



11 July 2019

Planning Department
Kildare County Council
Aras Cill Dara
Devoy Park
Naas
Co. Kildare

Ref: Draft Leixlip Local Area Plan 2020 - 2026

Dear Sir or Madam

We make this submission and seek to register our concerns with regard to the Leixlip Local Area Plan.

A. Scale of Expansion

The decision to allocate over 10% of Kildare's growth in housing to Leixlip without due consideration of the infrastructural needs and geographical constrictions of the town is a significant failing on the part of the Council. This is particularly so when you consider that over 30% of the growth needs of the county over this period are being shoe-horned into Maynooth-Leixlip-Celbridge area. Considering the towns' close proximity to one another and the shared resources in terms of major roads and public transport routes this is inappropriate over-development without the commensurate investment in schools, roads, water infrastructure and local amenities.

The temptation to adopt an approach of building houses first and hoping the infrastructure follows should be strongly resisted by the Council.

A.1 Schools

It is noted that there is no specific strategic aim for the education and development of the residents of Leixlip. This is a significant gap and can be evidenced in the approach adopted in the draft LAP to assessing the capacity and future needs within the community.

The majority of the initial development is focused in the catchment area for Colaiste Chiarain post-primary and the 4 primary schools: Scoil Bhríde, Scoil Eoin Phoil, Scoil Mhuire, Scoil Uí Dhálaigh. A new Educate Together primary school is in its infancy and its ability to expand limited by its facilities and lack of scale.

An increase in the number of children seeking places at these schools as envisaged in the LAP would result in significant strains on the existing facilities. The local schools may have sufficient capacity for existing demand but not when the intention is to increase the population of the town so dramatically.

An additional post-primary school or the expansion of Colaiste Chiarain would be required to meet the likely additional demand. An additional post-primary would also need to be developed. To date there is no acknowledgement of a potential requirement.

By the end of the LAP it is envisaged that the population of Leixlip will have grown in excess of 65% and the noted inclusion of two primary and one post-primary school to meet this need is wholly inadequate.

Any development should be limited in scale until sufficient Educational capacity is made available. This is in keeping with the stated In the LAP there is the requirement for developers to engage with Irish Water. The imposition of a similar requirement on developers and the County Council to engage with the Department of Education and Skills would ensure that the education needs of existing and future Leixlip residents are fully met in the future.

A.2 Public Transport

One of the stated strategic aims is noted as follows:

To promote and facilitate a sustainable transport system for Leixlip that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport and provides an appropriate level of road infrastructure, road capacity and traffic management to support future development.

The aim in relation to public transport would appear to be aspirational rather than supported by concrete measures.

A.2.1 Trains

The draft LAP fails to consider the existing capacity constraints on the rail network and the existing issues of over-crowding on the trains at peak hours.

To proceed to allow the proposed development within Leixlip of in excess of 3,300 units together with a further 3,000 units in Maynooth and Kilcock will mean that the existing train service will be wholly inadequate for commuters. Trains are already standing room only in the peak morning periods before they arrive at Louisa Bridge. This will only deteriorate further as Maynooth and Kilcock grow in size without the commensurate increase in capacity.

Dart electrification has long been promised but the plans to implement are likely to be deferred again due to competing needs across the network. The LAP notes that planning for electrification is due to commence in 2021. However, it is unlikely to be delivered until at the earliest the end of the LAP period. So the council are proposing to overload an already inadequate service over the next 7 years. An improved rail service should not be assumed as part of the 2020-2026 thinking without concrete commitments from Iarnrod Eireann.

Furthermore, electrification does not necessarily equate to greater capacity or improved frequency of the service. Due to capacity constraints at Connolly an increase in the volume of trains that can journey to or through the station is severely restricted. Therefore, electrification will reduce the journey times but will not sufficiently increase the number of trains that will travel on the line to meet the planned demand.

Park and ride facilities at Louisa Bridge barely meet existing commuter needs and there appear to be no plans to enhance these further. This is despite the planned increase in commuters from Leixlip and Celbridge who will want to use the facilities. Appropriate zoning should be considered at Louisa Bridge and Confey to meet the demand for additional park and ride facilities.

The strategic aim of the draft LAP with regard to public transport cannot be met while development on the scale envisaged for Leixlip as well as that considered for the adjoining towns is proposed.

A.2.2 Buses

Insufficient consideration of the bus network and the ability to meet the commuting needs at peak times appears to be considered within the draft LAP. As with the trains, the bus service will see a significant increase in demand but is unlikely to be in a position to meet it without significant investment.

Revised routes, including express buses that do not go through Leixlip village at peak times, together with a significant increase in numbers of buses would be required to address the needs of commuters.

These are capacity constraints on the objectives and development should be constrained until these are met.

A.3 Road Traffic

A comprehensive traffic management plan is urgently required to consider the impacts of the proposed developments on the community. The existing road network is under significant pressure and is not fit for purpose to meet the expansionary plans for Leixlip. Insufficient plans are in place to address the existing local road infrastructure deficits.

Increasing traffic volumes as envisaged without appropriate consideration of the impacts of congestion, noise and pollution will negatively impact on the community and be contrary to the strategic aims.

As noted previously the draft LAP as currently proposed will result in a significant public transport deficit for Leixlip, Maynooth, Kilcock, Celbridge and the surrounding towns and villages. This will increase the number of commuters utilising their cars and merging onto the M4 to go to work. The current plan will see the M4 / N4 resembling the N7 with long tailbacks and longer journey times becoming the norm. To exacerbate this with additional developments at Leixlip Demesne and Confey ahead of the Masterplan being put in place would result in chaos.

A.4 Water Infrastructure

The water infrastructure, after planned investment by Irish Water, will be insufficient to address the needs of the expanded community. The LAP proposes no development without proper consultation with Irish Water. However, this is insufficient and the LAP should reflect the level of expansion that can be reasonably accommodated within the existing plans of Irish Water.

Therefore the zoning and development of lands must be phased in line with the capacity of supporting infrastructure such as water supply and wastewater.

B. Confey Re-Zoning

These lands should not be re-zoned without a sufficiently detailed Masterplan. The proposed land in Confey is currently a green field area with little or no existing development. It is imperative that a masterplan is put in place, with sufficient opportunity given to public consultation in advance, to guide the significant quantity of lands being rezoned to ensure the delivery of key infrastructure and community services subject to a schedule of phasing.

C. Leixlip Castle Demense

The LAP notes the following with regard to the importance of our heritage sites:

“It also acknowledges the importance of built and natural heritage as an environmental and economic (including tourism) resource and includes significant objectives for its conservation and enhancement.”

“The Wonderful Barn, Leixlip Castle and Leixlip Spa in particular present opportunities to attract tourists to Leixlip.”

The lands at Leixlip Castle Demesne should not be re-zoned residential. To allow developments at both the Wonderful Barn and on Leixlip Demesne would run counter to the strategic aims regarding Leixlip’s heritage.

To enhance the local amenity and attractiveness as a location for both residents and tourists alike, the lands at Leixlip Demesne should be zoned for recreational use.

The site across the road at the Wonderful Barn will be developed residential and with it the volume of traffic on the Celbridge Road will increase significantly.

The Celbridge Road is already a very busy road facilitating school runs for both primary and secondary schools. It also absorbs a lot of diversion traffic via Castletown housing estate from the Green Lane / Easton Road areas.

The Celbridge road has residential housing on either side along its entire length and therefore it cannot be physically altered or enlarged to facilitate much more traffic. Zoning this site along with the Wonderful Barn KDA and the existing traffic considerations is over-development.

With the scale of Wonderful Barn KDA proposed and the noted congestion through Leixlip village an additional exit from the M4 should be separately proposed at the Celbridge Road.

This would also reduce the volume of traffic travelling through the Castletown estate.

D. Social Housing

There is inadequate consideration of the need for social housing within the overall plan. The Local Area Plan should ensure sufficient stock of social housing is provided for the Leixlip community.

E. Social Infrastructure

The LAP notes the following:

“To deliver new residential development within Leixlip to support existing community infrastructure, recreation and amenity facilities and provide new facilities in tandem with opportunities for significant new housing.”

The LAP is silent on the community’s continuing need for a public swimming pool. The omission of such facilities in the planning of a Large Growth Town is a retrograde step. It should be a priority of the council to deliver the social infrastructure expected within a town of 20,000+ residents.

The LAP acknowledges that the playground facilities at the Leixlip Amenities centre are inadequate for a town the size of Leixlip. The council should look to ensure sufficient public facilities are available to all and not just within the confines of newly developed residential estates. As noted above, a large community playground should be considered as part of the expansion of the amenities at the Wonderful Barn.

Thank you in advance for considering our concerns with regard to the draft LAP.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Carl and Ciara Crehan