

# LAND PLANNING & DESIGN

**CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS**

Lands at  
Harristown & Coughlanstown  
Co. Kildare

**Landscape and Visual Appraisal  
to support the inclusion  
of further landscape protection**

in

Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Prepared for  
**Harristown Coughlanstown  
Community Group**

by  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This study on behalf of Harristown and Coughlanstown Community Group seeks to outline the wealth of landscape built and cultural heritage in an area from Ballymore Eustace to the R412 / New Abbey, and north to Mullacash Hill to the R413 south of the River Liffey.

The landscape centres on the local hill of Harristown which for millennia has enjoyed panoramic vistas across the local countryside to Wicklow in the east, Mullacash Hill in the north and south to the Liffey Valley. This strategic location was the logic behind the construction of Harristown Castle on the southern extremities of the Pale, now only minor ruins evident, and the more extensive settlement which appears to have been here in the past.

Whilst fortifications are no longer needed on the hill, the local community would like to protect the panoramic vistas still present, and the surrounding amenity, through enhanced protections of the landscape, its character and quality around Harristown and Coughlanstown for residents, visitors and to sustain local rural enterprises.

Although a working rural landscape, there is a strong sense of place, of continuity and local pride – a place that people look after. Countryside residences are limited and where they occur well-kept presenting as part of their rural setting. The large local demesnes and large blocks of local woodland create structure and integrity in the landscape contributing both landscape capacity and also quality. Local minor undulations in topography provide elevated viewpoints at locations to enjoy panoramas and vistas of this rich resource, contrasting with intimate local green roads and lanes and the wooded Liffey Valley.

The landscape is rich in built and cultural heritage, much awaiting further research and discovery yet enough already known to provide interest to the visitor enjoying the walking and cycling amenities or the proposed Greenway Route along the Tullow to Sallins former railway (Ref Route K17 in the National Transport Au, and more importantly enriching the lives of local residents and communities.

It is clear that enhanced sensitivity should extend further across the study area reflecting local enhanced landscape value and reduced capacity for change.

### **Recommendation:**

In order to protect the amenity and landscape value described in the study area it is recommended that:

**A protected viewpoint is identified at Harristown and included in the List of Protected Viewpoints in the County Development Plan.**

**The purpose of this protection would be to protect prospects east to the Eastern Uplands and Wicklow Mountains and the intervening landscape that provides the setting to the upland backdrop.**

Secondly, to manage change in the rural landscape it is recommended that

**An expanded zone of increased sensitivity - Class 4 Special Sensitivity - north and south of the Liffey Valley, covering the study area should be acknowledged and included as a local variation to the sensitivity in the Eastern Transition Lands reflecting the interrelationship of the study area with both the Liffey Valley and Eastern Uplands.**

**The purpose of this protection would be to protect the landscape character, as described above, from inappropriate developments and land use changes of significant scale that erode its rural qualities.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

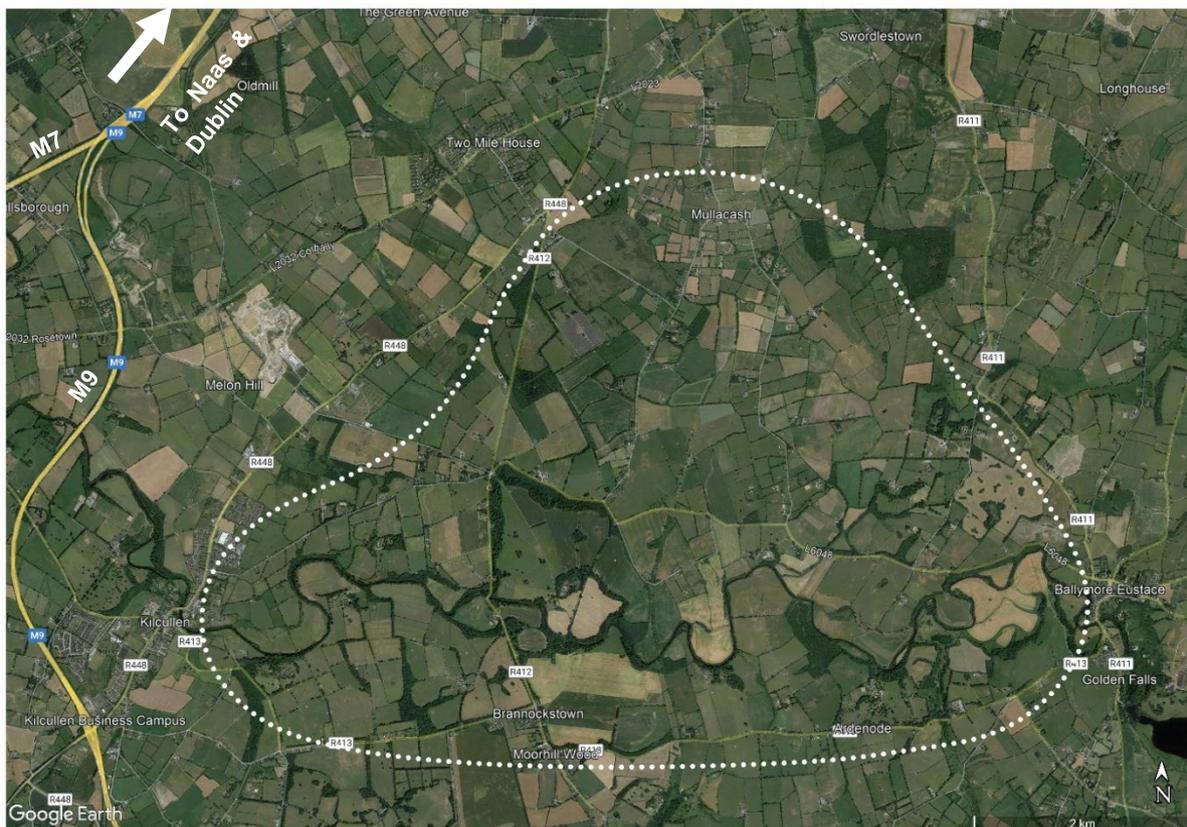
This Landscape and Visual Appraisal was prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds on behalf of Harristown and Coughlanstown West Community Group. Its purpose is to assess the local landscape character at Harristown, Coughlanstown West and Environs and the opportunity to enhance its protection in the Draft Kildare Development Plan 2023-2029, given the threat of large scale new development types in the area that could significantly alter the character of the landscape and the amenity enjoyed by local residents and visitors.

This report is intended to assist and inform the Development Plan policies regarding the protection of unspoilt but working rural areas and safeguarding landscape character and qualities.

This document has been prepared by Declan O’Leary, B.Agr Sc. Land. Hort., Dip LA., CLI, MILI, of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds Ltd. Declan has over 30 years experience in the design and analysis of landscape and the impacts of change, including the preparation of landscape policy and the preparation of assessments of developments for inclusion in Environmental Reports and EIAR.

The area of interest for this study is illustrated on Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Study Area and Context (Google Earth extract)**



The document is structured with an Overview of Relevant Policy (Section 2.0) followed by a description of the Area. An Analysis of Issues follows with Recommendations for inclusion in the new development plan.

Maps illustrating the relevant points of interest and key expanded photographs are included in Appendix 1.

A detailed review of Local Policy is included in Appendix 2.

Appendix 3 contains a copy of The Civil Parish of Coughlanstown Co. Kildare by local historian Katherine Mehigan

## **2. REVIEW OF PLANNING POLICY**

Appendix 2 contains a detailed review of local policy in the County Kildare Development Plan 2017 - 2023, as well as other national and local plans and policies. The Draft Development Plan is also reviewed and similarities and variance noted. This identifies development objectives and trends and also constraints on development in terms of landscape protections and sensitivities.

Cumulatively this analysis of existing and emerging policy informs a description of the landscape in terms of values that support its protection and conservation and/or its enhancement or change.

Key points are summarised here:

*(NB. Policy references are to the current Development Plan unless otherwise noted)*

- The concept of landscape as a complex shared resource not just an aesthetic and visual amenity
- Presence of protected national monuments and structures throughout the study area in particular the historical remains of Harristown Castle and settlement dating back to medieval times.
- The proximity of the study area to the South Kildare Tourist Route i.e. it is part of the setting/enjoyment of that route. Policy ECD 30 notes the need for a clean and attractive environment and the requires tourism resources and amenities to be protected from insensitive and inappropriate development. The proximity of the area to Dublin (Ireland's largest tourism market) is also recognised.
- There is general recognition and protection of Kildares unique landscapes, trees woodlands and general Green Infrastructure and Visual Amenity.
- Protection of Scenic views and Routes along the River Liffey, and Hilltop views from the Eastern Uplands In particular Policy SR 2 proposes to review and update all scenic routes and views.
- Location in Eastern Transition Landscape Character Area (LCA). This is classified as being of Class 2 Medium Sensitivity. The character is defined by its location in the context of the Eastern Uplands, its undulating topography and characteristic hills which provide long distance vistas. It is a working landscape capable of absorbing appropriately scaled incremental development. It is regarded as important and special particularly along the River Liffey valley – this coincides with the Study Area in this report. Visual connections to the Liffey and the Uplands are important. Sensitivity increases to Class 4 and 5 (Special and Unique) close to the boundaries of the LCA.
- The location of the River Liffey Valley passing through and contrasting with the study area and LCA (Intimate and enclosed / wooded as opposed to open with vistas). The River Valley is classified as Class 4 Special Sensitivity. And also a High Amenity Area
- The Eastern Uplands LCA rising to the east are categorised as Class 3 High Sensitivity. The importance of vistas to and from the uplands is regarded as critical for the potential visual impact of development – bulk , scale and inappropriate siting are highlighted as factors in this regard.
- The Study area contains the former Naas – Tullow railway Line, which is a potential Greenway Line (Walking/Cycling Route) Route K17 identified in the National Transport Authority's Cycle Network Plan for the Greater Dublin Area and also an objective of the Kildare County Development Plan.
- Recognised equine industry as an important contributor to the County to be actively promoted as an economic driver.
- Major Tourism initiative to develop a world class equine destination experience / tourism plan around County Kildare's rich horse training, breeding and racing tradition, including the environs of Punchestown and Naas adjacent the study area. And the recognition of the unique landscape and environment as part of that offer.
- In terms of landscape most of the policies in the Draft Development Plan retain or have similar intentions to the current adopted plan. The main changes relevant to the study area are increased protection for Uplands areas in the East Kildare Uplands LCA and Eastern Transition LCA (Policies LR 014 & 015). In addition it proposes to review the Landscape Character Assessment and designations within 2 years of the adoption of the new plan.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The Landscape Character Assessment in the Development Plan sets out good overview of this part of Kildare in the descriptions of the Eastern Transition Lands and the River (Liffey) Valley. The study area presents an excellent representation of the best of the characteristics of this area. The descriptions below aim to set out more local detail that informs a higher value and sensitivity of the landscape in the study area and in our view indicates that, locally, the LCA boundary sensitivity increase to Class 4 or 5 where the LCA meets the Liffey Valley and Eastern Uplands, extends much further than the indicated 500m in the CDP to encompass much of the valued landscape described below.

**Figure 2: Study Area**



The study area is organically shaped 6- 7 km east to west, from Ballymore Eustace to the R412/New Abbey, and 6km north to south from Mullacash Hill to the R413 south of the River Liffey. The main development and urban areas in Kildare are formed by Naas, Newbridge and Kildare towns strung along the M7 motorway several kilometers to the west. To the east the lands rise to the Wicklow mountains.

#### *Field Pattern and Vegetation*

This area contains a traditional patchwork field pattern with fields in pasture and tillage bounded by hedgerows. See Figure 2 above. Distinctively fields are often large with more substantial woodland belts or larger woodlands creating a rich well-structured landscape pattern. Whilst predominantly agricultural, a number of large demesnes and country houses are found here – Harristown House (north and south of the Liffey), Stonebrook (north of the Liffey) and Sallymount, Kilmurray and Ardenode (south of the Liffey). See Figure 33 below.

As well as agricultural activity a number of stud farms and equine business are found in and around the area.

This woodland and pasture landscape creates a rich and culturally interesting parkland landscape often missed by those passing through Kildare on the main transport corridors. The woodlands are particularly

distinctive as the species mix implies they are planted woods and thus have a cultural importance as well as creating a habitat and landscape structure.

**Figure 3 Typical Parkland Landscape Structure - looking north from Mullaghboy (adjacent the Liffey) towards Harristown Hill – which is very legible in this image**



North towards Mullacash can be found an extensive peatland area known as Harristown Common. This area is of ecological important for biodiversity and as a carbon sink and provides an interesting contrast and variety in what is otherwise such productive quality agricultural land. Harristown Common is included in the Draft CDP as a protected wetland (pNHA).

The Liffey Valley is a delightfully intimate and well wooded landscape contrasting with the open views and panoramas around. Large mature parkland trees sweep down to the river along its course and extend out through fields and the adjacent demesnes into the surrounding landscape deeply influencing its quality and character.

**Figure 4** View across Harristown Common, looking south. Dunstown station can be seen in the distance.



**Figure 5** Woodland sweeping down to the River Liffey at New Bridge on the R412



### *Topography and Drainage*

Topographically the landscape is gently rolling and undulating, as described in the LCA. The study area forms a landscape bowl bordered to the east by the eastern uplands rising to the Wicklow Mountains with expansive panoramas to the west. Low ridges and occasional hills to 130 – 150m bound the Liffey valley to the south. To the west a number of scattered hills (Melon Hill and Silliot Hill) rise to a similar

level. To the north Mullacash Hill rises to 160m offering expansive views to the north towards Punchestown, east towards the Eastern Uplands / Wicklow Mountains and south towards Harristown and the Liffey Valley. Some minor undulations are found within the “bowl” with a central hill at Harristown Castle to 140m. Despite their relatively humble scale, hills like this in flatter ground offer panoramic views over surrounding areas and thus their historic importance is often marked by the presence of fortifications and other structures, and their visual amenity enjoyed by local residents and visitors today.

Drainage and water is primarily represented by the River Liffey however hedgerow ditches would be common draining the local fields.

#### Access

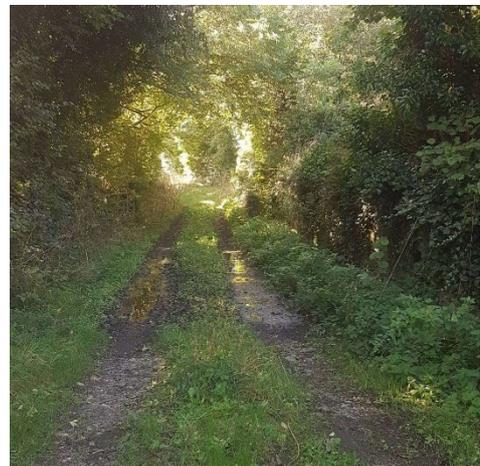
The study area lies several kilometres from the M9 (and M7) and whilst serviced by several regional roads, these are generally small, narrow and rural in character. Dublin City lies about 35km away illustrating the convenience of Kildare as both a place to live, but also visits and enjoy its rural and recreational amenity. There are numerous smaller roads locally as well as delightful small winding laneways through dense greenery and woods opening to panoramic vistas, with rural houses. These smaller routes often used for walking and recreation by local people.

**Figure 6 Local road lined with woods, formal hedge and rural hedgerows.**



**Figure 7 Local road at Harristown with open vistas (Below Left)**

**Figure 8 Laneway at Mullaghboy to Harristown Bridge and railway cottages (Below Right)**



**Figure 9 Green road leading from Mullaboy to Coughlanstown**



### *Built and Cultural Heritage*

As well as the attractive green and rural landscape, there is a rich and ancient story in the surrounding landscape. Whilst some of this, and its potential, is recognised in policy of protected monuments and proposed greenways, much is still hidden and now being uncovered by research, local community groups and interested enthusiasts, informing a fuller but still evolving understanding of the local area. The concept of historic landscape characterisation is described by the Heritage Council as:

*“a method of recognising the historic character, interest and value of widely different places and environments (rural, urban, coastal or marine). It is a tool that can enhance the understanding of how past human activity has influenced the character of today’s landscape, townscape or seascape. HLC can contribute to historical and archaeological research and public understanding. Landscape does not exist in isolation from the people and it is vital to the success of HLC that there is public participation throughout the process.”*

Ireland in particular has a relatively undisturbed landscape pattern in which is written, in the unique layers of previous millennia, in landscape patterns, tree lines, mounds of earth, structures and walls and sub-surface remains. This unique time-depth meaning of landscape is particularly strong within the study area and results in a landscape that is far more than its visual amenity or attractive vistas and views. In effect the content of the views has far more meaning and interest than just the aesthetic patterns and attractions.

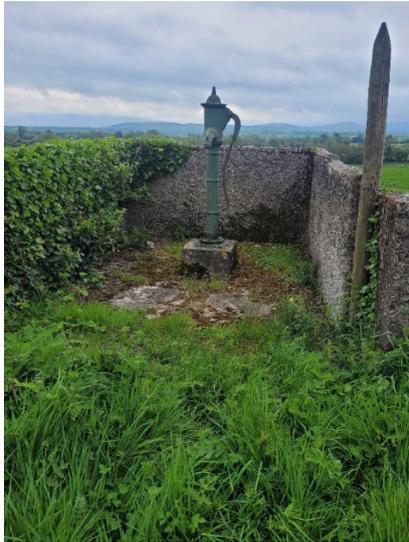
Whilst local historic demesnes mentioned previously provide the most obvious built heritage locally, each rural road contains traditional cottages, stretches of old stone walls, old village infrastructure and other rural heritage features. In places medieval ruins indicate the presence of much earlier settlements and more significant human history than today.

A selection of these characteristics are set out below:

Historic Community Infrastructure

**Figure 10 Village water pump at Harristown (Below Left)**

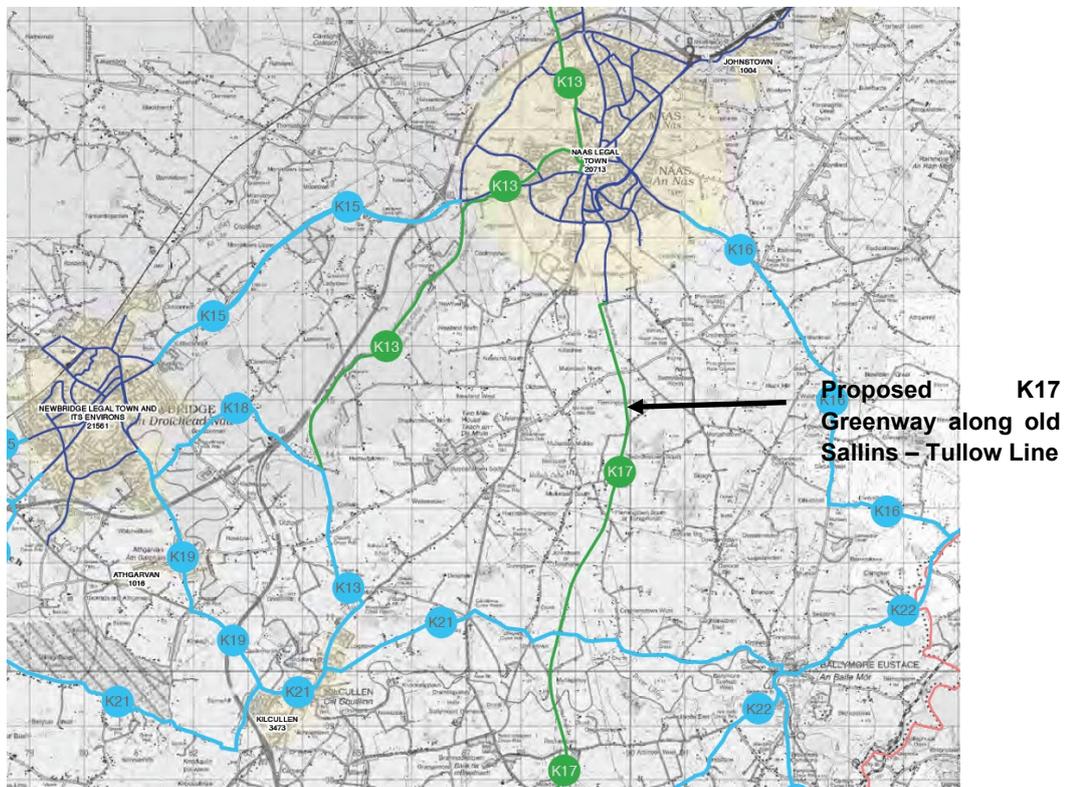
**Figure 11 Saint Patricks Church on boundary of Harristown Demesne (Below Right) – Source Google Maps**



Tullow – Sallins Railway

One of the most important local features is the remnant Tullow to Sallins railway. Although dis-used, much of the route is still present and legible in the landscape, with old bridge abutments and viaducts. A former rail station is still present at Harristown. This route is identified as proposed Greenway Route K17 in the National Transport Authority's Cycle Network Plan for the Greater Dublin Area, and this is supported by the Kildare County Development Plan. This will reopen the line as a Greenway allowing tourists access the landscape and amenity described in this section.

**Figure 12: Route 17 identified as a Greenway as part of the Cycle Network Plan for Greater Dublin Area**



**Figure 13 Goods shed at former Harristown Station (Below Left)**  
**Figure 14 Goods shed from rear (Below Right)**



**Figure 15 Stone abutments of removed railway bridge over local road near Harristown (below Left)**  
**Figure 16 Stone abutments of removed railway bridge over local road near Mullacash (below Right)**



**Figure 17 Disused Masonry rail bridge over Liffey at Harristown**



**Figure 18 Aerial view of Disused Masonry rail bridge over Liffey at Harristown**



This former rail line passes right through the centre of the study area and, when opened as a Greenway, will provide a wonderful experience of the landscape and character described here.

**Figure 19 Former Harristown Rail Station**



### Earlier History

Appendix 3 contains a detailed history of the Parish of Coughlastown, Co Kildare by a local historian Katherine Mehigan. This describes the important location and role of Couglandstown and Harristown over the past 1,000 years and more. Key points of interest here include:

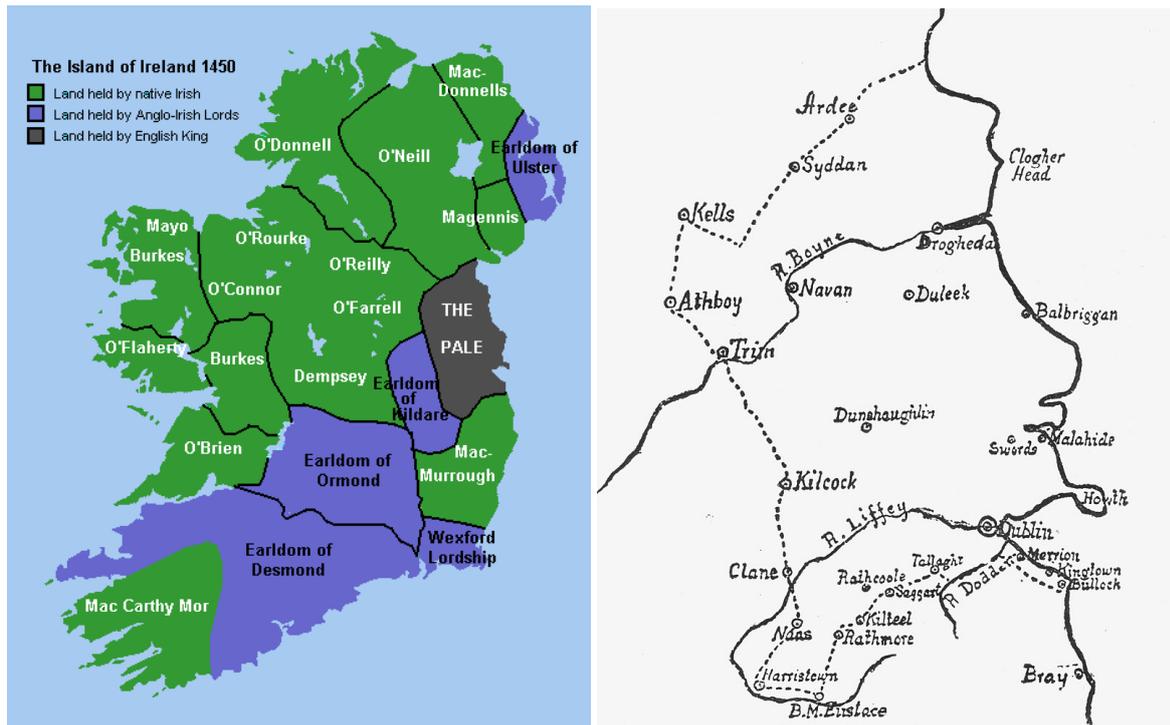
- Evidence of earlier Neolithic houses
- Nearby Dun Ailinne royal hill-top enclosure – west of the M9. Dating to the Iron Age, this along with several other Royal Sites in Ireland is on the Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites as a result of its representation o as site of Outstanding Universal Value.
- The establishment of the parish ca 1171 – ruins of the church and graveyard are still present as are various other enclosures. The graveyard contains the tomb of Lord Portlester dating to 1462.
- Key location on the edges of the Pale (the area of Ireland controlled by the Anglo-Normans) – subject to regular attacks by local Gaelic chieftains in Wicklow and south Kildare.
- Harristown Castle constructed in 1470s by Roland FitzEustace. Generally only remnants left and sub-surface materials.
- 1883 – the construction of the railway from Naas (and on to Dublin) running south to Tullow.

**Figure 20: Effigy: Rowland FitzEustace – New Abbey**



The Abbey and graveyard above was Franciscan and also contains the remains of the mother of “Silken Thomas” Fitzgerald and Government troops who died at Kilcullen in 1798.

**Figure 21: Maps showing the Pale and Harristown in relation to the rest of Ireland**



The historian points out that the landscape in particular has remained unchanged for hundreds of years as little changed hands resulting in a unique repository of local built and cultural heritage.

Another interesting feature (relevant to the proposal to develop the modern day Greenway) is the Church and Holy Well of St James which were part of the pilgrim path from Dublin to Waterford and onwards to Santiago de Compostela in Spain and the Way of St James

**Figure 22 St James Church, Coughlanstown. Below Left and Right**



**Figure 23 This simple stone cross is located in Coughlanstown, on a country road outside Ballymore Eustace, about 1/2 mile from St James Church.**

Local knowledge suggests that this cross (right) was being transported by craftsmen to St James Church to be erected in the graveyard. It fell off the horse drawn cart and since nobody wanted to or could lift it up again on the cart, it was left and erected there.'



**Figure 24: Artefacts discovered recently in Couglanstown which may relate to the Pilgrim Way**



### Historic Demesnes

A distinctive feature of the local landscape and landownership is the number of country demesnes present. Figure 33 illustrates 5 such demesnes all with characteristic country houses in some cases visitable. All contributing feature houses, external out-buildings, gate houses and walls, and extensive landscapes to the area. These include:

Harristown House – the largest spanning both sides of the river

Stonebrook north of the Liffey

Sallymount Demesne, Kilmurray and Ardenode south of the river.

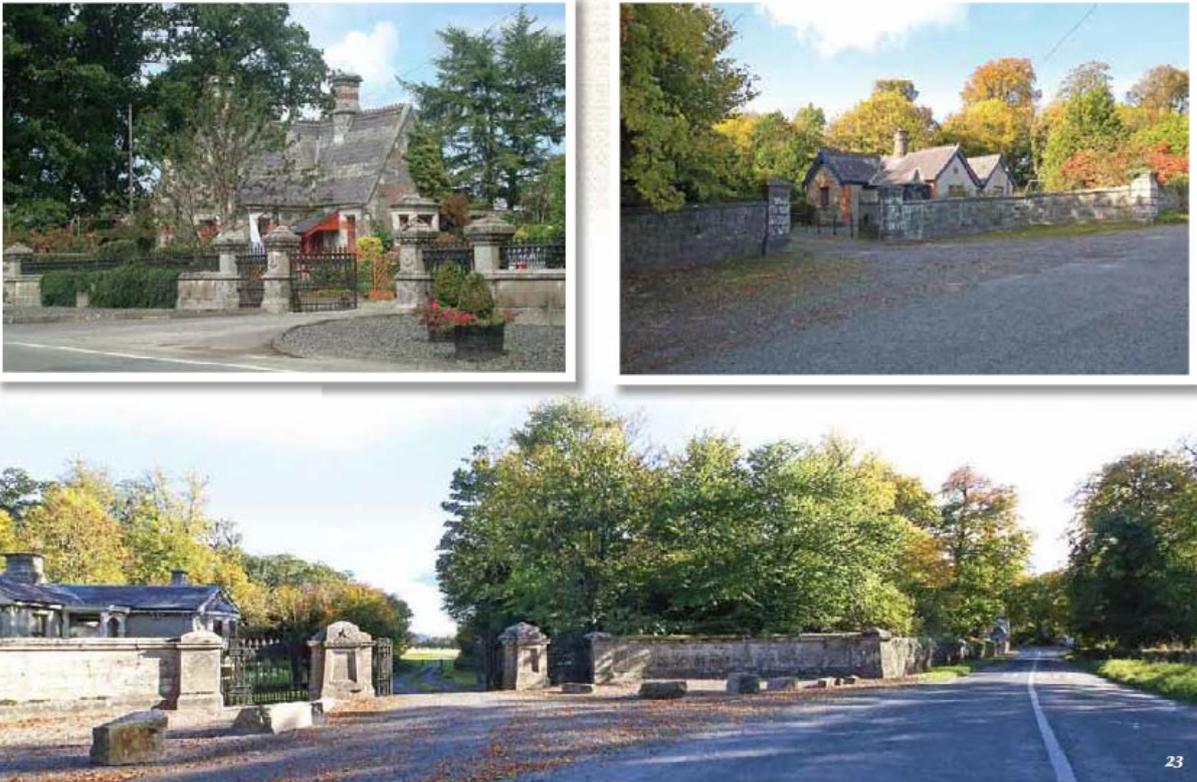
There are other smaller country houses of historic interest e.g. Mullaboden House with small woods that are scattered throughout the landscape also.

The images below of Harristown House and Demesne encapsulate the distinctive local landscape and setting create by these demesnes.

*Figure 25 Harristown House*



*Figure 26 Selection of views – Harristown House – Gate Lodges and Gateways*



**Figure 27** *Harristown House from the air looking east over the study area to Ballymore Eustace, Blessington Lakes and the Eastern Uplands / Wicklow Mountains.*  
**This is an unspoilt, high value, landscape worthy of protection.**



*Image courtesy Jordan Estate Agents*

### *Land Use*

Whilst land use is reflected in descriptions described above – agriculture, rural tourism, equine and forestry in places there are more functional interventions in the landscape.

The Dunstown 400/220KV Station occupies approximately 8.5Ha between Silliot Hill and Mullacash. Whilst a significant landscape intervention and change, this is relatively localised. A large waste recycling facility is also found at further west at Silliot Hill. This incremental industrialisation of this rich landscape must be controlled.

**Figure 28 Aerial view of Dunstown Station as seen in Google Maps**



### Recreational Amenity

The area is used by many groups from Anglers to the local riding and equestrian interest. However the loop road from Harristown to Coughlanstown to Mullacash is a destination walking and cycling route used frequently by residents not only of this area but of Two Mile House, Ballymore, Kilcullen and Naas. It's also used for fun runs and Two Mile House GAA.

Local community groups propose to have the route sign-posted and promoted as a Sli na Slainte route for Health and Recreation use. Coupled with the proposed Greenway and other local green roads this creates a network of informal recreational routes through a high quality landscape locally.

Halverstown Cricket Club occupies an idyllic setting in the grounds of Harristown House on the banks of the River Liffey. The club was founded in 1885.

### Visual Amenity

There are many opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the rural landscape of the area. In particular people walking and travelling at slower speeds can experience the local charm and character as well as views.

Views locally can be foreshortened by vegetation and trees and be quite intimate, but in places open out to panoramic parkland views of immense character and quality. Elevated areas in particular enjoy long and views to a long distance. Whilst the perimeter elevated hills such as Mullacash Hill have excellent views. The best value view is probably experienced from the central hill at Harristown. This experiences views at various locations in all directions over the study area but in particular East towards the mountains and the intervening lowlands – it is the landscape composition and its intactness and quality and references to heritage features that is most valuable.

**Figure 29 Elevated Views from a local residence at Harris town Hill – note deer roaming locally.**



**Figure 30: View looking east from local road L6044 (100m north of O'Hara's Cross Roads)**



**Figure 31 View looking east from local Road at Harristown Hill**



## **4. LANDSCAPE VALUES**

The values and characteristics of the study are listed below and can be categorised in two ways – values which should be conserved, and those that provide opportunity for enhancement. These values are summarised below:

### **4.1 Conservation Values**

The values to be conserved indicate those aspects of the receiving environment which are valued and sensitive and could be negatively impacted on by development or change. These include:

- Recognition of the study area's landscape qualities  
Eastern Transition Landscape Character Area  
River Valley Landscape Character Area  
Increasing sensitivity as we approach the Liffey Valley LCA
- Trees, woodlands and natural heritage
- Built and cultural heritage – Local Demesnes, historic structures, castles/ruins, local history and stories legible in the landscape.
- The remains of the Naas-Tullow railway line – potential as Greenway to experience the area.
- Local walking and cycling / recreational routes and green roads.
- Tourism value of landscape for recreation, general visitors and as a setting for a world class equine destination experience.
- Open landscapes whilst affording panoramic vistas have difficulty accommodating development.
- Vistas and Panoramas from elevated locations / hills.
- Undeveloped and unspoilt rural working landscape of high quality

### **4.2 Enhancement Values**

The enhancement values reflect change that is occurring in the landscape and its inherent robustness. These include:

- Medium Sensitivity of the Eastern Transitional LCA i.e. it has some capacity to accommodate development / change of appropriate scale and reflecting its working landscape character.

## **5. ANALYSIS**

The study area runs east to west, from Ballymore Eustace to the R412 / New Abbey, and north to south from Mullacash Hill to the R413 south of the River Liffey. The main development and urban areas in Kildare are formed by Naas, Newbridge and Kildare towns strung along the M7 motorway several kilometers to the west. To the east the lands rise to the Wicklow mountains.

The study area lands are in a high quality condition. Although a working rural landscape, there is a strong sense of place, of continuity and local pride – a place that people look after. Countryside residences are limited and where they occur well-kept presenting as part of their rural setting. The large local demesnes and large blocks of local woodland create structure and integrity in the landscape contributing both landscape capacity and also quality. Local minor undulations in topography provide elevated viewpoints at locations to enjoy panoramas and vistas of this rich resource, contrasting with intimate local green roads and lanes and the wooded Liffey Valley.

The landscape is rich in built and cultural heritage, much awaiting further research and discovery yet enough already known to provide interest to the visitor enjoying the walking and cycling amenities or the proposed Greenway Route along the Tullow to Sallins former railway (Ref Route K17 in the National Transport Au, and more importantly enriching the lives of local residents and communities.

Such a landscape is robust in terms of minor changes that are part of its existing working character – local housing, farm buildings, centres for local enterprise, tourism etc. However, the potential for the landscape to be undervalued and eroded by significant changes can be seen by the huge footprint of the Dunstown Sub-Station. Whilst one such piece of essential infrastructure may need to be accommodated in the location it is, other large scale / large footprint landscape changes of this nature will erode the rural characteristics and character of the study area. This is not just an issue of visibility but the awareness of such “industrial” scale, change occurring in the local environment, and the displacement of traditional uses and landscapes, will reduce the value of the landscape, and precedents will lead to further erosion and change.

This is particularly true of demanding land uses which can be located elsewhere by choice or discretion. Such uses which may be necessary for society should be allocated areas suitable for their use which have less sensitivities to such change.

Traditionally rural land did not need to be zoned, as the uses attracted there were generally appropriate, however modern requirements of land can require extensive areas often only found outside urban areas. There is a need to consider these requirements and identify and encourage such uses to locate there rather than react to speculative developments as they arise. The Development Plan contains tables of landscape sensitivities which attempt to allocate uses to appropriate locations.

The Study Area is located in the Eastern Transition Lands and thus is classified as of Medium Sensitivity and Class 2. The CDP acknowledges that as the boundaries of these areas are approached that sensitivity can rise to Class 4 or 5 - Special or Unique – providing more constraints on inappropriate land uses. This is confined to a 500m corridor to the River Valley LCA to the south and the Eastern Uplands to the East. However the analysis in this report shows that the study area is more intrinsically related to these adjacent areas - in terms of landscapes, built and cultural heritage that traverse the Liffey e.g. Harristown Demesne, and the visual connections and prospects to and from upland areas to the east.

It is clear that enhanced sensitivity should extend across the study area reflecting local enhanced landscape value and reduced capacity for change.

Recommendation

**See Figure 36 below**

In order to protect the amenity and landscape value described in the study area it is recommended that:

**A protected viewpoint is identified at Harristown and included in the List of Protected Viewpoints in the County Development Plan.**

**The purpose of this protection would be to protect prospects east to the Eastern Uplands and Wicklow Mountains and the intervening landscape that provides the setting to the upland backdrop.**

Secondly, to manage change in the rural landscape it is recommended that

**An expanded zone of increased sensitivity - Class 4 Special Sensitivity - north and south of the Liffey Valley, covering the study area should be acknowledged and included as a local variation to the sensitivity in the Eastern Transition Lands reflecting the interrelationship of the study area with both the Liffey Valley and Eastern Uplands.**

**The purpose of this protection would be to protect the landscape character, as described above, from inappropriate developments and land use changes of significant scale that erode its rural qualities.**

APPENDIX 1: MAPS

Figure 32: Study Area and existing landscape structure (Extract from Google Earth)



Figure 33 6 Inch OS Colour Map (1829-41) – Note how much of the landscape patten still remains



Figure 34: Landscape Character and Features

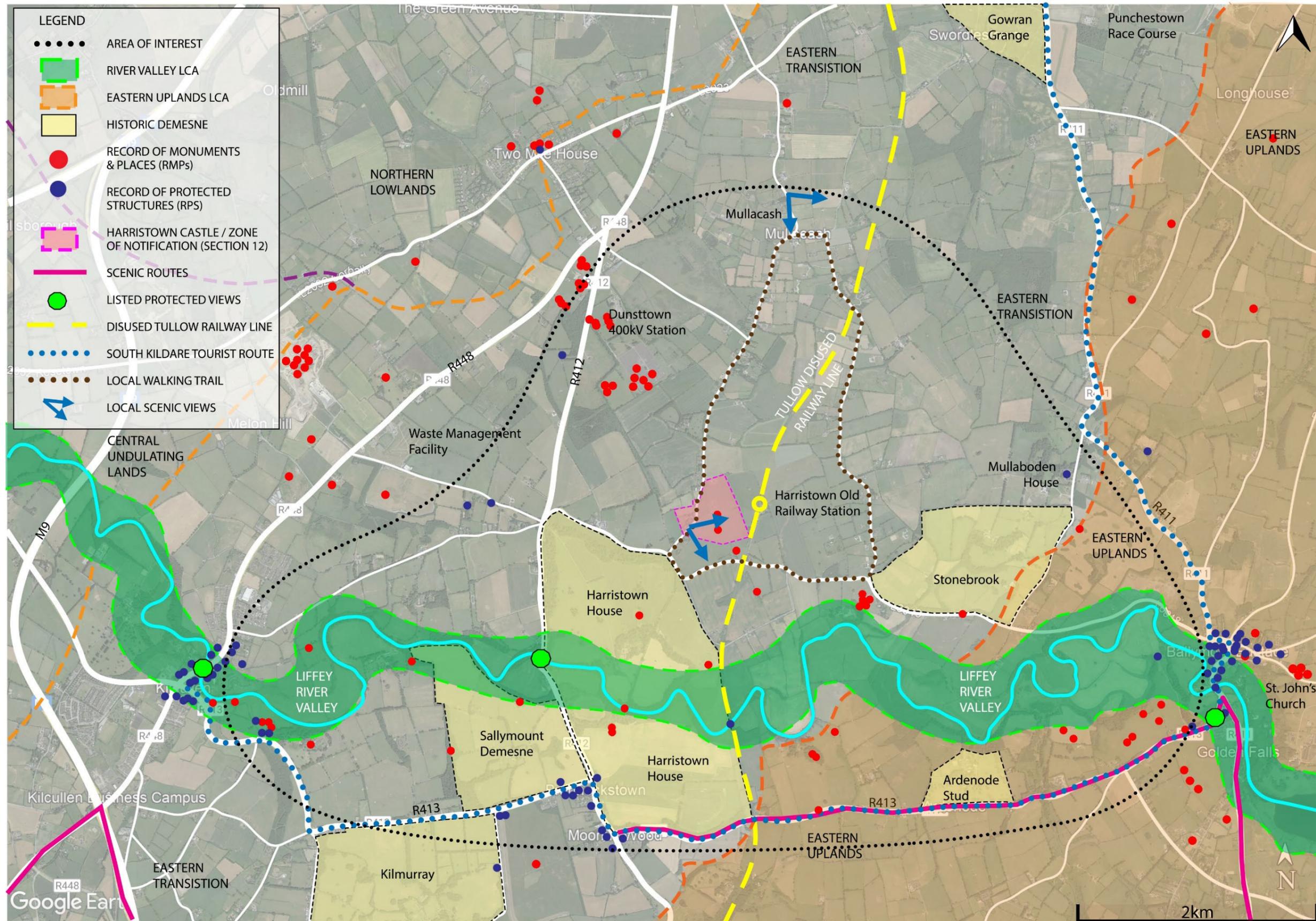


Figure 35 Local Points of Interest

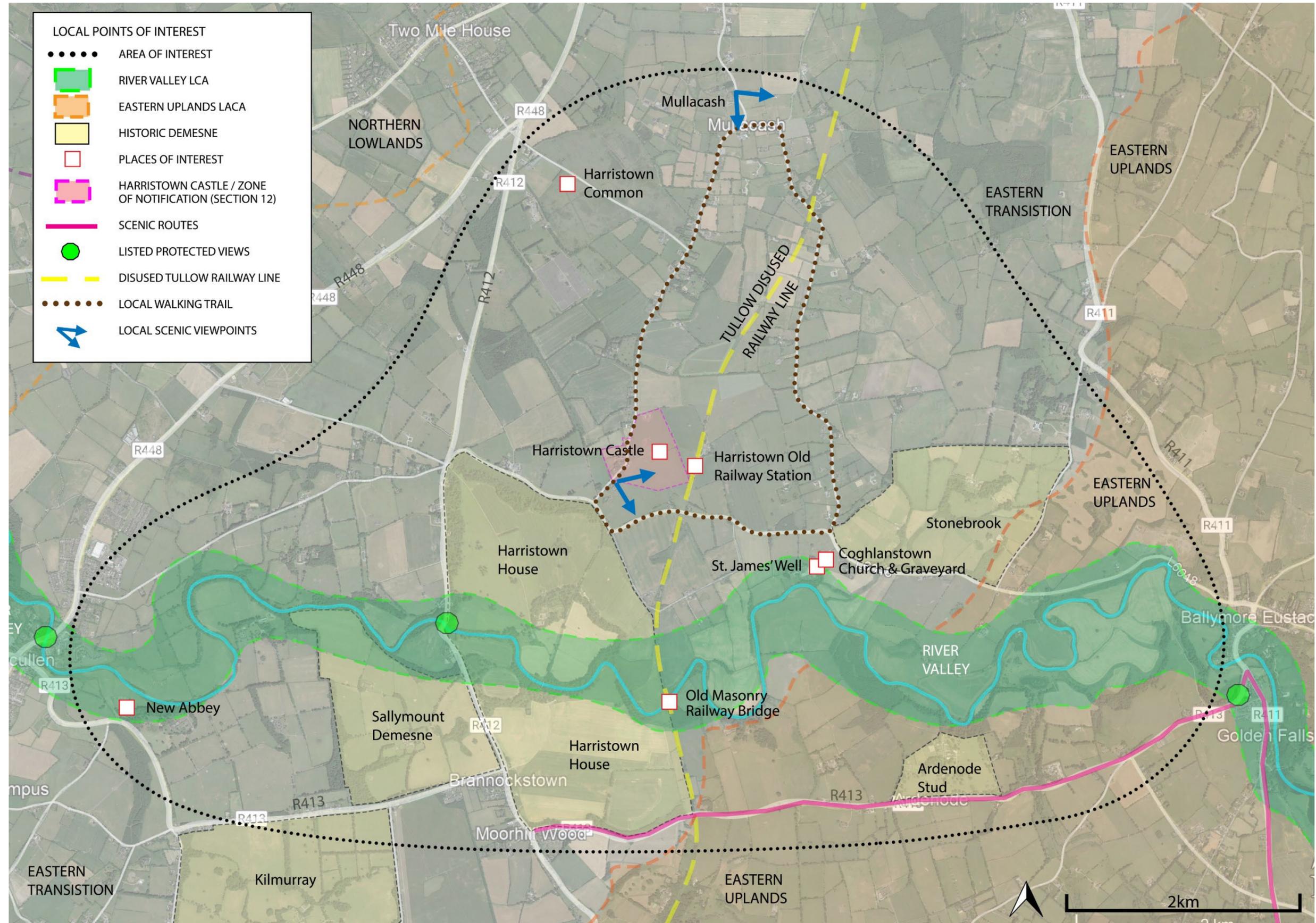


Figure 36: Existing Topography – showing perimeter of hills / uplands creating bowl with Harristown Hill to the centre



Figure 37 Recommended New Landscape Protections

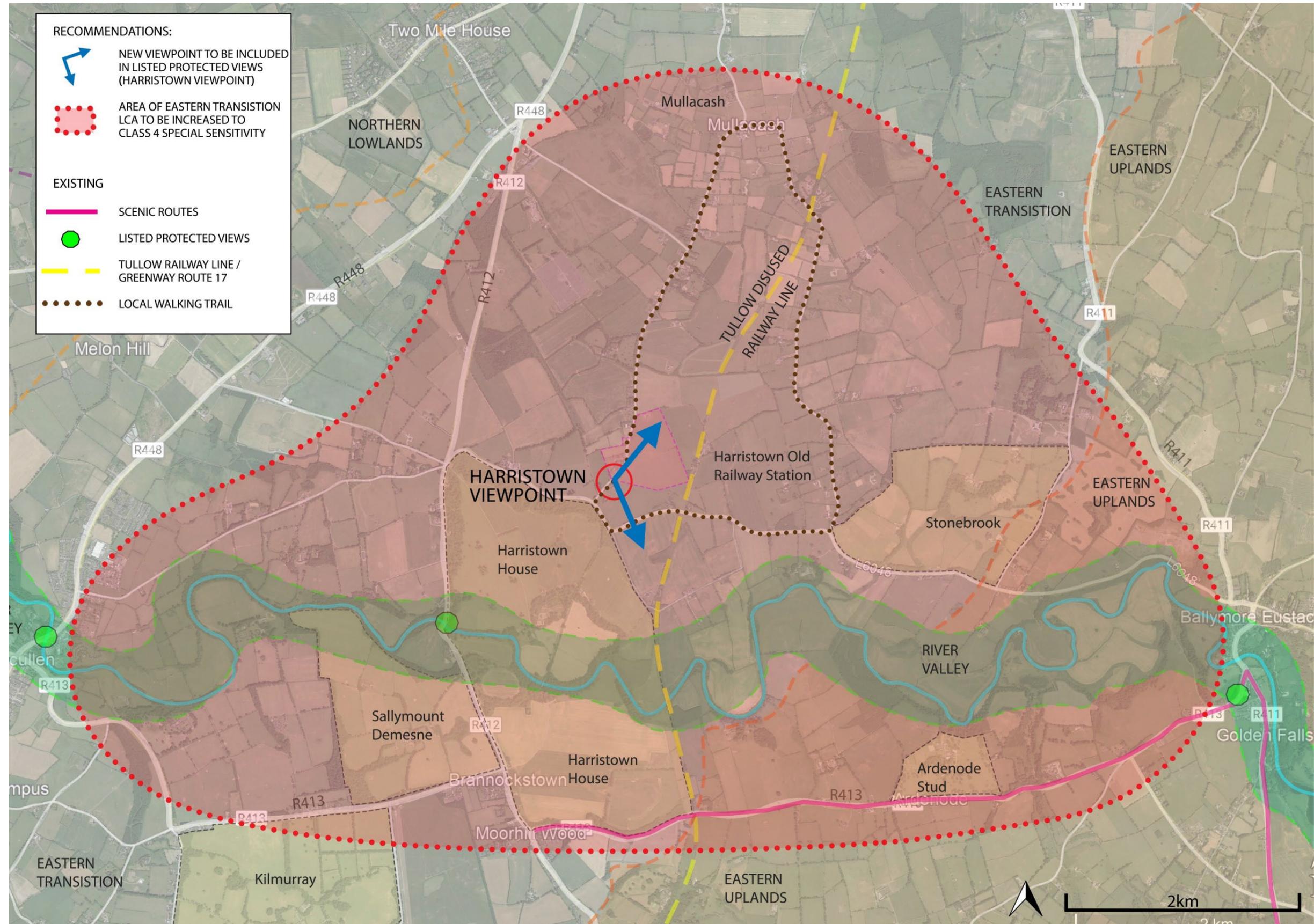


Figure 38: Representative view from local road (L6044) at Harristown Hill, 100m north of O'Hara's Cross Roads – looking east towards the eastern uplands and Wicklow Mountains



Figure 39 Elevated Views from a local residence at Harristown Hill (L6044) – note deer roaming locally.



Figure 40 Elevated view from Harristown Hill (L6044) looking east to Wicklow Mountains



Image courtesy Google Maps

*Figure 41 Elevated view from Harristown Hill (L6044) looking east to Wicklow Mountains*



*Image courtesy Google Maps*

## **APPENDIX 2: LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT**

### **A.2.1 National Landscape Policy**

#### *Definition of Landscape*

Ireland is a signatory to the European Landscape Convention (ELC). The ELC defines landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. This definition is important in that it expands beyond the idea that landscape is only a matter of aesthetics and visual amenity. It encourages a focus on landscape as a resource in its own right - a shared resource providing a complex range of cultural, environmental and economic benefits to individuals and society.

In particular in the context of this part of County Kildare, as a cultural resource, the landscape functions as the setting for local people's day-to-day lives, as well as providing opportunities for recreation and aesthetic enjoyment and inspiration. It contributes to the sense of place experienced by individuals and communities and provides a link to the past as a record of historic socio-economic and environmental conditions.

As an environmental resource, the landscape provides habitat for fauna and flora. It receives, stores, conveys and cleans water, and vegetation in the landscape, stores carbon and produces oxygen. As an economic resource, the landscape provides the raw materials and space for the production of food, materials (e.g. timber, aggregates) and energy (e.g. carbon-based fuels, wind and solar), living space and for recreation and tourism activities.

The definition above is included in the National Landscape Strategy (NLS) for Ireland 2015 – 2025 produced by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The NLS sets out the need for Landscape Character Assessments to be prepared at a National and regional level to guide development and landscape policy.

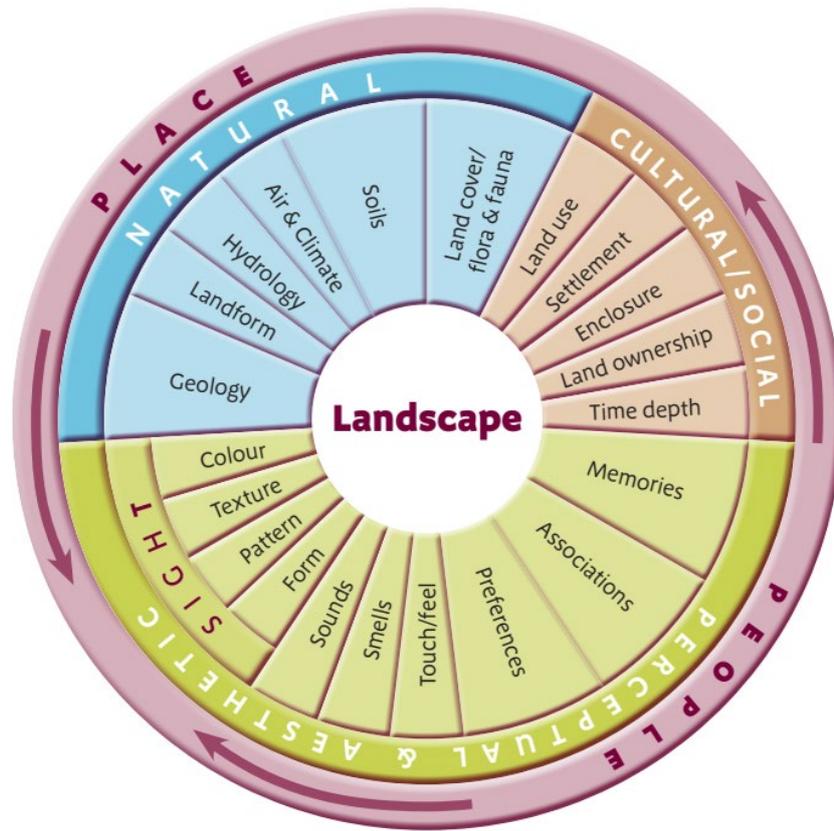
#### *Forces of Landscape Change*

Landscape is not unchanging. Many different pressures have progressively altered familiar landscapes over time and will continue to do so in the future, creating new landscapes. For example, within the receiving environment, the environs of the proposed development have altered over the last thousand years, from wilderness to agriculture, and the area is influenced by the growth of the nearby towns of Naas and Newbridge and the key transport route provided by the M7.

Many of the drivers for change arise from the requirement for development to meet the needs of a growing population and economy. The concept of sustainable development recognises that change must and will occur to meet the needs of the present, but that it should not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This involves finding an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental forces and values.

The diagram in Figure 2 below is often used to reflect the interplay of these factors.

Figure 42: Landscape Diagram



**A.2.2 Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023**

The following policies in the current Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 should inform the values ascribed to the local landscape in terms of character and sensitivities.

Archaeology & Architectural Heritage

Chapter 12 Architectural & Archaeological Heritage of the adopted Plan covers architectural heritage, archaeological heritage and protection including Historic Demesne.

Figure 43: Protected Structures (SMRs (red), RMPs (blue) and Zones of Notification(light-pink shade))

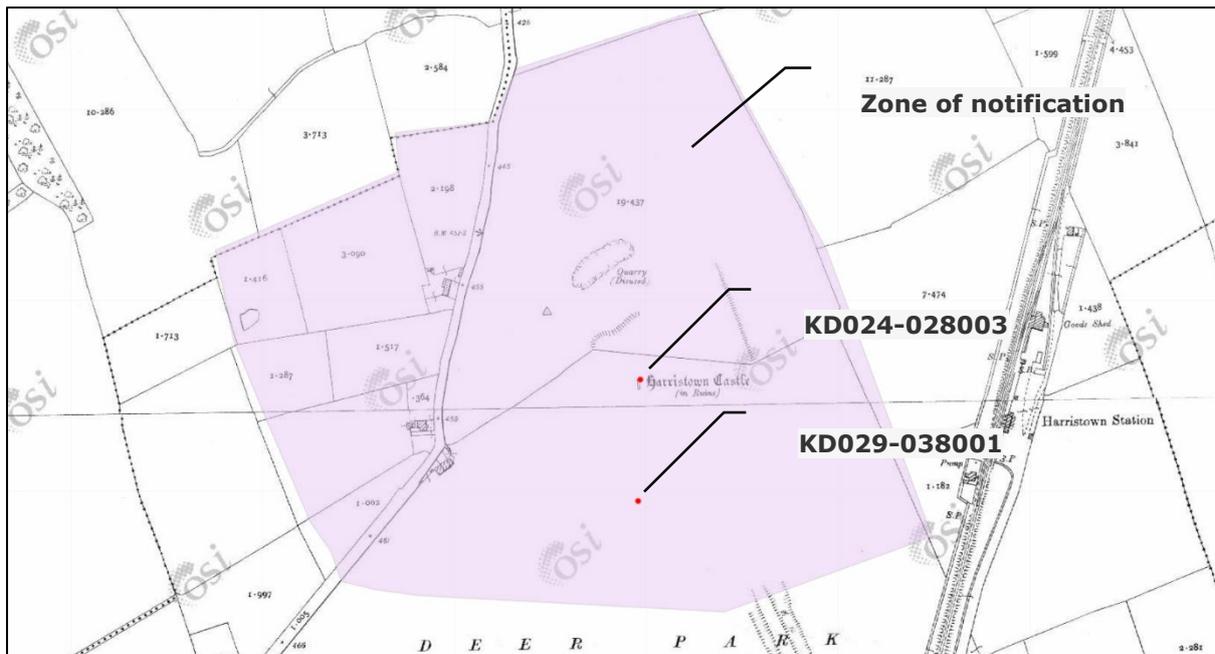


There are number of sites that are recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMRs) and Record of Protected Structures (RPS) with in the study area. Harristown is identified as a Medieval Settlement.

The area of interest is the Harristown townland where a castle was in existence. A large area (highlighted in light-pink shade) is identified as 'Zones of Notification (Section 12) and there are two Site and Monuments Record (SMR) identified within it.

A list of monuments in the Harristown townland relate to the Harristown Castle, these are KD024-028003, KD029-038001, KD029-038002 and KD029-038003.

**Figure 44: Harristown Castle and ruins**



**KD024-028003** is classified as 'Castle – tower house' and has the description "Stands c. 100m below the crest of a long gentle, SE-facing pasture slope. According to Bradley et al (1986 vol. 2, 179-80), a castle was in existence by the 1470's when it was the residence of Roland FitzEustace. It was forfeited by James Eustace in 1581 but in 1603 John Eustace was granted 'the castle and village of Harrestown, and also the site, circuit and precinct of the chief house, containing two castles, a hall, one garden, the orchard, the haggard place, one chapel upon a vault, one churchyard ...'. A reference in 1620 also mentions 'two castles with divers turrets ...' (ibid). According to Fitzgerald (1899-1902, 485), the castle was largely thrown down for building materials in 1884. In 2000 (SMR file), only the very poorly preserved remains of a short length of thick walling (3.7m N-S; T 1.6m), two storeys in height survived: built of very rough limestone rubble masonry with roughly coursed long, thin flags near the base. At first-floor level, a small rectangular area (L 1.2m: H 0.2m) was infilled with mortared red brick. A tall (H 2.5m) partially robbed-out base batter on the W face may have been a later addition as it was only keyed intermittently to a finished wall face behind. A small fragment of collapsed mortared rubble masonry (L 1m; With 0.8m) lay nearby to the NNE. The remains stand on the S end of a roughly square raised area (25m N-S; 25m E-W) defined by a low scarp (H 1m). A wide earthen ramp (With 8.5m E-W) runs N from the NE corner of the raised area. The wall collapsed in early 2010 and is now only 1m high (pers. comm. M. Byrne). Extensive earthworks (KD024-028006-) and a canal (KD029-038003-) to the S are the remains of 17th and 18th century designed landscape features."

**KD029-038001** is classified as 'Settlement deserted – medieval' and has the description "According to Bradley et al (1986 vol. 2, 177-83), a borough was established in Harristown in 1681, possibly on the site of a motte (KD024-028002-), but almost certainly in the vicinity of an existing tower house (KD024-028003-) and church (KD024-028004-). In 1681, Maurice Eustace received a charter from Charles II

*erecting his lands into the manor of Harristown and incorporating the borough and town of Harristown which was to have a sovereign and twelve burgesses. The borough, which was to contain 100 acres and return two members to parliament (Tickell 1946-63, 310, 316, 319), was short lived and did not survive the Williamite confiscations. No visible surface trace survives.”*

Relevant text from the Archaeological Survey Database on ‘how to read the information on the map’;

*The National Monuments Service interactive map/search facility that provides access to all records of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) stored on its national database, commonly known as the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).*

*It is important to note that only records that are precisely located are visible on the map canvas and that each record is represented as a red point or dot: this equates with the known approximate centre of the record and is not indicative of its geographic extent. If you are interested in obtaining a list of all records for a particular area it is recommended that you search the database either by county and/or townland as this will include both the located and unlocated records.*

*Records of monuments that are scheduled for inclusion in the next issue of the statutory “Record of Monuments and Places” are surrounded by a zone (highlighted on the map in a light pink-coloured wash delimited by a thin black line). These zones are not set to be visible as a default on the browser but may be turned on/off use the “Layer control” tool (see below). The zones do not define the exact extent of the monuments but rather are intended to identify them for the purposes of notification under Section 12 of the National Monuments Act (1930-2004): each is referred to as a “zone of notification”*

Relevant Policies:

**AH 1:** *Manage development in a manner that protects and conserves the archaeological heritage of the county, avoids adverse impacts on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest and secures the preservation in-situ or by record of all sites and features of historical and archaeological interest. The Council will favour preservation in – situ in accordance with the recommendation of the Framework and Principals for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (1999) or any superseding national policy.*

**AH 4:** *Ensure that development in the vicinity of a site of archaeological interest is not detrimental to the character of the archaeological site or its setting by reason of its location, scale, bulk or detailing and to ensure that such proposed developments are subject to an archaeological assessment. Such an assessment will seek to ensure that the development can be sited and designed in such a way as to avoid impacting on archaeological heritage that is of significant interest including previously unknown sites, features and objects.*

#### Architectural Heritage

**PS 1** *Conserve and protect buildings, structures and sites contained on the Record of Protected Structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.*

**PS 2** *Protect the curtilage of protected structures or proposed protected structures and to refuse planning permission for inappropriate development within the curtilage or attendant grounds of a protected structure which would adversely impact on the special character of the protected structure including cause loss of or damage to the special character of the protected structure and loss of or damage to, any structures of architectural heritage value within the curtilage of the protected structure. Any proposed development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds must demonstrate that it is part of an overall strategy for the future conservation of the entire built heritage complex and contributes positively to that aim.*

*PS 11 Promote the maintenance and appropriate re-use of buildings of architectural, cultural, historic and aesthetic merit which make a positive contribution to the character, appearance and quality of the streetscape or landscape and the sustainable development of the county. Any necessary works should be carried out in accordance with best conservation practice.*

*PS 16 Protect and retain important elements of the built heritage including historic gardens, stone walls, landscapes and demesnes, and curtilage features.*

#### Features of Historical Interest

*HF 1 Secure the identification, protection and conservation of historic items and features of interest throughout the county including street furniture, surface finishes, roadside installations, items of industrial heritage and other stand alone features of interest (items not listed on the RMP or RPS).*

#### Country Houses and Demesnes

The local demesnes are part of the character of Kildare. There are a number of protected structures including the Harristown Lodge, gates and bridges over Liffey within the Harristown Demesne that are protected. The structures, woodlands and setting are a key part of local landscape and built heritage and are protected as Demesne Landscapes.

**Figure 45: Harristown Historic Demesne (within the area of interest) (extract of 6inch Historic Map)**



Local Policy states:

*CH 1 Promote appreciation of the landscape and historical importance of traditional and gardens, demesnes and parks within Kildare in general and particularly where they constitute an important setting to a protected structure.*

*CH 2 Preserve and protect the historic gardens and designed landscapes identified in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.*

*CH 3 Encourage conservation, renewal and improvement which enhances the character and the setting of parks, gardens, and demesnes of historic interest within the county.*

*CH 5 Have regard to “Guidance Notes for the Appraisal of Historic Gardens, Demesnes, Estates and their Settings” published by Cork County Council 2006, in the appraisal and description of historic designed landscapes, demesnes and gardens.*

*CH 7 Preserve, protect and where necessary encourage the use of, heritage/ traditional varieties of plants and trees that form part of the local/ regional biodiversity resource and that contribute to local identity.*

*CH 8 Require where appropriate that a Conservation Plan is prepared in accordance with DAHG Guidelines and conservation best practice to inform proposed visual or physical impacts on a demesne, designed landscape or a park.*

*CH 9 Require that planning applications take into consideration the impacts of the development on their landscapes and demonstrate that the development proposal has been designed to take account of the heritage resource of the landscape.*

### Tourism & Countryside Recreation

Chapter 5 Economic Development Enterprise & Tourism covers Tourism & Countryside Recreation, Equine, and Greenways and Walkways.

County Kildare has prepared a Tourism Map identifying Tourism Routes and Tourism Products within those routes in the county.

The site lies on the arc of the South Kildare Tourist Route. Although there are many Equine centres and demesnes on this route, only Punchestown Racecourse & Standing Stone (number 37) are identified in the southern route.

**Figure 46: The study area is close to the South Kildare Tourist Route**



Relevant Policies;

*CR 5 Investigate the possibility of developing long distance walking routes, within the lifetime of the Plan, along disused sections of railway lines (e.g. Tullow line) and canals in the county (Corbally Line, Blackwood Feeder, and Mountmellick Line).*

*ECD 28 Promote, protect, improve, encourage and facilitate the development of tourism throughout the county as an important contributor to job creation in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.*

*ECD 29 Direct tourism based development where appropriate, into existing settlements where there is adequate infrastructure to service activity and where it can contribute to the maintenance of essential services.*

***ECD 30 Maintain a clean and attractive environment, to protect tourism amenities within the county from insensitive or inappropriate development, particularly any development that threatens the tourism resources and tourism employment in the county.***

*ECD 31 Promote the sustainable development of the tourism sector in appropriate locations throughout the county, acknowledging that Ireland's largest tourist market (i.e. Dublin) is highly accessible through the existing transport system.*

*ECD 32 Support the development of new tourist facilities or upgrading/ extension of existing tourist facilities at tourist sites in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development principles. These facilities should avail of shared infrastructure and services where possible.*

*ECD 33 Facilitate the development of tourism infrastructure such as accommodation, restaurants, car and coach parking and toilet facilities in the designated hubs throughout the county.*

*ECD 34 Facilitate the expansion of existing tourism and recreation related development, and the development of new tourism and recreation related development, subject to the protection of the receiving environment.*

*ECD 35 Facilitate the erection of standardised signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions as part of national and regional initiatives.*

*ECD 36 Consider suitable sites for caravanning, camping, and hostelling, in consultation with Fáilte Ireland.*

*ECD 37 Identify strategic sites capable of accommodating new tourism ventures while also ensuring the preservation of the natural landscape of the area having regard to economic, environmental and social sustainability considerations.*

*EO 40 Support the expansion and development of tourism in Kildare, investigating the feasibility of key opportunities such as those centred on the racing industry, retail, golf and eco-tourism to include: Arthur's Way, the Dublin – Galway Greenway, the Barrow Blueway, the Shackleton Trail, the Gordon Bennett Route, the Grand Canal Greenway and other opportunities.*

Landscape is the setting for all tourism and recreational activities. A quality environment / landscape is essential as part of the tourism resource. See highlighted policy ECD30.

Equine

It is estimated that 5,000 people are directly employed in the equine industry within the county, with a further c. 10,000 people in associated industries and services. There are 104 stud farms in the county. Racecourses at Punchestown, Naas and The Curragh, the State owned National Stud Farm, Kill



*EO 50 Promote the development of walking and cycling routes throughout the county as an activity for both international visitors and local tourists, in a manner that is compatible with nature conservation and other environmental policies.*

*EO 51 Investigate the feasibility of developing a walkway/cycleway along the former Tullow railway line in County Kildare.*

*EO 52 Promote and develop the towpaths along the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal (including from Maynooth to the Dublin County Boundary as part of the Dublin to Galway Greenway project), the Barrow Line and the Corbally Line as cycleways, in co-operation with Waterways Ireland and neighbouring Local Authorities.*

*EO 53 Investigate the feasibility of a River Liffey Greenway from the Dublin to Wicklow borders.*

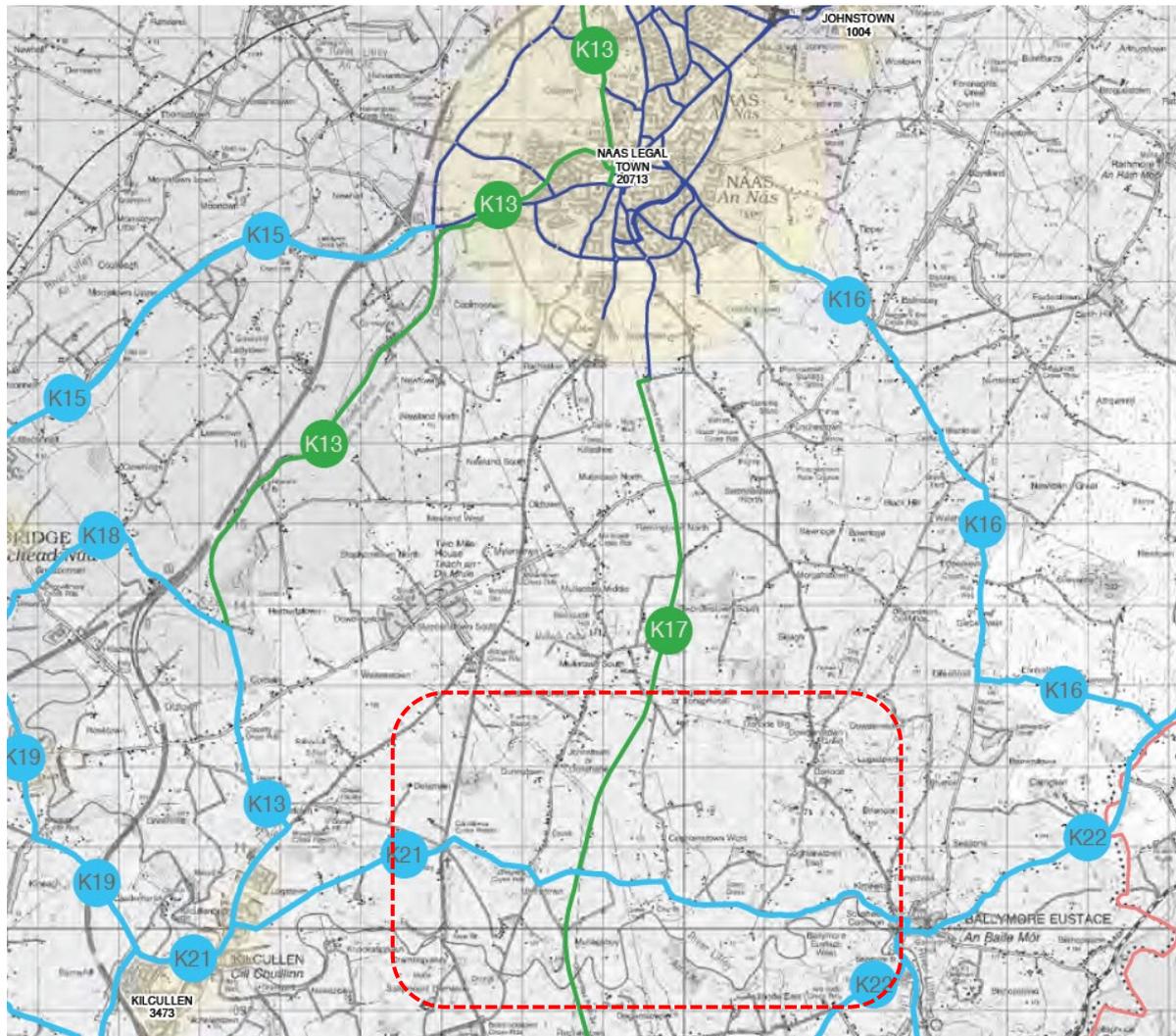
*CR 5 Investigate the possibility of developing long distance walking routes, within the lifetime of the Plan, along disused sections of railway lines (e.g. Tullow line) and canals in the county (Corbally Line, Blackwood Feeder, and Mountmellick Line).*

#### Movement and Transport

Movement and Transport is covered under Chapter 6 of the plan. The Naas-Tullow line has been included in the National Transport Authority's plans Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan as Route 17. See Policy below;

*WCO 4 Secure the development of the following specific cycle schemes (subject to funding from the NTA) as part of GDA Cycle Networks Projects: Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan Urban and Inter Urban Schemes; – Dublin Road Corridor Scheme Naas; – Maynooth Town North South Corridor; – Naas to Sallins; – North Kildare Cycleway (Dublin – Galway Route); – Barrow Blueway (Waterways Ireland); – Kilcullen Road; and – Kill to Naas*

Figure 48: Proposed Cycle Network Plan for the Greater Dublin Area

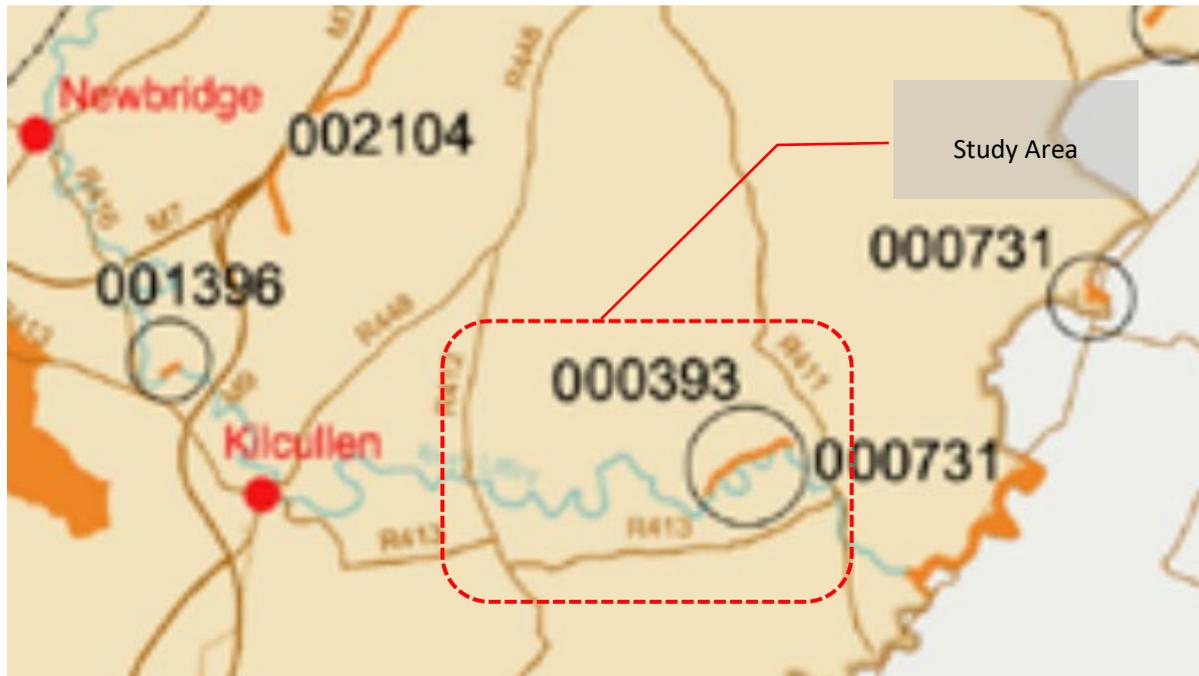


Chapter 13 Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure covers the Designated Sites and Green Infrastructure.

#### Designated Sites

The study area includes the 000393 Liffey Valley Meander Belt which is identified as a proposed Natural Heritage Area under the adopted plan. This renders support for protection of flora and fauna. There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas within the study area.

Figure 49: Proposed Natural Heritage Area 000393 Liffey Valley Meander Belt lies within the study area.



Policies of the Council on Natural Heritage and Protection include;

**NH 5:** Prevent development that would adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site located within and immediately adjacent to the county and promote favourable conservation status of habitats and protected species including those listed under the Birds Directive, the Wildlife Acts and the Habitats Directive.

**NH 7:** Contribute towards the protection of the ecological, visual, recreational, environmental and amenity value of the county's Natural Heritage Areas and associated habitats.

**NH 8:** Ensure that any proposal for development within or adjacent to a Natural Heritage Area (NHA), Ramsar Sites and Nature Reserves is designed and sited to minimise its impact on the biodiversity, ecological, geological and landscape value of the site, particularly plant and animal species listed under the Wildlife Acts and the Habitats and Birds Directive including their habitats.

**NH 9:** Ensure the impact of development within or adjacent to national designated sites Natural Heritage Areas, Ramsar Sites and Nature Reserves that is likely to result in significant adverse effects on the designated site is assessed by requiring the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) prepared by a suitably qualified professional, which should accompany planning applications and council developments, as not all developments are likely to result in adverse effects.

#### Green Infrastructure

**GI 1:** Ensure the protection, enhancement and maintenance of Green Infrastructure and recognise the health benefits as well as the economic, social, environmental and physical value of green spaces through the integration of Green Infrastructure (GI) planning and development in the planning process.

**GI 16:** Encourage the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows as part of new developments using native plants of local provenance.

### Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

Hedgerows, trees and woodlands in the countryside are protected by policy. The extensive field hedgerows, townland boundaries and woodlands in the study area adds to the character of the area.

*GI 8 Contribute towards the protection of and manage existing networks of woodlands, trees and hedgerows which are of amenity or biodiversity value and/or contribute to landscape character, and to strengthen local networks.*

*GI 9 Ensure that proper provision is made for the consideration, protection and management of existing networks of woodlands, trees and hedgerows when undertaking, approving or authorising development.*

*GI 10 Ensure a Tree Management Plan is provided to ensure that trees are adequately protected during development and incorporated into the design of new developments.*

*GI 11 Ensure that hedgerow removal to facilitate development is kept to an absolute minimum and, where unavoidable, a requirement for mitigation planting will be required comprising a hedge of similar length and species composition to the original, established as close as is practicable to the original and where possible linking in to existing adjacent hedges. Native plants of a local provenance should be used for any such planting.*

*GI 12 Restrict the cutting of hedges during the bird-nesting season (1st March until 31st August), except in certain legally defined circumstances, in accordance with the provisions of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.*

*GI 13 Recognise the biodiversity and archaeological importance of townland boundaries, including hedgerows, and promote their protection and retention.*

*GI 14 Contribute towards the protection where possible of the trees which are considered an important component of demesne landscapes.*

*GI 15 Encourage the protection of historic hedgerows or significant hedgerows which serve to link habitat areas to each other and the surrounding countryside.*

*GI 16 Encourage the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows as part of new developments using native plants of local provenance.*

### Balancing the Environment with Sustainable and Appropriate Development

*CS 12 Protect and conserve the natural environment.*

*CS 13 Protect and conserve nationally important and EU designated sites.*

*CS 14 Promote and enhance biodiversity throughout the county.*

*CS 15 Ensure that the built heritage is appropriately protected through the Record of Protected Structures with policies to support the sensitive reuse and integration of such structures into new development works.*

Chapter 14 Landscape, Recreation and Amenity covers Landscape Character, the recreational and amenity value of landscape, and the protection of the same. The Landscape Characters and Assessment are covered extensively under Appendix A.2.3 of the document.

### Scenic Routes and Protected Views

Generally, the views of rural Kildare are to be preserved. Scenic Route 13 'Views to the River Liffey on the R413 from Brannockstown Cross Roads to Ballymore Eustace' are protected. The townlands of Rochestown, Gaganstown, Ardenode East Cross Roads to Ballymore Eustace, Ballymore Eustace West are part of the Scenic Route.

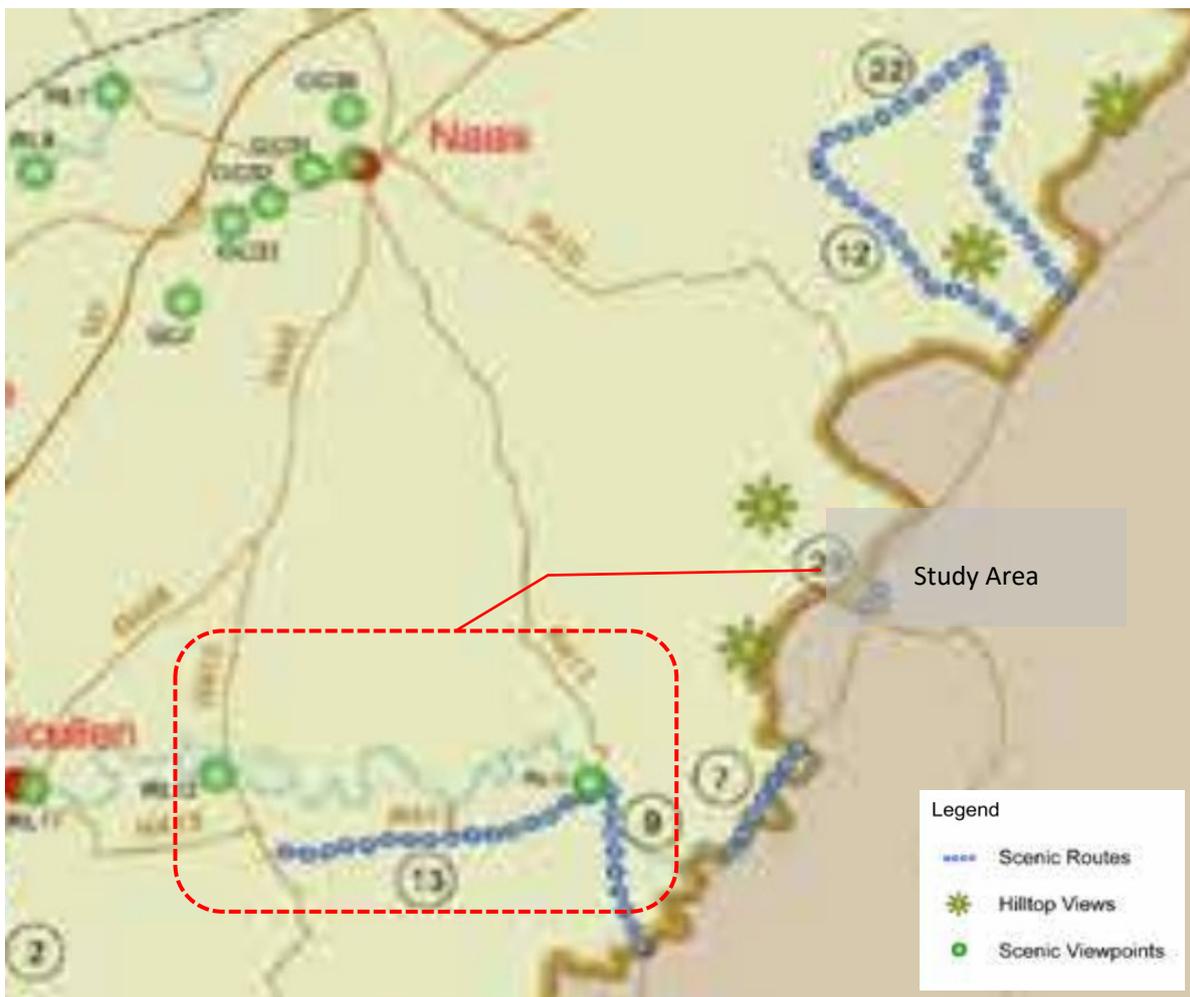
There are two protected views within the study area; (i) the closest viewpoint is 'RL 12 New Bridge Cramersvalley/Carnalway' along R412 which offers views of the River Liffey and its valley, and (ii) RL 13 Ballymore Bridge Ballymore Eustace which is located in Ballymore Eustace.

It is general guidance that any development should not detract from the setting of the view or impact negatively on the visual amenity.

*SR 1 Protect views from designated scenic routes by avoiding any development that could disrupt the vistas or disproportionately impact on the landscape character of the area, thereby affecting the scenic and amenity value of the views.*

*SR 2 Review and update all Scenic Routes and Views in the county during the lifetime of the Plan (Tables 14.5 – 14.10 refer).*

**Figure 50: Scenic Routes and Protected Viewpoints**



**Figure 51: Protected View of Liffey from Bridge (RL 12 New Bridge Cramersvalley/Carnalway' along R412)**



### Views to and from Hills

The landform in the eastern Kildare is undulating and long-distance views are available from hilltops and slopes towards Naas from eastern uplands. There are expansive views from elevated lands of the rolling Kildare countryside. The eastern transition Landscape Character Area (See Section 2.3) is mostly undulating with small hills like Mullacash Hill and ?.

County Council's Objectives;

*LO 1 Have regard to the Landscape Sensitivity Factors in the vicinity of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals.*

*LO 2 Ensure landscape assessment will be an important factor in all land-use proposals.*

*LO 3 Investigate the feasibility of preparing a Landscape Conservation Area Assessment within the county to identify any area(s) or place(s) within the county as a Landscape Conservation Area, in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).*

*LO 4 Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Kildare's built and natural environment.*

*LO 5 Preserve the character of all important views and prospects, particularly upland, river, canal views, views across the Curragh, views of historical or cultural significance (including buildings and townscapes) and views of natural beauty.*

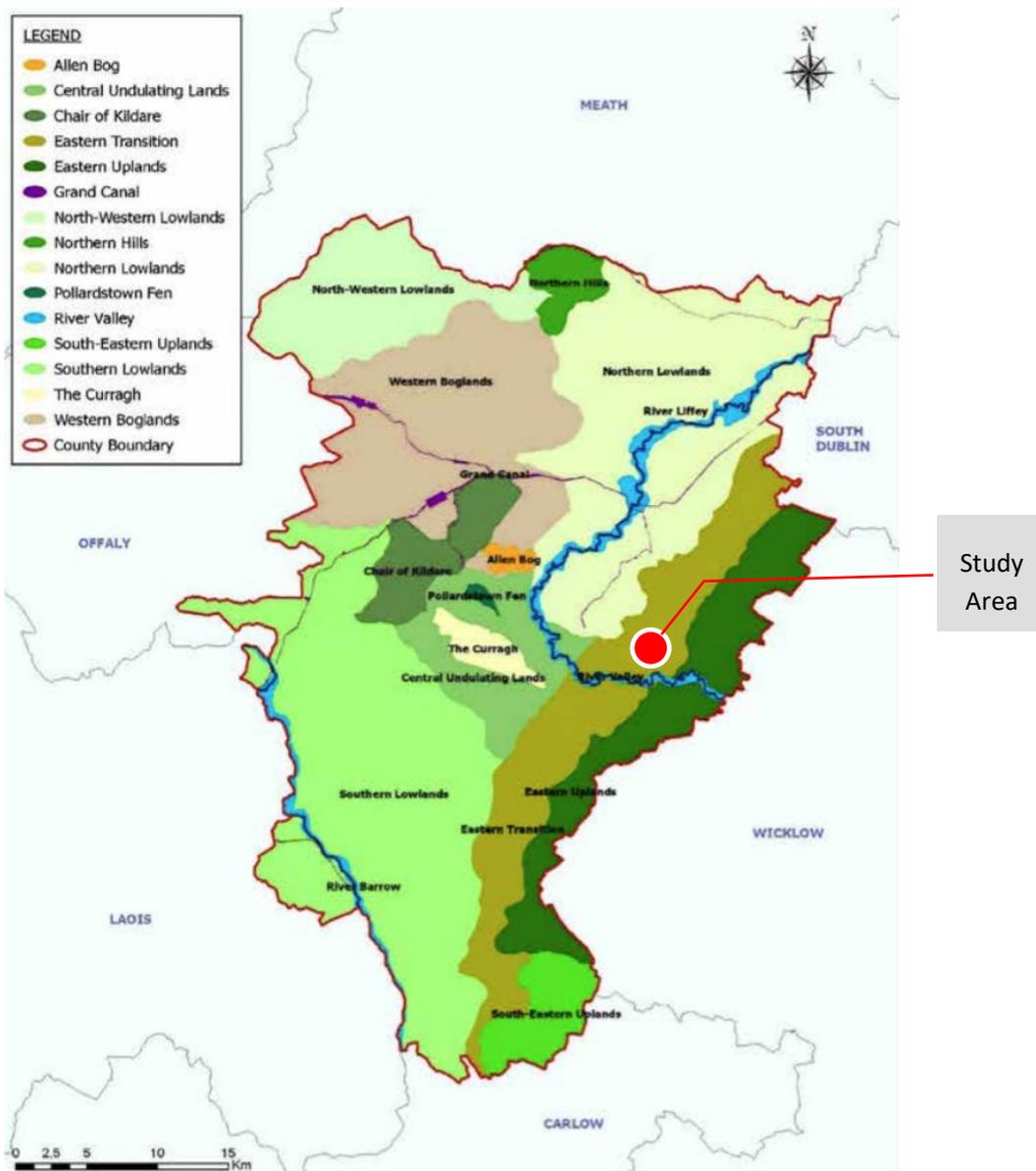
*LO 6 Preserve and protect the character of those views and prospects obtainable from scenic routes identified in this Plan, listed in Table 14.5 and identified on Map 14.3.*

### A.2.3 Landscape Character Assessment

The Landscape Character Assessment is included in 'Chapter 14. Landscape, Recreation and Amenity' of the current Development Plan. The actual Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of the county was carried out in 2004 and is contained in Volume II of the Kildare County Development Plan 2005-2011, which is the original LCA document. The draft Development Plan is also informed by this study.

The study area lies within 'Eastern Transition' Landscape Character Area. As per Council's Landscape Character Assessment, the area concerned is considered "Class 2 Medium Sensitivity", which is described as being "Areas with the capacity to accommodate a range of uses without significant adverse effects on the appearance or character of the landscape having regards to localised sensitivity factors."

**Figure 52: Landscape Character Areas identified in Landscape Character Assessment**



The original Landscape Character Assessment from the Kildare County Development Plan 2005-2011, describes the 'Transition Areas' in more detail than the current development plan; here is the description of the Eastern Transition Area;

*This transitional landscape character unit, located between the uplands and lowlands to the east of the County, is characterised by undulating topography. The River Liffey bisects the unit*

north and south. The lands are generally of medium size and regular pattern, with commonly well-maintained hedgerows. Gorse and natural vegetation occur at some areas of this unit.

The terrain gently rises from the lowland areas to the hilltops of the Eastern Kildare Uplands (see Chapter 19). The land undulates through a series of hilltops, the main ones being: Old Kilcullen Hill (179m O.D.) Bullhill (174m O.D.), Mullacash Hill (171m O.D.), Nine Tree Hill (168m O.D.) and Carrighill (166m O.D.). The elevated vantage points along the local roads provide long-distance views of the Kildare lowlands. The skyline to the east of this unit is defined by the Eastern Uplands, distant views including the neighbouring Wicklow Mountains, define the extent of visibility. The hilltops of the Chair of Kildare Hills (see Chapter 9, volume1) partially define the skyline to the west.

Soils in the area are composed of grey brown podzolics and complexes (mainly mineral soils). As a result, the area is classified as widely to moderately suitable for tillage, pasture and forestry.

The area is generally perceived as being important and special in landscape terms, particularly along the River Liffey valley. Preferred scenic drives are located within this unit, as part of the drives from

Naas and Kilcullen to Ballymore Eustace. The unit is perceived as having some development potential to the south, along the primary national road.

Critical Landscape Factors of the Eastern Transition Lands are as follows;

- *Undulating topography*

*Undulating topography, which characterises this unit, provides a physical shielding within the lee of hills and thus, can conceal relatively large new features on the lower-lying lands. Furthermore, the dynamic and complex nature of undulating land encloses local vistas, rendering development unobtrusive on the overall landscape.*

- *Slopes*

*Sloping land often provides an area with its character and intensifies the visual prominence of any feature over greater distances. The gentle slopes of the hills in this character unit start to define the visual boundary of the adjacent lowland areas (further defined by the Eastern Uplands) and provides an increased potential for development to penetrate the ridgelines when viewed from local roads and villages in the area.*

- *Low Vegetation*

*The grassland, tillage fields and generally low hedgerows of this area are usually uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. Existing well maintained hedgerows partially screen the lowest land parcels. Nevertheless, the commonly low vegetation proves unable to visually absorb new development.*

- *Shelter Vegetation*

*Shelter vegetation is represented at some stretches of this unit by coniferous plantations and the presence of scattered trees that grow on field hedgerows. In a similar manner to undulating topography, shelter vegetation has a shielding and absorbing quality in landscape terms. It can provide a natural visual barrier and also adds to the complexity of a vista, breaking it up to provide scale and containment for built forms.*

- *Localised River Valley Views*

*This character unit is bisected by the River Liffey valley. River valleys are visually enclosed and highly localised areas of distinctive character with a high degree of visual consistency. Due to the undulating nature of this area, many views of the river valley are available from vantage points along the local roads.*

From the Landscape Character Assessment (2005), it can be understood that the Eastern Transition area is unique in Kildare. This area is between the lowlands and the uplands and offers great visual access to both lowlands and uplands. The transition area is visible from the uplands and offers great visual amenity to residential receptors, those on scenic routes as well as from elevated points in the topography. The critical landscape factors identify the key factors that define the area. It is not a utilitarian landscape.

**Figure 53: Landscape Sensitivity Classification**

Sensitivity of Principal Landscape Character Assessment (Dominant Sensitivity Outlined)	Class 1 Low Sensitivity	Class 2 Medium Sensitivity	Class 3 High Sensitivity	Class 4 Special Sensitivity	Class 5 Unique Sensitivity
North Western Lowlands	Class 1				
Northern Lowlands	Class 1				
Central Undulating Lands	Class 1				
Western Boglands			Class 3		
Southern Lowlands	Class 1				
Eastern Transition		Class 2			
Eastern Uplands			Class 3		
South-Eastern Uplands		Class 2			
<i>Sub-ordinate Landscape Areas</i>					
Northern Hills				Class 4	
Chair of Kildare				Class 4	
The Curragh					Class 5
Pollardstown Fen					Class 5
Dun Ailinne					Class 5
Allen Bog				Class 4	
River Liffey				Class 4	
River Barrow				Class 4	

**Table 13.1 - Landscape Sensitivity Classification to Landscape Character Areas**

General Landscape

It is the policy of the Council to:

- LA 1 Ensure that consideration of landscape sensitivity is an important factor in determining development uses. In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design, type and the choice of location of proposed development in the landscape will also be critical considerations.*
- LA 2 Protect and enhance the county's landscape, by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the existing local landscape.*
- LA 3 Require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany significant proposals that are likely to significantly affect:*

*Landscape Sensitivity Factors;*

- A Class 4 or 5 Sensitivity Landscape (i.e. within 500m of the boundary);
- A route or view identified in maps
- 14.2 and 14.3 (i.e. within 500m of the boundary).

*LA 4 Seek to ensure that local landscape features, including historic features and buildings, hedgerows, shelter belts and stone walls, are retained, protected and enhanced where appropriate, so as to preserve the local landscape and character of an area, whilst providing for future development.*

*LA 5 Prohibit advertising structures and hoardings in the open countryside. The Council will use its enforcement powers under the Planning Acts to secure the removal of unauthorised advertising signs and hoardings including those that are affixed to trailers, wheeled vehicles etc.*

*LA 6 Preserve, where permissible, the open character of commonage.*

*LA 7 Be informed by consideration of the County Landscape Character Appraisal.*

**Figure 54: Impact of Development on Landscape**

Compatibility Key												
	Most	Agriculture and Forestry		Housing	Urbanisation			Infrastructure	Extraction		Energy	
	High	Agriculture	Forestry	Rural Housing	Urban Expansion	Industrial Projects	Tourism Projects	Major Powerlines *	Sand & Gravel	Rock	Windfarm	Solar
	Medium	Sensitivity Class										
	Low	Principal Landscape Character Areas										
	Least	Sub-ordinate Landscape Areas										
	1											
	1											
	1											
	1											
	3											
	2											
	3											
	2											
	4											
	4											
	5											
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**Table 13.3 - Likely compatibility between a range of land-uses and Principal Landscape Areas.**

### Eastern Transition

The study area lies within 'Eastern Transition' LCA, which is Class 2 Medium Sensitivity. The following policies apply;

*TA 1 Maintain the visual integrity of areas which have retained an upland character.*

*TA 2 Recognise that the lowlands in the transitional area are made up of a variety of working landscapes that are critical resources for sustaining the economic and social well-being of the county.*

*TA 3 Continue to permit development that can utilise existing infrastructure, whilst taking account of local absorption opportunities provided by the landscape, landform and prevailing vegetation.*

*TA 4 Continue to facilitate appropriate development, in an incremental and clustered manner, where feasible, that respects the scale, character and sensitivities of the local landscape, recognising the need for sustainable settlement patterns and economic activity within the county.*

### Water Corridors (Rivers and Canals) (Areas of High Amenity)

*WC 1: Seek to locate new development in the water corridor landscape character areas towards existing structures and mature vegetation.*

*WC 2 Facilitate appropriate development that can utilise existing structures, settlement areas and infrastructure, whilst taking account of the visual absorption opportunities provided by existing topography and vegetation.*

*WC 3 Control development that will adversely affect the visual integrity of distinctive linear sections of water corridors and river valleys and open floodplains.*

*WC 4 Co-operate with the DHPCLG/DAHRRGA in the protection and conservation of both the Royal and Grand Canals and the River Barrow, designated as a pNHA and cSAC respectively and in the sections of the River Liffey designated as a pNHA.*

*WC 5 Promote the amenity, ecological and educational value of the canals and rivers within the county while at the same time ensuring the conservation of their fauna and flora, and protection of the quantity and quality of the water supply.*

*WC 6 Support and promote an extension of the proposed Special Amenity Area Order for the Liffey Valley from Lucan to Leixlip (which is envisaged by the Dublin Local Authorities) to other parts of the Valley within County Kildare.*

*WC 7 Explore the establishment of the Barrow Valley and the Royal and Grand Canals as Areas of Special Amenity, as per section 202 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).*

*WC 8 Contribute towards the protection of waterbodies and watercourses, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains, from inappropriate development. This will include buffers free of development in riverine and wetland areas, as appropriate.*

*WC 9 Have regard to the relevant aspects of the Inland Fisheries Ireland's publication 'Planning for Watercourses in an Urban Environment'.*

*Upland Character Areas including East Kildare Uplands (Area of High Amenity)*

The study area lies about 3km west of the Eastern Uplands LCA. The Eastern Uplands LCA is considered to have 'High' (Class 3) Sensitivity.

*LU 1 Ensure that development will not have a disproportionate visual impact (due to excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) and will not significantly interfere with or detract from scenic upland vistas, when viewed from areas nearby, scenic routes, viewpoints and settlements.*

*LU 2 Ensure that developments on steep slopes (i.e. >10%) will not be conspicuous or have a disproportionate visual impact on the surrounding environment as seen from relevant scenic routes, viewpoints and settlements.*

*LU 3 Facilitate, where appropriate, developments that have a functional and locational requirement to be situated on steep or elevated sites (e.g. reservoirs, telecommunication masts or wind energy structures) where residual adverse visual impacts are minimised or mitigated.*

*LU 4 Maintain the visual integrity of areas which have retained a largely undisturbed upland character.*

*LU 5 Have regard to the potential for screening vegetation when evaluating proposals for development within the uplands.*

#### **A.2.4 Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029**

This section covers specific policies in relation to landscape and landscape amenity from the Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (hereafter referred to as Draft Plan / Emerging Plan).

Chapter 11 covers Built and Cultural Heritage. There are a number of Record of Monuments and Places (RMPs) in the area of interest. The Draft Plan also lists new proposed Protected Structures to be listed in the Record of protected Structures.

##### Archaeological and Architectural Heritage

Most of the policies and objectives relating to Heritage are covered under Chapter 11 Built and Cultural Heritage and the general principles for protection remain the same across the plans.

The Harristown House was not recorded in the protected structures in the adopted Plan, however in the Draft Plan, the Harristown House is a newly proposed Protected Structure (PPS2).

##### Archaeological Surveys

Harristown Settlement is one of the medieval / early modern towns identified in the 1986 Urban Archaeological Survey of County Kildare.

Relevant Policy and Objectives;

*AH P2 Protect and enhance archaeological sites, monuments and where appropriate and following detailed assessment, their setting, including those that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or newly discovered archaeological sites and/or subsurface archaeological remains.*

*AH O2 Manage development in a manner that protects and conserves the archaeological heritage of County Kildare, avoids adverse impacts on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest and secures the preservation in-situ or by record of all sites and features of historical and archaeological interest. The Council will favour preservation in – situ in accordance with the recommendation of the Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (1999).*

*AH O4 Ensure that development in the vicinity of a site of archaeological interest is not detrimental to the character of the archaeological site or its setting by reason of its location, scale, bulk or detailing and to ensure that such proposed developments are subject to an archaeological assessment prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist. Such an assessment will seek to ensure that the development can be sited and designed in such a way as to avoid impacting on archaeological heritage that is of significant interest including previously unknown sites, features and objects.*

*AH O5 Require the preservation of the context, amenity, visual integrity and connection of the setting of archaeological monuments. As a general principle, views to and from archaeological monuments shall not be obscured by inappropriate development. Where appropriate, archaeological visual impact assessments will be required to demonstrate the continued preservation of an archaeological monument's siting and context.*

##### Features of Historic Interest

*AH P5 Secure the identification, protection and conservation of historic items and features of interest throughout the county including street furniture, surface finishes, roadside installations, items of industrial heritage and other stand-alone features of interest (items not listed on the RMP or RPS).*

### Architectural Heritage

*AH O18 Conserve and protect buildings, structures and sites contained on the Record of Protected Structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.*

*AH O19 Protect the curtilage of protected structures or proposed protected structures and to refuse planning permission for inappropriate development that would adversely impact on the setting, curtilage, or attendant grounds of a protected structure, cause loss of or damage to the special character of the protected structure and/or any structures of architectural heritage value within its curtilage. Any proposed development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds must demonstrate that it is part of an overall strategy for the future conservation of the entire built heritage complex and contributes positively to that aim.*

*AH O28 Protect the designed landscapes associated with protected structures and retain important elements of the built heritage including historic gardens, stone walls, pathways, and avenues within the curtilage and attendant grounds of protected structures.*

### Country Houses

*AH O41 Encourage conservation, renewal and improvement which enhances the character and the setting of parks, gardens, and demesnes of historic interest within the county.*

*AH O42 Assess the demesnes and historic designed landscapes within Kildare and promote the conservation of their essential character, both built and natural, while allowing for appropriate re-use.*

*AH O43 Co-operate with owners in the protection, promotion and enhancement of heritage gardens and parks in the county, to support public awareness, enjoyment of and access to these sites and to seek the co-operation and assistance of other interested parties, including Government Departments and state agencies, in this regard.*

*AH O46 Require that planning applications take into consideration the impacts of the development on their landscapes and demonstrate that the development proposal has been designed to take account of the heritage resource of the landscape.*

*AH O47 To designate and protect historic landscape areas including demesnes and ensure that new development enhances the special character and visual setting of these historic landscapes and to prevent development that would have a negative impact on the character of the lands within these historic landscape areas.*

### Landscape

Chapter 13 of the Draft Plan covers Landscape, Recreation and Amenity; the aim of the chapter being:

*“To provide for the protection, management, and enhancement of the landscape of Kildare to ensure that development does not disproportionately impact on the unique landscape character areas, scenic routes or protected views; and to support the provision of high quality and accessible recreational facilities, amenities and open spaces for residents and visitors to the County, in recognition of the contribution of all forms of recreation to quality of life, personal health and wellbeing.”*

General Policies;

*LR O1 Ensure that consideration of landscape sensitivity is an important factor in determining development uses. In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design, type and the choice of location of the proposed development in the landscape will be critical considerations.*

*LR O2 Require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany proposals that are likely to significantly affect:*

- *Landscape Sensitivity Factors;*
- *A Class 4 or 5 Sensitivity Landscape (i.e. within 500m of the boundary);*
- *A route or view identified in Map 13-2 or Map 13-3 (i.e. within 500m of the site boundary).*
- *All Wind Farm development applications irrespective of location, shall be required to be accompanied by a detailed Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment including a series of photomontages at locations to be agreed with the Planning Authority, including from scenic routes and views identified in Chapter 13.*

*LR O3 Require all Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments of specified linear infrastructure projects to be undertaken in line with the guidance on best practice methodology of the TII publication Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of Specified Infrastructure Projects (2020).*

*LR O4 Ensure that local landscape features, including historic features and buildings, hedgerows, shelter belts and stone walls, are retained, protected and enhanced where appropriate, so as to preserve the local landscape and character of an area, whilst providing for future development.*

*LR O5 Preserve, where appropriate, the open character of commonage.*

*LR O6 Investigate the feasibility of preparing a Landscape Conservation Area Assessment within the county to identify any area(s) or place(s) within the county as a Landscape Conservation Area, in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).*

*LR O7 Restrict the quarrying of sensitive sites within the Landscape Character Areas in line with Table 13-3 and Table 13-4 above and to protect and conserve the ecological, archaeological, biodiversity and visual amenity surrounding quarry sites.*

*LR O8 Ensure that all quarrying activities and projects associated with the extractive industry comply with all relevant Planning and Environmental Legislation and the Guidelines for the Protection of Biodiversity within the Extractive Industry document 'Wildlife, Habitats & the Extractive Industry'.*

*LR O9 Continue to support development that can utilise existing structures, settlement areas and infrastructure, whilst taking account of local absorption opportunities provided by the landscape, landform and prevailing vegetation.*

*LR O10 Recognise that the lowlands and the transitional area are made up of a variety of working landscapes, which are critical resources for sustaining the economic and social well-being of the county and include areas of significant landscape and ecological value, which are worthy of protection.*

*LR O11 Support collaboration between Kildare County Council, the Midlands Regional Transition Team and all other relevant stakeholders and the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management for a just transition that incorporates the management, rehabilitation and restoration / re-wetting of significant tracts of peatlands in conjunction with appropriate developed after uses.*

*LR O12 Recognise that boglands are critical natural resources for ecological and environmental reasons, particularly for climate mitigation and adaptation. Development*

*proposals for boglands that reduce biodiversity and increase methane emissions will be strictly limited.*

*LR O13 Recognise that cutaway and cut-over boglands represent degraded landscapes and/or brownfield sites and thus are potentially fit to absorb a variety of development provided that the development proposal does not increase Green House Gas emissions*

***LR O14 Maintain the visual integrity of Eastern Transition Lands which have retained an upland character.***

***LR O15 Continue to facilitate appropriate development in the Eastern Transition Lands, in an incremental and clustered manner, where feasible, that respects the scale, character and sensitivities of the local landscape, recognising the need for sustainable settlement patterns and economic activity within the county.***

There are specific policies including in the Draft Plan that relate to the study area, i.e., Eastern Transition Landscape Character Area. These policies (LR O14 & LR O15) enhance the protection of Eastern Transition LCA.

The following actions are upon the council to fulfil within the lifetime of the Draft Plan;

*LR A1 Review and update the County Landscape Character Assessment, within two years of the adoption of this Plan1, having regard to the European Landscape Convention Florence 2000, in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance documents and to ensure consistency with the forthcoming National and Regional Landscape Character Assessment. All landscape character designations will be fully reviewed having regard to updated best practice guidance, LCAs of adjoining Local Authorities and other local relevant considerations, including clusters of biodiversity rich areas.*

*LR A2 Investigate the feasibility of preparing a Historic Landscape Characterisation of the county.*

*LR A3 Plant gateway roundabouts within the county with innovative design themes, having regard to traffic safety.*

It is an action to carry out a review and to update the Landscape Character Assessment within two years of the adoption of the Draft Plan. The original Landscape Character Assessment was carried out in 2004 and is much needed of an update.

### High Amenity Areas

The Liffey River Valley and the East Kildare Uplands are two of the many areas to be retained or identified as 'High Amenity Areas'.

*LR O16 Control development that will adversely affect the visual integrity of Areas of High Amenity by restricting the development of incongruous structures that are out of scale with the landscape within the Areas of High Amenity including advertising signs, hoardings, fencing etc. which create visual clutter and disrupt the open nature of these areas.*

*LR O17 Facilitate appropriate development in areas of high amenity that can utilise existing structures, settlement areas and infrastructure, taking account of the visual absorption opportunities provided by existing topography and vegetation.*

*LR O18 Restrict the over development of the edge of the Curragh Plains and development that obtrudes on the skyline as viewed from the Plains.*

*LR O19 Co-operate with all relevant stakeholders including the Department of Defence, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the racehorse industry, the owners with sheep grazing rights and the various interests currently with rights to the Curragh in the implementation of the Curragh Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan, designated as a cNHA4.*

*LR O20 Restrict development which may have a negative impact on the water quality and quantity of the Pollardstown Fen, in particular groundwater sources.*

*LR O21 Co-operate with the relevant government departments and other statutory bodies in the protection and conservation of the Fen, a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC).*

*LR O22 Co-operate with the relevant government departments in the protection and conservation of both the Royal and Grand Canals and the River Barrow, designated as a cNHA and SAC respectively and in the sections of the River Liffey designated as a cNHA.*

*LR O23 Support and promote an extension of the proposed Special Amenity Area Order for the Liffey Valley from Lucan to Leixlip and other parts of the Valley within County Kildare.*

*LR O24 Work closely with the relevant State bodies, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), UNESCO and local stakeholders to support the designation of the Dun Ailinne Royal Site as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.*

*LR O25 Contribute towards the protection of waterbodies and watercourses, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains, from inappropriate development. This will include buffers free of development in riverine and wetland areas, as per chapter12.*

*LR O26 Have regard to the four major steps in the integrated watercourse protection strategy of Inland Fisheries Ireland's publication 'Planning for Watercourses in an Urban Environment – 2020 Update'.*

*LR O27 Ensure that the Streamside buffer zone (minimum of 10m plus) is kept free from development and existing vegetation is retained undisturbed to contribute to biodiversity and to ensure that bike paths and/or larger footpaths along rivers and streams are provided in the Middle buffer zone (15m-30m), in line with the Inland Fisheries Ireland's publication 'Planning for Watercourses in an Urban Environment – 2020 Update'. Planting if required should be in keeping with the recommendations of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.*

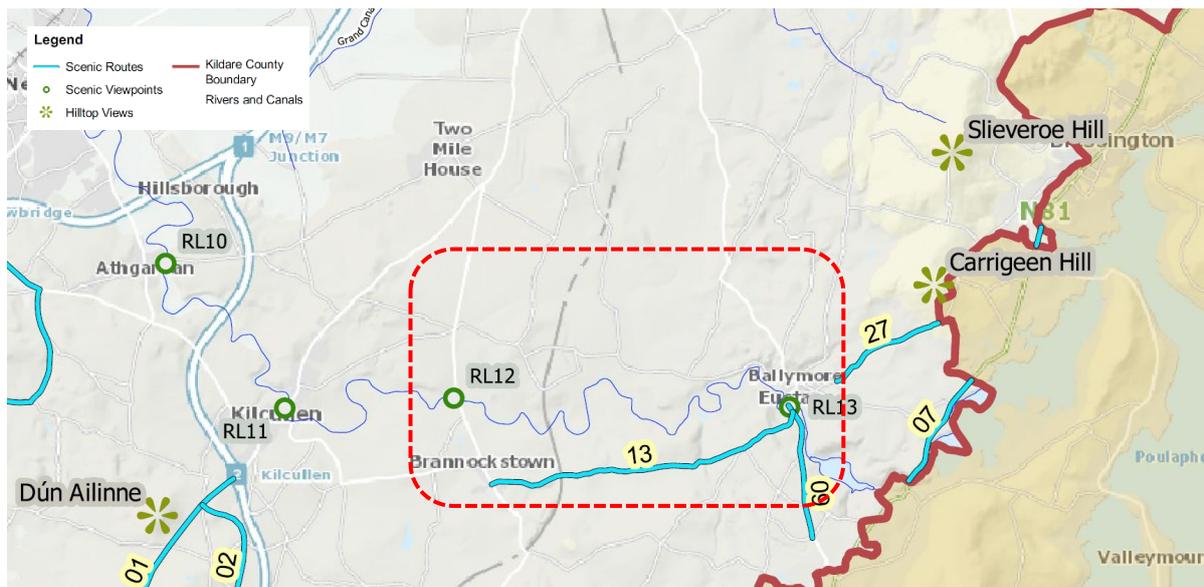
*LR O28 Sensitively consider developments in the Upland Character Areas including East Kildare Uplands that have a functional and locational requirement to be situated on steep or elevated sites (e.g. reservoirs, telecommunication masts or wind energy structures) where it can be explicitly demonstrated that residual adverse visual impacts are minimised or mitigated.*

*LR O29 Have regard to the potential for screening vegetation when evaluating proposals for development within the Upland Character Areas including East Kildare Uplands.*

#### Scenic Routes and Protected Views

The scenic routes and protected viewpoints have remained the same across the Plans.

**Figure 55: Scenic Routes and Protected Viewpoints (study area within the red box)**



### Greenways

*LR O44 Promote the expansion of cycle facilities throughout the county and to liaise with Fáilte Ireland, the Sports Council, the National Transport Authority and other bodies in the development of cycling touring routes throughout the county and adjoining counties, in particular in areas of high amenity.*

*LR O49 Support the development of ancillary infrastructure for Greenways and cycle routes (i.e. trailheads, signage, rest areas, parking, lighting, toilets, etc.) in line with the Greenways and Cycle Routes Ancillary Infrastructure Guidelines (2018) of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in co-operation with landowners, Waterways Ireland, Government Departments and other Local Authorities.*

*LR O50 Facilitate the delivery of the (i) Naas to Sallins Greenway and (ii) Naas to Corbally Harbour Greenway, in co-operation with landowners, Waterways Ireland and Government Departments.*

### Equine

Chapter 9 of the Draft Plan cover the Rural Economy where Equine Industry plays a key role.

*RD O13 Encourage the expansion of the bloodstock industry by appropriately protecting the environment and amenity value of rural areas from encroachment by urban sprawl and incompatible development.*

*RD O14 Ensure that equine based developments are located on suitable and viable landholdings and are subject to normal planning, siting and design considerations.*

*RD O15 Protect the Curragh, Punchestown, and Naas racecourses from any development that would interfere with their amenity value and qualities while, at the same time promoting the enhancement of facilities as an attraction for visitors / attendees.*

*RD O16 Promote and encourage the development of activities that relate to the equine industry in the county such as riding schools, pony trekking and the development of bridle paths.*

*RD O17 To continue to promote Kildare's world-renowned reputation for breeding and racing (at The Curragh, Naas, and Punchestown) and to support the ongoing operation of training and educational facilities and other bodies and organisations established in County Kildare.*



- *Undesignated sites containing good examples of Annex I habitats (under EU Habitats Directive).*
- *Undesignated sites containing significant numbers of resident or regularly occurring populations of Annex II species under the EU Habitats Directive or Annex I species under the EU Birds Directive or species protected under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.*
- *Major trout river fisheries.*
- *Water bodies with major amenity fishery value. Commercially important coarse fisheries.*

### Green Infrastructure

The Draft Plan identifies that there are three key components to Kildare's Green Infrastructure Strategy, these are;

1. *Core Areas: These are large geographical areas of influence and importance, for reasons of ecology, landscape, designation, heritage, environmental management and ecosystem services.*
2. *Stepping Stones: These are smaller geographical areas but either critically important because of their environmental quality (i.e., local native woodlands, intact bogs/peatlands, wetlands), local amenity value (i.e., urban parks) or because of their scale as undeveloped areas, such as Coillte forestry plantations.*
3. *Corridors: These are the connectors providing vital linkages in the networks, for example, canals, stream/river corridors and the associated riparian corridors or valleys, disused railway lines, etc.*

In the extract below; the study area contains the Harristown Common Stepping Stone and Liffey Valley Liffey Valley Meander Belt (pNHA: 000393) under the 'Stepping Stone' Category. The Liffey Green Corridor and the Disused Tullow Railway Line are listed under the 'The Corridors (connections)' category.

Relevant Policy:

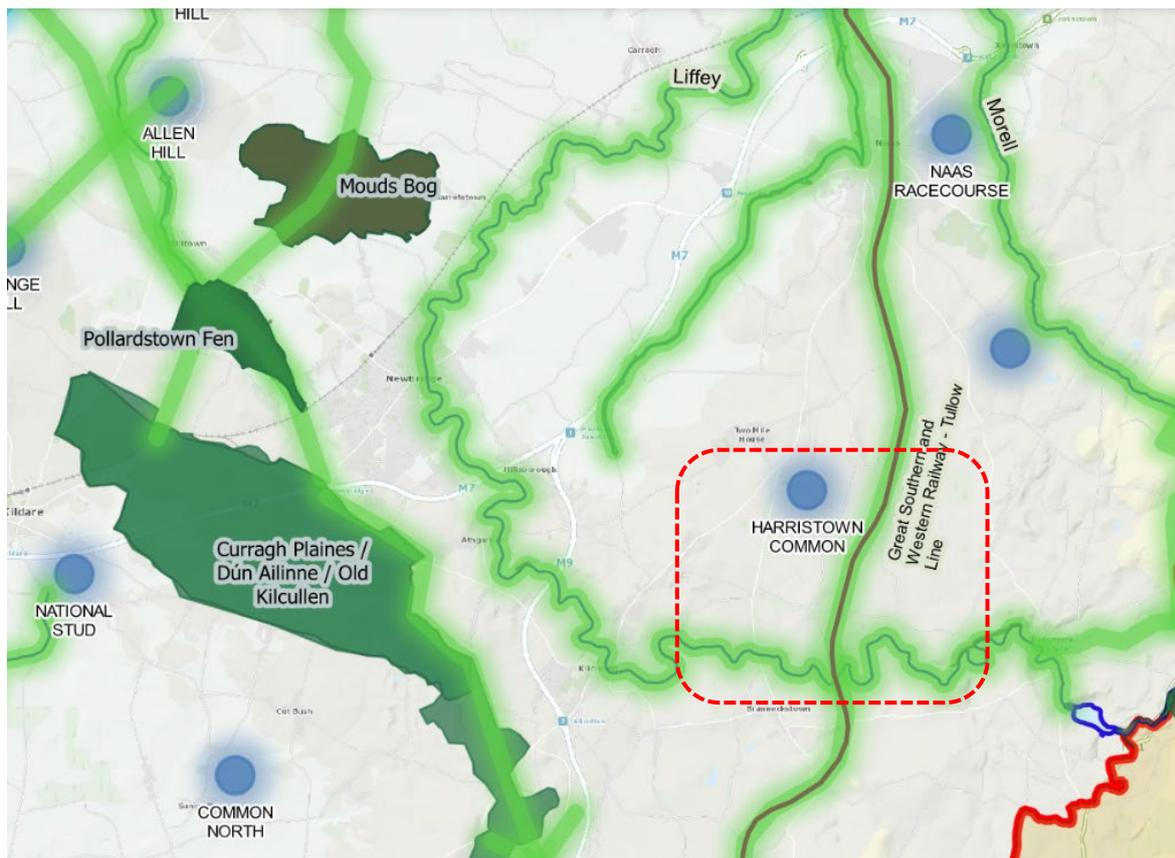
*BI P8 Ensure that Kildare's wetlands and watercourses are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values and maintain good ecological status of wetlands and watercourses in support of the provisions of the Water Framework Directive and Ramsar Convention.*

*BI P12 Recognise the importance of Green Infrastructure in Kildare and protect this valued biological resource, the ecosystem services it provides and the contribution to climate resilience.*

*BI O39 Ensure the protection, enhancement and maintenance of Green Infrastructure in Kildare*

*BI O44 Promote a network of paths and cycle tracks to enhance accessibility to the Green Infrastructure network across the County, while ensuring that the design and operation of the routes respect, and where possible, enhance the ecological potential of each site.*

**Figure 57: Extract of Biodiversity Plan (study area in red box)**



**Legend**

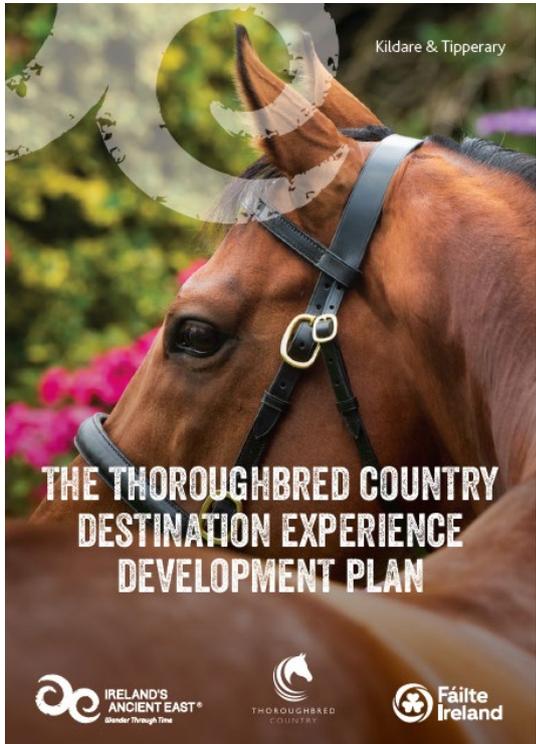
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|---|--|
|  County_Boundary |  Blueways / Greenways                   |
|  Core Areas      |  Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)    |
|  Stepping Stones |  Special Protection Areas (SPA)         |
|  Green Corridors |  Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) |
|  Peatways        |  Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)           |

**Summary of Changes:**

In terms of landscape most of the policies in the Draft Development Plan remain or have similar intents. The main changes relevant to the study area are increased protection for Uplands areas in the East Kildare Uplands LCA and Eastern Transition LCA. Protection of Green Infrastructure assets such as Liffey valley Corridor, Disused Railway Corridor and Harristown Common Stepping Stone, which are within the identified study area for this submission.

**A.2.5 The Thoroughbred Country Destination Experience Development Plan – Fáilte Ireland (Feb 2022)**

The launch of this initiative by Fáilte Ireland with Counties Kildare and Tipperary has the ambitious aim to deliver “the worlds best collective thoroughbred visitor experience”.



Drawing on 2,000 years of horses as part of Ireland's cultural heritage and the modern day internationally recognised centres of excellence of the global equine industry, the plan aims to build a tourism destination built around the thoroughbred industries in the heart of Kildare and Tipperary.

The plan will develop across a series of layers involving trainers and stud farms, racing locations including the Curragh and Punchestown, and associated tourism centres such as the National Stud and Newbridge Silver.

Key pillars relevant to the landscape of Kildare in general and the study area in particular included the concept of **Place and Heritage** - i.e. the cultural and landscape setting of the equine industry – and Festivals and Events including the nearby Punchestown Festivals.

One of the key Guiding Principles set out in “Delivering the Plan” is to

*“Increase awareness and appreciation of the Thoroughbred Country regions unique landscape and environment”*

**Figure 58: Growth Cluster Development**

