring additional accommodation or space to meet this growing need. On a point of information, the Department of Education and Youth engages closely with the National Council for Special Education in relation to the forward planning of new special classes and additional special school places. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE). This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

The department and the NCSE are working with schools and patrons to make increased provision for children with special education needs, both in special classes at mainstream schools and in special schools. At post primary level, all schools have been advised to plan for an average of 4 special classes. At primary level, the focus is on ensuring appropriate provision at all medium to large primary schools (8 mainstream classes or more) in the first instance.



Most special classes are established in existing accommodation and where there is a further requirement within that accommodation, additional capacity can be catered for through the provision of extension facilities.

In recent years, the department has seen an increase in SEN school place requirement. Since 2019, 11 new special schools have been established, with five more due to be established for the 2025/26 school year. The continuing need for additional provision across the country, including in the Wicklow area, is kept under constant review. In this regard, the department will consult with the Council if and when additional special education needs accommodation or sites for future special schools are required within specific locations. In the context of this Framework plan and being mindful of the population growth that may arise from the various future planned housing developments within the Arklow area and its surrounds, the department would welcome explicit support within the plan for the provision of school accommodation for children and young people with special educational needs.

In terms of assessing current and future capacity, the Department of Education and Youth has to be mindful of potential unforeseen circumstances such as the Ukrainian crisis, which have the ability to put undue pressure on school place provision and could necessitate reassessments of school place provision from time to time. The department will engage with the Council where the findings of an assessment require a review of existing or future school site provision within a specific location.

Finally, the department welcomes the continued engagement with the Council regarding the development of both new and existing schools, as appropriate, and emphasizes the critical importance of the ongoing work of the Council in ensuring sufficient land is zoned for this purpose. We look forward to continuing to work with you. If you have any queries in respect of the above, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Mairead Garry', written over a horizontal line.

Mairead Garry
Statutory Plans
Forward Planning & Site Acquisition Section