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Senior Planner,
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14th October, 2022

RE: Pre-Draft Consultation on preparation of a Joint Urban Local Area Plan for the Carlow-Graigucullen Area 2023-2029

A Chara,

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Pre-Draft Consultation for the Joint Urban Local Area Plan for the Carlow-Graigucullen Area 2023-2029.

We acknowledge and commend this important consultation to review and update the statutory Local Area Plan centred on the Carlow – Graigucullen urban area. This is an important next step in the statutory planning framework for Carlow following on from the adoption of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and recognition of Carlow / Graigucullen as a Key Town in both Southern Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and Eastern and Midlands Region RSES.

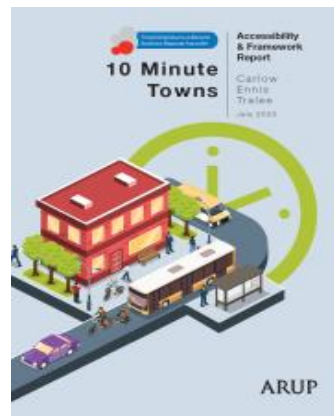
We note and welcome the Strategic Planning section in the consultation and its focus on key strategic issues for Carlow-Graigucullen identified in the RSES and the resulting key strategic objectives which are set out for the Town in this section.

The RSES designation of Carlow as a Key Town recognised its unique inter-regional role as a centre for education, healthcare, public services, shopping, arts and culture, leisure and recreation extending to a wide area of the surrounding counties of Kildare, Laois and Wicklow.

The Joint Urban Local Area Plan will play a particularly important role in guiding the growth and development of Carlow-Graigucullen Area. The joint approach between Carlow and Laois County Councils is strongly supported by the SRA. RSES Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 14 (b) supports a co-ordinated planning framework for the Carlow-Graigucullen area 'to ensure that it achieves targeted compact growth of a minimum of 30% to 2040'....and 'that it has the capacity to grow sustainably and secure investment as a Key Town'.

Regeneration, Urban Design & Placemaking will be key issues to support sustainable and compact growth of Carlow and the reference to *Project Carlow 2040* is welcome as an important document with its vision for a sustainable high-quality urban environment and a better quality of life for all.

We note that a Local Transport Plan (LTP) is already in preparation and that this will play an important role in developing active travel options and would encourage the linking of new transport initiatives to the development of Blue and Green Infrastructure. In this regard we would refer you to two key documents we have published on our website - '*Our Green Region - a Blue Green Infrastructure and Nature-based Solutions Framework for the Southern Region*' and a '*Ten Minute Towns Accessibility & Framework Report*', which may assist in the development of the draft plan.



CONCLUSION

The SRA welcomes the public consultation at pre-draft stage for the preparation of a Joint Urban Local Area Plan for the Carlow-Graiguelcullen Area.

Further engagement between the SRA as a key stakeholder in the next phases of developing the Draft Plan is encouraged. The RSES team are available for future consultation and discussion during plan preparation process.

Mise le meas

David Kelly
Director Southern Regional Assembly