

Castlecomer Settlement Capacity Audit

Introduction

This Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) was carried out to inform the Settlement Plan for Castlecomer.

The *Development Plan Guidelines*¹ and the *National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision*² require that the zoning of undeveloped lands is carried out in accordance with a standardised methodology, termed a Tiered Approach to Zoning (TAZ). This is intended to improve the coordination of zoning and infrastructure and service provision. The tiered approach distinguishes between lands that are 'Serviced' (Tier 1) and those that are 'Serviceable' (Tier 2).

The SCA requires an infrastructural assessment of lands within and adjacent to settlements as a key research input to the settlement strategy formulation process.

At the most basic site level, this infrastructural assessment must include the following infrastructure categories:

- Road access*
- Footpath access*
- Cycle access*
- Foul sewerage drainage**
- Water supply**
- Surface water drainage**

* Including public lighting provision

** In terms of capacity at a settlement level and access of sites to the network

The SCA is to provide data on development sites within settlements including service status, i.e. whether classified as 'Tier 1 Serviced Lands' or 'Tier 2 Serviceable Lands', as well as potential housing yield estimates.

The Settlement Capacity Audit will therefore comprise of:

(i) a table providing, for each settlement >1500 people, or where lands are zoned in settlements of <1,500, existing population, potential housing estimates for:

- (a) Tier 1 Serviced Lands
- (b) Tier 2 Serviceable Lands

(ii) accompanying maps that identify Tier 1 and Tier 2 lands or sites with potential for residential development in the individual settlements, with the existing built-up footprint (i.e. CSO Urban Settlement boundary) also indicated.

¹ *Development Plans, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2022*

² *National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision, 2025 National Policy Objective 101*

Identification of Tier 1 and Tier 2 lands

To aid in identifying Tier 1 or Tier 2 lands, a traffic light rating system has been developed that highlights any deficiencies in the infrastructure serving the lands, analysed as follows:

- A green colour indicates that infrastructure/services are available;
- An amber colour indicates that infrastructure/services are not available or further investment in same is required and this investment is likely to be provided during the lifetime of the Plan;
- A red colour indicates infrastructure/services are not available and are unlikely to be provided during the lifetime of the Plan.

An example of this system is set out below.

Commentary on infrastructure/services	Colour
Infrastructure/services available	
Further investment required	
Provision of infrastructure/services unlikely during period of Plan	

Land Use Evaluation

The Infrastructure Assessment has also been combined with a land use evaluation, which also utilises the traffic light rating system (See Table B). This evaluation takes account of compact growth considerations and physical suitability considerations, such as built and natural heritage and flood risk. In this regard, the traffic light rating system also reflects a score rating of 1 to 3 for land use evaluation, with 1 being the most optimal and 3 being the least optimal score, as set out below.

Commentary on land use evaluation	Colour
Most suitable	
Suitable	
Least suitable	

Infrastructure Assessment Matrix

The Infrastructure Assessment for Castlecomer is set out in table form in this section (See Table 1). All lands that have been examined are identified in the table with individual reference numbers. These reference numbers can be used to identify the lands on the accompanying map. Water supply is at capacity in Castlecomer, and as services are not available, this results in no land in Castlecomer falling into the Tier 1 category. Uisce Éireann have stated³ that a project to develop new groundwater sources is underway.

The table below is based on 80% net site area and density of 30 units per hectare, in order to align with the *Chief Executive’s Report on NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements*⁴.

³ Submission dated August 2024

⁴ Kilkenny County Council, *Report to Elected Members on NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements*, November 2025

Table 1: Infrastructure Assessment Matrix – Castlecomer Settlement Plan

Tier 1 or 2	Map Ref.	Zoning in 2018 LAP	Infrastructure & services ⁵	Land Use evaluation		Proposed Zoning in Settlement Plan	Area (ha)	Within CSO boundary	Potential Housing yield	Justification Rationale
				Compact Growth ⁶	Physical Suitability ⁷					
T2	NR1	New Residential				New Residential	1.4ha	Yes	34 ⁸	Love Lane – centrally located, flat site
T2	NR2	New Residential				New Residential – subject to Masterplan	0.8ha	Yes	22	Barracks site – located close to community facilities
T2	NR3	New Residential				New Residential	0.6ha	No	14	Adjacent to existing residential zoning at Oak Hill
T2	NR4	Community Facilities				New Residential	1.4 ha	Yes	34	Boys school site; located close to residential areas, and to community facilities.
T2	LD1	Low Density Residential				New Residential, subject to Masterplan	3.1 ha	Yes	74	Parish lands. Centrally located. Steep.
T2	LD2	Low Density Residential				New Residential	1.2ha	No	29	Clogh Road. Edge of town location, suited for low density to provide for housing mix.
T2	MU1	Mixed use				General Business	3.35ha	Yes	39 ⁹	Former Creamery site, centrally located. Permission for mixed use development.
T2	E1	Industrial				Industrial	8.6	No	0	Ballyhimmin employment land, includes One Stop Business Centre
T2	E2	Industrial				Industrial	1.18	No	0	Location opposite One Stop Business Centre
	E3	Industrial				Outside plan boundary	4.58	No	0	Not serviced by footpaths, would not promote sustainable mobility. Located at a remove from town centre.

Note; This matrix has been prepared to assist the preparation of the Settlement Plan. The criteria listed are not considered to be exhaustive.

⁵ This includes water supply, wastewater capacity, roads/footpath/cycle and surface water. As at present, water services are constrained, no site is considered serviced.

⁶ Factors considered here include the extent to which the site: would be infill/consolidation, proximity to town centre, promotes sustainable mobility, has access to community facilities

⁷ Factors considered here include topography, flood risk and built & natural heritage context

⁸ Based on a net area of 80% and minimum density of 30 units/ha (to align with *Report to Elected Members on NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements*, November 2025)

⁹ As permitted under P20/112 and P.23/60610

Figure 1: Location of sites overlaid on 2018 zoning map

