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Draft Leixlip Local Area Plan 2020 - 2026,  
The Planning Department,  
Kildare County Council,  
Áras Chill Dara,  
Devoy Park,  
Naas,  
Co. Kildare.

11<sup>th</sup> July 2019

**Re: Observations on Leixlip Local Area Plan 2020 – 2026**

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter sets out my observations and comments on the proposed draft Leixlip Local Area Plan 2020 – 2026 ('Draft Leixlip LAP').

**Confey KDA**

The KDA for Confey seeks to create a suburban hub on the northside of the Royal Canal, effectively erasing the current northern boundary for Leixlip, and extending it across the canal. This area, north of the canal, is currently dominated by agricultural land, with a small number of residents. It provides a welcome buffer zone and separation from the neighbouring suburbs of Dunboyne, Clonee and Lucan, providing definition for the Leixlip boundary. More importantly, it provides a much-used amenity centre in the form of the GAA, and also respite from the urban area. The quietness of un-developed land provides a welcome contrast from the residential and commercial areas existing in Confey.

We welcome the inclusion in the plan of increased land for the cemetery, a requirement that is often overlooked in development plans. However, we have a number of concerns regarding the other aspects of the plan.

The proposed development of numerous estates, commercial premises and schools, would significantly alter the area. The northern boundary for Leixlip would be permanently removed, opening up the potential for infinite urban sprawl and a completely loss of identity for the area. The large-scale development would result in increased noise levels and congestion, with the risk of increased pollution for the canal.

There are also other issues with the proposed development:

- The proposal to move the GAA centre to another location north of the existing one. This is contradictory to the other design principles which seek to create good permeability between the

existing and proposed developments. Moving the GAA to a more northern position would be a loss for the existing residents and long-time benefactors of the GAA, for the benefit of the new residents only. In its current location, and if residential development did take place on the lands around it, the GAA amenity centre would be a central point for the new and existing communities, helping to bring them together.

- The proposal to move the GAA further north is also contradictory to one of the other design principles which aims to ensure there is a school within a 10-minute walk for all children. Currently the GAA centre would be a 10-minute for the residents of Confey. Moving it further north would result in it being less reachable for many children who currently enjoy its amenities.
- The proposal to alter Cope Bridge in order to accommodate a significant increase in traffic volumes. Both options (6 & 7) proposed, seek to encroach on the green space in Glendale Estate, as well as the GAA pitches. The red line shown on the map indicates only a small portion of the green area would be affected, which may be acceptable. However, given that one of the proposals is to build a second bridge, which I assume would be at least equal in width to the existing bridge, I believe the red line shown on the drawing is misleading, and that in fact a large portion of the green area would be removed. This would have a serious negative affect on the residents of Glendale, with significant increase in noise levels, congestion and pollution from the extensive increase in vehicles, as well as the loss of a green area for children to play in. Given that around 50% of the children surveyed for the drafting of the LAP stated that there is currently insufficient playing areas, the removal of a large green area in the estate should be avoided at all costs.
- As a follow-on, I note that in Map 4 'Land Use Zoning Objective', the green area at the entrance to Glendale and also the green area in St. Mary's Park and the green area at the entrance to Newtown are all shown as area 'B' – 'Existing/Infill Residential', whereas the green area between Glendale and Glendale Meadows is shown as 'F' – 'Open Space & Amenity'. This is different to the current Leixlip LAP which shows these areas as green space. It is extremely important that these green areas continue to be designated as such. It is increasingly known that to support mental wellbeing, outdoor space is one of the key elements. Therefore, for the well-being of these residents, the green areas need to be maintained.
- Part of the proposed development at Confey is to create links between the new and existing developments by way of pedestrian/cycle bridges. One of these is proposed to link the new development with the green area between Glendale and Glendale Meadows, with Glendale becoming a primary/secondary cycle route. I could not find any further detail in the published documents as to the vision for this cycle route. However, it should be noted that Glendale is already a very busy road, despite the fact that it is a cul-de-sac. I therefore do not believe that additional bicycle traffic should be directed onto it. The residents of Glendale, many of whom have lived there for over 40 years and therefore have contributed to its upkeep for that period of time, should continue to be the primary users of that road, whether by car, bicycle or by foot.

There are also more fundamental questions regarding the feasibility of the proposed development. As noted in the Draft Leixlip LAP, the current bridge at Confey 'Cope Bridge' could not accommodate the increased volume of traffic. The proposed solutions to this (to either erect a second bridge or to completely replace the existing bridge with a new wider bridge) themselves raise concerns (above). Nonetheless, even if an alternative could successfully be put in place to address this issue, the impact on Captain's Hill and the village

cannot be overcome. Development of Captain's Hill is extremely limited given its topography. It is already noted as a 'pinch point' with "significant queue lengths evident at peak time" (section 4.8.3 of the SEA Environment Report), which can be confirmed by the existing residents of Confey and other areas of Leixlip. Altering Cope Bridge to allow for more than 1,000 additional vehicles to use it would result in a permanent tail-back from Leixlip Village to and beyond the bridge. The existing residents of Confey would effectively be locked in to their current estates. The limitations of Captain's Hill and the roads in and out of Leixlip village cannot be overlooked. It is impossible for them to accommodate the additional development proposed for Confey in the Draft Leixlip LAP. The proposed development is therefore not feasible and should be removed from the final plan.

### **Black Avenue KDA**

The proposed Black Avenue development would significantly increase the traffic in the village, and also approaching the village from the city. As noted in the Draft Leixlip LAP, congestion already exists in these areas. The proposed solution to place a roundabout at the Mill Lane Junction will not alleviate the issues the development would create. It should also be considered that Mill Lane is currently part of the ACA, and the increased noise, vibration and pollution from the traffic during construction could have long-term damaging effect on the residents in this area.

The proposal to link the proposed Black Avenue KDA development with the car park in St. Catherine's Park is unclear. I could not find any explanation as to the need or benefit of this. It seems counterintuitive to create a new entrance to the park via an estate which is accessed by narrow roads. It also does not support the protection of the park, which Kildare County Council has stated its commitment to. It is also likely that the future residents of that proposed development would not be in favour of their estate being used as an access road. This presents dangers for children playing in this area. For these reasons, it should be removed with the proposed development being a cul-de-sac.

### **Strategic Transport Assessment**

The Strategic Transport Assessment proposes (in Fig 5.14) a link to the M4 through St. Catherine's Park. This park is an amenity for the residents of Leixlip, and the public. Protecting it (as with all public parks) should be one of the key aims of Kildare County Council and the Irish Government. Allowing a road to be built through it would completely destroy it on a permanent basis, and should under no circumstance be allowed.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, I welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Leixlip LAP. The feedback of residents who live and experience the area on a daily basis is critical in the development of the area, and ensuring that the proposals are not only feasible but successful in the long-term.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Yours sincerely,

Sonja Brennan

