

leixlip

TOWN RENEWAL PLAN - PUBLIC CONSULTATION



Kildare County Council
Comhairle Contae Chill Dara

Leixlip Town Renewal Plan

The Strategic Projects and Public Realm section of Kildare County Council and Metropolitan Workshop, in association with the community of Leixlip, are in the process of preparing a Town Renewal Plan for Leixlip. The key objective of the Leixlip Town Renewal Plan is to deliver a new vision for the town with pedestrian focused public spaces and liveable streets. The aim is to put the pedestrian and cyclist at the heart of the design solution for the town and to create fully accessible, inclusive and age-friendly public spaces. The Town Renewal Plan will include a masterplan of the area with key priority regeneration projects and an implementation strategy for the town. The Plan will also align with the policies and objectives of the Leixlip Local Area Plan.

A Focus on Sustainability

Providing sustainable communities where people can live, work and socialise is the cornerstone of the Town Renewal Plan. The following high level aims will inform the emerging Plan.

They include:

- Providing a mix of land uses to minimise transport demand by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport, and minimise the need to use cars;
- Delivering a quality of life which residents and visitors are entitled to expect, in terms of amenity, safety and convenience - presenting an attractive and distinct sense of place with a quality public realm that is easily maintained;
- Enhancing and protecting green infrastructure/biodiversity and our built and natural heritage;
- Reviewing the range of community and support facilities, where and when they are needed and ensuring they are easily

How Covid 19 has Changed the Way we Interact

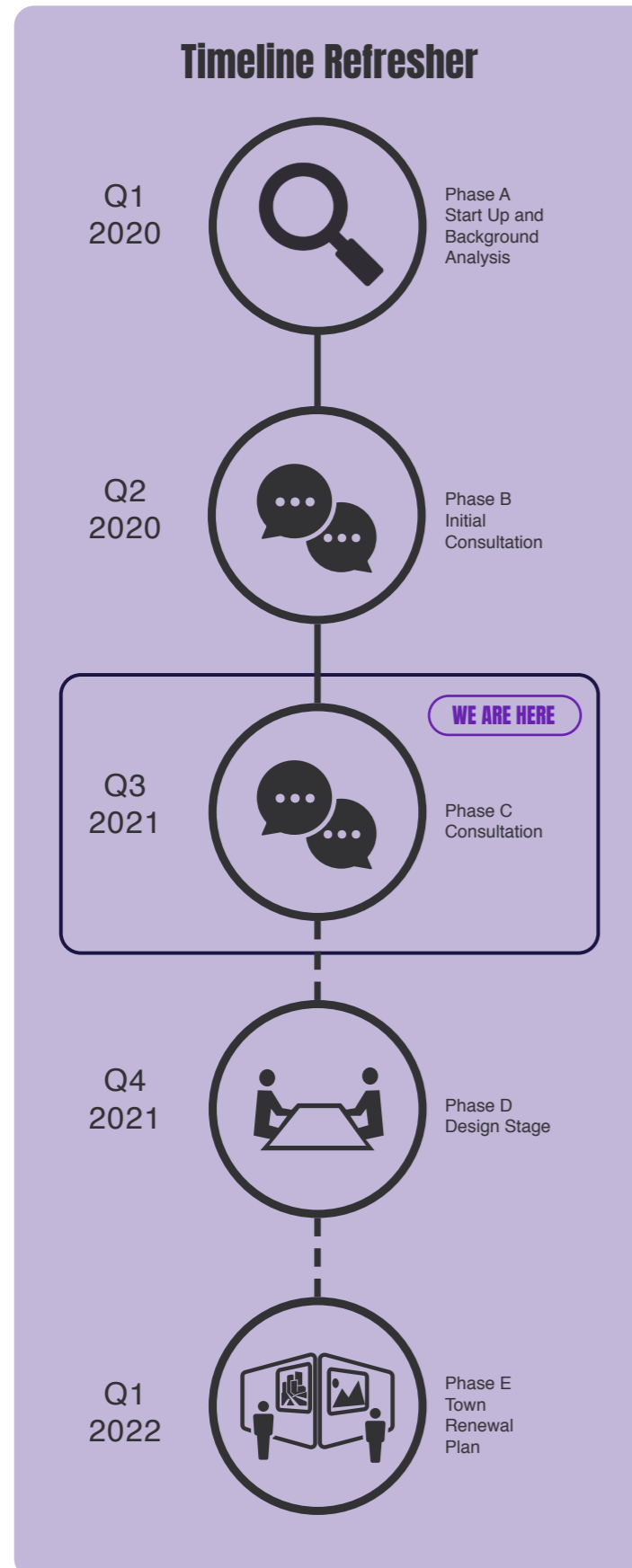
COVID-19 has brought a sudden unexpected change in how we socialise and use our surrounding environment. These changes in how we live and work have placed stresses upon our town infrastructures, highlighting inadequacies but also opportunities to develop our towns in a sustainable and progressive way. Local parks, paths and outdoor amenities have become so important to our physical and mental wellbeing during this time. We have begun to interact more with our home towns as we no longer commute and have more spare time to enjoy the natural beauties which our localities have to offer. At the same time, the pandemic has acted like an x-ray to our urban environment, diagnosing symptoms of poor urban design where they exist such as the lack of open space to encourage safe and enjoyable social interaction. We realise that quality urban spaces are required in our towns in order to improve our quality of life, our health and wellbeing.



Leixlip - Study Boundary



CONSULTATION STEPS



Phase A – Start Up and Background Analysis (Q1 2020)

This phase consisted of the appointed design team carrying out site visits and background analysis to generate a set of plans which help our understanding of the town, its history and structure. Typical issues we looked at are existing land uses, open spaces, connections and linkages, public transport and movement network, building heights etc. This information helps the design team build a picture of the town and to better understand the opportunities.

Phase B – Initial Consultation (Q2 2020)

This phase consisted of an online mini-survey, carried out from 5th to 19th of June 2020, which sought to get a snapshot of what residents thought worked well and what didn't work so well. The team also met with local representatives to understand their hopes and concerns for the town. Learning about local strengths, needs, issues and challenges is a massively important step in the process of design development, and so engagement and feedback is essential.

We are grateful to the respondents who completed our Community Mini-Survey, and the excellent additional comments submitted. As we embark on this exciting project, the feedback we received will help guide the project Design Team in the early design proposals and considerations. The results of this mini -survey are presented back as part of this consultation.

Phase C – Consultation (Q3 2021)

This current phase consists of an online survey which will see wide communication of the project – its aims and objectives, how the engagement process will inform the project, how people can get involved, means of contact, etc. Using a new website, surveys, meetings with local stakeholders, electorate, public engagement we will be listening closely and gathering knowledge on local strengths, needs, challenges and opportunities. This initial communication stage will set out the context of the Town Renewal Plan and look for specific feedback on what proposals you would like to see brought forward.

Phase D – Design Stage (Q4 2021)

Following this consultation stage, preliminary designs will be drawn up which respond, where possible, to feedback received and transparently set out the rationale. These emerging ideas will be put on display and, depending on Covid restrictions, the website may be used to upload information and illustrate material. It could have a short questionnaire with a series of specific questions aimed to draw out useful responses.

Phase E – Town Renewal Plan (Q1 2022)

This phase would see the finalisation of the Town Renewal Plan and publication of the document.

SURVEY FEEDBACK - RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

ENGAGEMENT

Kildare County Council and Metropolitan Workshop, the Project Team have embarked on a Community and Stakeholder Engagement process since the initiation of Leixlip Town Renewal Plan. Our aim is to work closely with residents, business owners and community groups who live and work in Leixlip so that their opinions and observations are reflected in the plans to improve the town.

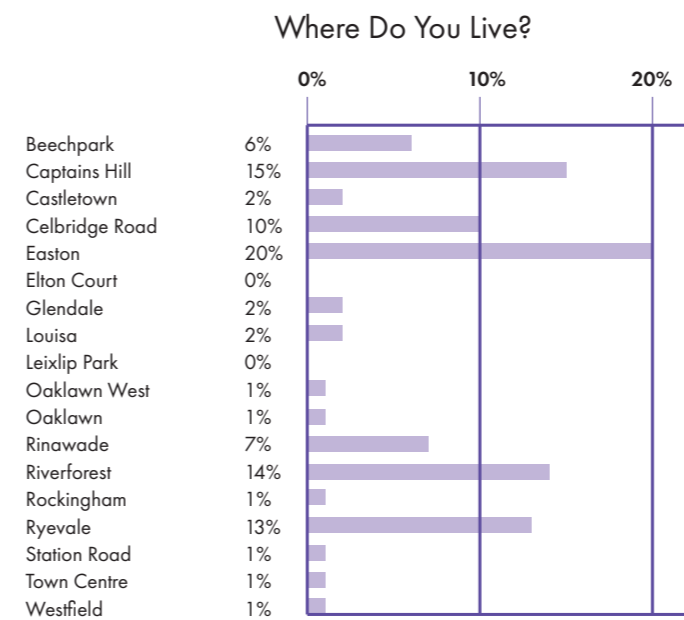
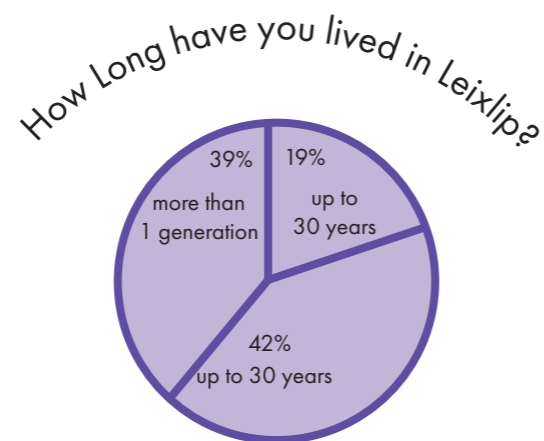
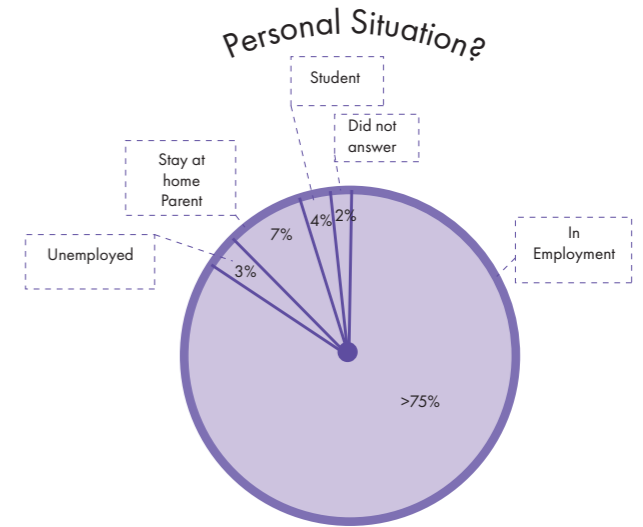
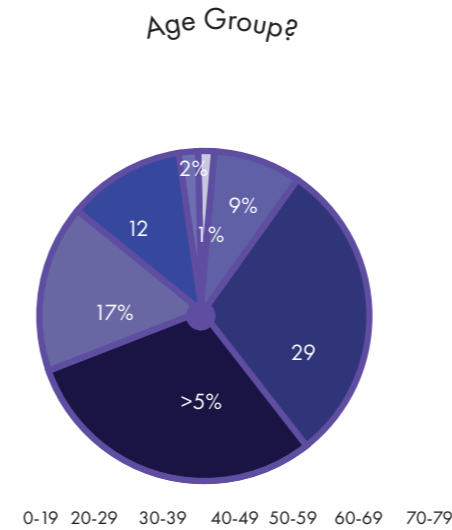
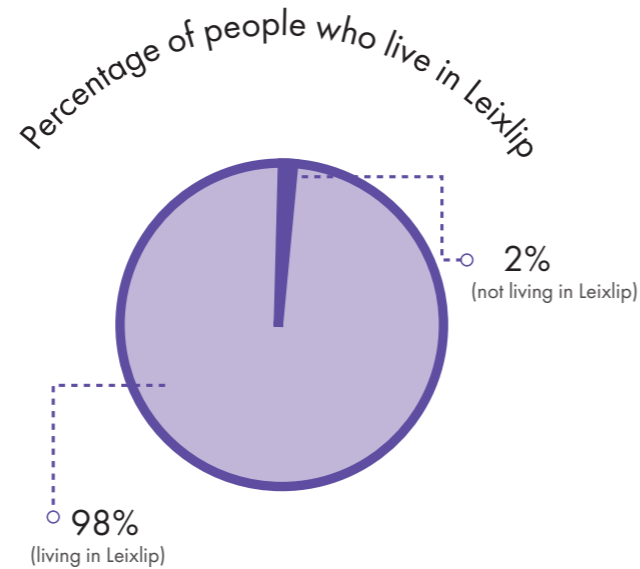
An initial online survey was carried out from 5th – 19th June 2020 with 723 respondents to gain insights on what was seen as important to the residents of the town. Specific areas highlighted in the Local Area Plan were further investigated including pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, inadequate facilities (most notably a swimming pool), night time activities (theatre/cinema/arts centre) with a particular focus on the sustainable use of cultural and historical assets of the town and its environs.

In order to avoid repetition of survey material amongst this group, we have collated feedback and comments from the initial survey on the following pages

We are so thankful to all respondents to our Community Survey. As we embark on this exciting development project, the feedback we received will directly guide the project Design Team in the early design proposals and considerations.

Demographics

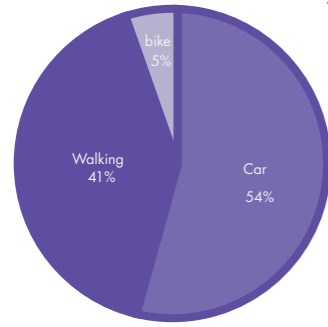
A wide cross section of the community was surveyed in terms of age profile and place and length of residence in Leixlip in order to inform a balanced picture of the present situation.



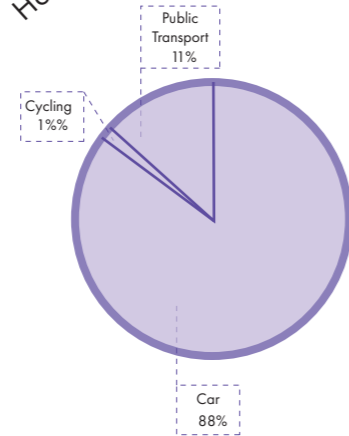
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ON-STREET SURVEY - RESULTS - TRAVEL/TRANSPORT

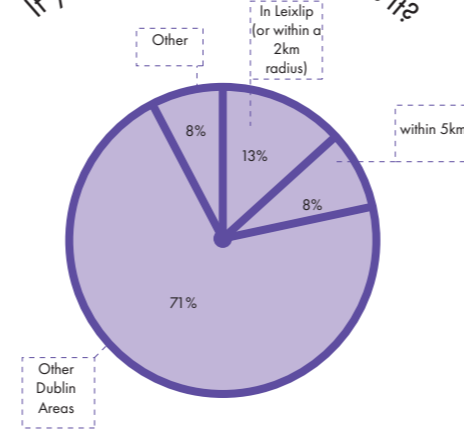
How Do you travel within Leixlip



How Do you travel beyond Leixlip



If you are employed, where is it?



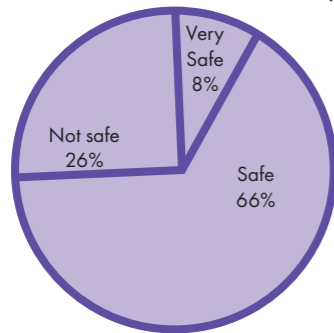
Where do you shop?



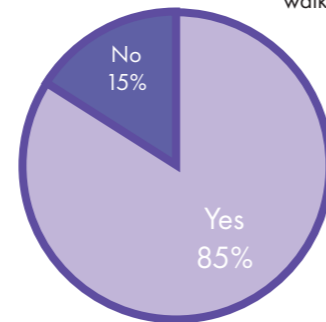
INSIGHTS

- Although walking holds a significant percentage of the means of local journeys, car transport still dominates. Walking and cycling infrastructures between nodes of work, amenity and recreation from residential areas should be prioritised to further encourage the uptake of sustainable forms of travel.
- Commuting long-distance by car to work is common amongst the demographic surveyed (Potential to re-survey post Covid-19)
- Leixlip is presently marginally stronger in terms of local shopping habits, this must be encouraged and strengthened. Further survey required to understand challenges faced by Leixlip town to compete in terms of retail offering

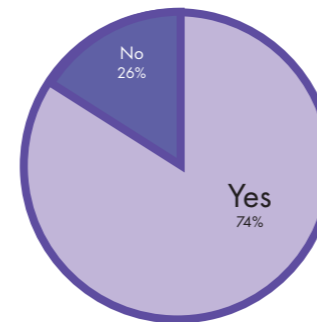
What is the perception of safety for walking and cycling around?



Would better foot-paths, cycle facilities and road crossings encourage more walking and cycling?



Is travel congestion and/or inappropriate driver behaviour common in Leixlip?

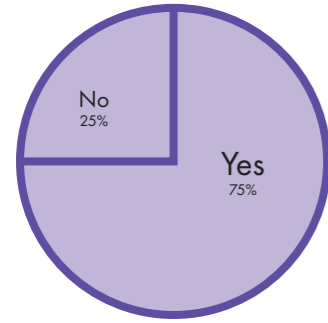


INSIGHTS

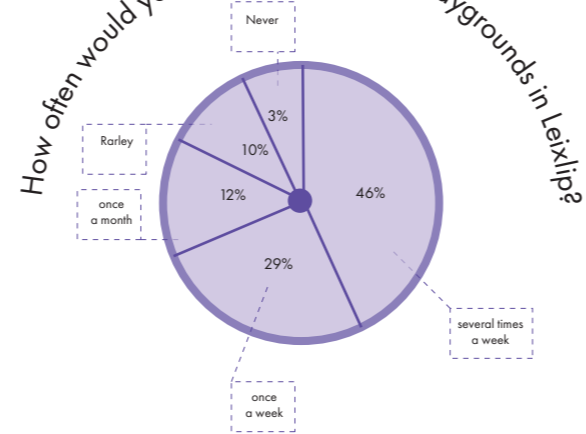
- Almost three-quarters of those surveyed (74%) regard Leixlip presently as a safe place to cycle or walk
- Both cycling and pedestrian infrastructure is regarded as requiring improvement
- Traffic management measures need to be looked at to improve traffic congestion and pedestrian and cyclist safety

ON-STREET SURVEY - RESULTS - TRAVEL/TRANSPORT

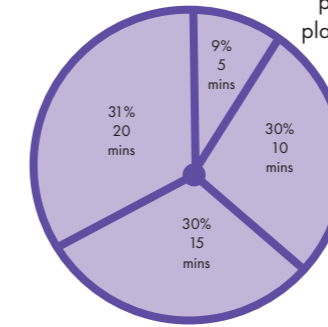
Do you travel outside of Leixlip to use any other sports or recreational facilities?



How often would you use public parks & playgrounds in Leixlip?



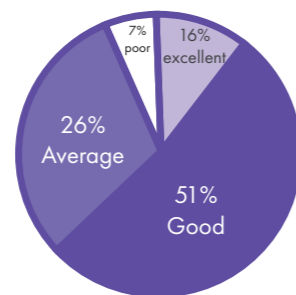
How far would you walk to use public parks and playgrounds?



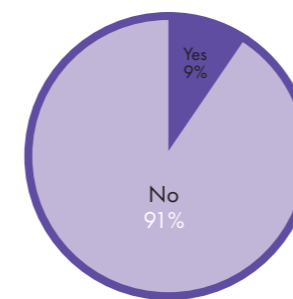
INSIGHTS

- three quarters of those surveyed presently travel outside of Leixlip to access basic recreational facilities.
- Three quarters of those surveyed use a public park or playground in Leixlip at least once a week.
- Almost two-thirds of those surveyed are willing to walk 15 minutes or more to a suitable park or playground facility, this highlights the need to increase pedestrian and cyclist links between residential and recreational nodes.
- Further survey required to illustrate facilities used outside Leixlip and whether similar facilities could be sustainably provided or safe pedestrian and cyclist links made to these infrastructures.

How do you consider the quality of streetscape and landscaping around Leixlip?



Is Leixlip taking full advantage of it's tourism generating potential, particularly from heratage perspective?



INSIGHTS

- Over 90% consider the present streetscapes and landscaping of the town as average or better..
- Over 90% believe that Leixlip is not taking full advantage of its tourism potential from its heritage assets.

KEY OBSERVATIONS HIGHLIGHTED IN SURVEY FEEDBACK

Village Centre

Free parking to encourage shopping in Leixlip Village centre is a common suggestion made in the public survey. Respondents see the issue of paid parking as a deterrent to shop local.

A further common suggestion is to provide grant aid/incentives to property/shop owners to improve/develop their premises on the village's principal streets to bring activity back into the village core. A shopfront improvement scheme is mentioned on several occasions within submissions.

Lack of activities/destinations within Leixlip Village is also highlighted within the survey, common suggestions include leisure facilities, swimming pool, theatre, cinema, riverside cafes/restaurants.

This lack of activity is evidenced in the Pedestrian and Observational Survey carried out in April 2020 which outlined that pedestrian movements on the weekday were 33% higher than the weekend day. The recorded footfall and significant differences in numbers suggest a high inflow of workers during the week which influence pedestrian counts and may suggest a lack of activities for the local population to engage with at the weekend.' (MDB, 2020, Leixlip Pedestrian and Observational Survey,)

The lack of connectivity to leisure/amenity/tourist sites is mentioned in many submissions, particularly the inaccessibility of Leixlip Castle grounds, The Royal

Canal path and train stations and the undeveloped grounds of Catherine's Park.

Traffic calming and pedestrian prioritisation including the provision of pedestrian crossings and widened footpaths is highlighted in several public submissions in order to encourage active and safe use of the village centre. This priority has been further illustrated in the Leixlip Pedestrian and Observational Survey carried out by MDB in April 2020 which outlined the lack of formal pedestrian crossing(s) at the Main Street /Mill Lane Junction and that the pedestrian signal times presently impose longer waiting times for pedestrians. A recommendation is made to consider reviewing pedestrian waiting times given the high level of pedestrian movement.

Pedestrian & Cycle Infrastructure – Interconnectivity

Pedestrian and cyclist connectivity infrastructure is highlighted in many of the survey submissions. Strengthened, direct, continuous and safe segregated cycle connections between established amenity areas from residential areas is mentioned in many submissions, particularly from both train stations on the Royal Canal path.

The development of the Liffey path to connect the towns of Celbridge and Leixlip is also highlighted in several submissions.

This lack of infrastructure was further evidenced in the Pedestrian and Observational Survey carried out in April 2020 which outlined, 'A higher number of cyclists were observed during peak hours. The cyclists were observed to be cycling on the footpath at instances. The absence of cycle infrastructure is highlighted.' (MDB, 2020)

Lack of maintenance and proper surface conditions/ lighting/bins on present paths is highlighted in several submissions.

Linkages to Heritage

91%, 637 of individuals surveyed, agreed that Leixlip is not taking full advantage of its tourism generating potential, particularly from a heritage perspective. The interconnectivity of Leixlip Castle, St Catherine's Park and the Castletown Demesne to the town and other heritage assets was consistently remarked upon.

Common concerns include the endangered state of repair and vacancy of many historic assets including the Town's Main Street, The Wonderful Barn Complex, St Catherine's Church, Gate and Stables, Leixlip Spa, Leixlip Castle Boathouse and canalside lodges.

Community Facilities

When questioned on a lack of facilities, 62% of correspondents mentioned the lack of swimming facilities in proximity to the town, followed by parking facilities, 20% and the provision of an arts centre/theatre, 13%.

A common statement against the construction of further housing without infrastructural improvements is made in many submissions.

Youth facilities including a BMX/bike park is suggested for development in a number of survey submissions.

Reference is made in a number of submissions to the development of boules courts in St Catherine's Park, Fingal.

Swimming Pool

Our online survey revealed that one of the most popular reasons for travelling outside the town was to visit the swimming pool.

In answer to the question "what is the one change which would make the greatest positive impact on the town?", one of the most frequent answers was the provision of a swimming pool in Leixlip.

While the provision of a swimming pool in North Kildare remains a priority for Kildare County Council, a funding application for the construction of a pool in Maynooth to serve North County Kildare was submitted to the Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund. However, the final location of a swimming pool for North County Kildare may be subject to review.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE LEIXLIP

With your help, through the implementation of the Town Renewal Plan, the Strategic Projects and Public Realm team of Kildare County Council are planning improvements to further encourage the sustainable development of Leixlip. We are actively pursuing opportunities to rebalance our streetscapes into people-orientated rather vehicular-orientated spaces, prioritising compact growth and a town centre first approach to development and seeking to progress priority regeneration projects for the community of Leixlip. We are also committed to ensuring that climate action and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity is at the forefront of all projects. We are again asking for your feedback. What can we do to improve the place in which you live?

How can we get involved?

There is a comprehensive engagement process for the Town Renewal Plan which provides a series of opportunities for people to get involved. Feedback is sought from the community, stakeholders and interested parties by the Design Team to inform the process of moving towards the selection and design development of town renewal projects.

The engagement phases start with this introductory communications and information gathering phase, where we aim to gather feedback through a survey and discussions with key stakeholders. After considering views on this stage, we will return with a more detailed masterplan, and update you on how the feedback was considered in the design approach. Again, you will have the chance to feedback on this.

While COVID-19 has severely challenged the possibility of holding physical consultation events, we aim to hold virtual events and meeting. Further information will be available in the coming weeks on the website at <https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/browse> and also through local media.

How can I access the information if I cannot use the internet?

We aim to provide all information available on this website (<https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/browse>) on a print friendly pdf that can be downloaded. If possible we will also provide information at public locations in the area such as the library and community centres.

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PRIORITY PROJECTS

Wonderful Barn

The Wonderful Barn is a well known landmark, noted for its unusual bottle-like design. Bounded on either side by two dovecote towers, the Wonderful Barn appears to have been used as a granary, a place to keep a large stockpile of grain in case of another famine. As it can be viewed from certain windows inside Castletown House, it is also believed that the architecturally unique building was intended to add character to the landscape. The structure is adjoined by a large two-storey residence called Barnhall House, with a walled garden.

A certain amount of conservation works has taken place however the Leixlip LAP suggests that the the Wonderful Barn in particular presents an opportunity to attract tourists to Leixlip and to support the development of a heritage trail through the town, linking the town centre to The Wonderful Barn, Castletown House and other historical demesne lands within and around the town.

The Leixlip Town Renewal Plan would like to promote The Wonderful Barn as an integrated tourism and amenity destination with complementary commercial uses to be informed by a detailed conservation and management plan. We would like your ideas on how this unique structure could be used in the future.



Main Street

The Main Street would benefit a range of streetscape improvements allowing it to function as a people focused town centre amenity with an emphasis on sustainable mobility. This could be combined with investment in the upgrade and regeneration of existing properties and commercial premises, extending to appropriate infill developments which would significantly enhance Main Street.

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TOWN RENEWAL PLAN - UPDATE MAY 2021

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Ralph Square and Riverside Walk

Ralph Square is a small square opposite Captain's Hill which has the potential to link the Main Street to the riverside. While the area is too small to form a square of civic proportions it does have the potential to create a very attractive space due to its narrow entrance and the small scale of the surrounding development.

There are a number of existing commercial uses located along the square which attract vehicular traffic reducing the potential to create a pedestrian centre. In addition, to the south of the square which opens onto the River Liffey walkway, there are a number of derelict properties. The regeneration of this area has the potential to attract enterprises which stimulate pedestrian movements through this space connecting Main Street to the River Liffey.



Leixlip Spa

The Leixlip Spa is situated close to the Royal Canal, at Louisa Bridge and was discovered in 1793 by a group of workmen excavating the canal. The spa was widely used over the years but since the 1960s it has fallen into disrepair. To preserve the spa, a committee was set up from members of Kildare County Council, An Taisce, Duchas and the Irish National History Museum.

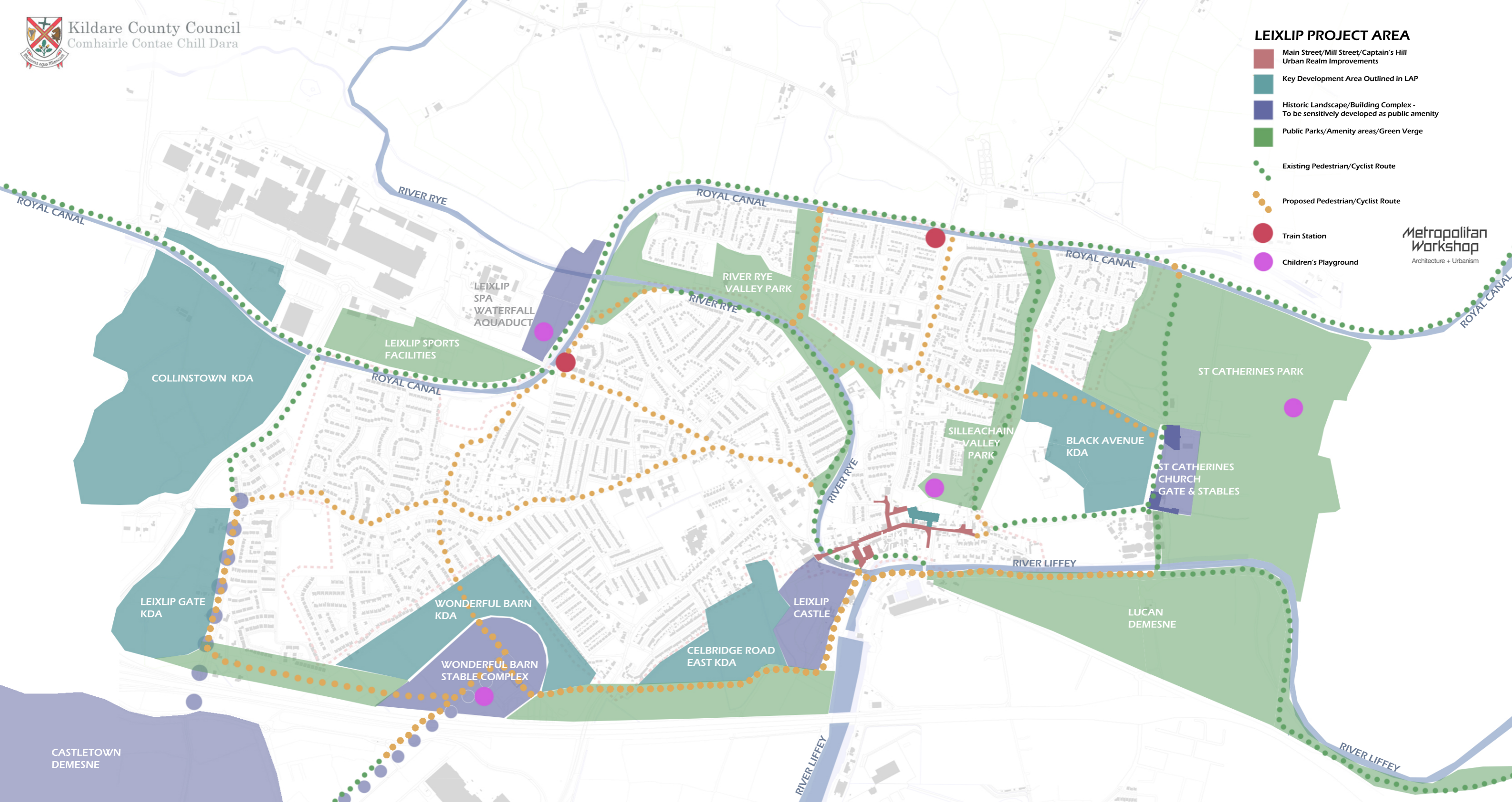
The Leixlip LAP aims to support the implementation of the conservation plan for the restoration and management of Leixlip Spa in association with key stakeholders. It has the potential to form a string of recreational facilities, supplementing other existing amenities such as the River Liffey, the Royal Canal and Greenway, Leixlip Castle and St. Catherine's Park.

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LEIXLIP PROJECT AREA

- Main Street/Mill Street/Captain's Hill Urban Realm Improvements
- Key Development Area Outlined in LAP
- Historic Landscape/Building Complex - To be sensitively developed as public amenity
- Public Parks/Amenity areas/Green Verge
- Existing Pedestrian/Cyclist Route
- Proposed Pedestrian/Cyclist Route
- Train Station
- Children's Playground

Metropolitan
Workshop
Architecture + Urbanism



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