

<https://kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/Planning/LocalAreaPlans/CurrentLocalAreaPlans/NewbridgeLocalAreaPlan2025-2031/>

Newbridge Local Area Plan

SUBMISSION FROM

Pat O'Mahony

Author of:

'Rethinking Housing Options for Senior Citizens: Retirement Villages in Every Irish Community'

Book available in pdf format: <https://retirementvillagesireland.ie/>

The Case for Developing Retirement Villages

The County Development Plan 2023-2029 acknowledges (Section 3.10) that the 'ageing of the population from this point onwards will represent one of the most significant demographic and societal developments and challenges that Ireland has encountered' and that 'by 2031, 16% of the population of County Kildare will be over the age of 65 years, with this rate increasing to 21% by 2040'.

In Section 3.11.1 the Development Plan acknowledges that the 'changing nature of the age profile of the county requires greater consideration of the housing needs of older persons' and highlights two kinds of what might be termed elder-friendly housing that need to be addressed to provide housing for older persons:

- 'Sheltered housing, nursing homes and other residential facilities catering specifically for older persons should be appropriately located close to public transport, community facilities, retail and other amenities'.
- 'For those who wish to continue to live independently in their community but wish to rightsize/downsize, it is important to provide a range of attractive and appropriately located accommodation choices which will in turn address the underutilisation of larger houses, particularly in more established areas. Older persons require housing that is appropriate and responsive to more complex needs, enabling them to enjoy more active, healthy and socially connected lives and to age healthily and safely within their community'.

Section 3.11.1 then goes on to acknowledge the importance of McAuley Place in Naas in enabling older people capable of independent living to age in place and indeed it cites McAuley Place as a national exemplar for older people and states that KCC will 'seek to identify further opportunities in towns in each MD throughout the County

for the Council (and other appropriate bodies) to expand this supported housing market. The Development Plan's objectives (HO 020 - HO 025) and actions (HO A1 – HO A2) broadly align with these sentiments.

It is understood that there are plans to increase the capacity of McAuley Place by a further 90 plus self-contained apartments which would give Naas more than 140 appropriately located and designed homes for older people.

According to the 2022 Census, the population of Newbridge (24,366) is just less than that of Naas (26,180). So, the need for elder friendly housing should be similar to what is required in Naas but other than what is available at Ryan's Field, there is a dearth of such housing in Newbridge and there are no plans to rectify this situation.

Recently, I visited two very impressive retirement villages run by the Sue Ryder Foundation at Dalkey and Carlow. Quite frankly, the retirement community at Dalkey is a brilliant example of what we should be aiming to have in all Irish communities. On land previously owned by the Loreto sisters, it is superbly located overlooking Dublin Bay and close to all the amenities in the village of Dalkey with its restaurants, cafes, pubs, shopping and excellent public transport connections to Dublin city. It has forty eight homes in a combination of bungalows and apartments and there is 24 hour on-site support, lunch seven days a week, as well as a laundry and cleaning service, all of which is included in the weekly charge. Besides, it includes lovely community spaces, a dining room, an oratory, gardens, etc.

The Carlow retirement community offers similar facilities (53 one and two bedroomed apartments) and the only difference between the two is that the Carlow development is some distance from the centre of Carlow though it has a very good public transport connection to the centre of Carlow. Ideally, retirement villages should be at the centre of communities – close to all facilities.

The ambience in Dalkey and Carlow must be seen firsthand to be appreciated and it is both impressive and inspiring to see people in their 70s, 80s and 90s living such full and independent lives in secure homes designed to accommodate their needs as they grow frail.

While securing suitably located sites for the development of retirement villages can be challenging, Newbridge is fortunate in that KCC already owns the former [Patrician Brothers Monastery](#) at the very heart of Newbridge - next to the Catholic Church, across the road from public and private bus stops, a very short walk from restaurants, cafes, pubs, the library, the Arts Centre, shops, etc. One of the real strengths of the site for a retirement village is its proximity to the tranquillity of the Liffey and the gem of nature that is Linear Park. Research tells us that experiencing the natural environment is hugely beneficial to the quality of life of young and old alike but many older people have little or no access to the natural world – other than the sky overhead.

One great advantage of the old monastery site is its size (C.2.66 acres) with approximately 150 metres of frontage on the Liffey. A further advantage is that the old monastery is relatively small (7,000 sq. ft) on two floors, thus there is great potential to increase the amount of accommodation (homes) on the site without having to spend a lot of money on remodelling an old building. It is conservatively estimated that it would be possible to provide some 50 own door homes (designed to accommodate older people as they grow frail) in a mix of houses and apartments on the site and to develop these at a reasonable cost to the developer.

The opportunity to provide a state of the art retirement village on the old monastery site is an opportunity that cannot be missed as there are no comparable sites for such a development in Newbridge. If this opportunity is not grasped now, it will not come again and the Newbridge Community will be the poorer for this loss.

As I understand it, KCC is not able to develop a retirement village on the Old Monastery site. If that is the case, might I suggest that KCC proactively seek to make the objectives referred to above a reality by approaching bodies such as the body that manages McAuley Place or the Sue Ryder Foundation with a view to those organisations developing a retirement village on the old monastery site.