

## Submission in relation to the Leixlip Local Area Plan 2020 – 2026

From: Ronan O'Beirne, [REDACTED]

Leixlip is a village with the population of a large town. It currently has a population larger, and significantly larger than many county towns in Ireland. These include Tullamore, Castlebar, Cavan, Wicklow, Longford, Nenagh, Monaghan and Roscommon.

Based on the likely population growth from the developments described in the Local Area Plan, Leixlip will become the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> largest town in Ireland. To put this in context, Leixlip will have a larger population than all but five towns across Ireland after the five cities (Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford). In fact, its population will be broadly the same as that of Kilkenny.

The Local Area Plan makes grossly insufficient allowance for a population of such significant size as is likely in Leixlip were this Plan to come to fruition in its current form.

In fact, to call this document a plan is an extreme exaggeration. A plan needs to outline timescales, and at a minimum, dependencies – i.e. “A needs to happen before B, B needs to happen before C, etc.” This document instead is little more than an outline of zoning proposals after which planning permission can be granted. In fact, given the size of many of the development areas, permission can be granted by An Bord Pleanala with little or no regard given to Kildare County Council or our elected representatives.

There are no assurances in the Local Area Plan to the population of Leixlip that required infrastructure and other facilities will be put in place before any new houses are built. Commitments need to be made in this regard, and funding obtained, prior to any further development within Leixlip.

Regardless of what arrangements are made, Leixlip as a village and its surrounds will struggle greatly if this level of development is permitted. I strongly encourage our local decision makers to reconsider substantial details of this plan and to significantly reduce this over-development in Leixlip.

I know you will have received detailed submissions from a number of other residents of Leixlip so I will keep my other observations brief. In my view, no matter how many or few houses are developed in Leixlip, focus is needed on the following areas:

- Leixlip Village is not thriving despite such a large current population. Despite the significant development already underway or approved in Leixlip from the last Local Area Plan, there have been no improvements to amenities or infrastructure. I am referring the development

underway adjacent to the Wonderful Barn and Glen Easton. Infrastructure and amenity development needs to be funded and commenced prior to other development commencing.

- The railway station car parks in Leixlip are occupied beyond capacity (Confey) and approaching capacity (Louisa Bridge). Utilisation of the latter has been growing steadily over the last two years, and I predict will be at capacity in 18 months. This needs to be addressed now, and not wait until further development commences.
- Leixlip Louisa Bridge car park was at capacity for a significant period during construction of the last expansion at Intel. It was being used by developer contractors as it was significantly more convenient than the Park & Ride arranged by Intel in Co Meath. This crowded out commuters, many of who even had annual parking passes. It is imperative that Intel contractors are not permitted to use this car park during future expansion of Intel. Repeated pleading with Irish Rail on this matter was unsuccessful over many weeks until I engaged a local elected representative. Until this was resolved I had no choice but to drive to work in Dublin City Centre. I am fortunate to have parking at work but I choose to take public transport. You must make it easy and enjoyable for people to avail of public transport.
- Any population growth in Leixlip needs to be discussed with Dublin Bus. The current proposal that Leixlip commuters to Dublin transfer to another bus in Lucan is not sustainable. In fact, I'm sure the people of Lucan don't want thousands of Leixlip residents alighting in their town centre every day. This must be addressed.
- Some may argue that Leixlip doesn't need all the facilities of a county town, or of any large town given its proximity to Dublin city and its catered-for suburbs. However, this is doing a grave injustice to the people of Leixlip in Co Kildare. For many items, Leixlip residents need to drive 30+ minutes to Naas or Newbridge. Examples include Motor Tax and K-Doc. In fact, the late night pharmacy alongside K-Doc is apparently no longer open late and there are no visible means for Co Kildare residents to obtain emergency prescriptions after-hours. Leixlip is facilitated as if it were a lower tier town than others in Co Kildare.
- There is one playground, a small playground for only small-ish children in all of Leixlip. While provision may exist within the Plan for development of playgrounds, there is no plan to create these nor any indication who will pay for these. Sufficient playgrounds need to be provided, with parking, for children of varying ages.
- Even with its current population, Kildare Co Council seems to have little regard for Leixlip. As an example, the grass verges on several routes into the town, including the link road to Intel have not been cut all year. The average household income in Leixlip is one of the highest in the country. If Kildare County Council cannot negotiate sufficient budget to maintain even our grass verges with our current population, I have serious concerns about Kildare Co Council's intentions with regards to the careful development of Leixlip and its ongoing maintenance.
- Leixlip town centre is deteriorating. Many stores are owned by a very small number of people. Most restaurant premises are owned by the same family thus diminishing competition (I count at least five from one family alone, approx. half the total number in the town other than hotels). From reading local reports, landlords would seem happier to evict tenants and leave premises empty. This needs to be addressed in the development of Leixlip to ensure a thriving village centre with healthy competition.
- The existing schools in Leixlip were predominantly built at a time when most pupils walked to and from school. The Plan even acknowledges the significant number of students who are not within walking distance. Consideration needs to be given to the means of access to

the new schools as well as existing schools given that many families will need safe vehicular access in this more modern age. While this is not in keeping with best green practices, there are limited alternative practical solutions for many families, and particularly not for young children.

- Significant thought needs to be given to child care, both for young children and school-age children. This includes creches, breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Funding must be provided to permanently resolve the consistent odour from the sewage pipe running through the centre of Leixlip village.
- Significant problems have been encountered recently with the water service in Leixlip. There were at least six leaks within 24 hours, some of which took several days to repair and restore service to some houses. Redundancy needs to be built into the water and other utility networks to ensure such large numbers of houses do not suffer outages again from single points of failure.
- A detailed ecological study should be conducted before any further development is authorised. When I moved to this current house in Leixlip, there were hares, pheasant and squirrels in adjacent fields. Even with limited development on those fields, this wildlife is gone. It is important that green space is protected and that mature trees and hedgerows are not taken down. It is dismaying that the hedgerow between Leixlip and the Wonderful Barn developments is to be removed. This must not be repeated elsewhere.
- Fungibility and ease of movements between housing developments is now encouraged at a national planning level. However, this goes against best international practice and the advice of An Garda Síochána. I encourage our local representatives to challenge this at a national level and not to permit the opening up of existing housing developments into new developments. At a minimum, this has two significant impacts: it enables anti-social behaviour, and depletes existing hedgerows as mentioned above.
- A detailed environmental impact assessment needs to be conducted, stipulations of planning enforced and developers held to account for unanticipated negative impact. As an example, recent developments, far less intrusive than those anticipated in the Plan, on the GAA lands at Easton have resulted in flooding of some gardens in Rinawade. While the GAA should be commended for being one of the only groups contributing to the expansion of leisure facilities in Leixlip, they are not responding to enquiries on this issue. This particular event must be addressed and must not be repeated in other developments.
- Industrial and commercial business activity is essential to towns like Leixlip and Foreign Direct Investment is a backbone of the Irish economy. The further development of Intel is to be encouraged and I would encourage the continued use and expansion of the legacy HP site for similar commercial / industrial purposes.
- It is important that commercial premises in the town be protected and be expanded on to serve the people of Leixlip. I am referring to such services as locksmiths, car servicing, motor factors, hardware supplies, etc. They provide an integral level of support to local residents must not be crowded out forcing residents to look further afield for such services.
- There is no provision for new roads in the Plan. In particular, any number of additional houses built in Confey will cause significant congestion on Captain's Hill.
- A town the size of Leixlip needs leisure facilities. This is primarily catered for today through two large sports clubs and a number of other smaller ones. Provision and funding should be provided for other key community activities. Leixlip has a healthy number of music, drama and acting groups. Some may not be well known within Leixlip but are well known on stages across Ireland. Provision of a theatre and Arts Centre within Leixlip needs to be a priority.

Parking also needs to be provided. There should not continue to be reliance on St Mary's GAA for their stage/auditorium, which itself is quite limited. Other groups need to travel to the Helix in Dublin city for their shows. For reference, at least two local award-winning amateur drama groups have limited to no means to stage their productions in Leixlip yet win awards on stages across the country.

- Following on from my above point, significant consideration needs to be given to overturning the decision of Kildare County Council in developing a swimming pool in Maynooth. Maynooth already has several pools. This pool should be built in Leixlip which has none. The location of the pool in Maynooth will also add to traffic congestion in that town, and make for a difficult journey from Leixlip.
- Whenever planning permission is granted to houses, substantial attention needs to be given to addressing and not re-introducing problems seen in earlier housing estates particularly with regard to parking. Houses should have sufficient parking based on current and future car ownership projections. Houses should not be built on corners whereby cars have to park on corners, creating a hazard for other road users. Roads need to be wide enough to allow for safe passage and turning of all vehicles including emergency service vehicles and waste collection vehicles.
- St Catherine's Park needs to be protected and developed as a recreation area for the good of all current and future residents of Leixlip. It would be another disservice to us and future generations to build a road through or over the last remaining green space between North Kildare and Co Dublin.
- In a similar vein, similar protection should be given to maintaining the green space currently occupied by Weston Airport, for the same reason as maintaining some green zone between Counties Dublin and Kildare. In fact, has Weston Airport management been consulted in relation to this Plan to ensure that houses will not be built under flight paths and runway circuits that could ultimately lead to renewed pressure on Weston airport?

In summary, Leixlip as a small village cannot support the level of development that will convert it to the sixth largest town in Ireland after the five cities. Leixlip is not Kilkenny yet will have a population equivalent to it, Ireland's sixth city. Constrained as it is by a motorway, a river, a canal, a valley and two country boundaries, it cannot be developed in such a way that will sustain an appropriate quality of life for current or future residents. It will not be a living, breathing, interactive, neighbourly community. It will be a dormitory town with even less of a community than exists today.

While I accept that some development will be required, I encourage you to curtail this significantly, and to focus on addressing the other concerns I have outlined in this document.

I am happy to discuss with you at any point.

Ronan O'Beirne



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