

SUBMISSION TO THE DRAFT LEIXLIP LOCAL AREA PLAN (LAP) 2020-2026

Introduction

We wish to state that we make this submission on the Leixlip Area Plan (LAP) 2020-2026 as two individuals and residents of the Confey area of Leixlip. We have no political affiliation or vested interest other than we have lived in this area for over 40 years and are now entering our senior years and have chosen to live in Leixlip because it is a lovely town, community and place to live. We write this submission with some understanding and local knowledge, which we reference throughout the document.

I know a little about the planning process having worked in Dublin City Council for almost 30 years and have personally being involved in some major housing projects in the City.

I have always held the view that **Planning is primarily about People and Communities** and their needs over vested interests or speculative developments. Good planning should seek to address the issues facing the communities and their lived environment. In fact, this was emphasised by the Minister for the Department of Housing and Local Government in 2013 in his introduction to ***Guidelines for Planning Authority of Local Area Plans*** when he stated, *'Planning is fundamentally about people, about communities we live in and their future'*. The same ***Department Planning Policy Guidelines*** also stated, *'Our Planning system provides for the social and physical infrastructure to meet the needs of our people and in a way that protects the many qualities of our natural and built environment'*.

As I read through the **Draft LAP for Leixlip 2020-2026** there is a clear disconnect between these guidelines and policies and the proposals for Leixlip and in particular the Confey area as envisaged. The primary stakeholders in any development plan for an area must be first and foremost the existing local community but this LAP has a development led *focus* with a dependency on private vested interests for it's a delivery. It also lacks any real information on the details beyond land zoning and is **devoid of a Master Plan** providing the necessary infrastructural and environmental detail and impact assessment as well as presenting a clear and convincing reasoning justifying the decisions behind the plan. We will therefore address our submission and concerns under the following headings:

Proposed Housing Development

The LAP envisages a total housing development comprising **3,315 units of which 1,350 are to be located in the Confey area**. The major concern this immediately raises is the scale of the proposed housing development. Development on this scale would result in a population increase in Leixlip Town over the next ten years of around two thirds. By way of example the River Forest Housing estate comprises over 400 houses and is one of the largest housing estates in North Kildare area. The scale of the proposed development in Confey area alone comprises 1,350 units, in essence you are looking at a housing development over three times the size of River Forest Estate. This simply cannot meet the basic criteria that the scale of housing development in one location should match the community's natural expansion needs. The plan simply does not give any reasonable basis for determining this scale of need and therefore must be reviewed and in our view scaled down considerably.

Incredibly the LAP in terms of the land zoning for housing development suggests the **relocation of the single most primary sports and social facility Confey GAA grounds and club house** to facilitate some of this development. Have the planners not considered more suitable and accessible sites like the lands at the former Hewlett Packard campus for these houses, instead of 'uprooting' an entire GAA grounds!

One of the greatest mistakes over previous decades in housing provision has been the 'promise' that once the houses are constructed that the additional needs will promptly follow such as the proper infrastructure including suitable road network, transport as well as amenities, social and educational needs. Sadly, primarily for financial reasons, many of these 'promises' never materialise. River Forest estate again is a good example. Once the houses were built there was one single shop unit for years, there was no public transport 'up the hill' as CIE said it was inaccessible and the residents waited years for a train service, a library and shops. It also took KCC years to 'take the estate in charge'.

This LAP is repeating the mistakes of the past and provides absolutely no financials' or funds commitment and guarantees that will ensure that these necessary facilities will materialise **in tandem** with the housing development proposed. It is simply the '*cart before the horse*' and the planners must produce a Master Plan that gives these commitments and guarantees BEFORE a single housing unit is designed and approved. They owe this to the local community and the local Councillors must on their behalf demand it!

Traffic and Transport

There is already considerable traffic congestion at peak times especially accessing the village, access onto the N4, local access from estates during school stop offs etc. Have the planners factored in the co-relation between the adjoining towns of Maynooth and Celbridge, which share public transport services and road networks into Dublin City With the increasing traffic levels early morning and evening, commuters coming from adjoining areas are diverting through Leixlip village and accessing the N4 can cause delays of up to 15 minutes. Getting out of housing estates can also cause delays.

The Commuter train service from Maynooth, especially at peak times, is already well over capacity and rarely can a passenger get a seat at Confey station. In addition, there is just one 66X bus from Confey heading directly to the City Centre and this is almost full before the village.

The main secondary road route to the village from Confey area is over Cope Bridge and this is a single lane system because of the limited bridge width. Accepting that the LAP envisages works to widen this bridge BUT the scale of housing envisaged will at least generate in excess of 2000 more cars creating chaos to the existing restricted traffic management of the area.

There is also the major expansion for the INTEL Plant currently being undertaken. Currently during shift changeovers increase traffic volumes in the area and a large number of these cars travel via Cope Bridge coming from north of the area. This will increase significantly with the increased workforce.

The LAP proposes a *'Park and Ride'* service within the proposed housing development of approx. 50 car spaces! Are the planners not aware that an *unofficial* P & R system already exists in most of the housing estates adjoining these transport services, much to the annoyance of local residents, directly affected. The reality is that users in these new developments will add to the already unofficial situation, rather than walking some distance.

The new DART service for Maynooth line envisaged will take at least another 8 to 10 years so add these commuters from the new housing areas to the currently overcrowded public transport network and you are looking at a gridlock situation from Confey through the village of Leixlip

This leads me to question have the planners and designers of this draft LAP actually spoken with local residents or gone to the bother of gaining local knowledge of the issues especially the traffic and transport issues that currently exist and will significantly add to the congestion.

Environmental Impact

The recent local elections highlighted the *'Green Agenda'* and many councillors with 'green credentials' were successful in this election because of the serious threat to the environment with car emissions, pollution and biodiversity etc.

The proposals in this LAP have significant environmental impact especially in the already mentioned higher level of traffic generated by the scale of the housing developments, the lack of any alignment with ensuring an improved capacity in public transport as well as the water and electrical services.

In recent months the Leixlip area has experienced severe pressure on its already vulnerable water and electrical supply systems. Once again add an additional 3000 + housing units to this area and result is obvious, an increase in pollution, noise levels and impact on the environment not to mention the general quality of life.

There is therefore, in my view a lack of vision for the needs of the current and potential community in this plan.

St Catherine's Park

There are not a lot of local amenities in Leixlip and the LAP unfortunately does not provide for the likes of a local civic building or theatre, facilities for the elderly (25% of the population are now over 55 years), a Primary Care Centre etc

But thankfully we have a wonderful (FREE) amenity in the beautiful **St Catherine's Park**.

Over 1000 people protested and submitted submissions at the ludicrous plan to run a dual carriageway through the Kildare lands of the park to link the N4. Eventually the Councillors agreed to protect the amenity of St Catherine's Park and that no road proposal should be considered through the park within the Councils (Kildare) ownership. This was the right decision.

But now the Key Development Area within the LAP is proposing the zoning of agricultural lands within the parklands and providing 350 units on lands with **access off the Black Avenue.**

Again, I must ask has any of the planners walked this access which adjoins the Fire Station for the area and is a narrow almost single lane thoroughfare that leads to the sewage treatment plant. Tankers, trucks and tractors with slurry trailers also use this route to the plant on a daily basis, which is only accessed off a narrow road leading to Main Street and the village. It is incredulous to suggest that this thorough fare, even with some widening, could accommodate the level of traffic created by the proposed development (approx. 500 vehicles) in such a prime amenity area. I might add that there is often a noxious odour from the treatment plant on certain days.

Once again have the traffic and environmental impacts been seriously considered. The current level of open space will be reduced; the traffic will generate emissions and pollution/noise as well as the impact on road widening on a key green infrastructure and its habitats.

The LAP lacks any convincing rationale for choosing such a location for housing development and it leads us to think that there must be some speculative interest behind identifying a location within such a prime amenity area.

The Councillors as representatives of the people of Leixlip must vehemently oppose the inclusion of this area for housing and reiterate their previous commitment to ensure that no roadway or no housing development that will materially impact this important amenity area for the people of Leixlip takes place!

We ask that our views and submission on the Leixlip Area Plan 2020 to 2026 are given due consideration as part of this important planning process for the people of Leixlip.

Yours respectfully,

Jim and Barbara Donnan

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8th July 2019