

CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS

CSR Ref: 22194/PG/180522

18th May 2022

The Administrative Office
Forward Planning
Áras Chill Dara
Devoy Park
Naas, Co. Kildare.

Via the Consultation Portal

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Submission on the Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029
Submission on behalf of Mondello Park Sports Ltd in respect of Mondello Park.**

We make this submission on behalf of Mondello Park Sports Limited in respect of Mondello Park, Donore, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 T957.

This submission seeks to strengthen and promote Mondello Park as (a) a sporting, recreational and tourism hub and a centre of excellence for driving and (b) a venue for the automotive industry, autonomous vehicle testing and development and a centre for vehicle innovation with benefits to the county in both instances and for the betterment of the proper planning and sustainable development of County Kildare.

Introduction

Our client warmly welcomes the publication of the Kildare County Draft Development Plan for the period 2023-2029 and greatly appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft plan over the period until 24th May when it is placed on public display and made available for comment.

The County Council is commended for its proactive approach to development within the context of protecting and enhancing the proper planning and sustainable development of the county and to the creation of employment and investment within the county and with this there is a request from our clients to strengthen the role of Mondello Park as a combined sports, recreation and tourism facility with considerable potential for further job creation and technical development based on the emerging automotive and autonomous vehicle sector. There is nowhere better to further develop that emerging industry than at the home of motor sport and motor testing in Ireland.

Purpose of this Submission

There are two purposes to this submission. Firstly, our client would like incorporated into the emerging County Development Plan policies or objectives that would facilitate the expansion of motor sport related activities at Mondello Park that will maintain and enhance its position as the 'Home of Irish Motorsport' and as a tourism and leisure centre going forward. Secondly, our client would like incorporation into the emerging plan some recognition of the potential for automated vehicle research and development in the county with Mondello Park being the preferred location following the principles of developing economic hubs and specialisms set out in the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

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Existing Features and Operations

Mondello Park is recognised as the 'Home of Irish Motorsport' and an international motorsport venue. Mondello Park currently hosts international and local race events and motorsports related activities. The circuit currently has a limited Museum showcasing the history of motorsport in Ireland, as well as the creation, evolution and history of the racetrack itself and has a number of existing facilities, amenities and infrastructure that it seeks to upgrade to enhance the operation of the track, the racing and working environment and to improve the experience for visitors and tourists whether it is to races, other motor events and to those visiting the museum and corporate and business events.

A race circuit or track (www.mondellopark.ie) has existed on site since 1968. It is universally acknowledged as 'the home of Irish Motorsport' and is a facility of national status.

The track hosts a number of activities including car racing, bike racing, rallycross and drifting of national significance. The track hosts 10 Car Racing championships throughout the year including 'grass roots classes' like the Fiesta Zetec Championships through to BOSS Single Seater cars including F1 engine machines.

The track also hosts Mondello Park Driving Experiences, which are available to the public and businesses, which include the Formula Race Thrill and the Supercar experiences which are delivered in high performance cars such as Ferrari and Porsche. There is also a BMW driving experience offered. There are also a series of drifting competitions and experiences which have been operated in the track since circa 2005.

The overall race and race day experience is not confined to the track or circuit itself. Mondello Park offers a Virtual Race Academy for those 13 years and upwards and has the country's first and only pro-level racing simulators. The track is a fully operational racetrack to accommodate the above championships and includes a fully operational pit lane and pit garages as well as track stewards vantage points over the circuit. The administrative offices of the Mondello Park business are also located on site. The site also offers dining and corporate facilities for the race day experience.

Whilst there is a considerable range of vehicle based activities it is Mondello Park's intention to broaden these activities into the development of autonomous motor vehicle development and testing in what are already ideal facilities and amenities for such activities.

Future Intentions

Mondello Park would like to develop its activities in these two directions and would like an emerging plan that is as favourably disposed to both sets of activities as possible.

(1) Development of Driving and Associated Activities

Central to this seam of activity is the development of a Skid Pan which will facilitate automotive training and development and will also cater for media production activities.

Skid Pan training is an essential driving skill for each person to learn. At some point we all will experience a skid, let it be mild or a serious, life threatening event. With Skid Pan training one can get immersive tuition from experienced instructors, an opportunity to learn the theory behind skidding and how to prevent it happening.

Such training programs are conducted by the Road Safety Ireland such as the Road Safety Ireland Mobile Winter Driver Training which is focused on interactive immersive learning that is proven to be the most effective way to bring about behavioural change and educate participants to become much more aware of the dangers. By using various teaching techniques attendees will learn how to prepare for and drive safely in difficult weather conditions.

The Park wants to develop a Skid Pan in the centre of the circuit that will be used for driver training, technology testing, customer experiences and for media production.

The development will consist of an area of tarmac which will have a water sprinkler system installed at ground level, the tarmac will be graded to allow the water to flow to the edges where it will be collected in a channel and pumped back to a holding tank for use again through the sprinkler system.

This activity will require some additional buildings, a workshop type facility and office space in the future.

The Park would also look to increase activities related to media production such as filming for commercials, recording and documenting car restoration projects, testing project cars and a general area that can be used by media companies that are centred around the automotive industry in Ireland.

(2) Development of the Automotive Industry

The development of automotive technology in Ireland, particularly in the connected, autonomous and electrification sectors, is an area that has seen substantial investment over the last number of years. There are hubs in the west and south west of Ireland and it is our client's aim to provide a hub in the east of the country and Mondello Park see themselves as an ideal location to develop such activity. Their vision is to create technology park that will attract the leaders in the automotive and technology industries that will use the venue as a test bed for new and emerging technologies.

The following is an extract from the European Commission regarding the Automotive Industry Sector which identifies the potential of this sector for Mondello Park and the county of Kildare;

“The automotive industry is crucial for Europe’s prosperity. The automotive sector provides direct and indirect jobs to 13.8 million Europeans, representing 6.1% of total EU employment. 2.6 million people work in direct manufacturing of motor vehicles, representing 8.5 % of EU employment in manufacturing. The EU is among the world’s biggest producers of motor vehicles and the sector represents the largest private investor in research and development (R&D). To strengthen the competitiveness of the EU automotive industry and preserve its global technological leadership, the European Commission supports global technological harmonisation and provides funding for R&D.”

Mondello Park seeks to be Ireland's arena for testing of future technology and be an epicentre to test, run and analyse such automotive innovation in conjunction with local and national entities.

Suitability of Mondello Park for the automotive industry

The Park has a 3.5km private road for testing with associated green spaces, runoff areas and safety measures. Additional buildings / research centres and testing facilities can be accommodated within the Park. The Park is 40 minutes from Dublin and within easy access of the wider motorway network.

Mondello Park will engage with regional and national stakeholders to develop this opportunity in Kildare to build an internationally recognised centre for the development of automotive technology. This development will build the talent pool in Kildare. Mondello Park will link with educational facilities in the county to ensure a flow of engineering graduates. The campus will generate significant employment opportunities for Kildare in the development stage and provide sustainable employment in the long term.

The Emerging Development Plan

The following policies and objectives of the Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 are indirectly supportive of motorsports activities at Mondello Park.

‘RE O1 Facilitate and support the growth of the economy in Kildare and the Greater Dublin Area in a sustainable manner, and in accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

RE O2 Continue to promote Kildare, together with the Kildare Local Enterprise Office and national development agencies, as a strategically located economic and employment hub within the Greater Dublin Area and support and facilitate the development of an environment that

fosters innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship but also maintains a core focus on issues around climate change and biodiversity.

RE P23 Support and promote existing festivals and sporting events to increase the cultural, heritage and lifestyle profile of the county, and, where appropriate, promote and facilitate the development of new events.

RE P25 Support the sustainable tourist related development of the Bloodstock and Equine Industries. (b) Recognise the importance of angling and the golf industry to tourism in the county. (c) Promote the development of international class sporting facilities in County Kildare.'

Development Plan Submission

Developing a 'Racing County' theme

As the county is the home to Ireland's leading horse racing facility at the Curragh, has other notable horse racing racks, including Punchestown and Naas, as well as being the home of Irish motor sport, we would encourage the county to develop a theme of Kildare being the '*racing county*' bringing the two traditions and the county together. We would request such text within the Chapter 4 Resilient Economy & Job Creation section of the emerging plan.

The Promotion and Development of Mondello Park

We would like to request a specific policy or objective supporting existing and future motorsport focused activities at Mondello Park that will strengthen its role as the home of Irish motorsport and to assist in the sustainable development of Kildare County and in the Eastern and Midland Region as a key sporting, recreational and tourist hub, supporting other attractions in the County and in the eastern region.

This submission requests the Council to add specific policies with Chapter 4 Resilient Economy and Job Creation the aim of which is '*To provide for the future well-being of the residents of the county by creating a strong and resilient economic base, providing expanded opportunities for employment and facilitating a good quality of life within vibrant and attractive places to live, work, visit and invest.*' The Park's vision is consistent with the aims of Chapter 4.

Our Requested Additional Objective for Mondello Park

Therefore, we request the following objective be inserted into the emerging plan to take account of the Park's potential for further motor sport and driving enjoyment and excellence as well as promotion of automotive research and development be included under Chapter 4 Resilient Economy & Job Creation;

RE OXX Strengthen, promote and support Mondello Park as the home of Irish Motor Sport, as a centre of driving excellence, as a tourism, leisure and education centre and to develop it as a nationally significant automotive innovation centre consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.'

The above requested objective specific to Mondello Park would be much the same as similar policies and objectives for horse racing including Objective RE O88 which seeks to '*Support the continued redevelopment and upgrading of the National Stud, Curragh, Punchestown and Naas racecourses and their associated facilities*' and Objective RE O92 which seeks to '*Promote and facilitate, at appropriate locations, commercial activities that are directly associated with the Horse Racing and Sport Horse industries*'.

The Development of Events and Festivals Theme in the Emerging County Plan

Mondello Park hosts a range of events throughout the year to attract visitors from all ages. Mondello Park has the ability to host international events that significantly boots the County's tourism activity alongside with the renowned Punches town and The Curragh.

We request the following objective to be inserted into the paragraph under 4.29 (Events and Festivals) of the emerging County Plan;

*'Festivals can be a key driver of local economies and a means of revitalising and maintaining local culture. Festivals are important in terms of attracting visitors to the county during the off-peak season. County Kildare hosts a wide range of festivals and annual events including the internationally renowned Punchestown and The Curragh racing festivals and **motorsport activities at Mondello Park** which provide a significant boost to the County's tourism industry.*

Sports, Recreation and Tourism

Mondello Park is a significant sports, recreation and tourism facility in County Kildare as the 'home of Irish Motorsport' and has hosted international racing events for participants from around the world. Mondello Park needs to be namechecked along with other notable sporting and tourism locations such as The Curragh and Punchestown because of its potential to expand and attract diversified visitors from across the county, the State and from around the world. Mondello Park has an excellent case to be mentioned and supported in the emerging County Development Plan.

We request the following amendments to the wording of Policy P25;

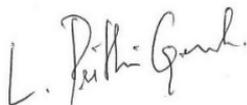
*'RE P25 Support the sustainable tourist related development of (a) The Bloodstock and Equine Industries and existing horse racing venues within the county; (b) Recognise the importance of angling and the golf industry to tourism in the county; (d) **Promote Mondello Park as an international racing circuit**; (d) Promote the development of international class sporting and recreational facilities in County Kildare*

We trust that the local authority will consider the above in their deliberations on the emerging County Plan.

We ask that we are included on any mailing list that is created to provide updates on the plan making process (pgowda@csrlandplan.ie and epreter@csrlandplan.ie).

If further elaboration is required, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Assistant Planner

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