

# Adopting the Safe System Approach in the Confey Masterplan

*Submission by*

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As part of the Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030, targets were set to reduce road fatalities and serious injuries from road crashes in Ireland by 50%, the starting point was year-end crash statistics 2020<sup>1</sup>.

From available statistics, Kildare had recorded 4 road fatalities by year-end 2020, this would set a target for Kildare to reach 2 or less road fatalities by 2030. Sadly, this year by 13 January 2024 Kildare has recorded 3 road fatalities<sup>2</sup>.

As part of the Road Safety Strategy plan to reduce road crashes by 50% in Ireland for 2030, a Safe System Approach was adopted. Road Transport Ireland produced a report “Forgiving Roads” to set out a template of how the Safe System Approach could be used in designing safer roads<sup>3</sup>.

Taking the Safe System Approach and applying it to the “Confey Masterplan” will require a review of existing road and transport options for all road users in the Confey area. By making road and transport options safer in the Confey area prior to bringing in a new population, we create a safe space for all road users as the town grows.

**Newtown Hill House** is a development of houses in the grounds of a house dating back to 1765. When you leave this development to walk south to Leixlip Village you have a footpath that finishes at a wall, where you have no view of the road that you need to cross to access the footpath on the opposite side. As a car or bus driver using the R149 north, you similarly have no view of the footpath due to the wall impeding your view. On the 23 November 2022, two pedestrians were seriously injured in a road collision close to this location. A barrier to prevent pedestrians crossing at this location would be recommended, moving the crossing point closer to Newtown Hill vehicle entrance, where the sight line is larger to ensure a safer crossing point for pedestrians. Taking the Safe System Approach, this dangerous crossing point for pedestrians at Newtown Hill House R149 will need to be amended now<sup>4</sup>.

**Bay parking spaces**, which run from Imperial Bakery to Bank of Ireland Leixlip Village, are a danger to cyclists and other road users with traffic reversing onto the R149 at the junction where it meets the main street R148. Removing these parking spaces would allow more space for bicycles to safely navigate this junction, putting in parallel parking spaces would also be a safer option if you need to keep some parking spaces available. This junction needs to be made safer before you increase traffic flow at these lights.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rsa.ie/about/safety-strategy-2021-2030>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/alarm-over-road-deaths-surge-as-one-county-equals-its-total-2023-fatalities-in-just-21-days/a1384605887.html#:~:text=Ireland%20recorded%20a%20total%20of,demanding%20action%20on%20safety%20issues.>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tii.ie/tii-library/road-safety/Road%20Safety%20Research/Forgiving-Roadsides.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kfiradio.com/news/localnews/gardai-appeal-for-information-following-a-road-traffic-collision-in-leixlip/>

The Confey Masterplan Strategic Transport and Mobility Report on page 6 has a model hierarchy picture for road users with safer active travel at the top. The following options have been highlighted to achieve this on pages 12,13 and 64 of the report.

- To improve Captains Hill from a cycle and pedestrian perspective. (MT2.9)
- New safe pedestrian and cycle links across the canal. (MT1.5)
- To provide a footbridge over the Rye River at Confey College. (MT1.6)
- Cycle lane from Scoil San Carlo through Avondale continuing to Mill Lane (figure 6.5<sup>5</sup>)

A safe “school zone” outside Scoil San Carlo with improved pedestrian crossings is mentioned in the document Confey Lands Masterplan on page 31. Taking a Safe System Approach to the existing Confey area, all the necessary pedestrian and cycle friendly infrastructure are needed now before we start any developments, to protect vulnerable road users around “school zones”. On page 53 of this document, it gives a timeline of Phase 1a with this work being undertaken during construction of the first 450 units with no mention of timeline for construction of Confey College footbridge over the Rye River<sup>6</sup>.

My husband has lived in Leixlip since 1972. He had a primary school friend who lived beside Confey Cemetery, In the 1970’s, while his mother was pushing him in a pram over **Cope Bridge**, a car collided with them killing his mother. At that time, Cope Bridge was a two-way road, with no pedestrian footpath or traffic lights. Currently the footpath along the canal has an access point on both north sides of Cope bridge, when travelling from the west direction to access the road and footpath opposite you must join the road with zero visibility towards Leixlip village due to the camber of the bridge. There is an option to travel under the bridge and join the road at the footpath side, but this option is narrow under the bridge and unfinished, not suitable to all users.

A Safe System Approach would require this crossing to be amended as soon as possible to provide a safer crossing point to protect cyclists and pedestrians before you increase traffic flow on this bridge. The Confey Lands Masterplan document has a timeline of 2026-2029 and the construction of up to 1,100 houses during the completion of upgrades to Cope Bridge (Pages 53,54).

The new town planned for Confey is due to have approximately 1,765 units, this will be similar in size to Sallins town. On 29 November 2017, a pedestrian crossing the main road in Sallins town was struck by a car and killed. The following year Sallins Road Safety Action Group was established to campaign for safer crossings, bicycle lanes and infrastructure in their area. By setting up a campaign group and highlighting the road safety danger zones in their town, they successfully managed to get the council to make crucial changes to the roads in Sallins.

The Group went on to win a Leading Lights Award in Road Safety in 2019 from the Road Safety Authority (RSA). We can all learn so much from this Group’s commitment to providing safer roads in Sallins.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/system/files/materials/7947/Strategic%20Transport%20and%20Mobility%20Report.pdf>  
<https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/consultation/amendment-no-1-leixlip-local-area-plan-2020-2023-extended-2026>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.kildarenow.com/news/local-news/402162/gardai-appeal-for-witnesses-to-fatal-sallins-collision.html>  
<https://www.leinsterleader.ie/news/news/501771/raod-safety-award-for-sallins-group.html>

The Confey Lands Masterplan document has highlighted many areas in Confey that need to be improved to provide safe active travel, using the Safe System Approach these measures need to be undertaken now before any further growth in population happens. We need to learn from past experiences where road upgrades happen retrospectively after a serious or fatal road collision. In 2023 pedestrian road deaths on Irish roads were the highest since 2011, Building in safer road upgrades before construction of Confey Masterplan will ensure road crashes are reduced and thus preventing the devastating impact a road crash has on the Confey community<sup>7</sup>.

Phase 1a of the Confey Masterplan construction is planned for 140 units East of Confey GAA, in area R5 on page 45 Confey Lands Masterplan document. This section will join the R149 close to the intersection with the **Dunboyne Road L5052**. On 20 June 2008, a car exiting the L5052 collided with a motorcyclist causing fatal injuries to the motorcyclist. After the collision a change in road signage was made approaching this junction, no alterations to date have been made to improve visibility as you exit this junction from the L5052 onto the R149.

A Safe System Approach would require this junction to be upgraded to improve visibility for traffic exiting onto the R149. No mention of timeline is made in the Confey Lands Masterplan for upgrades to this junction or description of how this junction will be made safer<sup>8</sup>.

Phase 1a of the Confey Masterplan construction is planned for 470 dwellings in area R1 directly across the Canal from Confey train station on page 42 Confey Lands Masterplan document. The timeline for completion of work on Cope Bridge is during the construction of this phase or 2 years after - this will mean that pedestrians and cyclists may have to continue using Cope Bridge before it is upgraded. The area R1 will border the L1015 road and to travel to the R148 you will have to continue along **Kellystown Lane L1014**. This is the chosen route option 1 to provide an access route to the M4 on page 15 of the Confey Masterplan Strategic Transport and Mobility Report. There is no map available to explain how this road is to be upgraded to provide a “clear zone” as recommended in the Road Transport Ireland Forging Road Document.

There is also no mention in the report that **Kellystown Bridge** on the L1014 is a protected structure with a weight restriction. The Confey plan does have a detailed drawing of upgrades to Cope Bridge but no drawing of plans to upgrade Kellystown Road Bridge, which is part of chosen route option 1 to provide access to Confey Masterplan area. There is a mention in the timeline document for upgrade of L1015 but no mention of a timeline for upgrade of Kellystown Lane L1014. A Safe System Approach will require the necessary upgrade of L1015 and L1014 Kellystown Lane including Kellystown Bridge alterations to provide a “Clear Zone” that will protect cyclists and pedestrians before the commencement of any construction in the Confey Masterplan area.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.rsa.ie/news-events/news/details/2024/01/01/road-deaths-in-2023-increase-by-19>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/man-killed-in-leixlip-crash-named-1.824807>

In conclusion, to follow a Safe System Approach, the following will need to be completed before construction starts on Confey Masterplan area to protect all road users:

- Make road crossing safer at Newtown Hill house.
- Improve junction where R149 meets R148, Leixlip Main Street.
- Provide a safe school zone and pedestrian crossing at Scoil San Carlo.
- Build a pedestrian bridge at Confey College across the Rye.
- Construct safe cycle lane from Scoil San Carlo through Avondale and onwards to Mill Lane.
- Finish upgrades to Cope Bridge before commencing construction in Confey Masterplan Area.
- Provide a detailed report with consultation period on the chosen route option 1 as described in the Confey Masterplan Strategic Transport and Mobility Report on page 15 to safely access the Masterplan area.
- Upgrade of the junction where L5052 Dunboyne Road meets the R149 to improve visibility before construction of area R5 on Confey Masterplan.

I would like to acknowledge the information and help given by my husband Aidan Jordan who has lived in Leixlip since 1972 and who has worked in road safety directly in Leixlip since 1996 as a driving instructor.

My own background on road safety is a 2018 Master's dissertation with DCU on "*An Evaluation of the Learner Driver Programme in Ireland*<sup>9</sup>" for which I achieved a first class honor's degree and Academic Award for Excellence. This led to the establishment of the Learner Driver Support Programme in 2022, which was published by the European Commission Road Safety Charter in 2023<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/43255385/Evaluating\\_the\\_Learner\\_Driver\\_Process\\_in\\_Ireland](https://www.academia.edu/43255385/Evaluating_the_Learner_Driver_Process_in_Ireland)

<sup>10</sup> <https://road-safety-charter.ec.europa.eu/content/evaluation-learner-driving-process-ireland-category-b-0>