

Planning Department
Kildare County Council
Devoy Park
Naas
Co. Kildare

Monday, 23rd May 2022
[Via Consultation Portal]

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: SUBMISSION TO DRAFT KILDARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029 ON BEHALF OF REATHCOFFEY GAA CLUB.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rathcoffey GAA club, Rathcoffey, Co. Kildare have retained Tom Phillips + Associates¹ ("TPA") to make this submission in respect of the *Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029* (KDP), as opened for public consultation for a period up to the 24th May 2022.

2.0 RATHCOFFEY GAA CLUB

Rathcoffey GAA Club was founded in February 1888 and has been a central and integral part of the community for over 130 years. The Club has exceptional facilities including:

- four grass pitches (one of which has floodlights),
- two floodlit astro turf pitches
- a 1km floodlit walkway around the perimeter of the grounds,
- a large clubhouse with a member's bar and meeting room,
- a large sports hall,
- a gym and
- a childcare facility

All of these facilities are used on a daily basis and provide a significant community amenity to the residents of the village and the surrounding rural hinterland. In particular, the grounds are actively used by the local national school, who use the pitches during the spring and summer months and the sports hall for winter-time PE. This is facilitated by a dedicated footpath which runs from the school to the Club Grounds. In essence, the Club grounds are an integral part of the community and in particular the village.

¹ 80 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2, D02 F449.

3.0 THE RURAL SETTLEMENT MAP FOR RATHCOFFEY IS INCORRECT

The club believes that the Rural Settlement Map for Rathcoffey is incorrectly drawn. In particular, it is noted that the Club itself and many neighbouring houses which are considered to be part of the village are not included within the settlement boundary. The club believes that this will have a negative impact on the community Rathcoffey in particular.

The club notes and supports the Council's stated position in relation to providing sustainable alternatives to rural housing (section 3.13.7 of the Plan).

In particular, the club notes and endorses the draft Plan's statement that:

*"The local pub, church, community centre and **GAA** and other local sports clubs are **unique aspects of rural life, to be valued, protected and strengthened**. Over past decades, the fabric and role of rural villages has changed, with population decline and the loss of built fabric and traditional services. **Re-establishing and maintaining the future viability of our villages is critical for rural Ireland and is one of the most important challenges for national and local policy makers, stakeholders and communities.**"*

[Our Emphasis]

This position is specifically provided for in Policies HO P22 and HO P23 which note that the Council will designate lands for serviced site in villages and rural settlements. While this has been done for all of the Rural Settlements in the County, it appears that the process has been somewhat arbitrary for Rathcoffey.

If as is the case in Rathcoffey, the lands that are considered to make up the rural settlements and villages are not appropriately mapped, all potential development sites in such settlements will not be properly identified. This difficulty will be further exacerbated by the council's plan to limit Rural Residential Density as set out in Section 3.14. In essence, all lands located outside to the rural settlement boundaries (as shown in Volume 2 of the Draft Plan) will be considered rural and subject to the rural residential density policy. As such, this significantly limits the choices for existing residents of villages such as Rathcoffey who wish to continue to reside in such settlements. It essentially means that houses that are currently considered to be part of a rural settlement or village (such as Rathcoffey) will be subject rural housing considerations, despite being in an urban or peri urban context.

The Settlement Boundary for Rathcoffey is incorrect and arbitrary. In particular, it is noted that a number of houses to the north east of the village have been included within the Boundary (at some remove from the village) while the GAA club and houses closer to the village centre have been excluded. Equally the Southern and western boundaries of the village do not make sense and exclude many parts of what the community in the Village of Rathcoffey call 'The Village'.

Rathcoffey GAA Club specifically request that Kildare County Council properly represent the village of Rathcoffey on the Rural Settlement Maps. In this regard, please find attached as Figure 1 a map showing what the GAA club and generally the community in Rathcoffey believe to be the extent of the village. The extent of the lands included to the south and west are based on the location of the 50kph speed limit signs into the village.



4.0 CONCLUSION

We trust that the Council will give this submission due consideration. Accordingly, we trust that the council will amend the Rural Settlement Boundary as shown on Map Ref V2 – 4.17 (Rathcoffey Rural Settlement Map) in line with that indicated in the attached Figure 1.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin Lawlor
Director
Tom Phillips + Associates

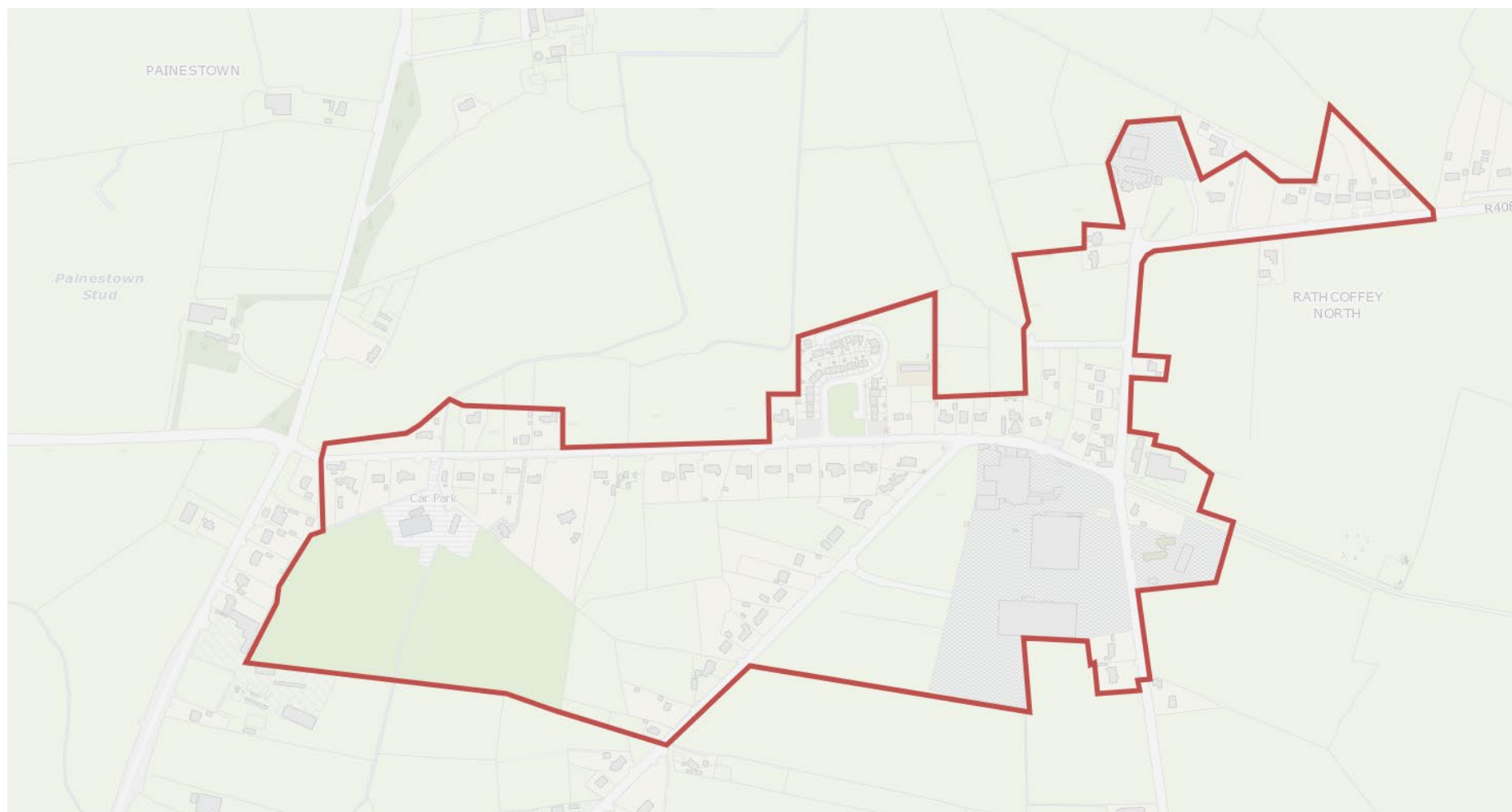


Figure 1 – Map Showing Corrected “Rural Settlement Boundary” for Rathcoffey Village (Map Source MyPlan.ie)