



**Kildare County Council
via website**

Date: 24th October 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

1.0 INTRODUCTION

County Kildare Chamber is the business organisation in Kildare, proactively working to identify and progress developments that are facilitative of economic and sustainable growth. Representing an employer base of 400 businesses and over 38,000 employees across the county, County Kildare Chamber is the largest business organisation in the mid-east region of Ireland.

As a business organisation, County Kildare Chamber believes that long term planning for the development of the county is essential in responding to the challenges presented by Covid 19, climate change, Brexit and the current crisis in Europe.

We would like to offer a number of comments within the confines of the County Development Plan, as this process draws to a close.

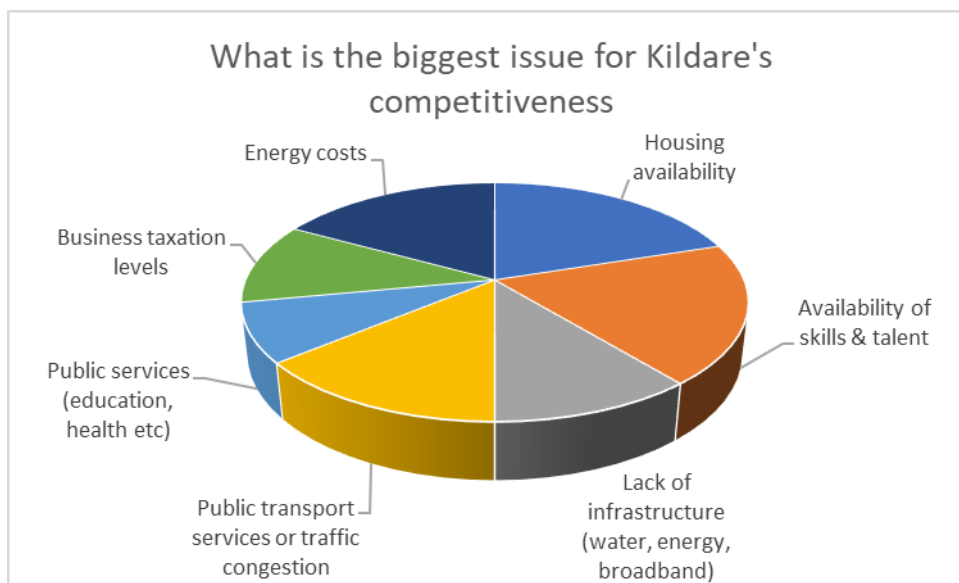
2.0 SUBMISSION

As a county, Kildare has a number of significant attributes. Kildare, according to the last census has a population of 246,977, the fifth highest in the state, a growth of 11% over the past six years and is projected to grow again by up to 44,000 by 2031.

It has a substantial multinational economic cluster, a highly skilled workforce coupled with a high quality of life, our excellent infrastructure provision and connectivity (port, airport, and digital infrastructure) ensures we are well placed to achieve the goals set out in the National Planning Framework.

Housing & Strategic Growth:

Housing availability continues to be an issue of vast concern for County Kildare Chamber membership. When asked in a recent survey what the biggest challenge to Kildare’s competitiveness was, over 20% of our members stated housing availability. ¹



Housing supply targets for Kildare under this development plan are 9,144. With a housing crisis in our midst, it is vital that sufficient housing numbers be allocated to the county. We reiterate that given the current housing stock levels are inadequate, it is crucial that the level of housing supply target is correct for key growth areas such as Naas, Maynooth and the surrounds.

We reaffirm our belief that the population averages used, in the National Planning Framework, to calculate the figures are too low for future need and this will negatively impact on our ability as a county to attract new business and employers of size from setting up in Kildare.

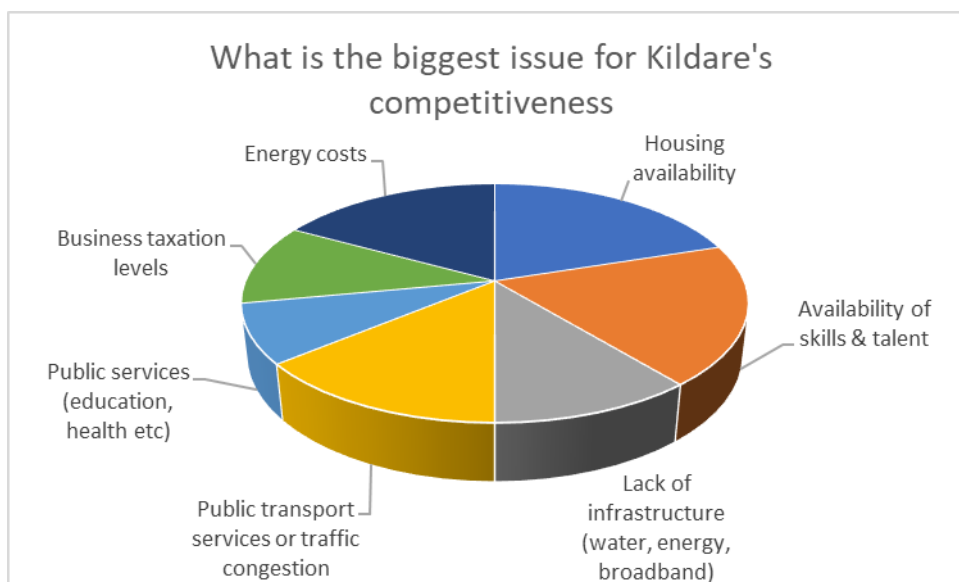
¹ [Chamber Membership Sentiment Report \(countykildarechamber.ie\)](https://www.countykildarechamber.ie)

Infrastructure & Energy:

County Kildare Chamber welcomes the comments by Kildare County Council with regard to amendments of section 5.1. County Kildare Chamber as the representative body for business in the county agrees with the sentiment of the amendment, and we will continue to work with the Council to improve and development the employment paradigm throughout Kildare.

We welcome the plans to increase multi transport options to reduce traffic congestion in our large towns and villages. We also welcome the significant moves towards sustainable towns and cities within the amended plan. It is only through sustainable development of our economic centres, communities and town centres grow and thrive.

We would like to reiterate our support for the electrification of the train line/Dart+, mentioned in several the amended sections in Chapter 5. We note within Budget 2023, the project along with a number of other national rail projects were funded to the tune of €2.6 billion. This should mean the continued progression of a significant piece of infrastructure for Kildare.



With regards to infrastructure, our membership has become increasingly concerned with security of supply particularly relating to water, energy and broadband.



This could be seen as a knock-on effect of the ongoing war in Ukraine and rising costs, inflation, and uncertainty with energy. County Kildare Chamber welcomes the inclusion and recognition of onsite wind power & solar farm initiatives within the county. Support for the implementation of these times of renewable energy sources will be critical to answering business concerns around supply issues. Current and future investment and development in renewable energy will be a driving force in ensuring Kildare's economic future and the regions continued attractiveness to FDI.

Economic Development and Employment:

County Kildare Chamber welcomes as a whole the Councils objectives and commitments set out within the development plan, particularly the significance of climate action, the Green Economy and sustainability to any future economic development of Kildare.

Notwithstanding this County Kildare Chamber would like to reaffirm our concerns around the lack of new commercial zoned land availability within the county. Furthermore, concerns regarding skills availability continue to abound, and remains a top concern to business competitiveness within the Kildare region²

County Kildare Chamber in its role as the main voice for business in Kildare is part of a number of regional bodies, including the Regional Skills Forum and the Regional Enterprise Forum, which has a role in the preparation of the LECP.

As a key commuter county, with a large population, excellent infrastructure provision and connectivity to airports, rail and port services, with a large number of multi-national and domestic companies employing thousands of our highly skilled workforce, Kildare represents a driving force in the national economy and preforms a key role in ensuring the continued international competitiveness of the region. In order to achieve this the development plan must ensure the conditions are right for the creation of quality jobs in locations around the county.

We further welcome support for Circular Economy integration, particularly with manufacturing industry and social enterprise developments. Transitioning to a circular economy is vital to combating against climate change and promoting sustainable development and growth. It is also vital for Ireland to meet our climate 2030 targets.

² [Chamber Membership Sentiment Report \(countykildarechamber.ie\)](https://www.countykildarechamber.ie)



3.0 CONCLUSION

This development plan takes place at a unique time, in the wake of a pandemic, yet in the midst of continuing optimism around our economic growth and future policy provision, through initiatives such as the NPF, the NDP and a number of regional plans, all focused on promoting and furthering growth within our towns and cities.

Quality of life, housing availability, infrastructure, transport, sustainable practised and economic growth will all be dominant topics for the duration of this plan, it is essential for the continued success of Kildare, its communities, and businesses that progress is made in each of these areas.

County Kildare Chamber looks forward to working with Kildare County Council to deliver a successful outcome for the whole county, and we are available at all times for consultation, discussion and support.

Yours faithfully,

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