

24 May 2022

Submitted via online Portal

Kildare County Council  
Head Office  
Áras Chill Dara  
Devoy Park  
Naas  
Co Kildare  
W91X77F

Ref: CUSX3002

Dear Sir / Madam

## **R.E. SUBMISSION TO DRAFT KILDARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023 - 2029**

Cushman and Wakefield, on behalf of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, has instructed Turley Town Planning Consultants to make a submission in respect of the Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 in relation to lands at Moore Abbey, Monasterevin.

### **PURPOSE OF THIS SUBMISSION**

The Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (dKCDP 2023 – 2029) is intended to set the planning parameters for the future development of the County. The policies and objectives of the dKCDP 2023 – 2029 will also inform the preparation of a new Local Area Plan for Monasterevin.

Whilst the dKCDP 2023 – 2029 is not intending to rezone lands within Monasterevin, the proposed policies and objectives contained within the Plan will influence the quantum, and type, of development that the upcoming LAP will deliver. Through this submission we wish to ensure that Kildare County Council are aware that a significant asset, excluding any existing buildings or uses, in the south west of the County is available for redevelopment and that the policies and objectives of the dKCDP 2023 – 2029 are appropriate in order to maximise the development potential of these lands and encourage sustainable compact growth in the town.

### **A STRATEGIC LANDHOLDING LOCATED IN MONASTEREVIN**

The entire landholding (known as Moore Abbey Estate), controlled by the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, is located to the south of Monasterevin and extends to circa 99.4 hectares in area (see **Appendix 1**). The site comprises of a significant historic land holding in the town which is fundamental to the future growth of Monasterevin.

Currently the buildings at Moore Abbey are used for two purposes. Firstly, The Gate Lodge, Grove House, The Bungalow and Rosglas Convent provide residential accommodation for the Sisters of the Order. The Main House and all the other buildings are occupied by the Muiriosa Foundation and used for both administrative and training purposes and to care for people with intellectual disabilities.

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A number of the existing buildings within the estate are protected structures including: The Lodge (Ref<sup>1</sup>: B26-06); Moore Abbey House (Ref: B26-10); Moore Abbey House Garden (Ref: B26-10B); an existing outbuilding (Ref: B26-10C); and the former stable block (Ref: B26-10D). These buildings have a significant historic value in the estate, and wider town, and there are no plans to redevelop these buildings.

To the south and west of the existing buildings are areas of dense mature woodland, with the largest areas being located to the west and north of the site. There is also a significant area of agricultural land located to the south and east of the existing buildings. These lands are positioned in close proximity to the centre of Monasterevin and therefore it is considered that there is future development potential in these areas.

## CURRENT PLANNING CONTEXT

### Monasterevin Local Area Plan 2016 – 2022

Monasterevin Local Area Plan 2016 – 2022 (MLAP 2016 – 2022) has been the effective Local Area Plan for Monasterevin from 20 March 2016. This Plan was prepared in compliance with the Core Strategy of the Kildare County Development Plan 2011 – 2017.

Following adoption of the dKCDP 2023 – 2029 the MLAP 2016 – 2022 will remain the effective LAP for Monasterevin until such time as a new Plan is prepared. It is our understanding that a programme for preparation of the new LAP has not been agreed.

### Land Use Zoning

Section 7 of the MLAP 2016 – 2022 states that “*The key method of implementing this plan is through the identification of Land Use Zonings and Objectives for specific sites in Monasterevin*”. An extract from Map Ref: 7 – Land Use Zoning Map of the MLAP 2016 – 2022 is included at **Appendix 2**. The overall land holding of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary is identified by a red dashed line.

**Table 1** provides a summary of the land use objectives for zonings within the boundary of the subject site.

**Table 1: Summary of Relevant Land Use Zoning Objectives**

Zoning Reference	Land Use Zoning	Summary of Objective
E1	Community and Recreation	Specific Objective E2 – a specific objective is identified for Moore Abbey Demesne.
F	Open Space and Amenity	To protect and provide for recreation, open space and amenity provision. The Council will not normally permit development that would result in a loss of open space within the town. Existing Agricultural uses in open space areas will continue to be permitted.
I	Agricultural	To retain and protect agricultural uses. The purpose of this zoning is to ensure the retention of agricultural uses and protect them from urban sprawl and ribbon development.
U	Public Utilities and Services	To provide for and protect public utilities and infrastructure.

<sup>1</sup> Reference numbers as per the Schedule of Protected Structures in the Monasterevin Local Area Plan 2017 – 2023

The Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary have previously disposed of a portion of their land holding (Zoning E2 as identified in **Appendix 2**) to provide for a new education campus (Planning permission reference 16/1140) within Moore Abbey Demesne. The development of this school will deliver ‘Specific Objective E2’ of the MLAP 2016 – 2022.

Further to this The Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary have agreed in principle to transfer a portion of their land holding to the Sports Hub Group and Kildare County Council for redevelopment as a sports hub. The area of land to be transferred is identified at **Appendix 3**. Redevelopment of this portion of the site will deliver ‘Specific Objective E1’ of the MLAP 2016 – 2022 through development of recreation, amenity and sports facilities in a campus style development to meet the needs of a number of sports clubs.

## RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT KILDARE COUNTY PLAN 2023 – 2029

### Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy

Monasterevin, alongside the towns of Celbridge, Kilcock, and Clane are designated as Self-Sustaining Towns. These towns are considered to *“have a high level of population growth and a weak employment base but have the potential to improve their employment offering through biotechnology, knowledge based digital enterprises, logistics, tourism and food and beverage products in order to strengthen their overall economic offering”*.

As a Self-sustaining Town, Monasterevin is considered as one of the higher order settlements and therefore no residential zoning provisions have been allocated to the town as part of the preparation of the dKCDP 2023 – 2029, where the Council relies on the LAP to zone land for future housing.

The Core Strategy advises that *“Individual Local Area Plans will be prepared for higher order settlements, where individual Infrastructural Assessments will be carried out to apply the tiered approach to the zoning provisions associated with their respective housing allocations”*.

Table 2.8 ‘Settlement Hierarchy – Population and Housing Unit Targets Q1-2023 to Q2-2028’ of the dKCDP 2023 - 2029 advises that a population growth of 654 no. people (2.6%) is targeted between 2023 to 2028, which equates to a housing growth target of 238 no. units in the same period.

To deliver this growth the dKCDP 2023 – 2029 estimates that an additional 8 hectares of land, providing an average density of 30 units per hectare, will be required in Monasterevin during the lifetime of the Plan.

**Table 2** summaries the relevant Core Strategy policies that we consider are an important consideration for the future development of Monasterevin.

**Table 2: Summary of Relevant Land Use Zoning Objectives**

Policy	Description
CSO 1.1	Ensure that the future growth and spatial development of County Kildare is in accordance with the population and housing allocations contained in the Core Strategy which aligns with the regional growth strategy as set out in the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region and further specified in the ‘Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning’.
CSO 1.4	Ensure that sufficient zoned and adequately serviced lands are available to meet the planned population and housing growth of settlements throughout the county in line with the Core Strategy and the Settlement Hierarchy.
CSO 1.9	Review and prepare on an ongoing basis a portfolio of Local Area Plans (LAPs) for the mandatory LAP settlements of Naas, Maynooth, Newbridge, Leixlip, Kildare, Athy, Celbridge, Kilcock, Monasterevin,

Sallins, in accordance with the objectives of the County Development Plan and all relevant Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines.

CSO 1.15 Review the existing quantum of employment related land use zonings in each of the Local Area Plan (LAP) towns as part of the review of each of the LAPs. Additional lands may be zoned for employment purposes, as necessary and appropriate in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

## Our Response

Table 2.8 ‘Settlement Hierarchy – Population and Housing Unit Targets Q1-2023 to Q2-2028’ of the dKCDP 2023 – 2029 advises that an additional area of 8 hectares should be zoned to deliver 238 no. new homes in Monasterevin over the lifetime of the Plan.

Table 3.1 of the dKCDP 2023 - 2029 outlines the density levels for different settlement types as per the ‘Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG (2009)’ (‘the Guidelines’). Within these Guidelines small towns and villages are considered as ‘those with a population ranging from 400 to 5,000 persons’.

For the purposes of the dKCDP 2023 – 2029 Monasterevin has an estimated population<sup>2</sup> of 4492, therefore is currently considered a small town or village. Taking into account the projected growth for Monasterevin the estimated population would rise to 5,146. In the context of the Guidelines this would mean that Monasterevin would be considered as a ‘town<sup>3</sup>’ and therefore a target density of 35 – 40 units per hectare is prescribed.

Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021 (April 2021), was issued to provide clarification on residential densities in towns and villages, as set out in *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)*, states that “*The NPF also acknowledges that there is a need for more proportionate and tailored approaches to residential development. This means that it is necessary to adapt the scale, design and layout of housing in towns and villages, to ensure that suburban or high-density urban approaches are not applied uniformly and that development responds appropriately to the character, scale and setting of the town or village*” [our emphasis].

The Circular goes on to advise that “*As such, it is highlighted that in certain locations, particularly at the edges of towns in a rural context, more compact forms of development may include residential densities at a lower level than would be considered appropriate in a city or large town context*”.

On this basis, we respectfully submit that the small exceedance of the population threshold, meaning that Monasterevin is designated as a town, should not mean that the existing character and development pattern of Monasterevin should be set aside. It is our opinion that a density which respects the scale and character of Monasterevin should be used to inform the potential yield of lands that are to be zoned in the settlement by a future LAP. **Table 3** summaries the densities that the dKCDP 2023 - 2029 states are appropriate to small towns and villages.

**Table 3: Appropriate Density for Smaller Towns and Villages**

Settlement Type	Location	Density
Smaller Towns and Villages	Centrally located sites	30-40+ units per ha
	Edge of centre sites	20-35 units per hectare

<sup>2</sup> 2021 Population Estimate (based on % growth from 2011- 2016)

<sup>3</sup> Defined for the purposes of ‘Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG (2009)’ guidelines as towns with 5,000 or more people

Edge of small town/village	15-20 units per hectare with lower density in some cases (refer to Section 6.12 of the Guidelines)
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The following summarises the average density of residential developments in Monasterevin. It should be noted that other established residential areas, which are characterised by detached dwellings on large plots, have not been included. However, the density of those established residential areas is significantly lower than those shown below.

- 22 units per hectare – Ferns Heath, Ferns Crescent, Ferns Dale and Ferns Green;
- 19 units per hectare - Old Grange Wood, The Meadows, The Glades, The Willows and Old Grange Wood Elms; and
- 26 units per hectare – Brocan Wood (under construction. Development includes 24% apartments).

In Table 3.1 of the dKCDP 2023 - 2029 Kildare County Council have applied an average density of approximately 30 units per hectare to Monasterevin, which equates to a requirement of 8 ha of land. Our research indicates that recent completed residential developments broadly align with the densities recommended for ‘edge of small town/village’ or ‘edge of centre sites’, as shown in **Table 3**, and do not achieve a density of 30 units per hectare.

*The Development Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities Draft for Consultation (August 2021), prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, states that “In providing housing sites for development within settlements, it may be necessary to zone more serviced land and sites for residential (or a mixture of residential and other uses), than would equate to meeting precisely the projected housing demand for that settlement. This approach recognises that a degree of choice in development sites to be provided locally is desirable to avoid restricting the supply of new housing development through inactivity on a particular landholding or site”.*

Taking into account the available land in the centre of Monasterevin, it is our opinion that the majority of new housing will be delivered in edge of centre / edge of town locations, with a lower density required to respect the character, scale and setting of the town. The implication of this is that additional land will be required to deliver 238 no. units allocated to the town. For example, an average density of 20 units per hectare would require almost 12 hectares of land to be available / zoned to deliver the estimated population growth. It is our opinion that the Council should consider increasing the provision of residential zoned land in Monasterevin to avoid restricting the supply of new housing development and ensure that land is available to deliver the projected population growth for the town.

As previously stated, the lands at Moore Abbey represent a significant land holding which is fundamental to the future growth of Monasterevin. The construction of a new school and sports hub on lands within land zonings E1 and E2 will deliver the main objectives of the zonings, as identified in the MLAP 2016 – 2022 for Moore Abbey. We consider that there is a surplus of land zoned for ‘Community and Education’ at Moore Abbey and that this land could be utilised for other uses that complement the planned education and community facilities and encourage compact growth of the town.

Historically, the town has sprawled to the north / east of the town centre with limited growth to the west / south. Redevelopment of a portion of the Moore Abbey estate for a residential use, as identified at **Appendix 3**, would create a land use that would connect the planned education and community facilities to the town centre and support the objectives of the National Planning Framework 2040 by encouraging compact, sequential urban growth within walking distance of the town centre and public transport routes.

## Compliance with ‘Development Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities Draft for Consultation (August 2021)’

The Draft Guidelines provide specific guidance with respect to the approach to land use and recommend that ‘...in most cases, that **land-use zoning** decisions **should not be deferred** to subsequent **local area plan processes**’ so as to ‘...avoid a scenario whereby the development plan core strategy **may be subject to challenge** and effectively **undermined in a separate statutory process**’ [our emphasis].

The Draft Guidelines advise that ‘There are **clear practical advantages to aligning** the core strategy, settlement strategy and principal residential zoning functions **in a single, integrated development plan process** including:

- (i) **Transparency and coherence** in the decision-making process, with the **full extent** of residential zoning set out for the six-year period of the development plan;
- (ii) **Ensuring certainty** by avoiding a scenario whereby lands are not zoned or inappropriately zoned **in separate statutory processes**;
- (iii) **Providing clarity**, especially where there may be a **risk due to the time delay in preparing a number of subsequent local area plans**; Enabling planning authority resources to **focus on plan implementation and monitoring**;
- (iv) **Enabling local area plan preparation to concentrate on detailed planning** for layout, design, community facilities, transport, recreational amenities, etc. **at a local level**’

The Draft Guidelines conclude this section by confirming that ‘...**land-use zoning should principally be undertaken as part of the development plan process** in tandem with the preparation of **the directly-related core and settlement strategies, informed by a Settlement Capacity Audit**’ [our emphasis].

The Draft Kildare County Development Plan advises that ‘Volume 2 of the Draft Plan sets out the **land use zoning** for settlements of the **small towns and villages** within the county’ [our emphasis] and that ‘Volume 2 is **accompanied by an assessment** which provides a weighting of potential sites for future development **on the basis of sustainable planning** and **serviceability/infrastructural grounds**. This **assessment assists in the designation of lands as either Tier 1 lands or Tier 2 lands** and identifies the **likely development services required to support new development**. The **SPIA was integral in informing the future development strategy** for the **small towns and villages**’ [our emphasis].

So far as the higher order settlements are concerned, the Plan states that ‘**Individual Local Area Plans will be prepared for higher order settlements**, where individual Infrastructural Assessments will be carried out to apply the tiered approach to the zoning provisions associated with their respective housing allocations’ [our emphasis].

The MLAP 2016 – 2022 has been effective since 20 March 2016 therefore it is appropriate to consider whether it has been prepared in accordance with the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region. This Plan expired in March 2022 and, it is our understanding, there is no timeframe agreed for preparation of a new Local Area Plan for the town.

As previously set out in our submission, there is a concern that the level of residential land being proposed for Monasterevin is not sufficient, and the Plan does not identify the lands on which the projected growth will be delivered. The higher order settlements make up the majority of the population of Kildare (approx. 59%) therefore without the inclusion of land use zoning maps for these settlements in the Plan, and noting the reliance on out-of-date and soon to expire Local Area Plans, it is unclear if the Plan is consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives or specific planning policy requirements specified in guidelines under subsection (1) of section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

It is our opinion that confirmation that the Core Strategy of the draft Kildare County Development Plan is 'fit for purpose' and deliverable can only be supported through the inclusion of land use zoning objectives for all settlements in the County being included as part of the County Development Plan rather than delayed to the preparation of Local Area Plans.

## **Conclusion**

To ensure that an adequate quantum of land can be zoned through the LAP plan making process and deliver the number of homes commensurate with the growth projected for Monasterevin, we respectfully recommend that Kildare County Council review its approach to the population and housing unit targets to:

1. Ensure compliance with the Development Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities Draft for Consultation (August 2021) document by not deferring land-use zoning decisions to subsequent Local Area Plan processes. We would recommend that land use zoning maps for all higher order settlements are prepared as part of the County Plan to ensure, as outlined in the Guidance, *'transparency and coherence in the decision-making process, with the full extent of residential zoning set out for the six-year period of the development plan'*;
2. Reconsider the Target Residential Density for development in the various hierarchy of settlements. Whilst the existing strategy is aiming to deliver a density in line with national policy it is our opinion that greater flexibility should be built-in to the Core Strategy to ensure it results in high quality residential development at an appropriate density that respects the existing character of Monasterevin; and
3. Include a higher provision of "Residential Zoned Land" in Monasterevin to ensure that there is flexibility at the LAP making stage to deliver the projected growth. To respect the character, scale and setting of the town and to provide a degree of choice in development sites our opinion is that at least 12 ha of residential land should be zoned in Monasterevin.

We trust that due consideration will be given to the role of the subject site in the overall future development of Kildare, that this submission will be taken into consideration in preparation of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and the forthcoming Local Area Plan for Monasterevin.

We would be happy to clarify any issues arising, if considered appropriate by the Planning Authority, and would welcome the opportunity to work with you and your fellow Councillors, to secure these objectives.

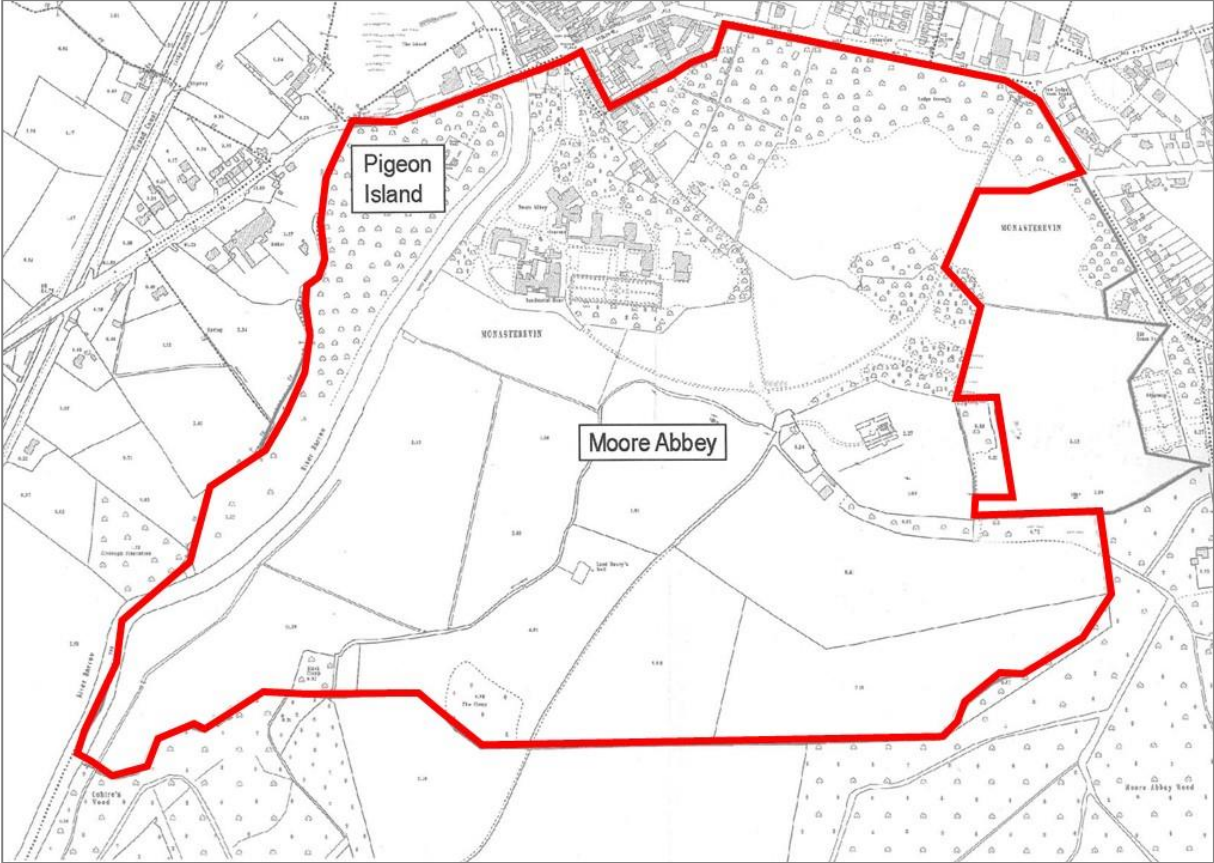
Yours faithfully



Lee Hannigan  
**Associate Director**

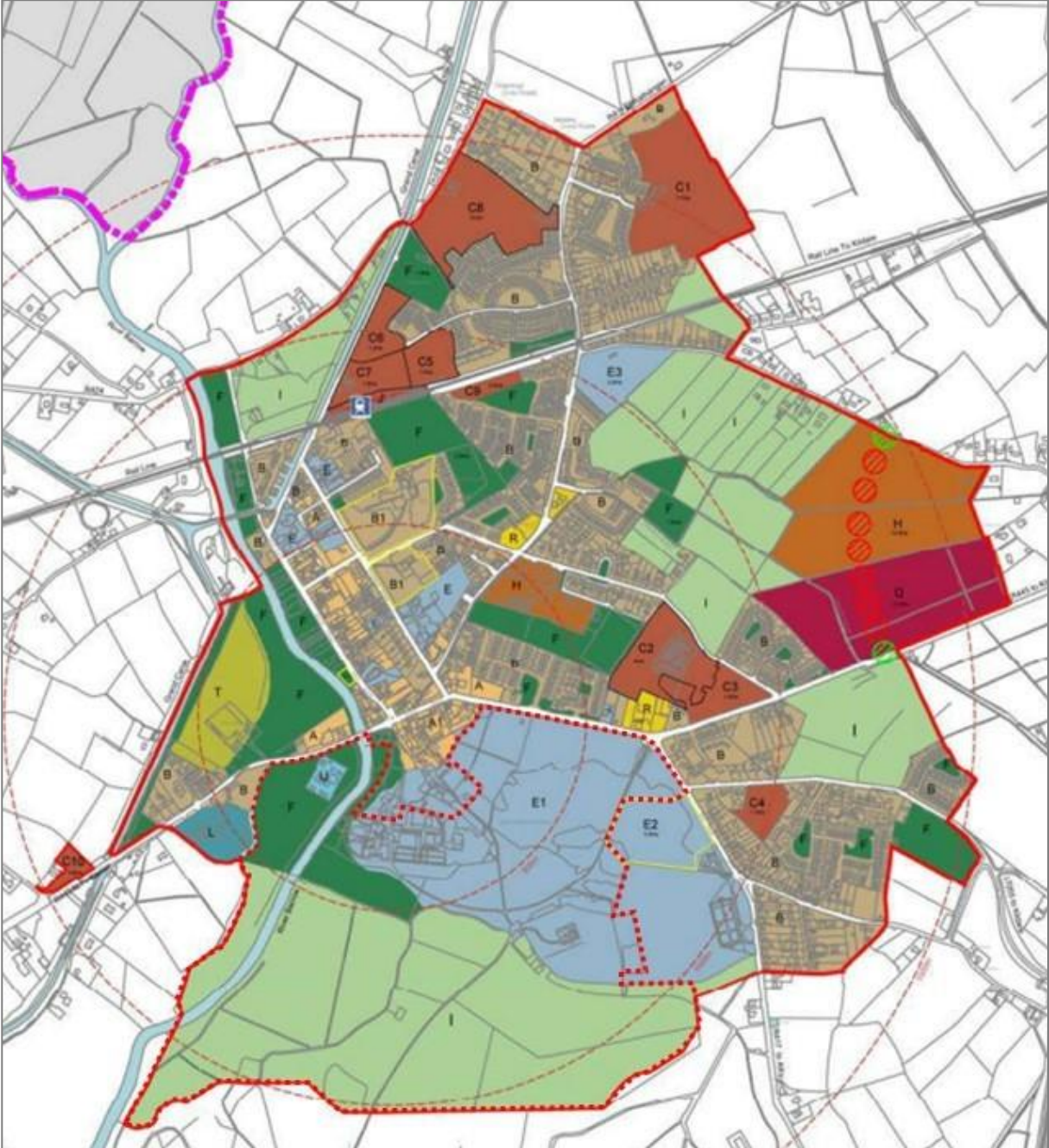


# Appendix 1: Land Under the Ownership of Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary

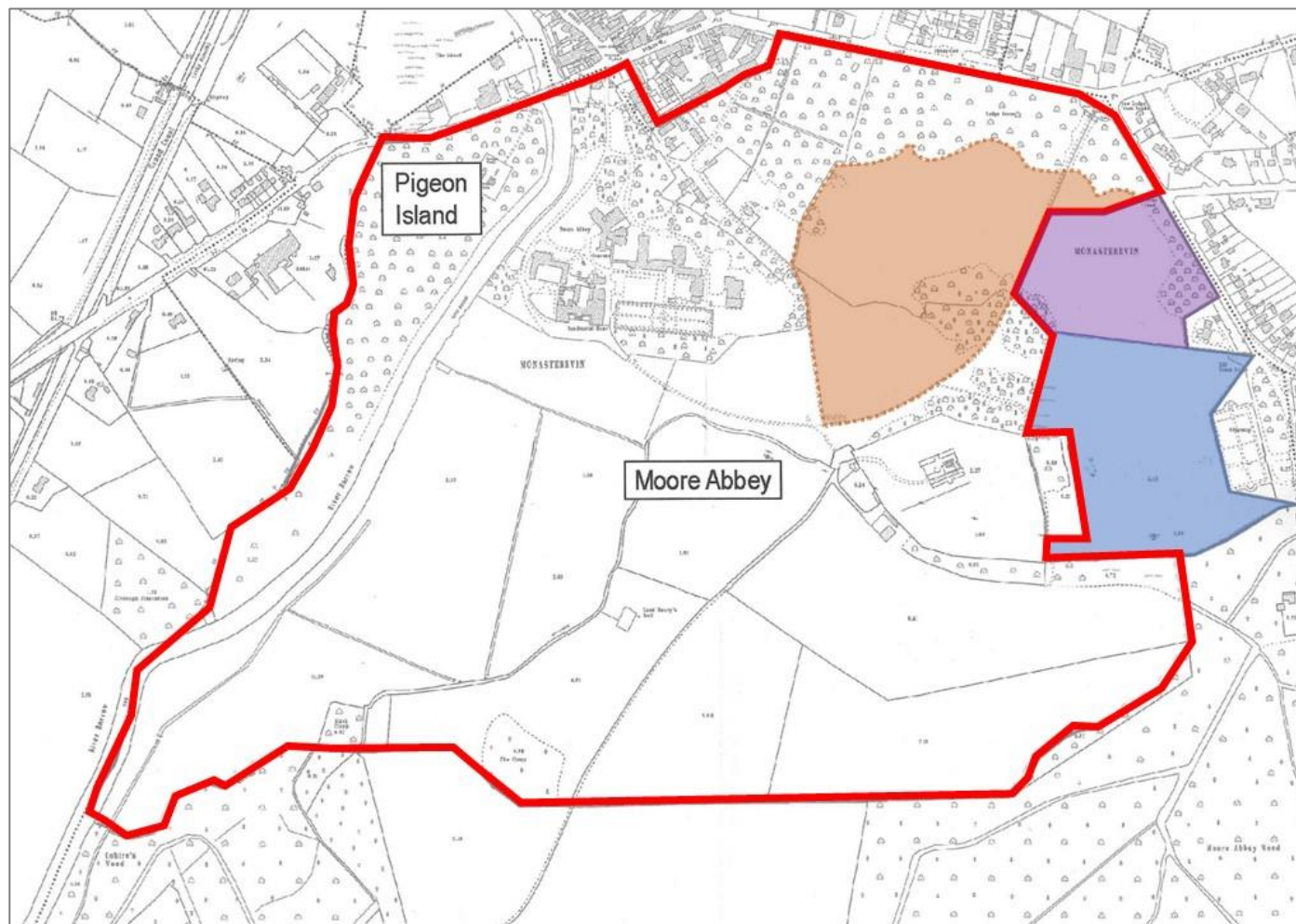




**Appendix 2: Extract from Land Use Zoning Map of the  
MLAP 2016 – 2023**



## Appendix 3: Land Available for Future Residential Development



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