

To whom it may concern,

I wish to make the following observations on the Draft Local Area Plan 2020-2026 for Leixlip.

Please note: where possible URLs are linked from the document, so if you have access to the internet when reading this PDF, you can link to the websites referenced.

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## QUANTUM OF HOUSING

Whilst I appreciate the housing allocation for Leixlip is set beyond the decision-making process of Kildare County Council, it should be clear to anyone that the current policy of housing in this state has failed, and continues to fail. 15,500 people currently live in Leixlip (<https://kfmradio.com/news/11052017-1812/census-2016-reveals-population-17-kildare-towns>). Adding over 3,300 houses/units to this could see the population jump to over 20,000. The LAP itself predicts, based on CSO data, 'the dwellings forecast for Leixlip, could result in a total population of 23,433 people.' The infrastructure is simply not here for such a rise.

**If the population of the country is growing at a very modest 1.6% per annum, why is Leixlip being asked to grow by over 50% in a short space of time?** This is unsustainable, and the very essence of bad planning.

This out-of-date 'plan' was simply designed to facilitate the growth of Dublin, and allow people to move from the country close to the city. Doing so has allowed massive urban sprawl to occur, and we are now trying to come to terms with these decades of bad planning. Clogged roads, lack of schools and medical facilities, lack of amenities, social problems, health issues; the list goes on.

## MAINS WATER

**The mains waters system is creaking and literally bursting at the seams.** (June 11th, 2019:

<https://www.leinsterleader.ie/news/north-kildare/423162/works-to-restore-water-supply-in-leixlip-continue-following-major-pipe-burst.html>)

## WASTE WATER

**Sewage from the greater Dublin area has made swimming in Dublin Bay impossible**, due to the capacity at Ringsend. (<https://www.rte.ie/news/2019/0703/1059815-ringsend-analysis/>) and the plant at Leixlip is already close to capacity, despite recent upgrades. Plans to expand Intel mean that any capacity currently available is effectively gone before a brick is laid in the town.

## DRINKING WATER

**Leixlip's drinking water is susceptible to contamination:**

<https://www.water.ie/news/leixlip-water-treatment-p/>



*Burst mains water pipe, Leixlip, June 2019  
image © Kildare Now*

## ROADS

**Leixlip's road infrastructure is not adequate for large housing developments.** Recent studies from RPS Consulting proved this, though these seem to have been forgotten or overlooked in the recent plans. In particular, the large-scale development proposed for Confey cannot take place without new roads.

## SCHOOLS

**New schools would need to be coming on stream very quickly**, with all the attendant services and staff. The Department of Education does not have a great track record on this score.

## LEIXLIP IS NOT A TOWN – IT’S A VILLAGE

### Leixlip’s Topography

Two river valleys joining at the heart of the village make for a scenic layout but also create issues for roads and other development. Leixlip remains to this day a village. It is not a town, and is unlikely to reach that status, regardless of how many houses you build around the periphery. All we will end up with is a hollow ring. An empty doughnut. All stodge, and no jam.

If you don’t understand why Leixlip is a village, you need to pay us a visit. If you stand at the top of the Main Street on Rye Bridge, you can see the other end of the Main Street near the old ESB site.

That’s just over 400 metres long. Compare that to Newbridge town, with a population of about 21,500, or Naas, with about 20,700. Newbridge main thoroughfare is over a kilometre in length, and the main street is wide and full of busy retail outlets. Naas has a similarly busy, wide main street as regards retail, and also has a wider number of roads feeding into the town. These are, in essence, true ‘county’ towns, and yet their populations are not much greater than that of Leixlip.



*Main Street and the Mall, Leixlip*

The current plans for Leixlip will continue to turn our village into a dormitory town. It is not sustainable, and therefore in breach of the following, from the current proposed LAP (page 8):

### *3. Sustainable Planning and Infrastructural Assessment (SPIA)*

*A Sustainable Planning and Infrastructural Assessment (SPIA) was carried out to inform the appropriate zoning of land. In accordance with Appendix 3 of the National Planning Framework, the Sustainable Planning and Infrastructure Assessment comprises of quantitative and qualitative research analysis of existing and proposed infrastructure and accompanies the LAP.*

Page 11 also states:

*The NPF confirms the position of Leixlip within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, and places specific emphasis on the regeneration and rejuvenation of towns through the promotion of compact growth and the consolidation of future development within and close to the existing footprint of built up areas. The NPF states that this will be achieved through infill and brownfield development rather than an over-reliance on greenfield, edge of town development.*

Again, the LAP does not achieve this. And again, this addition of **over 10% of the planned population increase for the county into one village is unsustainable.**

On page 14:

*S6 To phase significant future growth in line with the capacity and delivery of supporting physical infrastructure.*

and also:

*S8 To protect, enhance, create and connect natural heritage, high quality amenity areas and other green spaces throughout Leixlip for both biodiversity and recreational use.*

Again, **many of the proposed KDAs breach these Strategic Objectives.**

You can keep telling us that we live in a busy, thriving and expanding town. We don’t. We live in a village, regardless of how many thousands of houses you surround that village with.



## KEY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

### KDA Celbridge Road East

This is a rather bland way of saying Leixlip Castle Demesne. This estate should be left intact. The land itself is subject to **flooding** and high water tables; in part, due to the cauterising effect of the M4 motorway. I know this because I lived right beside these fields for ten years. Our house even flooded once, despite being essentially on some of the highest ground in Leixlip. There are few areas of arable land, and areas of heritage value, around Leixlip. What is left should be preserved as is, and either **farmed**, or left for **future amenity use**. The setting of Leixlip Castle should also be respected. The 'plans' proposed to create walkways and cycle paths through the estate and on to the Main Street via the castle entrance are a nonsense. That land is all private and will remain so, unless the state wishes to purchase the entire estate and the castle. Highly unlikely. Those plans are a sop to try and increase the likelihood of rezoning proposals, and should be roundly ignored.



*Leixlip Castle*

### KDA Black Avenue

**St. Catherine's Park**, also known as Lucan Demesne, stretches back over 800 years to the time of the Normans. Even then, it was parkland and woods. **Today it is a valuable amenity of over 200 acres of open spaces and ancient woodlands within the Liffey Valley, itself protected by a Special Area Amenity Order.** Fingal only has two of these SAAOs. The demesne, which straddles both Dublin and Kildare, was purchased in 1996 by our current president, Michael D Higgins, after a hard-fought campaign by locals to stop much of the parkland being built on. With the park safe, the aim, according to an official Fingal Co. Co. policy document, was to **"produce a core site for the establishment of a multi-county Liffey Valley Regional Park"**

It is frankly incredible that we are back here again, after all these years. The fight to protect the Black Avenue and St. Catherine's Park was a long and bitter one. Perhaps the corporate memory in Áras Chill Dara is short, but rest assured there are many in Leixlip who recall every part of that campaign.

Just to remind anyone reading this, when the OPW purchased the park on behalf of the public, as instructed by the then Minister Michael D Higgins, the entire estate was handed over to three local authorities to manage. The land included access from both the Lucan/Clonee Road (Fingal), lands beside the weir below the Spa Hotel in Lucan (South Dublin), and the Black Avenue (Kildare), all the way to the Fire Station on the Mill Lane in Leixlip. This is an important point. Whilst Fingal and South Dublin county councils respectively have properly honoured their part of the bargain by drafting management plans, Kildare has been dragging its feet. Indeed, it has treated the historic, tranquil and rather beautiful Black Avenue shamefully by allowing **40-50 tonne liquid bulk tankers and other HGVs** to drive up and down this narrow road. **Old stone walls have since collapsed** due to this heavy traffic that the road simply cannot cater for, and has made what is the Kildare entrance to our wonderful public park something of a **death trap**.



*The Black Avenue in winter*

There is, in time-honoured park tradition, a steel road barrier at this entrance, beside the Fire Station. This is just one of the ways you know you are entering a **public park**. The other is to check the title deeds in the OPW office, if you are

not sure. Or check out this official park map from Fingal (right). Alas, for some odd reason, Kildare feels unable or unwilling to lock this barrier at night (a simple task, not least considering Fingal locks its barriers in the evening, and no doubt opens them in the mornings too).

Can you imagine if Fingal decided to run huge bulk tankers up and down their section of the avenue into their car park? There would be war, and rightly so. It simply wouldn't fly. The waste water treatment plant that creates this unwanted traffic could pipe this waste in over the river, but this has never been investigated. Perhaps (God forbid) if we have a tragic accident or further disastrous collapse of walls into gardens, there may be a change of heart.

The proposed development that would ensue from a rezoning would create **traffic through a popular public park**. Instead of more traffic, we need to install better traffic calming at very least along the Black Avenue. The plan would not only bring traffic up the Avenue (currently a cul-de-sac, as it is the entrance to the Kildare car park of St Catherine's) it then proposes to bring traffic around and back down the other end of the Avenue from the car park, thus creating a one-way loop. This would effectively destroy the amenity as enjoyed by thousands of pedestrians, dog-walkers, joggers and casual cyclists.

**It also suggests that public amenity land can be turned over for private profit and development.** This is clearly wrong and in breach of everything that was supposed to happen for this section of the park when it was bought by the state on behalf of the public.

To that effect, it is probably wide open to a **legal challenge** on that matter alone. And on that very substantial issue, **Kildare County Council planners should not have even considered this rezoning.**

Further suggestions in the LAP are farcical. It is suggested that linear parks can be 'created' alongside this development. This is a nonsense. Woodland and grassland would be removed for housing, and yet somehow more amenity would be created? (The area is listed as 'Key Green Infrastructure Area': Figure 11-2 Green Infrastructure Mapping for Leixlip. Source: Leixlip: Habitat Survey and Green Infrastructure Mapping 2015).

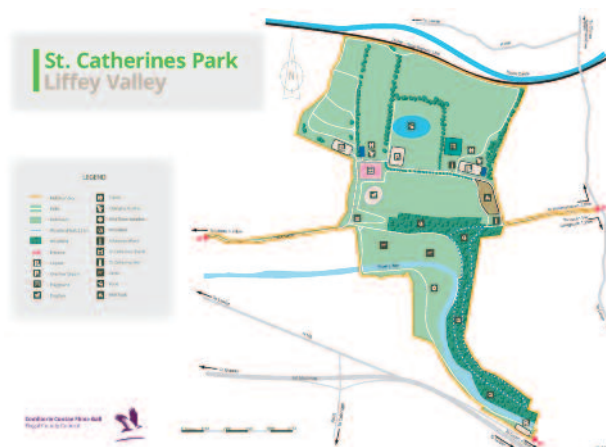
The 'linear park' in question lies directly over Irish Water (and Intel's) various pipelines that access the treatment plant. That is the **ONLY** reason that section of the land owned by the developer has been set aside.

The planner that KCC supplied on the public open day in Leixlip was questioned about these road plans, and he admitted he had **not visited the area in question** and was not aware of the car park in St. Catherine's. That is not just hugely depressing, but genuinely negligent, and shows a blatant disregard for the serious implications of such bizarre planning.

This KDA is contrary to S8 which commits the council to:

*'protect, enhance, create and connect natural heritage, high quality amenity areas and other green spaces throughout Leixlip for both biodiversity and recreational use.'* (Page 14).

**This KDA threatens the very nature of a public park**, and on this ground alone it is bizarre that you have included such a public facility, which is in essence a pedestrianised zone, for use as a road to access a private development. Such development and encroachment on St. Catherine's Park would lead to a loss of safe amenity and have a negative effect on public health.



*Fingal's official map of St. Catherine's Park, showing the boundary including the Black Avenue*



*Recent protest by locals along the Black Avenue, highlighting the hazards of bulk tankers along this narrow hill*



**This KDA would further negatively impact on residents of Mill Lane and Silleachain Lane, with hugely increased traffic volumes.** This would massively alter the environment of this quiet neighbourhood, and the traffic alone would impact on the residents, and also the **fire station**, which requires 24 hour access and egress for both incoming crews to calls (it is a retained station), and for fire appliances leaving the station.



*Leixlip fire station, Mill Lane*

**The critical thing to remember is that the Black Avenue is PART OF THE PARK.** It is locked at park times, with barriers (currently at the gate managed by Fingal near the Waste Water Treatment Plant). To allow this avenue to be turned into a public road therefore means 24-hour access. Without doubt, this would lead to large amounts of **antisocial behaviour and illegal dumping**, among other problems. To suggest housing allows for passive surveillance is a nonsense. All that is required for the park and the avenue to continue to be the fantastic facility it is already is for Kildare County Council to step up to its responsibilities, and lock their barrier at the Fire Station, and manage their section of the park, as they were supposed to do when they were gifted this great opportunity in 1996.

Fingal have set about their task: they have an avenue almost identical to the Black Avenue. It is beautifully maintained. They have a ranger station with toilets, a state-of-the-art playground and a BMX track. They have many well-kept pitches, outdoor gym equipment, a cricket crease, heritage monuments, ancient woodland and access to the river. South County Dublin have the weir, beautiful riverside walks and the recently installed 'fairy garden' for kids, along with some brand-new play equipment artfully placed around the section they maintain.



Over in Kildare? We allow our avenue to be used by heavy trucks. We allow our few public benches to flake and rot. We do deals with local clubs so that they, and not the council, cut the grass on the pitches. We plant a few trees and let them die. We allow contractors to remove mature trees without the correct paperwork.



Several years ago, the council allowed private haulage contractors to tip waste soil and rock into the local woodland without planning permission (from the council-owned site at the waste water treatment plant) which resulted in the death of many mature trees overlooking Black Avenue, and the destabilisation of the soil. And to cap it all off, the council are now considering opening up the entire avenue for private profit. It's beyond farce. It's grotesque. And in **total breach of what was planned for the park at the outset**. Other than the developer/land-owner, no-one is going to thank you for this unbelievable proposal.

*Clockwise, from top left: Tanker entering Black Avenue from Mill Lane; Van passing woman with buggy on Black Avenue hill; Truck taking up entire narrow road at top of Black Avenue; Vehicles stuck on hill towards car park in St. Catherine's: it is narrow with listed stone walls and mature trees, and not wide enough for two vehicles to pass. Typically, it is used by pedestrians. It is part of the park. This has been pitched as an exit point for the proposed KDA*

**The council needs to remove this KDA from the LAP. It was thrown out at the last LAP, and should not have made a reappearance.**

## The North Main Street Backlands

This was pitched in the previous LAP, and received a lukewarm reception. Is it a serious proposal? Have landowners been notified? Are CPOs going to be required (it looks like some homes would have to be demolished)? Because it seems like it's just a sop towards trying to implement some of the brownfield site requirements in the LAP that are otherwise absent in the plan. As with far too much in the LAP, the objectives are developer-led. There is talk of a **car park**. This is welcome news as it may stem the flow away from Main Street retail for a time. Though as with other promised facilities such as swimming pools and playgrounds, we'll believe it when we see it. What genuine efforts have been made on the **parking issue** in Leixlip in recent years? Arthur Guinness Square is small and full most of the time. The small area off the Captain's Hill is no longer available. What is left of public on-street parking is heavily policed by traffic wardens. Aldi is now a private car park for customers only. If this proposed new car park at Backlands is contingent on the overall project going ahead, then I can safely say it won't be appearing anytime soon.



*Empty units on Leixlip Main Street*

Do these projects work anyway? Do they fulfil a function? I am not sure. 'New streets' conceived by planners tend to all look the same, with coffee shops on the ground floor, and apartments above; lots of brick, steel and glass parachuted into heritage settings. (Speaking of coffee shops, there are currently three, relatively new indigenous coffee shops in the centre of Leixlip, and the very best of luck to them all. One outlet from one of the big chains, like Starbucks, in this new retail opportunity, and these local, home-grown shops are toast). The reality is that there is far too little detail for anyone to make a decent observation on the scheme, other than to question **where exactly is all this car parking located?** The plan is fuzzy and lacking in detail, but certainly does not show any sort of car parking that could be considered a 'new public town centre car park', unless there are plans for an underground and/or multi-storey facility.

**The entrance on to the Main Street and Mill Lane junction** also will create traffic issues. Again, there are cross-purposes here which suggest there is precious little joined-up thinking in the plan. The plan here shows a roundabout. Already there are road markings on that junction for traffic calming measures to create a **much narrower entrance** on to the Mill Lane. An engineer has told us that there is no room for a roundabout. So what's it going to be, planners? Because your current plan for Backlands requires a vehicular exit at that junction. You are currently designing it out of the equation. Increased traffic volumes (from KDA Black Avenue) will make this junction into a **nightmare bottleneck** for residents, other road-users and the fire service.

## The Town Centre Public Realm

The Town Centre Public Realm also suffers if you have plans to make this area a multi-functional space for public use but also keep it as a car park. Where do all the car users park if you take away their main facility? Using **Arthur Guinness Square** for pop-ups and other gatherings is a lovely idea (such as a farmers market), but seems totally unworkable without first providing some alternative car parking. After all, these events are supposed to bring tourism and trade into the village, but that's hard to do when you cannot offer visitors a place to park.

Proposals to extend the **walkway** along the river are great, but again, I cannot see them happening. There are structural issues involved, potential health and safety issues, heritage sites to consider, and permissions required as well. It would be preferable if the **river bank** around the confluence of the Rye and the Liffey was landscaped first, which is a mass of brambles; that would be far cheaper, and open up the river for the public. I also have proposed in the past that a **weir** be placed on this section to create a rise in water level of approx. half a metre in line with the old level when the original weir was in place. This would resolve a couple of issues. It would permanently flood the area on a controlled basis and cover some of the unsightly concrete banks below the viewing stand, and would create a wonderful visual spectacle for visitors. It brings the boathouse back into play as per its original function, and overall would have a neutral effect on wildlife. In fact, it would help stabilise an



*The original weir on the Liffey at Leixlip*



area that is subject to fluctuations in water levels that probably impact on wildlife, such as fish, invertebrates and nesting birds. And overall, a simple concrete weir such as the ones placed on the Rye would be cheaper than a short boardwalk that doesn't go anywhere.

**Ralph Square:** what can you say except good luck with that. It's a nightmare of shared ownership. It's a shambles, but if nothing else, it proves that people will lose their mind if you suggest removing their car parking space. The plan is commendable. I would love to see it in my lifetime. I hope I live that long.

## LEIXLIP ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Clearly this area (Collinstown) has been sterilised for tech business. This is a shame, because as land goes, it is well-placed for housing as it close to the motorway, and the possibility of an additional train station (though it is relatively close to one at Louisa Bridge). It is certainly a better location than Confey, which will require the uprooting of a large GAA club, the demolition (most likely) of a heritage canal bridge, the provision of a new road link somewhere (possibly along the canal, though through St. Catherine's Park was also pitched a few years ago, and then rapidly withdrawn due to public anger). Plus it will feel 'separate' from the main village, whilst somewhere near Collinstown and Barnhall could be better incorporated into the layout of Leixlip.

## TOURISM

'Cultural heritage offers a specific attraction to many visitors to the Leixlip area: The Wonderful Barn, Leixlip Castle and Leixlip Spa' (page 35) reads well, but the reality is as follows:

- The Wonderful Barn: about to be hemmed in by large housing development.
- Leixlip Castle: proposed rezoning of some of the demesne, leading to inevitable erosion of the estate, plus proposed access through main castle grounds to Main Street.
- Leixlip Spa: proposed road to pass right beside this SAC site for relief for Confey development. Such a road would destroy the character of the Rye Valley, and do more visual damage to this area than Intel ever did.



*The Wonderful Barn, built c. 1743*

So the tourism attractions in Leixlip have been poorly treated by the council over the years. The Wonderful Barn experience in particular is shameful. (<https://www.kildarenow.com/gallery/news/405941/planning-board-grant-permission-for-massive-40m-housing-development-in-north-kildare.html>). In that article ('Planning board grant permission for massive €40M housing development in north Kildare', 19th April, 2018) it states:

*A developer has been granted permission to fast track the construction of 450 homes in north Kildare in what is one of the county's biggest housing projects for some time. Ardstone Capital went directly to An Bord Pleanála seeking planning permission to develop 450 new homes in the Barnhall area of Leixlip on a site north of the Wonderful Barn amenity and adjoining the existing residential areas of Rinawade, Castletown and Elton Court. The government brought in measures last year that would allow developers apply directly to An Bord Pleanála when seeking to build more than 100 homes, rather than having to go through local authorities.*



*The Wonderful Barn site, soon to be surrounded.*

Allowing large-scale developments to leap-frog local councils is yet another diminution of democracy, along with the abolition of town councils.

*"Today the Wonderful Barn stands sandwiched between the M4 Motorway and a housing estate and, with its associated buildings, is in direly in need of a vision and a plan to secure its future. Sadly Barnhall House was badly damaged in a fire in recent years..." (Irish Georgian Society)*

Interestingly, it further adds, in the article that ‘access to the proposed development is via a new roundabout on the Celbridge Road (R404) which will facilitate new vehicular access to the application site and a dedicated entrance arrangement to the Wonderful Barn Complex.’ This of course is **not true** as there is no room for a roundabout. There will just be a junction, and, knowing this country, probably traffic lights. It could become quite a dangerous junction too, as it comes out near the bottom of the bridge with poor sight-lines for east-bound traffic.

The renovation works carried out at the barn a few years ago are welcome, but the overall site is effectively managed by local volunteers, and the site is hugely vulnerable to **vandalism and fire** (there are regular fires at this site, some within the main buildings). It would be fair to say, when Bayzana owned the site, they looked after it better than the council do now. Pretending we got some sort of deal from the developers for land to the west of the Barn in exchange for building land is a nonsense. That is sterile land set back from the motorway that can never be developed anyway. It was a poor deal, and future generations have been sold out. The Barn requires large investment to make it into a worthwhile visitor experience. I do not believe the council have this kind of money available, and if they do, I am not convinced it would be spent on this site. That said, it is a great opportunity with huge potential; hopefully it won't be burnt to the ground before we reach that potential.

## HEALTH

There is a requirement for a **primary care centre** in Leixlip. The council should ‘fess up here and admit the recent site suggested (the old ESB site near Mill Lane) was never a runner. Accusations that locals somehow stymied the plans are mischievous. The site itself was simply not large enough for the model you require. Either you reduce the model size, or find a new site. Either way, the Mill Lane option is not feasible for the current proposal. But overall, yes, it would be great to have a primary care facility in Leixlip.

## CAR PARKING

*‘The main public car park in the town centre is at Abbey Square.’*

According to the Leixlip LAP, we have an Abbey Square in Leixlip. This is news to the locals. It's clearly a cut and paste error. Does anyone proof-read these LAPs? As pointed out above, our main car park is Arthur Guinness Square, and it's at capacity most of the time. I seem to recall this error was in the last draft too. That's poor.

## SURFACE WATER AND GROUND WATER

*‘The management of surface water and protection of groundwater is part of the Council's sustainable water services policy. Adequate storm water drainage and retention facilities are necessary to accommodate surface water run-off resulting from current and future developments in Leixlip. The use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Green Infrastructure in new developments will contribute to surface water retention and help to reduce and prevent flooding, by mimicking the natural drainage of a site.’*

Can the council point out where they have implemented SuDs in Kildare? Because without some serious considerations on flooding, the **Confey development could have serious impacts on the residents below within the Silleacháin Stream catchment**. This area was always prone to flooding, and recent alleviation works by the OPW seemed to have stopped this for now. Creating a massive housing development at Confey will seriously alter what happens to large-scale rainfall, and unless this is managed properly, could see houses once again flooded within this catchment.

## POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

*‘The Council recognises the importance of maintaining the town free from litter and protecting it from indiscriminate dumping and bill postering.’*

So, perhaps lock the barrier at the bottom of the Black Avenue? That will eliminate one black spot anyway.



## SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

*The existing provision of open space still remains above the 'FIT' recommended guidance with the exception of green corridors and natural/semi natural open space provision. This means that if the population of Leixlip is to increase to the higher range of 23,433 persons by 2023, an additional 8.72 hectares of green corridors and/or natural/semi natural open space area will be required to serve the community.*

### **How are the council proposing to do this, when much of the current LAP proposals actually remove habitats?**

Again, you would have to ask if you actually read any of these things, or just add them in as padding. That's 21.5 acres of green, open space. Where is this, planners? Can you point it out? If you are genuinely trying to foist every small patch of grass within a housing development as some form of green belt, then we have all truly gone down the rabbit hole.

Including the Black Avenue KDA as some sort of linear park is not just disingenuous but an outright lie and needs to be nailed as such. Several times within this LAP you have tried to produce this KDA as some sort of green wonderland. For example, here:

*1. Black Avenue KDA: New Residential Lands facilitating the delivery of new parkland along Black Avenue and providing improved access to St. Catherine's Park.*

It is nothing of the sort. It is pandering to a private developer using public land that is already a public park, much-loved and much-used, and its co-option for private gain will not be tolerated or allowed. The stupidity of it is that the green facility you keep referencing **is already there**, and requires very little investment. So either someone has been seriously hoodwinked in the council planning department, or there is something truly rotten at the heart of Áras Chill Dara. I sincerely hope that is not the case. Improved access is not an issue given the current, light, traffic volumes (if you discount the bulk tankers who should not be using this entrance, though in fairness, their numbers have stabilised). The only reason you would have to widen the road would be to facilitate the traffic from the new housing development.

So, a classic case of **fixing a problem that doesn't exist**.



*Wild flowers in St. Catherine's Park, Leixlip*

## Summary

In summary, this proposed LAP could represent one of the most serious mis-steps ever taken in the development of Leixlip. Some of the proposed KDAs, such as Black Avenue, Backlands and Celbridge East hugely alter the structure, fabric and ambiance of our village.

Whilst some housing is welcome, the amount being forced on us from unaccountable sources is **unsustainable**. Some people think more houses will help with local retail. In general, this is a dubious claim at best; in reality, packing houses around the edge of Leixlip will more than likely encourage people to get away from the village Main Street (where there is precious little parking) and do their shopping in the larger retail centres – something a lot of local people do already.

Some of the ‘upgrades’ mooted for the centre sound wonderful (river walk, pop-up markets, Ralph Square pedestrianisation), but we have seen these pitched before, and they have not happened. And to be honest, I don’t see them happening this time either. There are no commitments, just aspirations.

Finally, the council needs to step up to its responsibilities regarding **St. Catherine’s Park**. It is a jewel, and needs to be treated with respect. The Black Avenue KDA is, for all the reasons outlined in this submission, one of the worst ideas ever pitched in a Local Area Plan, and should never have been considered.

The council also need to respect the wishes of the previous elected councillors, who **unanimously voted to protect St. Catherine’s Park**, and refuse the building of any road through it. This was aimed squarely at the plans from Fingal (and now TII and the NTA) to link the M4 to the M3.

But it turns out we should have been looking closer to home...

Yours sincerely,

Declan Kenny



*Hundreds of park users protesting about a proposed road through St. Catherine’s Park*