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Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029

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### 3. Housing

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Housing

Ábhair: housing

I grew up in Newbridge in the 60 and 70s and have returned after 60 years in Dublin, Bray and London. The town had many issues during my teens but scale and schooling supported social cohesion, along with great neighbours.

Many local voluntary groups were active then and now. The social capital created by groups in the past and now is what housing developers in Ireland are depending on and using as leverage to sell units. Our town has significantly outgrown its early roots as a major medieval religious settlement at Great Connell Priory and British Army garrison town. With one bridge over the Liffey and what were quiet country roads now carrying heavy goods traffic, we are severely under strain. 150 ie Dunbar's Number has been exceeded several times over in terms of new housing development without any evidence to my knowledge of plans for extra schools, GPs and youth centres. A Youth Centre for Newbridge has been invoked in strategies since the 90s and never materialised. Although Newbridge has not been designated key town in the Mid Easter Region context, its population size alone should warrant serious attention in my view. Leaving voluntary groups to fill the gap and shoulder the burden is to my mind cynical and disingenuous. Allowing market forces to likewise fill the gap is in my view equally cynical and potentially damaging.

To quote from Kildare County Council Corporate Plan 2010 - 2024: **Kildare is one of the fastest growing and youngest population centres in the country; with the highest proportion of people aged 0-24 in the state at almost 37%<sup>1</sup>. Population growth combined with proximity to Dublin is driving housing costs and demand for housing, and, inevitably many of our citizens are struggling to meet their housing needs. Our Plan commits us to continuing our work with all partners to strive to meet Kildare's housing needs while supporting social inclusion, equality and quality of life in new communities that have grown in recent years.**

My point is: we are sowing seeds of a seriously dysfunctional social fabric without sufficient attention to infrastructure, physical and social. Anecdotally, people will not walk down Eyre Street in daylight hours due to fear of mugging and attacks by people using drugs and alcohol. Local teens regularly harassing elderly people and firesetting have been documented on social media. We are not managing our current population. How will we manage future residents and generations? A house may be just a building unit to a developer whose commitment is to shareholders and who will leave an area without having to live with the consequences of inadequate and strained social and physical infrastructure. Building a housing unit may be fulfilling a housing need per se but to thrive, we need more than shelter. Is the vision for, and fate of Newbridge going to be linked to demand for prison / drug rehab places and higher garda numbers to police unsafe, derelict streets, ie, a vicious circle? Will people be trapped in their homes, unable to drive, cycle or walk safely around their town or find a school / playground/GP/dentist due to lack of

infrastructure. I would be delighted to be shown any examples of Irish towns where parachuting in new physical developments on the basis of "build it and they will come" ie, simply generate housing and schools / GPs/ youth facilities /social cohesion will naturally grow alongside and at a sustainable rate, has been successful.

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**Documents Attached:** Níl