

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

24th September 2012

Re: Wicklow-Rathnew Draft Development Plan

To whom it may concern,

The National Transport Authority (“the Authority”) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Development Plan for Wicklow-Rathnew. We acknowledge the positive discussions with Wicklow County Council on the overall approach to development in the County, with particular attention paid to the linking of population growth to employment growth in order to foster a higher degree of self-sufficiency in the designated RPG centres, than may have pertained to date.

Context

According to the draft plan, the current population of the plan area is c.13,400 persons and there were approximately 2,600 jobs located in the same area in 2006.

Taking the wider Wicklow/Rathnew district centre catchment, 2006 Census data shows that 35% of work trips that originate in this area remain internal to the catchment. This equates to c. 1,800 trips. A further 350 trips go from Wicklow to north of Rathnew and the Glenealy area. There is a strong longer-distance commuter trend: 7% of work trips from Wicklow have Dublin City Centre as their destination. In addition, 43% of trips are going to destinations along the east coast rail and N11 corridor as far north as Balbriggan, excluding the city centre. For all trips, the mode split for car passenger and car driver combined in 2011 was 66%.

As such, the policy to grow Wicklow-Rathnew in a more self-sufficient manner, tying population growth to employment growth, is one which will help meet the objective of reducing car dependency and long-distance commuting and one which the Authority supports.

NTA Comment

The Draft Development Plan provides for a total population of 21,500 persons (60% growth or c.6% per annum over the period 2011-2019) with an associated provision for an additional 3,980 housing units. The Authority fully supports the consolidation of zoned land away from the pattern of the previous development plans towards the most central areas. It is recommended that a phasing

scheme is introduced which strengthens the policy of applying a sequential approach to residential growth from the centre out, over the life of this plan.

In terms of employment, the Authority supports the broad thrust of the Draft Development Plan to provide for jobs in Wicklow in order to reduce the level of commuting, as highlighted above. The evidence-based approach taken to calculate the extent of land required for employment is also welcomed.

The Authority, however, is concerned with the application of a 100% headroom to the zoning of employment land and recommends that such lands are designated for development in a phased manner only as extant permissions are realised and Infill Employment Lands identified are developed as set out in section 5.3.5. The Authority also recommends that some account is taken of the potential jobs yield from the development of the Clermont campus in zoning for employment land.

The Authority welcomes the plan-led approach to the phased provision of schools in tandem with population growth. The Authority would encourage the location of primary schools at the centre of neighbourhoods and post-primary schools at the centre of the town or district, in order to maximise access by walking and cycling from residential areas.

Regardless of the outcome in relation to the location of schools, the Authority recommends that policies are inserted into the plan which state that access by walking and cycling is optimised to the site(s) from the residential areas of Wicklow-Rathnew and that drop-off facilities are provided appropriately in order to allow pedestrians and cyclists to access the school safely and conveniently.

In relation to car parking standards, the Authority would like to reiterate our comment at the Issues Paper stage, which recommended that all non-residential development proposals in the GDA should be subject to maximum parking standards. Notwithstanding policy P1, which aims to reduce the level of parking required in certain locations or for certain types of development, the application of maximum standards, which could be location-specific, would ensure such a reduced provision.

We trust that the views of the Authority will be taken in to consideration in the finalisation of the Wicklow-Rathnew Development Plan.

Yours sincerely,



Hugh Creegan
Director of Transport Investment and Taxi Regulation