



Athgarvan

GAA
Est. 1889

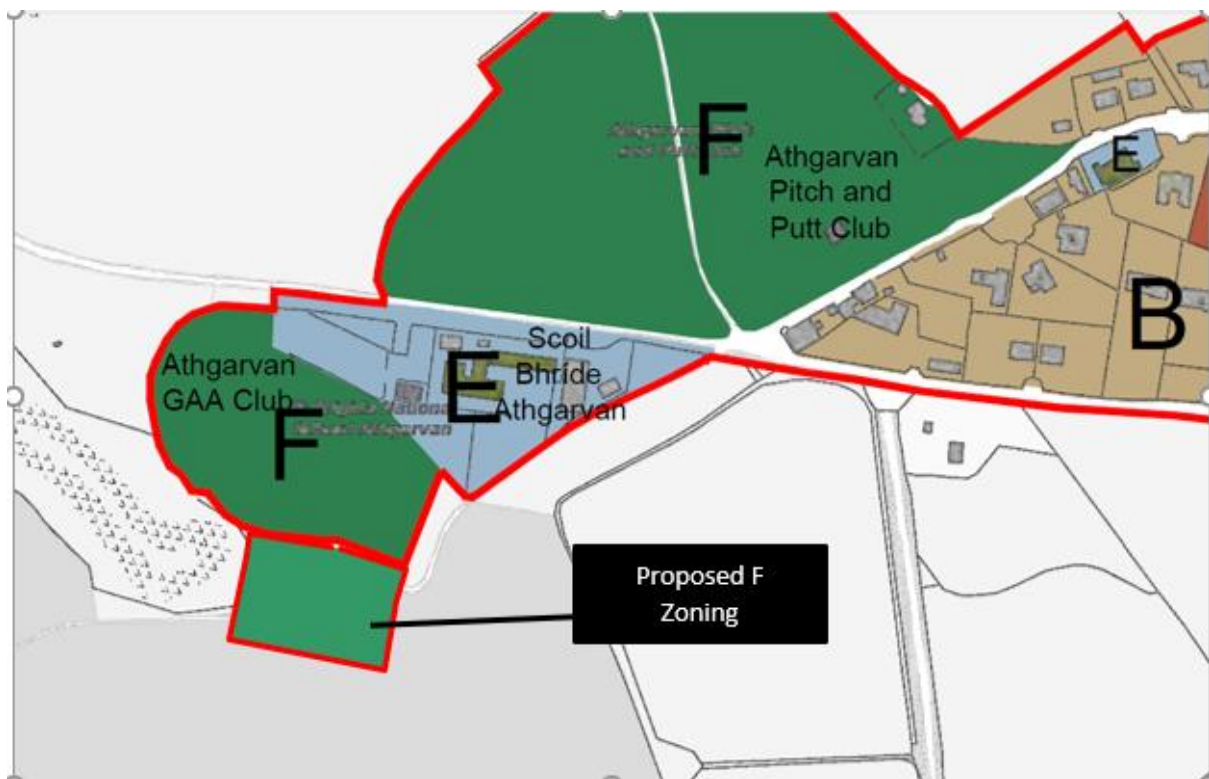
**Submission to
Kildare County
Council for
additional
recreational
facilities in
Athgarvan**

Prepared By:
Club Strategic Development Committee



What is Athgarvan GAA seeking?

- To have lands zoned F (Open Space and Amenity) under the new Kildare County Development Plan 2023-29 close to the club's current pitch to facilitate a modest expansion of the existing GAA grounds which are manifestly too small to accommodate the current playing needs of the club.
- To have further lands, within easy walking distance of the school and the GAA club zoned F (Open Space and Amenity) to facilitate the provision of the following desperately needed sport and recreation facilities for residents of Athgarvan – an all-weather playing area capable of facilitating GAA and other sports training all year round, additional pitches for other sports, and an indoor playing facility capable of accommodating indoor sports and training for those involved in outdoor sports in inclement weather.,
- Ideally, all sports facilities need to be near one another to facilitate sharing across different sports and to facilitate economies in their provision and management.



Extract from draft KCDP 2023-29 Athgarvan Village Zoning Map showing the proposed zoning objective for the school and GAA Club - adapted to show proposed new F zoning objective.

The Case for Additional Facilities:

The growth in the population of Athgarvan since 2005 is typical of the trends witnessed across the County of Kildare. The County Development Plan (2017-2023) acknowledges this reality and Athgarvan has been re-designated as a Small Town with significant growth in population forecast to 2025.

Population/Year	2005	2016
County Kildare Population	186,335	222,504 (25% under age of 14)
Athgarvan Population	895	1,160 (Forecast 1,500 by 2025)
Athgarvan GAA Membership	120	2022 Membership is 401

A further 337 house units are forecast to be built in Athgarvan up to 2025 with planning permission already sanctioned by KCC for 145 units. At present Athgarvan GAA and Athgarvan Pitch & Putt Clubs are the only local organisations providing outdoor recreational activities for the Athgarvan community.

Sport and recreational needs of the Athgarvan Community

The GAA club's facilities are on lands owned by the Department of Defence. These amount to a single GAA pitch, small but functional changing rooms, and parking for some 50 cars. All these facilities are shared with the local primary school, which is also situated on land owned by the Department of Defence. These facilities are manifestly incapable of meeting the needs of Athgarvan GAA Club for playing and training facilities currently.

The GAA club has modest plans for the expansion of its playing and training facilities (see attached details) but the realisation of these plans requires the agreement of the Department of Defence and a successful planning application to KCC. Before this can happen, it is critical that the County Development Plan make provision for additional f-zoned (open space and amenity) land to facilitate the integrated development of sport and recreation facilities in a growing community.

While what is being proposed by the GAA Club would improve matters greatly for both those playing GAA and the pupils of Scoil Bride, and the walking track would also provide the local community with a safe area in which to exercise, especially after dark, the sport and recreation needs of Athgarvan GAA and the wider Athgarvan community require much more than will be provided in the context of the GAA's proposal.

Specifically, there is a need for an appropriately sized and lit all-weather playing area capable of facilitating GAA and other sports training all year round. Ideally, this facility should be close to the local primary school. There is also a need for additional pitches for soccer and, indeed, an indoor playing facility capable of accommodating basketball, volleyball, badminton and indoor training for local sports teams in inclement weather. Again, it would be ideal to locate all these facilities in proximity to the primary school but, given the unique geography of Athgarvan, it is appreciated that this may not be possible. That said, there would be distinct merit in having all sport and recreation facilities in Athgarvan near one another, as this would generate economies in their management and use. This would also facilitate different sports sharing the same resources.

Given the extent to which the land available for development in the vicinity of the school and the GAA pitch is limited, the Council needs to consider alternative lands that would provide additional playing pitches, ideally within a convenient distance of the school and the GAA club – land with an established pedestrian connection to the school and the GAA club. We believe such land is available but would need to be zoned appropriately.

Current Status:

The table below summarises the number of registered players and non-players in the Club for 2022. **The club forecasts that during the next five years our membership (playing and non-playing) will grow by 40%.**

Group	Registered 2022
Playing (over 17)	87
Juvenile (U13 – U17)	109
Underage (Nursery – U12)	143
Non-playing members	62
Total	401

The Club will field a total of 23 Adult and Underage teams across both Male and Female Football and Hurling codes in 2022, with further significant growth expected over the next 5-10 years. There has been significant growth in Ladies participation with 65 female members currently playing at either Senior, U13 and u9 levels. The recent growth in demand for ladies' sport in the area has seen an increase in female members joining the club.

Athgarvan GAA club has a strong link with Scoil Bhríde, Athgarvan and provides the use of its playing facility and changing rooms to the 330 children attending the school. Club coaches supported by Kildare GAA provide Football and Hurling training to all classes in the school, assist with active school's week by organising and refereeing games and, along with the teaching staff, manage the Cuman Na mBunscoil league teams. The club supports all school activities including fundraising events, annual sports and field days. Additionally the club's car park is available to the parents/guardians to drop off and collect their children daily.

The club reaches into the community with its annual 5Km and 10K fun run/walk and plays a significant role in the mental and physical wellbeing of the community. The clubs Green/Biodiversity Co-ordinator has applied for the club to participate in the GAA's Green Club Initiative 2022.

Athgarvan GAA Club currently participates in Kildare County Council's Green Kilometre Initiative & conducts a twice-yearly clean-up along all roads leading to the Village Centre including the Club environs. Athgarvan GAA registered an expression of interest with Croke Park to be included in a new initiative called the Healthy Club Project (HCP). This project is backed by Irish Life and Healthy Ireland and is focused on improving the health of the nation. The club is focused on providing the best possible facilities particularly for the young people living in the area and, pre-COVID19, the club hosted a youth club on Friday nights during the winter months. The local Order of Malta has an agreement for the use of the clubhouse for scenario and cadet training. Our club's intention is to continue to contribute towards building and maintaining a sense of community in Athgarvan and facilitating improvements in community health and welfare through participation in Gaelic Games, leisure activities and establishing a Biodiversity/Green Club.

The Club's Submission

Athgarvan GAA club submission requires the provision of additional playing facilities to meet the requirement of the local community.

The options to do this are limited in the area however these are:

- Re-orientation of the existing pitch by 90 degrees. This would require an additional net 0.7 acres of Curragh Lands and the new pitch would be framed by a 2 metre-wide walking track. The club's strategy of re-orientating the existing pitch utilises every piece of perimeter ground

within the current boundary and minimises any potential impact on The Curragh Lands. This would require rezoning of approximately 0.7 Acres of Curragh lands bordering the existing pitch and reaching an agreement with the Department of Defence to facilitate this.

- Laying down a new Juvenile-size pitch 90m X 60m within the current boundary of the existing club grounds.
- The perimeter walking track would be available to the community and school and provide an excellent recreational facility.
- Rezoning of other privately-owned lands in Athgarvan to facilitate the increasing need for recreational space for a growing community.

It is important to note there are no plans to extend the Club's Dressing Rooms as it is projected that they are sufficient to serve the Club's needs for the next 20-30 years. The club car park is also fit for purpose to serve the needs of the club.

Our submission is underwritten by the following:

- A commitment to continue to provide and support the Athgarvan Community with high-quality sport and recreational facilities.
- A commitment by everyone concerned with Athgarvan GAA Club to continue to respect the Curragh Plains and preserve them for future generations. To this end we have applied to participate in The GAA's Green Club initiative 2022. This programme has been developed in conjunction with local authorities and our intention is to use this programme to drive real change within our Club. We have already identified some areas for improvement.
- The Club commits to implementing any development in a sustainable way that is acceptable to the Department of Defence and Kildare County Council and other stakeholders in the Athgarvan area
- The clubs Fundraising Committee has a demonstrated ability to fundraise and have raised in excess of €100,000 for the Club over the past 5 years. It is in a strong position to fund the development of additional recreational facilities through a mix of our current resources, Fund Raising Initiatives and Sports Capital Funding.
- **In support of any Club Development on our current site Athgarvan GAA Club has already commissioned Archaeological & Environmental Impact Assessment reports. Any works carried out would be governed by the recommendations contained in these reports.**

In Summary:

Athgarvan GAA club believes there is an overwhelming need for additional sport and recreational facilities for the Athgarvan Community. We believe the Kildare County Council Development plan being currently developed is a real opportunity, after many years of endeavour, to develop the kind of sport and recreation facilities the growing community of Athgarvan so desperately needs.

The club has a well-established, diligent and active committee that is committed to this proposal.

Thank You.