

Enterprise and Employment Land Assessment

Carried out as part of the preparation of the Settlement Plan for Castlecomer

This is a simple assessment of the context for enterprise and employment in Castlecomer, carried out to inform the preparation of the Settlement Plan. The assessment is based on the *OPR Practice Note PN04: Planning for Employment Growth - The Development Plan and Employment Lands, 2024*¹.

Step 1: Gather existing data on lands for enterprise and employment uses

This step requires a calculation of the total area of lands currently in use, and/or zoned, for enterprise and employment uses. The factors to consider are as follows:

- i. The distribution of employment (numbers employed/jobs) across different land-use zones;
- ii. Developed zoned employment lands;
- iii. Undeveloped greenfield zoned employment lands;
- iv. Brownfield land, zoned for employment uses, suitable for redevelopment;
- v. Vacant or underutilised lands and premises on zoned employment lands;
- vi. Extant permissions on zoned lands; and
- vii. Known constraints to zoned lands.

For a settlement the scale of Castlecomer, the focus is to broadly examine the existing zoned land and determine requirements.

The main employers in Castlecomer at present are the Modubuild premises at Princes Ground, and SRS, Steel and Roofing Systems in the Castlecomer Business Park. The Castlecomer Business park houses a number of employers, included Tírlán. Other employment locations are the Enterprise Centre, and the One Stop Business Centre on the Kilkenny Road.

The relevant employment zones in the Castlecomer LAP 2018 are General Business, Industrial and Mixed use. The breakdown between developed and undeveloped zoned lands is shown below.

Employment zone 2018 LAP	Total area zoned 2018 LAP (ha)	Undeveloped/brownfield land remaining (ha)
General Business (central area)	14.05	2.5
Industrial (8 sites)	23.68	14.35
Mixed use (2 sites)	6.62	3.75
Total	44.35	17.7

There is one significant brownfield site with employment potential, which is the former Creamery, zoned as Mixed Use in the 2018 LAP². This has permission for a convenience retail shop, and a number of other employment uses.

¹ Based on OPR Practice Note PN04: Planning for Employment Growth - The Development Plan and Employment Lands, 2024

² Permission was granted for a significant mixed use development on this site during the period of the last Plan (under P.20/112 and P.23/60610)

According to the Practice Note, this assessment should also include relevant non-zoned lands and established uses on contrary zoned lands. The former Brick factory on the Athy Road, now disused, is a significant brownfield site, outside the town’s Settlement boundary.

The main extant permission on zoned lands is the mixed use development at the old Creamery site.

Step 2: Assess site suitability to determine total area of available land suitable to accommodate enterprise and employment uses

Examining the three employment zones, the General Business zone covers the centre of the town, and allows for a wide variety of uses. This is appropriate to accommodate flexibility in the town centre.

The Industrial zoning to the south of the town, containing the Enterprise Centre, the Castlecomer Business park, and the One Stop Business Centre are all lands suitable for employment purposes.

The Industrial zoning on the Athy Road, which was identified in the last Plan to facilitate the relocation of a business from the town centre, does not align with sustainable land use planning objectives (see the Transport and Infrastructure/Settlement Capacity Audit assessments).

The Mixed Use zoning, covering the Modubuild site and the former Creamery (3.3 ha), allows for a wide variety of uses. Those two sites have the potential to fulfil different functions however. The former Creamery site, with a mixed use extant permission, forming part of the core retail area, will now be added to the General Business zone. The Modubuild site has the potential for other mixed uses, but not for retail at present.

Employment zones 2025 Plan	Undeveloped land remaining (ha)
General Business	2.5 plus brownfield Creamery site 3.3 ha
Industrial	9.8
Mixed use	0.4
Total	12.7

Step 3: Forecast workforce supply – at settlement level

According to the CSO, the population of Castlecomer ED at work in 2022 was 1,017. The national stated aim for employment policy is to create more self-sufficient settlements with more sustainable commuting in/out flows having regard to national statutory greenhouse gas reduction targets. There are 738 total people working in the Castlecomer ED. This results in a Job ratio of 738:1017 or 1:0.72. A job ration of less than 1 indicates a net out-flow of commuting out of the settlement, or ED in this case.

Of the 738 people working in the Castlecomer ED, the home county is as follows:

County of origin	Numbers employed in Castlecomer ED
Carlow	35
Kildare	11
Kilkenny	614
Laois	68
Tipperary	10
Total	738

The Core Strategy has set out that a total additional population of 270 people to 2027 is planned for. This would entail an estimated proportionate increase of 103 to the labour force.

Year	ED Population	Population at work	%
2022	2,397	1,017	42%
Projected 2027	+270		
Estimate	2,667	1,120	42%

Step 4: Determine employment sector demand

From discussions with the Local Enterprise Office, the requirements for Castlecomer are primarily for small start-up units. The Castlecomer Enterprise Centre, and the One Stop Business Centre, offer this type of facility, however both are at capacity. There is also a need for land to accommodate expansion for any businesses that grows out of these incubation units.

Two respondents to the Business Survey, as carried out for the Health Check report, reported seeking additional space, but being unsuccessful.

Step 5: Translate future workforce supply into land-use requirements

From Step 4 above, there is a need to accommodate expansion of the Enterprise Centre, and the One Stop Business Centre. The Enterprise Centre, located on Kilkenny Street, was previously zoned as Industrial. Given the nature of the range of businesses operating at this location, from offices, studios and small scale manufacturing, the General Business zoning is considered more appropriate. There is limited room for expansion at this location however, given the River Dinin, and associated flood zones, to the east. Two sites to the north (the Garda Station and a house) will also be zoned as General Business, in the interests of any future change of use at these sites.

For the One Stop Business Centre, located on the Kilkenny Road at Ballyhimmin, the previous zoning was Residential. This should be zoned as Industrial, with room for expansion. This location offers some synergies with the Castlecomer Business Park.

The total area of greenfield Industrial zoned land therefore is 9.8 hectares. As identified above, employment opportunities also exist on General Business and Mixed use zoned lands.

Step 6: Quantify the shortfall/surplus of land for each employment sector

The provision outlined above is sufficient to cater for the need for employment over the plan period. Applications may still come forward on land not included in the Plan, such as the former Brick factory on the Athy Road. There is no identified need for any further Industrial zoning.

Step 7: Conclude the Assessment and prepare the final report

The Core strategy has set a population increase of 270 over the Plan period. The jobs ratio is below 1, indicating an outflow of commuters. The Plan must provide for opportunities for expansion of employment in Castlecomer, and has allowed a total of almost 10 hectares of greenfield land for Industrial use, clustered around the Kilkenny Road area, with the existing areas of the Castlecomer Business Park, the One Stop Business Centre and the Enterprise Centre. This is sufficient to serve the needs of the area for the term of this Plan.

Figure 1: Employment land zoned in 2018 LAP

Figure A1 Castlecomer Zoning and Objectives Map

