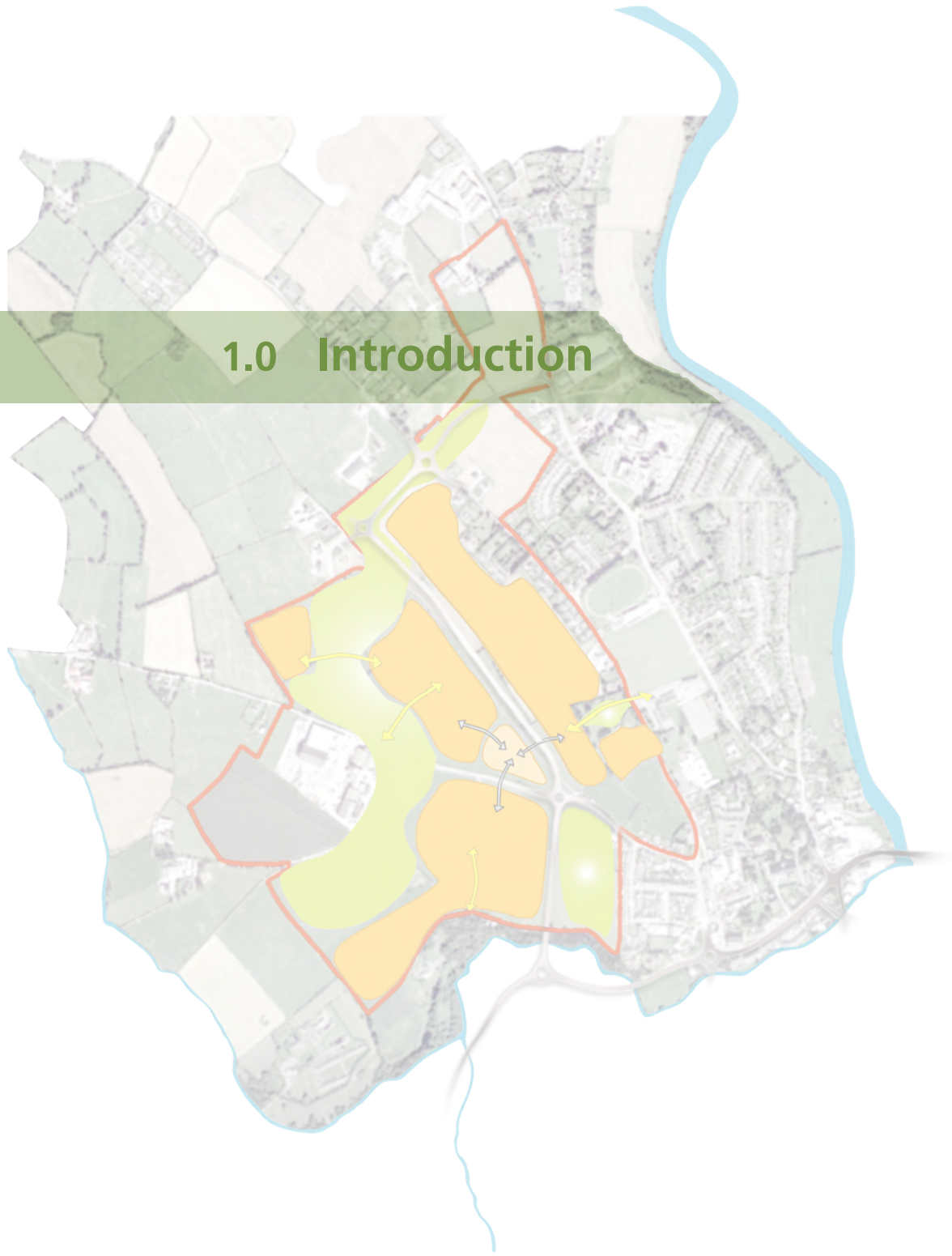


1.0 Introduction



1.0 Introduction

The following sections present an overview of the Loughmacask Local Area Plan (LAP), including a physical and historical description of the site and surrounding area, and the relevant local and national planning context.

1.1 What is an LAP and how does it work?

What is an LAP?

Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides that an LAP may be prepared in respect of any area which a planning authority considers suitable; and in particular for areas which require economic, physical and social renewal, and are likely to be the subject of large scale development within the life time of a Development Plan.

This LAP has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000, and takes on board the following;

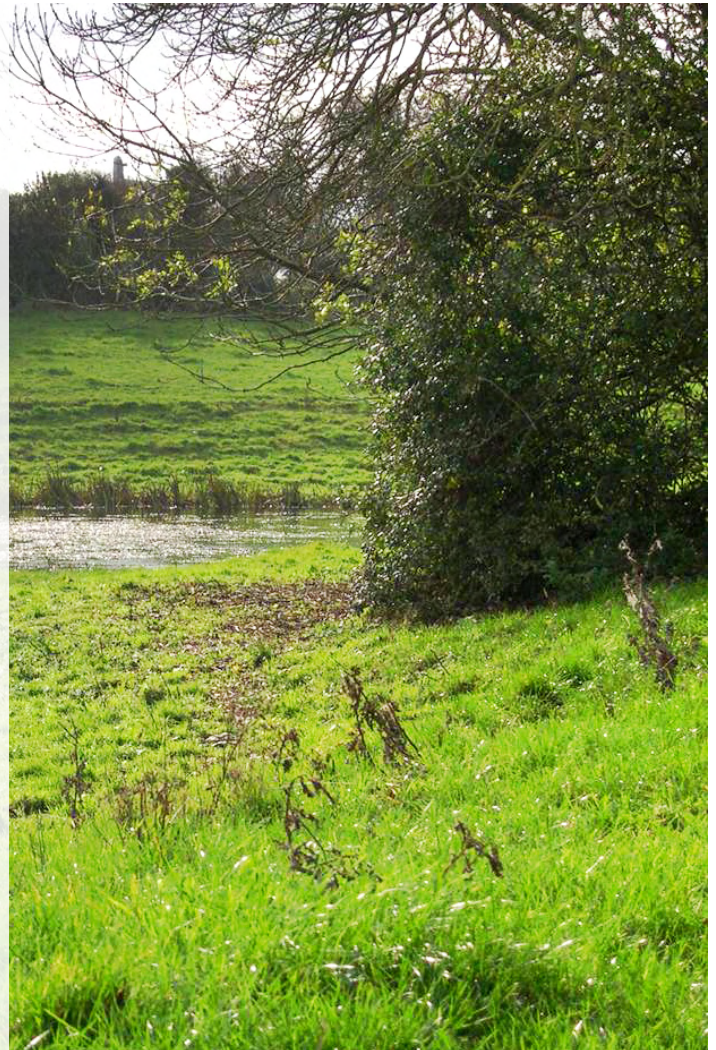
- 1) An LAP shall be consistent with the objectives of the County and or City Development Plan and shall consist of a written statement and may include policies and objectives for the zoning of land for particular purposes, and or objectives ensuring the proper planning and development of an area, including details on community facilities and on standards for design of development and structures.
- 2) An LAP shall contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan.
- 3) A Planning Authority shall take whatever steps it considers necessary to consult the public and others before preparing, amending or revoking an LAP.

How does the LAP work?

The Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan 2002-2008 contains specific objectives to prepare a detailed LAP for the Loughmacask area. To fulfil this objective, the LAP process for Loughmacask has been instigated under the direction of Kilkenny Borough Council and County Council (referred to hereon as the Councils').

The Local Area Plan develops the policies set out in the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2002 in more detail and specific to the Loughmacask area. This document includes a written statement with policies, objectives, and a design guide, accompanied by maps and appendices

The purpose of the Loughmacask LAP is to guide the proper planning and sustainable development of the outlined Loughmacask area through a detailed policy framework. The Plan, for the period 2008-2014 will be used by Planning Departments of both Councils' to assess planning applications for the LAP area. The plan will enable both planning authorities to adhere to detailed policy objectives and an implementation framework as set out and approved in the Loughmacask LAP.



Loughmacask Lake

1.2 Loughmacask Site Description

The area subject to the Loughmacask LAP is located to the northwest of Kilkenny city centre, within walking distance of the city's commercial core. The site's name is derived from a small wetland area, Lough Macask, which is located near the north western boundary and is designated as a proposed Nature Heritage Area (pNHA).

The site, approximately 114.8 hectares in area, comprises lands zoned for development between the Breaghagh River and the Freshford Road. The area lies adjacent to the existing neighbourhoods of St. Canice's and the Butts, the Western Environs / Poulgour area (currently under construction), and the River Nore, which runs on a north-south axis to the east of the plan area. A network of roads traverse the site, of which the future Inner Relief Road (IRR) forms an integral part of the transport infrastructure for future development within the area.

Within the site, the existing residential population comprises 47 residential units on the eastern boundary, and a further 259 units are currently under construction. On the western boundary of the site is located Grassland Fertilisers, an industrial plant undertaking the production of fertilisers. To the south of the industrial plant are located playing fields associated with the Dicksboro GAA club.

The site includes a number of known and potential archaeological and architectural heritage sites, such as terraced houses at the southeast boundary and architectural remains adjacent to Loughmacask. The balance of the site is primarily in agricultural use.

Key Qualities of the Plan Area

The site is characterised by qualities that differentiate it from surrounding lands and give it a unique identity. These qualities include (inter alia) the following:

- Close proximity (within walking distance) to historical Kilkenny city and its retail and commercial core;
- Close proximity to existing physical and social infrastructure;
- Unique natural and cultural landscape qualities, such as Lough Macask, karstic topography, limestone walls, archaeological sites, and Lousybush Lane;
- Archaeological remains, dating from the late Bronze Age;
- Architectural heritage post dating the early 1700's;
- Scenic views to and from Kilkenny City and monuments such as St. Canice's Cathedral;
- High amenity values and scenic views within the site;
- Proximity to Kilcreen Lodge, the wooded Breaghagh Valley and the Nore Valley;
- Access to sporting and recreation grounds, such as the Dicksboro GAA club; and
- Local employment opportunities.



Fig. 1. Aerial map of LAP boundary and context

1.3 Local History

Located on the northwest periphery of Kilkenny, the LAP area's history is strongly linked with the development of the town and its rich fabric of cultural heritage. Kilkenny City has a nationally significant archaeological and architectural heritage, which provides a valuable cultural, tourism and educational resource both locally and nationally.

Kilkenny City

The origins of Kilkenny City date back to the late 6th, early 7th centuries when, during the medieval period, St. Canice founded a monastery. The Normans established a camp on the southern bank of the River Breagh and outside the precincts of the monastery after the invasion of 1169; this was later to form the nucleus for the development of the city. During the medieval period, Kilkenny developed into one of the most important political towns in Ireland and prospered as a result.

The city's fortunes declined in the mid 1600's due to the collapse of the Confederation of Kilkenny and Cromwellian siege. However, upon the restoration of Charles II this process was partially reversed and the late 16th and early 17th centuries proved to be a time of relative prosperity with an accompanying phase of building. Several of the surviving merchant houses such as Rothe House, Parliament Street, were built during this period. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Kilkenny operated as an important commercial and trade centre (See Fig. 2).

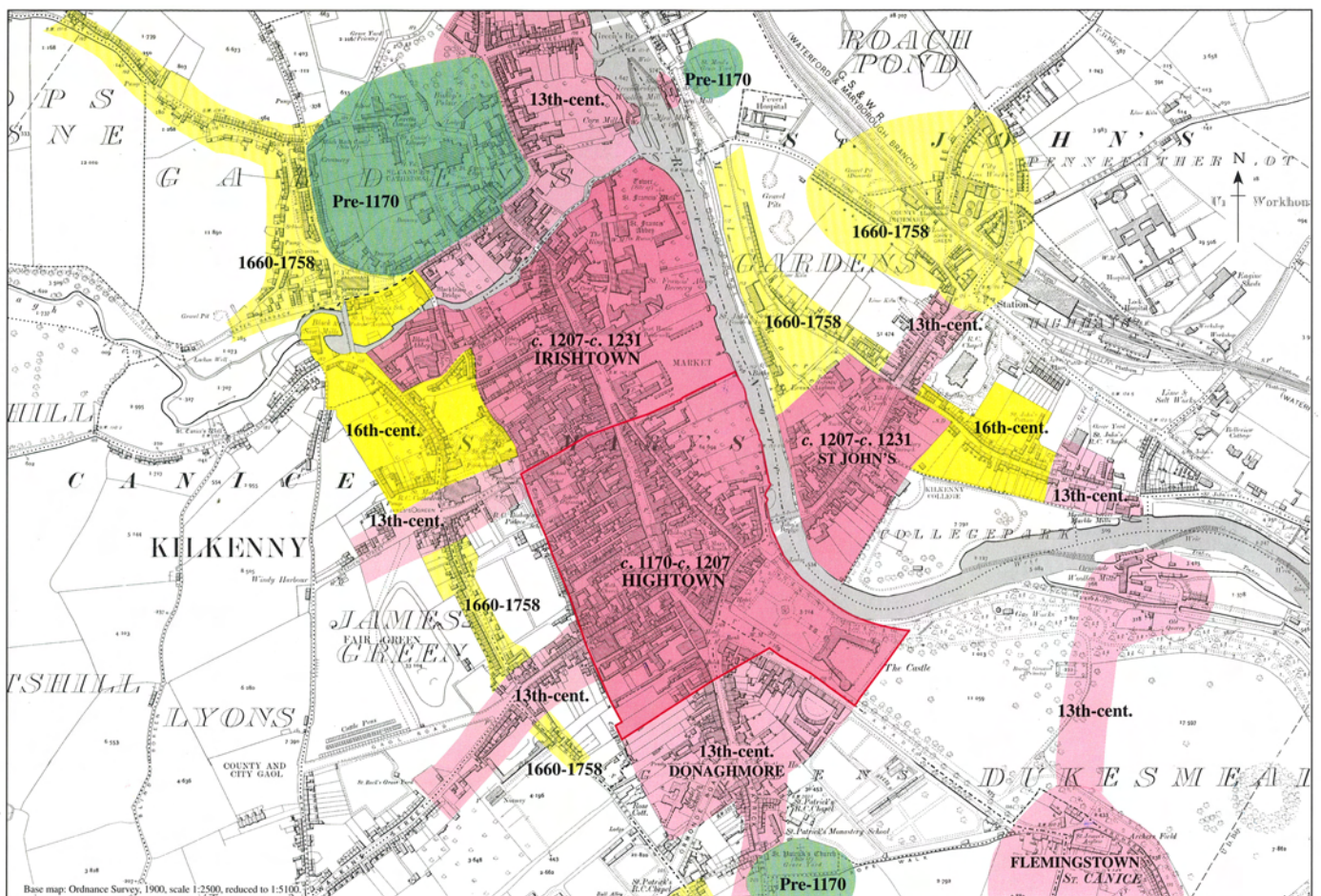


Fig. 2. Growth of Kilkenny to 1758

Loughmacask LAP Area

The LAP area comprises of seven townlands. Each townland infers ownership of surrounding land in some form – Ayersfield or Ayer’s Bawns; Bishops Demesne, Palmerstown or Palmer’s homestead or pilgrim’s homestead; Loughmacask or Lake of MacCask (referred to hereon as Lough Macask); Talbotsinch or Talbot’s Holm. Kilcreen can be interpreted as a withered wood ‘coill chrion’. However, it has been suggested it translates into old church although no extant remains of a church exist. Lousybush has been recorded as a meeting place of beggars. It’s literal translation from ‘sreach na miol’ means ‘white thorn of the lice’. Talbotsinch was a planned village, built by Lady Desart in 1904 for the workers in her local woollen and woodwork factories.

St. Canice’s Parish borders Loughmacask to the east. Saint Canice, the patron saint of Kilkenny City, founded a monastery in the late 6th, early 7th century. The area contains several sites of archaeological interest; some possibly dating from the Late Bronze Age indicating that the area attracted human settlement for many centuries before. (See Fig. 3)

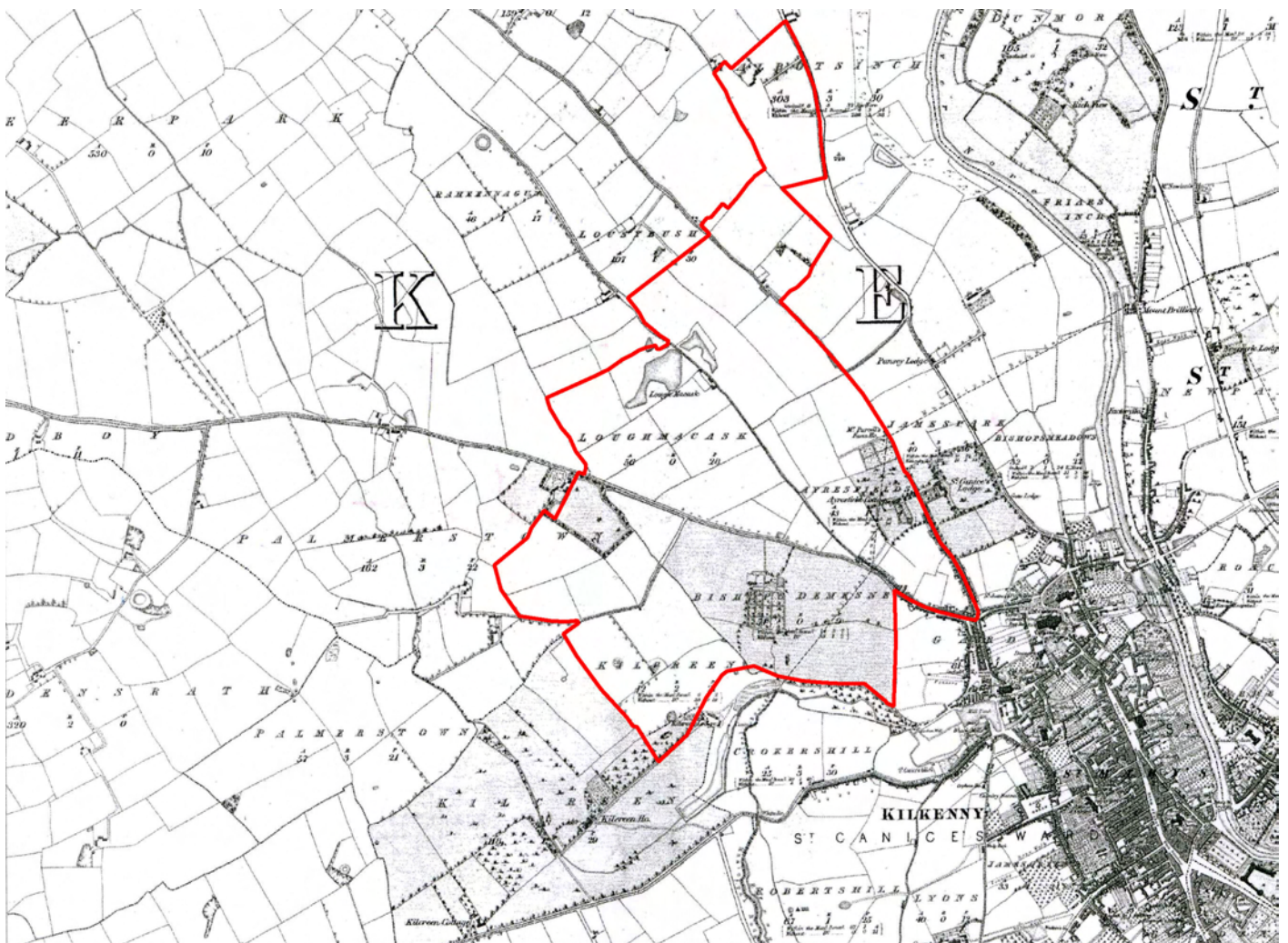


Fig. 3. Historical Map 1839

1.4 Strategic Planning Policy Documents

1.4.1 National and local strategic and planning documents

In the preparation of the LAP due regard has been given to the following (inter alia) national and local strategic and planning documents:

The National Development Plan

The National Development Plan was introduced as a mechanism to underpin the development of Ireland's dynamic and competitive economy, building on growth experienced over the past years. Aiming to strengthen the economic and social foundations for strong and sustainable progress in the years ahead, the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 specifically aspires to continue sustainable national economic and employment growth and strengthen Ireland's international competitiveness, as well as fostering balanced regional growth.

Balanced regional development is a fundamental objective of the Plan. This commitment sets out policies specific to the development of regions but more importantly, this plan encompasses policies, which aim to ease the pressure on urban infrastructure, to tackle urban and rural poverty and, over the long term, to better integrate physical and economic planning through more effective land use. Urban centres, such as Kilkenny have a strong role to play in facilitating the above. This is recognised in the National Development Plan.

National Spatial Strategy

The purpose of this strategic plan is to aspire for a better balance of social, economic and physical development with population growth between regions. Focusing on people and places, the NSS wants to build communities where people can live where they work.

The National Spatial Strategy has placed Kilkenny City and Environs within the South East Region of the Country. Kilkenny is strategically positioned and forms part of a nationally strategic growth triangle. Driving regional growth and development, Kilkenny Hub is complemented by Carlow and Wexford Hubs. Having a population greater than 5,000 people, Kilkenny City and Environs falls within the category of County Towns. The National Spatial Strategy identifies these towns as important as they provide a strong platform for balanced development through out the region.

Regional Planning Guidelines

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the South East region, 2004-2016 provides a long-term strategic planning framework for the development of the southeast region and its constituent counties. In effect, this is the strategic policy for the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy for the same area.

The Regional Planning Guidelines provide a settlement hierarchy for each county of the South East. Kilkenny is designated as a Hub. The Guidelines envisage a "Hub" as being a strategic urban centre that supports and is supported by the Gateway of the region and that it reaches out to wider rural areas of the region that the RPG's are targeting for significant levels of growth.

As set out in this regional policy document, a "Hub" is supportive of a population in the region of 10,000 people.

The Regional Planning Guidelines set out that Hubs with a population greater than 10,000 persons would need to grow to a population of 30,000 persons or more in the years up to 2020 and beyond (See Fig. 4).