Chief Executive’s report submitted to Elected Members in accordance with Section 19(1)(d) and 19(1)(e) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in relation to the deferral of making of a new Carlow Town Environs Local Area Plan September 2017
Part 1 – Introduction

1.1 Background

The Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012 -2018 (JSP) covers the former Carlow Town Council area, Graiguecullen on the western side of the River Barrow in Co. Laois and the environs of the former town council boundary area to the east, north and south of Carlow Town. The JSP comprises a town development plan (under sections 9-12 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended) and two Local Area Plans (under Sections 18-20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended).

The plans were prepared jointly between the relevant planning authorities (Carlow County Council, Carlow Town Council and Laois County Council) and became effective on the following dates:


There has been one amendment to the JSP – Carlow Town Environs Local Area Plan 2012 – 2018 to rezone lands located on the Kilkenny Road from “Amenity and Open Space” to “Residential 1 – established” (Adopted November 2015).

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended new legislative provisions (Section 11C) have been introduced regarding development plans where a town council (Planning Authority) has been dissolved. The Carlow Town Development Plan 2012-2018 was adopted by the former town council which has subsequently been dissolved. Following consultation with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, the advice received is that the Carlow Town Development Plan 2012-2018 cannot be reviewed at this time as a Local Area Plan but must be reviewed as part of the review of the Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021 which will commence in 2019. The new Carlow County Development Plan 2021-2027 will contain land use zonings for the Carlow Town Development Plan area (former Town Council boundary). The existing Carlow Town Development Plan as contained in the JSP will therefore remain operative until a new plan is adopted as part of the Carlow County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The two remaining LAPs contained in the JSP (Carlow Town Environs and Graiguecullen Local Area Plan) are due to expire in 2018. In order to continue with the preparation of a coordinated strategy between the two planning authorities and having regard to the position regarding the Carlow Town Development Plan outlined above, the forthcoming Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies it is recommended that the life of the Carlow Town Environs local area plan be extended (up to 2022) in accordance with Section 19(1)(d) Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. A
similar extension to the life of the Graiguecullen LAP is being considered by Laois County Council. The new Local Area Plan for Carlow Town and Environs will be prepared jointly with Laois County Council in 2022 and will incorporate land use zonings for Carlow Town as adopted as part of the Carlow County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Appendix no. 1 contains correspondence from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government which supports the proposed extension of the LAP to facilitate the continued coordinated approach to the development of Carlow Town which is in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

This extension to the Life of the Carlow Town Environs LAP does not preclude any variation / amendments required to the relevant statutory plans where same is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

1.2 Legislation

Section 12 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2010, (which amends Section 19 of the Principal Act) provides for the extension of the valid life of a Local Area Plan from 6 years for a further period not exceeding 5 years.

Section 12 of the Amendment Act, 2010, states:

(d) ‘Subject to paragraph (e), not more than 5 years after the making of the previous local area plan, a planning authority may, as they consider appropriate, by resolution defer the sending of a notice under Section 20(3)(a)(i) and publishing a notice under Section 20(3)(a)(ii) for a further period not exceeding 5 years

(e) No resolution shall be passed by the Planning Authority until such time as the members of the authority have:

(i) Notified the manager of the decision of the authority to defer the sending and publishing of the notices, giving reasons therefore, and

(ii) Sought and obtained from the manager-

(i) An opinion that the local area plan remains consistent with the objective and core strategy of the relevant development plan,

(ii) An opinion that the objectives of the local area plan have not been substantially secured, and

(iii) Confirmation that the sending and publishing of the notices may be deferred and the period for which they may be deferred.’

The determination as to whether the Carlow Town and Environs Local Area Plan is to be reviewed or whether it is more appropriate to extend the life of the Plan (with the passing of a resolution by the Elected Members as maybe deemed appropriate) must be made not later than the 31st October 2017.
Part 2 - Chief Executive’s Report

This report comprises the Chief Executive’s opinion and concludes,

(I) That the Local Area Plan remains consistent with the objectives and core strategy of the Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021;

(II) That the objectives contained within the Local Area Plan have not been substantially secured, and

(III) Confirmation that the sending and publishing of the notices may be deferred and the period for which they may be deferred.

2.1 Compliance with Objectives and Core Strategy of Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021

The Carlow County Development Plan 2015 - 2021 recognises the importance of Carlow Town and the need to maintain a strong competitive economic position. It is identified as a focus for public and private sector investment within the County with significant population and economic growth. The Core Strategy of the Carlow County Development Plan 2015 - 2021 outlines population targets and housing land requirements for County Carlow, which were allocated by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government at national level and distributed at regional level by the South East Regional Authority. The South East Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 -2022 have allocated a population target of an additional 8,924 from the Census of 2011 (Carlow Pop 63,536 by 2022). Based on the population target the core strategy has allocated a specific population target for each settlement.

The population target for Carlow Town and Environs in the Core Strategy is for an additional 2,480 persons between 2015 and 2021. This equates to a requirement of 585 units / (30 ha) within Carlow Town and 641 units (57 ha) in Carlow Town Environs.

Note: Any new population allocation arising from the publication of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy may give rise to an amendment / variation of development plans / local area plans as appropriate in order to cater for anticipated population growth levels and required land use zonings.

2.2 Settlement Strategy

Carlow Town and Environs is designated a County Town in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021. It is recognised as an important regional centre with a sphere of influence extending northwards into County Kildare, north-west into County Laois as well as its role as a County Town within the South-East Region. Carlow Town is recognised as a critical element in the regional settlement structure for realising balanced regional development and an important focus for strengthening the wider hinterland area.

2.2.1 Carlow Environs Development Strategy

The development strategy for Carlow Environs as contained in the JSP is to
support the role and functioning of Carlow Town by providing green lungs to the town, improving road infrastructure and making housing, community and enterprise lands available for development subject to a sequential approach to the orderly development of the area. In this regard strategic objectives specific to the Carlow Environs area include:

- Advancement of the southern relief road
- Advancement of key opportunity sites
- Consolidation of the urban form
- supporting the provision of community services and recreational amenities
- seeking the provision of pedestrian, cycle and ecological linkages between the Barrow Track and Oak Park Forest.

These strategic objectives remain to be achieved and are in accordance with the provisions of the Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021 which recognises Carlow Town as a critical element in the regional settlement structure for realising balanced regional development and an important focus for strengthening its own area.

2.2.2 Population and Zoned Land Requirements

The population of the greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban area is 43% of the entire population of County Carlow. (Table 1). The level of population residing within the urban area has continued to increase over each intercensal period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Period</th>
<th>Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area</th>
<th>County Carlow</th>
<th>Proportion of Co. Carlow Population residing in greater Urban Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>18,487</td>
<td>46,014</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>20,724 (+12%)</td>
<td>50,339 (+9.3%)</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>23,030 (+11%)</td>
<td>54,532 (+8.3%)</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>24,272 (+5.3%)</td>
<td>56,875 (+4.3%)</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Population of Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area and County Carlow (Source: CSO)

Population and Housing Requirements for Carlow Environs as contained in the Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021 are outlined in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carlow Environs</th>
<th>2015-2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population Allocation</td>
<td>2,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Residential Units Required Carlow Environs</td>
<td>684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Land Requirement for Residential Units Carlow Environs</td>
<td>57 Ha¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Population and Housing Requirements for Carlow Environs.

¹ With adjustments to accommodate unoccupied units / extant permissions which may proceed this is slightly reduced to 54ha.
2.2.3 Capacity to Accommodate Development

Within the Carlow Environs Local Area Plan there are:

- 53 hectares of land zoned as new residential development (Residential 2 lands).
- 24ha of land are zoned for established residential.
- 208.7ha zoned strategic reserve with 7.5ha of same subject to current valid planning permissions.

Accordingly, there is sufficient land zoned for residential purposes to satisfy the core strategy requirements of the Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021 and the proposed extended time period of this Local Area Plan.

2.2.4 Housing Provision

Since the adoption of the JSP it is estimated that circa 45 units have been constructed. Interest in the housing market within Carlow Town and Environs is beginning to recommence. Within Carlow Town and Environs current planning permission exists for in excess of 600 units, the majority of which are located within the Carlow Environs area. The planning authority will continue to implement housing policies as contained in the JSP (HOUS P01- P25) which seek to ensure availability of appropriately zoned lands, quality in terms of neighbourhoods, choice in terms of location, mix and tenures, provision of housing for various users / needs etc.

2.3 Economic Development and Retail

Carlow Town is designated as the principal driver of economic growth, employment generation and service provision in the County. Clusters of small and medium enterprises have emerged in Carlow Town. Carlow has significant potential to contribute to the delivery of growth at a national, regional and/or inter regional level. Within the Carlow Environs area it is noted that there is sufficient land to accommodate further employment expansion and growth with an estimated 71ha of green-field land zoned for employment purposes (excluding existing established business). This includes lands for enterprise and employment purposes and business and innovation purposes. A further c. 30ha of undeveloped brownfield lands are zoned for business and innovation and include the majority of the former Greencore Sugar Beet Factory Site.

Within the Carlow Environs area there are five significant employment opportunity sites (See map attached to appendix 2) which remain to be further progressed and comprise:

- **Opportunity Site no. 16:** Kernanstown Industrial Estate with potential for intensification of small scale manufacturing.
- **Opportunity Site no. 21:** Former Greencore Site with potential for significant employment and potential use as a Green Business Park.

2 This zoning may include other uses particularly those that have the potential to improve the residential amenity of residential communities such as schools, crèches, small shop, doctor surgeries, playing fields etc.
Opportunity Site no. 22: Teagasc’s Oak Park Research Centre with potential for intensification of research activities.

Opportunity Site no. 23: Adjoining the River Burrin and located off the Ballinacarrig Inner Relief Road zoned for tourism and leisure purposes.

Opportunity Site no. 24: Quinagh, Southern Relief Road which has potential for a campus based business park with good functional links to IT Carlow.

The continued expansion / redevelopment of industrial lands including the former Braun site and lands occupied by Merck Sharp and Dohme is also supported with sufficient lands zoned to accommodate further redevelopment / expansion of the established facilities.

It remains an objective of the Council that Carlow is positioned and promoted as having a vibrant enterprise culture capable of sustaining and expanding local enterprises, creating employment and attracting inward investment. Economic development objectives ECN 001- 009 as contained in the JSP which include building on the role of the area as a driver for economic development, stimulating expansion and diversification, working with key agencies etc. remain applicable to the future development of the area.

Retail

Under the Carlow County Retail Strategy Carlow County Town Centre is designated ‘Level 1’ and forms the first tier within the retail hierarchy. It recognises that Carlow town centre should be the prime focus for future development and in particular high order comparison retail floor space. Limited retail is provided within the Environ area with residents served by Carlow Town, the Sandhills retail area and smaller neighbourhood centres at Askea and on the Tullow Road. Consolidation of larger scale retail provision within the zoned town centre of Carlow Town is appropriate to maintain the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre. Smaller scale local shops will be considered as appropriate to service residential / employment neighbourhoods where proposed in the environs area where the proposal would not detract from the town centre and would be in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The planning authority will implement the relevant provisions of the Retail Strategies for Carlow Town and County as contained in the statutory land use plans as appropriate.

2.4 Transport Infrastructure

It is an aim of the Council to develop sustainable, efficient and a safe transport network in the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area. Transportation Objectives to achieve same which remain applicable are contained in Trans O01-O07 of the JSP. Specifically within the Carlow Environ area there are a number of strategic roads objectives which remain to be achieved. These include advancing the extension of the Eastern Relief Road and the development of the Southern Relief Road in the Ballinacarrig and Quinagh areas. The Southern Relief Road will involve the construction of a new bridge over the River Barrow enhancing linkages with Graiguecullen and County Laois. The development of the relief road will improve traffic circulation in and around Carlow Institute of Technology as well as residential and employment areas to the south of the town and subject to appropriate
environmental studies comprise key strategic infrastructural assets necessary for the future development of the town.

2.5 Water and Wastewater

Infrastructural investment and projected growth rates must align with the local planning policy framework that has been informed by both National and Regional Policy. To ensure compliance with statutory obligations, delivery of water and wastewater infrastructure in accordance with core strategy population targets and anticipated economic growth rates is required to support the delivery of future sustainable growth.

In order to maintain a strong and competitive economic position the delivery of key infrastructure projects including the phased upgrading of Mortarstown Wastewater Treatment Plant which services the Greater Carlow Urban is required.

Water supply is supplied by a combination of Rathvilly, Sion Cross and Oak Park Wells Field and whereas there is adequate capacity to meet demand over the projected time period of the LAP (up to 2022) continued capital investment in the water services infrastructure and networks is required to sustain anticipated demand.

The objective of the Council to provide an adequate, sustainable and economic supply of potable water and wastewater water treatment capacity for domestic, commercial and industrial use, having regard to its status as a County Town remains a key objective of the Council (Objective PI O02). The Council will continue to work with Irish Water to achieve same.

2.6 Education

Educational requirements for the Greater Carlow area are accommodated by 12 no. primary schools and 6 no. secondary schools. Since the adoption of the JSP permission has been granted for extensions to a number of primary schools.

The secondary schools within the area are also expanding with extensions to St. Leo’s Secondary School, the construction of a new 1000 pupil post primary school (KCETB) at Mortarstown and significant refurbishment and extension works to St. Mary’s Knockbeg has commenced. An extension is also proposed for St. Mary’s Academy CBS under the current 6 year Department of Education and Skills programme.

Carlow IT has also expanded since the adoption of the JSP with the construction of the Dargan Centre and Haughton Building. The planning authority has also granted permission for the development of a new sports campus, for the Institute at Mortarstown.

The Council will continue to liaise with the Department of Education and Skills and all other educational providers to support the provision of educational facilities and services in accordance with the provisions of the Plan (Ref: Objectives E&S O 01-O 06).

2.7 Community / Recreation and Social Inclusion

Community facilities and amenities are important elements of the social infrastructure required to support and develop community development. In an audit it was established that Carlow Town accommodated 18 community facilities and 15 sports clubs. There have been a number of permissions granted since the adoption of the JSP for various sporting facilities for flood lighting, pitches etc. Strategic recreational open space facilities also exist in the area including The Barrow Track, Oak Park Forest Park and Carlow Town Park.
The Council has also progressed a number of projects in Carlow Town Area including:

- Provision of a Community Garden, The Plots, Rathnapish Carlow.
- Purchase of lands at Perry’s Carlow Town for Car Parking.
- CPO of 11 properties at Barrack St for redevelopment / connectivity purposes.
- Provision of Age friendly parking spaces Carlow Town.
- Provision of a Linear Park Burrin Road.

The Council is also currently progressing through the Part 8 process the provision of a Skateboard Park at the Burrin Road, Carlow. The renewal of the Tullow Road Area is also a key priority of the Council.

The objectives of the Council regarding open space and provision of recreational assets as contained in REC O001 – REC O007 remain key objectives of the Council. Furthermore the Council will continue to promote social inclusion and community cohesion through implementation of Social Inclusion Objectives SOC O01- O05 which also seeks to encourage capacity building within local communities.

2.8 Environment and Heritage

Protection of the environment is a fundamental principle of sustainable development. The Carlow Environ LAP as part of the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The Plan incorporated appropriate land use zonings, mitigation measures, policies and objectives to ensure the implementation of the Plan will not result in significant effects on the environment in accordance with the SEA Directive and associated Regulations and the Habitats Directive.

Significant investment in the protection of the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area from flooding has been undertaken with the Carlow Flood Relief Scheme.

There has been one structure in the Environs area added to the Record of Protected Structures in the Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021 - Lime Kiln at the Former Sugar Factory Athy Road, Carlow.

The Built and Natural Heritage objectives (HER O01 – O13) of the JSP which encourage the conservation, interpretation of and promotion of the heritage of the area remain applicable.

2.9 Urban Design and Built Form

Good design ensures the development and management of attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. The aim of the Council is to ensure the delivery of a safe, sustainable and liveable built environment suitable for all through good well connected design. The planning authority has regard to national policy and best practice guidelines in the consideration of development proposals and the objectives of the JSP as contained in DBF O01-09 remain applicable to future proposals within the functional area. The Council is also progressing a Public Realm Plan for identified areas within the core of Carlow Town which will also guide future development proposals within the greater Carlow Town area.
Part 3 – Objectives of LAP have not been substantially secured

The Carlow Town Environs LAP 2012-2018 as contained in the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012-2018 includes policies and objectives in relation to: economic development, transport, physical infrastructure, environmental management, education, recreation, sustainable communities and social inclusion, housing, built and natural heritage, urban design and built form. It is considered that all policies remain relevant and functional, however, the objectives of the LAP as referenced in Part 2 above have not been fully realised to-date.

Part 4 – Concluding Opinion and Resolution

In summary, it is the opinion of the Chief Executive that as,

- The Carlow Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018 as contained in the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012-2018 remains consistent with the objectives and core strategy of the Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021; and

- The objectives of the Local Area Plan have not been substantially secured.

It is appropriate that the life of the Carlow Town and Environs Local Area Plan be extended by a period of 4 years (to 2022), during which time the objectives identified may be achieved.

Accordingly it is recommended that the following resolution be passed:

Resolution

‘To extend the life, by a further 4 years (i.e. up to and including 4th November 2022), of the Carlow Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018 as contained in the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012-2018), in accordance with the provisions of Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, (as amended) which provides for the extension of the valid life of a Local Area Plan (LAP). The extension of the LAP is sought to provide Carlow County Council and all other relevant stakeholders adequate time and opportunity to realise the strategic objectives of the Carlow Town and Environs LAP which is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area’.
Appendix 1
26 July, 2017

Bernie O’Brien,
Director of Services,
Carlow County Council,
County Buildings,
Althym Road,
Carlow.


A chara,


I note both Carlow County Council and Laois County Council have been engaged in consultation with the Forward Planning Section in the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government regarding the planning of Carlow Town with respect to the review of the relevant statutory development plans.

This task is a complex undertaking, given the various administrative boundaries involved and the requirements of recent local government reform legislation abolishing Carlow Town Council.

The Department is supportive of the detailed approach by Carlow County Council as set out in your correspondence and the beneficial co-ordination of the statutory plan timescales that are pertaining. In particular, the collaborative working relationship between the two County Councils is acknowledged by the Department and will assist in providing the necessary coherent planning framework for Carlow Town to continue grow and prosper.
Is mise le meas,

[Signature]

Niall Cussen
Principal Advisor
Forward Planning Section
Appendix 2