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SECTION 3 VISION FOR LEIXLIP

3.1 STRATEGIC VISION

"This LAP is underpinned by a strategic vision which is intended to guide the future growth of Leixlip in a sustainable manner, in a way that reflects the existing character and amenities of the area, the surrounding landscape, heritage and environment and improve the quality of life for the existing and future community.

The vision for the LAP will ensure that growth planned for the town over the Plan period and beyond occurs in a suitable and sequential manner, while prioritising a low carbon, compact, consolidated and connected pattern of development."

- Accurate research clearly was not carried out. We don't want Confey to resemble a soulless ghetto – Adamstown springs to mind, so does the Ballymun, Dublin, the planning disaster of the 1960s.
- Community is very important – the GAA Club is the heart of the community. The proposal to move it is ludicrous, even if only the playing fields. The new location would be too far to walk to for all members of the community, especially the elderly (we have a very high number of senior citizens), the school-going playing members, and the pupils of the local primary schools whose only fields are the GAA Club.
- Two proposed footbridges at River Forest and Glendale would fail to serve any real purpose, being exceedingly costly, attract unsociable behaviour, would be ugly eyesores and a complete waste of taxpayers' money. The height alone would make them prohibitive, unsafe and unrealistic for wheelchair users and those pushing buggies or with limited mobility. A target for crime for users.

3.2 DELIVERING THE STRATEGIC VISION

"The vision is supported and consistent with the policies and provisions of:

- Proximity to the railway stations.
- Ability to promote sustainable transport modes and connections, both within the existing urban footprint, new community, education, sports and recreational facilities, maximising existing amenities such as the River Liffey, the Royal Canal & Greenway, Leixlip Spa, Leixlip Castle and St. Catherine's Park."
- How can sustainable transport modes be promoted? The planned electrification of the local railway lines will not be complete for a minimum of twelve plus years. The existing train service is a hit and miss affair – commuters are forced to take trains up to 90 minutes earlier, just to get a seat on the train in the mornings. The carriages are not monitored for over-crowding and, for Confey and Leixlip commuters, it's always standing room only; almost always crammed together like the Calcutta Express. Travel by rail is dangerous and unbearable, unless late at night or at midday, midweek. It is clear the Planners have not properly researched this either.
- Bus Connects has announced that it is cancelling the only bus service to Confey, the 66A.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

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

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

- St. Catherine's Park and the provision of a motorway linking the N3 and the N4, despite unanimous and vehement promises to the contrary, right through the Kildare side of the park, has not been addressed in the LAP. In fact, it has been removed since the previous edition of the LAP. Why?
 - St. Catherine's Park, Kildare land, has been identified as the proposed route for the new, alternative motorway to the major M50 in Dublin. That means the loss of all the playing fields in the entire Co. Kildare section of this, the only public park in North Kildare. Motorway underpasses or high pedestrian bridges would be unsafe, unrealistic and an unfair way to access land already designated to Dublin clubs, in the next county. How can the removal of the Park possibly be considered an 'improvement'?
- PLEASE EXAMINE THE RESULTS OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY, MAY 2019, CARRIED OUT ON BEHALF OF T.I.I. BY ROUGHAN & O'DONOVAN, AECOM ALLIANCE, CONSULTING ENGINEERS – TITLE: 'ENHANCING MOTORWAY OPERATION SERVICES, M50 RESILIENCE BETWEEN M50, J 6 AND J7, SCOPING STUDY, MAY 2019'.
- In the above-named Study, four of eleven routes examined are deemed the most suitable for a replacement M50. All four are routed through St. Catherine's Park. Three of these are through the Co. Kildare part of the Park. Apart from destroying the quality of life for residents - the motorway is planned directly behind back gardens. Kildare Co. Councillors unanimously voted to prevent this land from having the proposed road ever routed through it.
 - Indeed, our current Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, and Minister Damien English promised in a televised sitting of the Dail that no road would ever be permitted to be built through St. Catherine's Park.
 - The LAP proposes moving Confey GAA pitches unreasonably far away to an alternative location; instead providing ugly dense housing.
 - The proposed Sensory Garden in St. Catherine's Park, to which Kildare Co. Council awarded a €50,000 grant, provided its most suitable site and approved its plans for expected completion in August 2019, has not been mentioned in the LAP. I do not understand why or how the Planners could have missed something so important. It was as a result of a €5,000 donation from Intel Corporation and further substantial fundraising by locals towards the Sensory Garden that Kildare Co. Council came on board in 2018 and announced their €50,000 funding.

- The carparks for St. Catherine's Park are crammed to capacity every weekend, both in the Co. Kildare and the Fingal sides. The weekly Urban Market & Craft Fair held in St. Catherine's Park attracts thousands of visitors, apart from all of the sporting events, exercising options, picnics, socialising, nature walks and other general well-being benefits that the Park offers. Again, why has the protection of St. Catherine's Park been omitted from the current LAP?

- In the recent SEA Report, under the heading of Mitigation Measures 9.2, Subsection Policy 15, it is advised that: 'It is the policy of the Council to protect environmental quality in Leixlip through the implementation of European, national and regional policy and legislation relating to air quality, light pollution noise pollution and waste management.'

- For Air Quality, the following is recommended: "It is the policy of Kildare County Council to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole, though promoting the preservation of best ambient air quality with sustainable development."

- Under the heading Visual Amenity, the creation of a new policy is recommended: "Recommend creation of new policy: Protect the landscape character, values, sensitivities, focal points and views in the Leixlip area. This will include, inter alia, the following: a) the requirement of a Visual Impact Assessment for developments with potential to impact on areas of significant landscape character, value or sensitivity, including both urban and natural features, significant townscapes and historic buildings, as appropriate, and b) Prohibit development that will block or interfere with a significant focal point of view. Where it is considered that a development may impact on focal points or views, have regard to the significance of any such impact and any appropriate mitigation measures that should be incorporated."

PLEASE PREVENT THE DESECRATION OF THE BEAUTIFUL ST. CATHERINE'S PARK

- Above, you will see some of the reasons illustrated why it is so important to save our valuable St. Catherine's Park from either housing development or, especially, a very large motorway. These are some of the daily scenery of one of the most beautiful places in Ireland, and quite certainly in Co. Kildare. If you could kindly visit the area, before allowing the desecration of the area, it would be greatly appreciated. A visit will not disappoint!

- The residents of Glendale Meadows already tolerate the noise of increased rail traffic, the constant hum of traffic using the Leixlip By-Pass/M4 and the sounds of planes and helicopters flying in and out of Weston Airport. We are in the direct flight path of Dublin Airport and it is particularly noisy during summer months.

- Apart from the associated health risks, the noise from traffic using the proposed Eastern Access Road would create a living Hell scenario for the residents of the innermost, and certainly our road, of Glendale Meadows.

SECTION 4 CORE STRATEGY

4.2 RESIDENTIAL CAPACITY

Table 4-1 Residential Unit Assessment

"Key Development Area Black Avenue 350 houses"

- The direct area outlined for 350 proposed houses is part of a heritage site and is currently of extreme interest to the archaeology team in Fingal Co. Council and to those concerned in the National Museum. A number of finds have been made on both sides of the county boundary. I find it incomprehensible that the Planners have either not discussed this with archaeologists and that it has been omitted from the LAP.

- The whole area around the Black Avenue, Mill Lane and St. Catherine's Park is home to a protected and endangered, rare species of bat. International teams travel to the Black Avenue at least annually to inspect these rarer, Annex-listed species. Please refer to the guidelines issued by Bat Conservation Ireland, as follows:

"Bats are protected by law in the Republic of Ireland under the Wildlife Act 1976 and subsequent amendments. It is an offence to intentionally disturb, injure or kill a bat or disturb its resting place and any work on a roost must be carried out with the advice of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Republic of Ireland. Among Ireland's obligations under this Directive we are obliged to 'maintain favourable conservation status' of Annex-listed species."

- The following information, as published in the Irish Times, very early on Thursday 11 July 2019, in an article written by a Ms. Olivia Kelly, is of extreme pertinence in regard to the preservation of the bat community in the Black Avenue and surrounding area of Leixlip:

Blackrock housing go-ahead reversed over missing bat report

Permission obtained by Cairn Homes for over 220 homes quashed by High Court

A "fatal" error that meant a developer failed to publish online a report about bats has resulted in a judge quashing planning permission for more than 220 homes in Blackrock, Co Dublin.

Southwood Park Residents Association took judicial review proceedings against An Bord Pleanála's decision to grant Cairn Homes permission for 214 apartments and seven houses on the grounds of Chesterfield House, a protected structure on Cross Avenue.

Mr Justice Garrett Simons, on the second day of proceedings, quashed the board's decision because a document on the potential impact of the development on bat species had not been posted online. The residents, whose estate backs on to the Chesterfield site, had claimed the board had erred in its decision and failed to meet requirements under EU environmental impact and habitat directives. The judge noted in his ruling that the breach was not "trivial, technical or insubstantial" and was "fatal to the validity of the planning permission".

At least four species of bats were recorded "feeding and commuting" in the area, according to the bat survey. Irish Wildlife Trust conservation officer Kieran Flood said such surveys are important. "We can't allow unchecked

development, every small loss of habitat represents a death by 1,000 cuts.”

- The final stretch of the Black Avenue, adjacent to the Sewerage Works, leading up to the car park in the Kildare side of St. Catherine's Park has its county border along the very centre of the road. How can any developer apply for planning permission for a housing estate, incorporating lands from Fingal Co. Council? Surely that would be invalid? application?

- Furthermore, in reconstructing the road and during proposed excavations, how can protected structures such as the St. Catherine's holy well remain intact?

- Currently, in Confey and throughout Glendale Meadows, adjacent to St. Catherine's Park, we experience between six and eight incidents per year, of an increasingly prolonged nature, when our water service is cut off. We also experience far too many prolonged electricity breakdowns, also at no notice. Why would the Planners even consider almost doubling the number of houses in Leixlip, when this is the case? The LAP does not address the growing problems of loss of essential services.

- There are already far too many houses in the area. While it is accepted that there is a need for new housing nationally, I strongly feel that the scale of the proposed new housing be reduced to 10-15% in total, at an absolute maximum. This figure would be far better for traffic management and in order to fulfil the LAP's commitment to reducing carbon footprint as distinct from increasing this dramatically in Leixlip.

- Why have the Planners not considered using the long vacated former Hewlett Packard premises and campus for housing and development? It would make far more sense, economically and the infrastructure is already in place.

SECTION 7 HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

7.4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 7-1 Social Infrastructure Needs

“Local equipped play areas -St. Catherine's Park”

- St. Catherine's Park is listed in this table. Whereabouts are the sites for these play areas? A motorway (the alternative to using the major M50 in Dublin) is planned directly through and over St. Catherine's Park, in the Kildare side. Apart from ruining the quality of air, the quality of life for immediate residents, noise pollution and the attraction of antisocial behavioural types, destroying the one and only Park in North Kildare and eliminating every single playing pitch in the Park AND eliminating the long promised solitude of a sensory garden for the less able bodies members of our community, how could Planners possibly factor in play areas in the form of a playground for children or playing fields for all residents? As the Planners propose removing and relocating the GAA pitches, where exactly do they propose providing the 'local equipped play areas' in St. Catherine's Park?

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my application.