

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL



PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Report prepared in accordance with Part XI of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended

Development proposed by, on behalf of, or in partnership with Local Authority

Report for submission to the members, prepared in accordance with Part XI, Section 179, Sub-section (3)(a) and (3)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

Type of Development	Regeneration of existing park with additional leisure facilities
Site Address	at Harbour Fields, Maynooth, Co. Kildare
Development Proposed by	Special Projects and Public Realm
Display Period	Plans and particulars on display at the offices of Kildare County Council from 05/10/2021. These were also available to view on Kildare County Council's website. Site Notices were erected at the site location on the 04/10/2021 Submissions could be made in writing or online on or before 16:30 on 16/11/2021.
Submissions/Observations	110 submissions received from members of the public 1 submissions received from Relevant Statutory Bodies
Part 8 Reference Number	P8 2021 - 06

1. SITE LOCATION & CONTEXT

The 2.27-hectare site is located at Maynooth harbour on the Royal Canal. Bounded between the R406 Straffan Road and Leinster Street the park is located on the opposite side of the canal from Maynooth's main train station. A pedestrian bridge connects the station to the harbour and adjoining Leinster street.

Due to its central location there is significant footfall passing the park with the town centre only 2 minutes walk away and the university within a 4-5 Minute walk.

The Park is bordered to the North by a residential development at Court House Square and the grounds of Geraldine Hall, a community hall and Scout Hut with Maynooth Community Care Unit and the Fire Service located close to the park's western boundary.

Figure 1: Approx location of site identified in red – extract from Google maps



2. NATURE AND EXTENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Kildare County Council proposes to redevelop the Harbour Fields Town Park into a more active and engaging space with amenities that will cater for a diverse and multi-generational user base.

In summary the proposed scheme will include the following:

- Removal of the existing earthen embankment between the park and the canal walkway to open up views to and from the water.
- Creation of bespoke entrance features at the 3 main gateways into the park and development of a signage and furniture package inline with their aesthetics.

- Construction of a segregated cycle and pedestrian path along the existing canal frontage.
- Construction of a network of internal paths with primary paths allowing controlled vehicular access and secondary linking pathways to access facilities within the site.
- Creation of two large designated play areas namely a playground and a skate park with auxiliary recreation facilities such as an outdoor gym, table tennis and boules area and climbing nodes.
- Construction of a large plinth for use as a stage and a formal lawn which can accommodate crowds during events.
- Enhancement of the area's recreational value by the addition of seating nodes, picnic tables and lounge seats.
- Increase visibility and security within the park by removing sections of an existing high wall and using terracing to link the park body to the existing path.
- Planting of native, ornamental and parkland tree species to support a wide range of biodiversity. Trees will be chosen in relation to their location within the park and used for the creation of path avenues, strengthening boundaries, softening a play area and creating orchard nodes.
- Expand the park's biodiversity by introducing a palette of low maintenance shrubs, flowering perennials and grasses which will provide year round colour and interest. Planted in large mixed beds or as individual block species the planting will include a large number of pollinator and insect attracting species.
- Identification of locations for a potential café building, events pavilion, a maintenance store and possible future commercial buildings (not part of this planning application)

Need for the Scheme

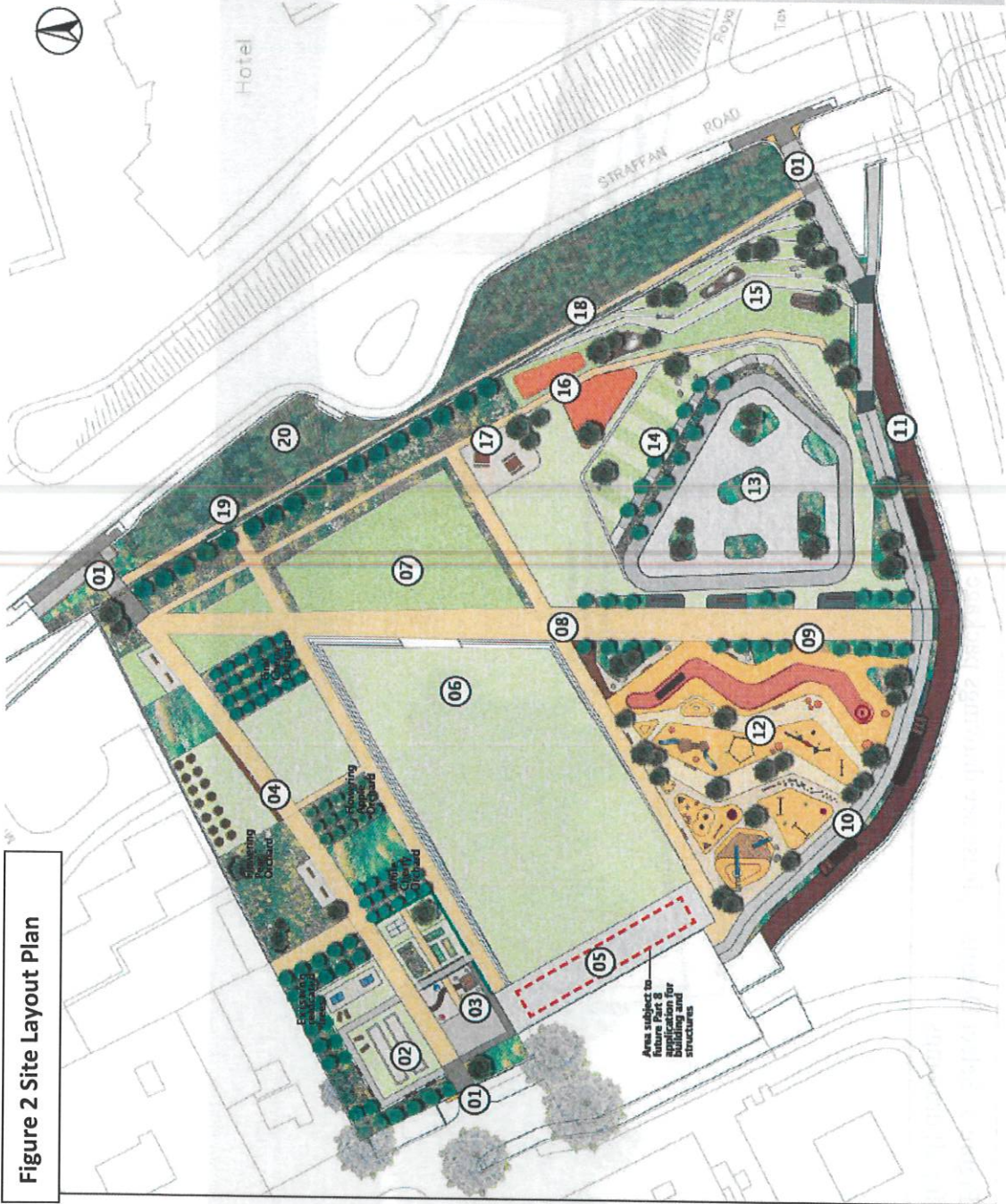
The main design considerations were gauged from the findings of the community consultation results. This landscape strategy was driven by 2 key components, the desire to connect the site with the existing canal creating a high quality waterfront and the intention to offer a wider range of uses.

On examination a number of design, layout and maintenance issues were identified with the existing park that limits its potential as a quality urban amenity space to be enjoyed by all. It is considered that a comprehensive redevelopment of the existing Harbour Field, as proposed within this scheme will contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre and the quality of life of the growing Maynooth population.

The park's town centre setting and proximity to major transport infrastructure allows it to benefit both the local population and visitors to the county making the location the perfect hub for recreation amenities. The plan seeks to provide the broadest range of user activities possible with a new state of the art playground catering for toddlers to teenagers and providing inclusive, accessible play for all. This will be complemented with smaller natural play areas, sensory play, skate and pump track facilities, outdoor gym equipment and climbing

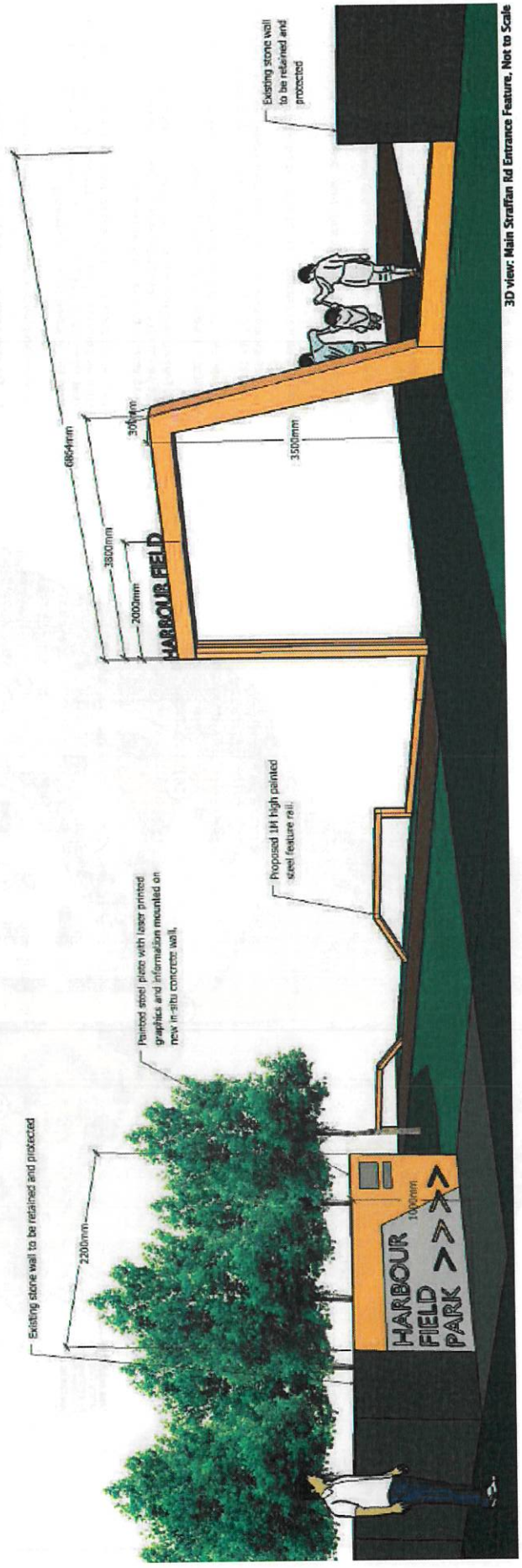
boulders. Additionally, a stage facility and open space for gatherings and markets will allow the area to cater for a broad range of community activities while planted gardens and orchards as well as seating along the canal provides quiet space for relaxing.

Figure 2 Site Layout Plan



- Key**
01. Entrance areas with natural stone paving and bespoke entrance/signage feature.
 02. Games area with edged bowling lawns, concrete table tennis tables and 'sun lounger' seating.
 03. Sensory garden with ornamental planting, toddler play objects and paved optional seating area for use by future commercial unit.
 04. Existing access path with controlled ambulance/maintenance access, seating nodes, perennial meadows and flowering orchards.
 05. Events space with exposed aggregate concrete plinth joining formal lawn to open landing space within adjoining site.
 06. Lawn with formal stepped edging, vehicular access point to be agreed.
 07. Informal kick-about space for ball games.
 08. Central axis route allowing both pedestrian and controlled vehicular access.
 09. Avenue tree planting to define and soften central axis route.
 10. Designated cycle path with high chip asphalt surface, 4m wide with central flush division stripe creating directional lanes.
 11. 4M wide decked boardwalk with raised timber seating rafts, decking in hardwood with anti-slip finish.
 12. Feature playground with large climbing sculpture and age zoned equipment (exact specifications to be confirmed) catering for ages 1-16 years. Safety surfacing as required.
 13. In-situ concrete plaza style skate park for use by skaters, bikes, scooters and roller skaters. To be designed in co-operation with local skate group and Kildare Youth Services. Area approximately 1235 M2 including 395M2 of planting.
 14. Mini pump track with associated undulating lawn.
 15. Terraced seating area with bouldering/climbing nodes.
 16. Adult gym area with mix of gym and parkour equipment (exact specifications to be confirmed).
 17. Picnic and barbecue area with robust timber furniture.
 18. Stone wall to be partially removed to open views to park and increase passive surveillance.
 19. Existing metal gate to be retained and protected.
 20. Existing screening planting to be maintained for traffic noise reduction and ecological value, area to be planted with native woodland bulbs.

Figure 3: Select Details – please see drawings package for all drawings



3D view: Main Straffan Rd Entrance Feature, Not to Scale



3. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The proposal is accompanied by the required plans and particulars. In addition a number of documents have been included, namely:

- Design Statement
- Tree Survey Report
- An EIAR Screening report
- An AA Screening Statement Report
- Drawings and drawing list (Appendix to this Planning Report)
- Copy of the site notice
- Original newspaper notice

4. BUILT / NATURAL HERITAGE

Built Heritage

The site adjoins but is not within the Architectural Conservation Area identified for Maynooth town centre. There are no protected structures within the Harbour Field Park itself. A protected structure, RPS B05-54 – Geraldine Hall, is on the adjoining site to the northwest of the site. The proposed development will have a positive impact on the setting and context of this building. The proposed development will have an impact on the setting and character of the Royal Canal Harbour area within Maynooth town and it is considered that it will constitute a positive contribution to the area.

Archaeological Heritage

There is one national monument, reference KD005-014, described as an 'architectural feature' to the northwest of the site associated with the adjoining school and while the zone of archaeological potential does incur on the site, it is considered that the above ground nature of the feature and the lack of significant proposed groundworks in this area, that the proposed development will not impact on any identified archaeological feature.

Natural Heritage

No SAC or SPA is in close proximity to the subject site. An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was completed and Kildare County Council has determined that there is no requirement for a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

The Royal Canal is a pNHA and bounds the site to the southwest.

Landscape Category

The site is within the Northern Lowlands LCA, which is described as of Class 1, Low sensitivity, defined as 'Areas with the capacity to generally accommodate a wide range of uses without significant adverse effects on the appearance or character of the area.'

5. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None

6. SUBMISSIONS AND REPORTS RECEIVED

Cathal O'Meara Landscape Architects prepared a 'Part 8 Report and Report on submissions received'. Which has been included in Appendix A. This report should be read in conjunction with this Planning Report. The report includes a summary of each submission received and the response of Kildare County Council.

Submissions

110 submissions were received from members of the public - Cathal O'Meara Landscape Architects prepared a 'Part 8 Report and Report on submissions received' on behalf of Kildare County Council, this report includes the response of the Chief Executive for each submission and is included in Appendix A of this report.

1 submission was received from a Relevant Statutory Body – Transport Infrastructure Ireland had no observations.

Reports

There were 4 reports received from the internal reporting sections of Kildare County Council as follows.

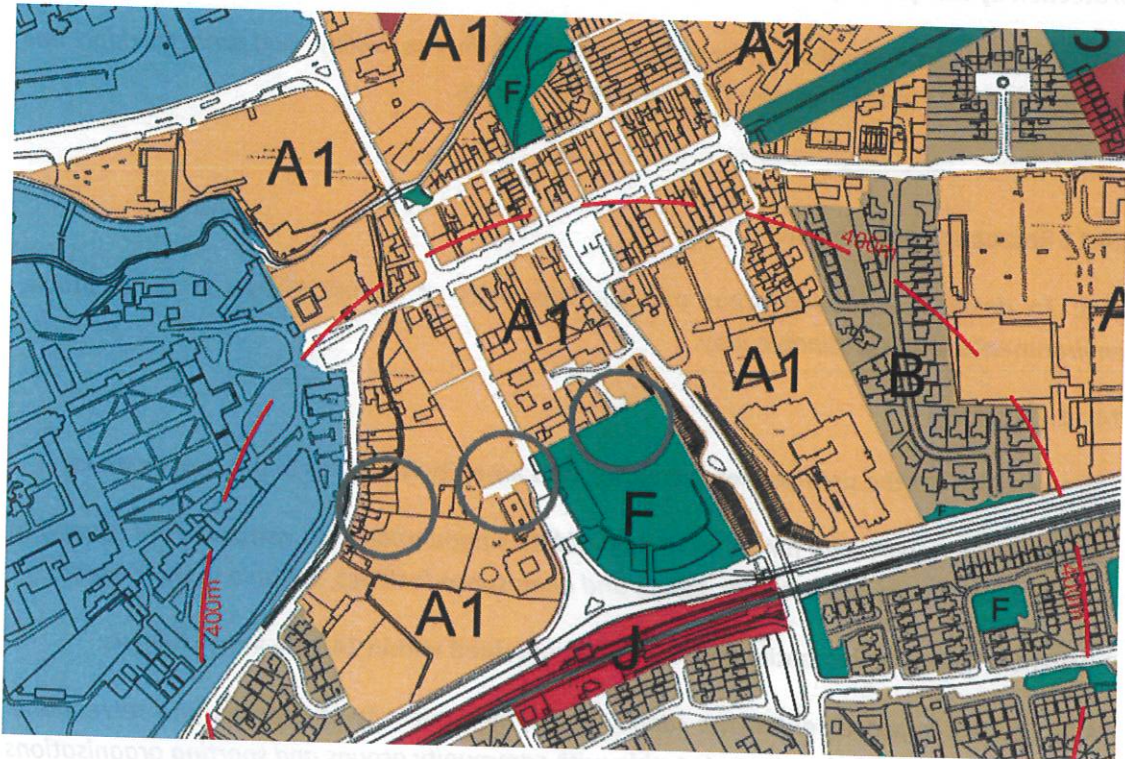
- KCC Water Services Section
- KCC Parks Department
- KCC Forward Planning Section
- KCC Fire Service

All of the Sections had no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions.

7. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Maynooth Local Area Plan (2013-2019)

Figure 4 Extract from Zoning Plan



Within the LAP the Harbour field is zoned as Open Space and Amenity (Zoning reference F) and is therefore to be protected for the provision of recreation, open space and amenity use. The zoning also seeks to improve and maintain any public open space and to provide for recreational and sports facilities.

As such any development that would result in a loss of open space within the town will not be permitted except where specifically outlined within the LAP.

3.8 Environment and Recreation

“The Royal Canal is one of the town’s prime recreational and environmental assets, the maintenance of the environmental quality of the canal and the development of amenity facilities for walking and cycling is vital. The development of the Harbour field as a key piece of green infrastructure in the town centre will greatly benefit the amenity of the town centre as a whole”

Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023

Within the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023, Chapter 14: Landscape, Recreation and Amenities, sets out clear policies for landscape and recreational development, further policies highlight the potential for sensitive redevelopment of the Royal Canal and its corridor and its contribution to amenity.

Relevant policies include:

WC 5: Promote the amenity, ecological and educational value of the canals and rivers within the county while at the same time ensuring the conservation of their fauna and flora, and protection of the quantity and quality of the water supply.

WV 2: To preserve and enhance the scenic amenity of the river valleys and canal corridors and the quality of the vistas available from designated views.

14.11 Recreation and Amenity

Aim: To develop recreation areas and the amenities of County Kildare in an equitable, environmental and sustainable way.

14.11.2 Strategy

The strategies for the provision of recreation and amenity resources in the county seeks:

To provide an opportunity for all sectors of Kildare's population, and visitors to the county, to avail of good quality recreational, sports and open space facilities, suitable to their needs.

Relevant Policies for Recreation and Amenity contained within 14.12.4 are as follows:

RA 5: To seek improvement in the range, quality and capacity of sporting and recreational facilities through initiatives in partnership with community groups and sporting organisations and to cater for all age-groups and abilities

RA 6: To encourage the clustering of sport and community facilities and to encourage them to be multi-functional and not used exclusively by any one group

RA10: Seek to promote additional non-mainstream facilities for children and teenagers through the provision of suitable recreation and amenity facilities in all major towns and villages.

EVALUATION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Principle of Development and Compliance with Local and National Policy

This report and Appendices are prepared in accordance with Part XI of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended. This report seeks to evaluate whether the proposed development is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.

Section 7 of this report set out the zoning objectives as per the Maynooth Local Area Plan 2013 as applicable to the consideration of this proposed development. It is considered that the proposed redevelopment of the Harbour Field town park is consistent with the zoning objective which states: *"The aim of this land use zoning objective seeks to protect, improve and provide for recreation, open space and amenity provision; to protect improve and maintain public open space and to provide for recreational and sports facilities."*

It is considered that the subject site is an appropriate location in principle for a development of this type. The park's town centre setting and proximity to major transport infrastructure allows it to benefit both the local population and visitors to the county making the location the perfect hub for recreation amenities. The plan seeks to provide the broadest range of user activities possible with a new state of the art playground catering for toddlers to teenagers and providing inclusive, accessible play for all. This will be complemented with smaller natural play areas, sensory play, skate and pump track facilities, outdoor gym equipment and climbing boulders. Additionally, a stage facility and open space for gatherings and markets will allow the area to cater for a broad range of community activities while planted gardens and orchards as well as seating along the canal provides quiet space for relaxing.

The Maynooth LAP recognises that the population of Maynooth is rising exponentially with the 2016 census indicating an increase of 16.6% since 2011: the census also shows that Maynooth has a younger than average population with a large proportion of 15-24 and 25-44 year olds. Therefore, provision for these age groups is imperative and sets the case for a park with a broad range of user activities outside the usual playground offerings. The LAP recognises Harbour Field as the site for such a hub as outlined in section 3.8 of the Plan. The proposed development constitutes a positive development and is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the town of Maynooth.

Visual Impact and Architectural Heritage

While adjoining the historic town centre of Maynooth to the north, the Royal Canal to the south, the subject site is outside of the identified Architectural Conservation Area. There is little of architectural interest on the site itself, though it is proximate to an abundance of built heritage of value. It is considered that a contemporary approach to the landscaping of the park, including the entrance features and prominent play and skateboard structures will not detract from the built heritage and will make a positive contribution to the architectural setting of the town.

Design and Landscaping

The design of the proposed redevelopment of the Harbour Field Town Park was completed by Cathal O'Meara Landscape Architects as directed by the Special Project and Public Realm

Team in the Planning Directorate in Kildare County Council. The main design considerations were gauged from the findings of the community consultation results and resultant landscape strategy was driven by the desire to connect the site with the existing canal creating a high quality waterfront and the intention to offer a wider range of uses.

A foremost intervention is the proposal to remove a large earthen embankment that currently screens the canal from the park and severs any connection with the water. In order to establish a connection, the embankment and associated stone retaining wall will be removed allowing the canal and park to function as one.

A path starting at the Straffan Road entrance will cut diagonally through the site linking the main entrance point of the park to the waterfront. New character areas will be created to include designated spaces for play, exercise, wheeled sports and events, while other spaces are reserved for more passive relaxation. A location for the future development of a café is provided for.

A significant number of the public submissions advocated for the retention of a basketball court in the permitted revised design, this may be accommodated and can be included as a modification.

The Parks Department of Kildare County Council have provided detailed feedback in their report, this may be included as a general modification requiring the promoting section to liaise closely with the Parks Section.

Residential Amenity and Operating Hours

Concerns regarding noise and disruption have been raised in some of the submissions made – these have been summarised and responded to individually in Appendix A of this report. The nearest existing dwellings to the subject site are Manor Court to the north of the site and residential units within the town centre itself. It is noted that this is a town centre location, and it should be reasonably anticipated that any town centre residents will be proximate to areas that experience heavy footfall throughout the day and evening time. It is also reasonable to expect night-time pedestrian traffic. It is considered that the proposed redevelopment of the existing Harbour Fields park will not have an undue impact on the residential amenities of any of the residents of the local area.

By incorporating passive surveillance features including lowering walls in certain locations, incorporation of predominantly low-level planting and considered lighting, anti-social behaviour will be discouraged.

Similar to the existing park, the redeveloped park will be open all hours and some ancillary evening time use is anticipated, including performances – however these are anticipated to be fleeting or irregular events. Such events will be irregular, as part of ongoing arts programming or community led initiatives, and as such it is considered that it is not appropriate over-regulate the park or to limit the hours of operation of any aspect of it.

The hours of operation of construction should be specified in the modifications.

Traffic

The proposed development is within the existing Town Park, no additional parking demand has been provided for, it is anticipated that any traffic generated is accommodated within the existing provision within the town. The creation of cycle and walking friendly spaces is consistent with encouraging a modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport.

The existing layout allows for emergency vehicles – in particular the fire service to reach the Straffan Road and avoiding the town centre - to traverse the park, this should be retained in the redevelopment and throughout the construction process, this should be specified as a modification.

A general modification with details to be agreed with the transportation section prior to implementation will be included.

Flood Risk Assessment

There is no information available to the planning department that indicates that the site is at risk of flooding or any record available of previous flood events, the proposed use is not classed as 'vulnerable'.

EIAR Screening

Having regard to EIA Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (the EIA Directive), the guidance contained in: "Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-Threshold Development" (published by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2003); "Environmental Impact - Assessment of Projects - Guidance on Screening" (published by the European Commission in 2017); "Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment" (published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in 2018); Kildare County Council, as the Competent Authority, determined that the proposed redevelopment of Harbour Field, Maynooth, individually, and in combination with other plans and projects, did not require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Appropriate Assessment

Having regard to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the guidance contained in the document entitled "Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities" (published by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2009) and following an examination of the objective information provided in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Statement prepared as part of the accompanying documents, Kildare County Council, as the Competent Authority, determined that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, does not have the potential to give rise to likely significant effects on European sites, their conservation objectives or integrity, and therefore did not require an Appropriate Assessment. Core consideration was the closest European Site, the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC, Site Code 001398, approx. 1.5km northeast of the site.

Therefore a Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment will not be required to inform the project appraisal either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, with respect to any Natura 2000 sites and their Conservation Objectives.

Internal Sections

It is noted that the Parks, Water Services and Forward Planning Sections and Fire Service have indicated no objections subject to conditions, these conditions will be included by way of modification.

Public Submissions

All 110 submissions received from the public – both individuals and groups – have been reviewed and responded to.

Construction Management – Noise, Vibration, Dust and Traffic

The Contractor will be required to produce a Construction Management Plan prior to the construction stage which shall be subject to the approval of Kildare County Council.

8. CONCLUSIONS

It is considered that the proposal would be in accordance with the provisions of the Kildare County Development Plan 2017 –2023, and the Maynooth Local Area Plan 2013, and would therefore be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

9. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended to the Mayor and Members of the Maynooth Municipal District that the proposed development be proceeded with, subject to the modifications set out below.

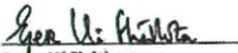
Modifications

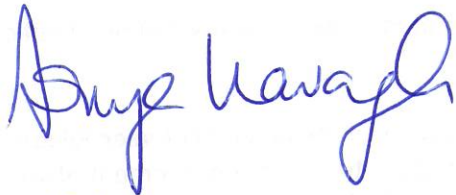
1. The proposed development to be carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars placed on public display on 5th October 2021, except where altered or amended by the following modifications.
2. The emergency access route between the Fire Station and the Straffan Road shall be maintained as part of the proposed development. Entrance features shall be designed so as not obstruct fire tenders or access by any other emergency vehicles. The Fire Service shall retain control of all mechanical bollards. Access across the site shall remain possible for the Fire Service throughout the construction period, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Chief Fire Officer.
3. A basketball court shall be included in the final design and layout of the proposed development, to be agreed in writing with the planning section. The final design and layout of the park shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Section and Parks Department and details shall be recorded on the Part 8 file.
4. The proposed surface water drainage shall be designed and constructed with the requirement of Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study in terms of incorporating appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to restrict- attenuate surface water discharge flows from the proposed development to prevent pollution and maintain the quality of adjacent ground waters and watercourses. The system shall cater for the 1:100 year storm event (or otherwise agreed in writing) and with an allowance of +20% in order to cater for "climate change". Final details regarding the requirements of the Water Services Section shall be agreed in writing with the Water Services Section prior to the commencement of any on site development works, details shall be recorded on the Part 8 file.

5. A qualified Arborist shall be retained as an Arboricultural consultant for the entire period of construction activity. The requirements for the Arboricultural consultant shall be agreed in writing with the Parks Department and details shall be recorded on the Part 8 file.
6. A qualified Landscape Architect (or qualified Landscape Designer) shall be retained as a Landscape Consultant throughout the life of the construction works. A Practical Completion Certificate shall be signed off by the Landscape Architect when all landscape works are fully completed to the satisfaction of the Parks Section and in accordance with permitted landscape proposals.
7. Final design details the 'decked boardwalk' adjacent the Royal Canal are to be agreed with the Parks Section. The use or inclusion of recycled composite timber may be considered rather than hardwood surfacing, final agreed finish shall be agreed in writing with the Parks Department and details shall be recorded on the Part 8 file.
8. It is a requirement of the Parks Section that all details for the design, choice of equipment, safety surfacing, along with specifications and proof that all equipment conforms to European Standards EN 1176-1-11 and EN 1177 Playground equipment and surfacing are agreed. Post installation certification by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is also a requirement. Details shall be agreed in writing with the Parks Department and this shall be recorded on the Part 8 file.
9. Public lighting will be in accordance with the adopted Kildare County Council Public Lighting Policy.
10. A construction method statement and management plan will be agreed between Kildare County Council and all appointed on-site contractors prior to the commencement of any development on site. The method statement shall include a Construction Waste Management Plan and shall identify the necessary arrangements to be put in place in relation to stockpiling of topsoil and drainage thereof.
11. In the interests of residential amenity, the hours of construction on the site will be restricted to Monday to Friday 07:00 to 18:00 and Saturday 08:00 to 14:00, or as agreed in writing in advance with the Planning Department. No construction activity shall be undertaken on Sundays and Bank Holidays.
12. Final details regarding the requirements of the Council's Parks, Transportation, Chief Fire Officer, Environment and Water Services Section shall be agreed with the relevant sections prior to the commencement of any on site development works, details shall be recorded on the Part 8 file.
13. (a) A Consulting Engineer shall be engaged to carry out the final detailed design of the works, to prepare tender documents and drawings, to assist in the procurement of a Contractor and to assist in the supervision of the works on site.
 (b) A detailed design for the proposed works should be submitted to the Planning Authority for approval. Details of the design, traffic management, implementation, costing and phasing of these works should be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, KCC Roads and Maynooth MD Sections prior to the commencement of the development.


Eoghan Lynch
Senior Executive Planner

18th January 2022


Emer Uí Fhátharta
Senior Planner
January 19th 2022


Amy Kavanagh
CE
19.1.2022.

APPENDIX A

**PART 8 REPORT AND REPORT ON SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED PREPARED BY CATHAL
O'MEARA LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**

APPENDIX B
APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT and EIAR SCREENING DETERMINATION