

Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Pre-Draft Stage

Public online Meeting: 3rd February, 2021

1. Introduction

Caroline O'Donnell, Acting Senior Planner opened the online meeting, welcomed the participants and said she looked forward to their engagement in this early (pre-draft) stage consultation. This was one of two (two hour) public consultations at this pre-draft stage. Participants registered in advance of the meeting and received the Issues Paper along with an agenda. The Issues Paper was prepared to give people an overview of the main development issues. It is also available online on the consultation portal (consult.kildarecoco.ie).

The two consultation meetings were facilitated by an independent facilitator. The facilitator explained the meeting process. Ground rules, including use of the technology, equal space for participants to input their views were agreed. Participants introduced themselves when they asked their first question or made their first contribution. The participants included representatives from Environmental Groups, Residents Associations, Community Groups, Planning Consultants, journalists along with individuals living and working in Kildare.

This report from the first meeting was developed by the facilitator and represents the consultation process and the key questions and issues raised. It is laid out as follows:

- Introduction,
- Presentation,
- Questions and Issues,
- Next Steps and Closing Remarks

2. Presentation

Jane O'Reilly, Acting Senior Executive Planner gave a presentation on the County Development Plan: *"Purpose, Value and Content of a County Development Plan"*. Key points included:

- The purpose of a County Development Plan
- The main areas including Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy
- A profile of County Kildare

- The 7 key themes: Healthy Placemaking, Economic Opportunity, Climate Action, Sustainable Mobility, Creative Spaces, Enhanced Amenity and Heritage and Making It Happen

This was followed by a wide range of questions and comments. The questions, in the main went initially to Caroline O'Donnell and she asked different members of the Kildare County Council staff in attendance at the meeting to answer in the respective areas. Eoghan Ryan (Director of Services for Planning) also contributed to a number of topics.

Caroline said that all questions were welcomed and also encouraged participants to make submissions on their area of interest post the meeting.

3. Key Questions and Issues

Audit of Previous Plan

- Has there been an audit of the previous plan to see what has been achieved and what has not? This would be very useful to understanding the current position prior to future planning.
- There was a 2-year review of the current CDP which is available on the KCC website. Some of the long-term objectives will roll over from one CDP to the next. There is a statutory undertaking to review CDPs.
- This is available on the KCC site.

County Development Plan: the scope and concepts

- It was clarified that the CDP included rural areas and towns.
- Compact Development was explained as a planning concept which promotes short distances between services and amenities. Urban layout with amenities close together.
- In explaining the concept of Key Towns in the CDP, the following points were made:
 - There are different categories of towns.
 - These key towns are set at a national and regional level.
 - Key towns attract more funding usually with a better range of services and facilities.
 - Key towns are considered through the core strategy and relate to population growth with targets established through EMRA.
 - In terms of plans underway, nothing is concrete just yet.

Measuring the progress

- Are there measurable targets to determine if we are going in the right direction (*general and particularly in relation to climate change*)?
- Measurable targets will be worked through with the climate change team. Through climate action, we have targets. CARO are working on national targets and these will tie into the climate action plan. KPIs are being developed.

Key Town: Working Hubs/Covid

- Some participants were interested in the potential for Working Hubs in Key Towns and in Maynooth specifically. KCC said *“If you identify buildings suitable as Working Hubs in towns, let us know”*
- In relation to Maynooth: the structure of Maynooth has the potential for higher density near the train station and working with the NTA to increase the infrastructure provision.
- In relation to the potential for Working Hubs in Key Towns, and remote working hubs, the MERITS building was due for completion in March 2021 but is delayed with the halt in construction due to Covid-19.
- There is also a private hub in Ballymore Eustace. In Athy, the food and drinks hub is planned.
- How will the changes in need (for example working from home) be incorporated into existing and forthcoming LAPs? – changes will be required.

The planning process

- Will KCC look for different types of submissions at the various stages of planning?
- The submissions should become more detailed as the plan progresses. At this stage, the submissions should be at a high level.
- Stage 3 is quite specific. At this stage you will see the proposed plan and you can comment on the specific ideas.

Youth engagement in the process

- The Photography Competition for young people is designed to involve them and get their input into this process. Their photos of gardens, nature, parks and areas of interest to them will be reviewed in the process.
- Participants were interested in youth engagement in the early stage consultations and in how the outcomes and photos from the competition will be used to inform the plan. This was in the context of Kildare having such a young population.

Government Departments/Agencies in the process

- Is there a consultation process regarding government departments/agencies?
- Does national policy dictate over submissions made by the public?
- The issues paper was referred to the statutory authorities for housing/climate change etc. They were also advised of the public consultation. KCC has also organized meetings to discuss issues with transport etc. Several KCC staff were also involved with open space and rural housing.

Climate Change and reducing footprint

- The relationship between climate change and local needs was highlighted: allotments, local markets etc. and the need to support these developments through the CDP
- Community Gardens and allotments have multiple benefits: environment, community engagement, connectivity
- With Covid-19 there has been an increase in demand for outdoor markets.
- For KCC one issue highlighted was the bylaws that prohibit outdoor trading in some towns. These bylaws are being reviewed.
- Has there been any consideration into co-housing to reduce the carbon footprint – this would be positive
- Submissions are welcomed especially where examples are given of this occurring elsewhere and how it worked.

Community Owned Sustainable Energy System

- Participants raised the potential for community owned sustainable energy systems and how the plan could enable and support
- This approach is supported at a National Level and through the climate action office. Kildare's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (KCC) was highlighted.
- KCC has employed an energy officer to find ways of improving energy and developing sustainable energy in communities. There is a network of communities that feed into the process. There are 18 sustainable energy communities in Kildare with 4 very advanced.

Maynooth

- Maynooth is considered within the Metropolitan area (and has a number of SHDs). A number of issues were raised in relation to Maynooth: the current lack of key amenities such as a community centre, doctors, pool, potential for higher density in some areas, the potential for a work hub and potential for a new train station/ park and ride and a college bus as solutions, particularly given the large number of students
- There needs to be supports for sustainable businesses in the town centres including Maynooth. The rates are too high causing businesses to close on the main streets.
- An SIA will be carried out for Maynooth to list the infrastructure against the population and projected population.
- Rates is a process outside of the CDP. If other County Councils have incentives it would be useful to let KCC know this
- Strong encouragement to get in touch with LEO if setting up one of these businesses re. rates rebates schemes to revitalise town centres. Also the Commercial Incentive Scheme was noted – info on website
- The lack of a community centre should be highlighted in submissions. Is this plan going to feed into funding from Europe?
- The main source of funding is from the rural regeneration fund and the urban regeneration fund. KCC would need to look at the different funding opportunities.

Mobility/Transport/Trains

- Train stations are relatively cheap to build, is there potential to add new stations to the train line? We could then create new communities and introduce park and ride stations and bus stations
- The Dart Extension Scheme was acknowledged. This topic also requires discussion at a high level. The potential for a Sallins station is being investigated (including changes to a new park and ride set up).
- In Maynooth, there is good economic rationale for a new station. Discussions with South Dublin CC about the possibility of updating the rail lines but a detailed flood assessment must be undertaken. KCC are open to comments on this.
- Having elements of local transport developed in isolation does not work. A transport strategy for the county and a green transport plan are needed.
- KCC are working through LAPs currently and local transport plans with emphasis on mobility. A Transport strategy will be published with the plans.
- The CDP will be informed by the transport plans. Submissions should be included on this.

- Funding streams from the government will focus on climate friendly transport plans. Developments can also be levied by development contributions.
- There has been promotion of cycling for the past 20 years yet rural areas are seeing less of this type of planning. Schools are being built too far from homes. We need to enable cycling.
- KCC said they would welcome submissions with views and suggestions in this area.

Per capita funding (General, Newbridge and Maynooth)

- Social Infrastructure - is it and could it be on a per capita funding basis? In terms of sustaining rural communities, what evidence is there of services being dispersed fairly across the county? It would be good to have a picture of potential gaps in distribution.
- Unlike other counties (like county Meath who have 1 main plan), Kildare has 12 LAPs. The structure is different and so social infrastructure is considered in these LAPs. SIAs are now a part of the LAPs and they look at the number of doctors/childcare facilities/open space etc. for the population.
- Houses should be delivered in tandem with infrastructure.
- The LIHAF funding was specific funding relating to housing. Generally, KCC wouldn't look at housing first and then infrastructure. Houses will be added in tandem with infrastructure

Development Issues

- On development and national and primary roads – there will be a national policy to focus on railway lines
- On rural housing and towns - It is national policy to support towns. 1 in 4 houses in Kildare is rural. This is significant and a reason for this can be down to affordability but causes issues. It is a challenge to get infrastructure there in a sustainable manner.
- KCC also said there will be an interest in submissions on how the participants see development into the future, in terms of where infrastructure and development can be directed
- The lines between country and towns are changing and this brings traffic volume concerns. Permission was granted for large housing developments, but little was done to alleviate the traffic issues. Speed limits are inadequate for areas around new development.
- KCC noted that this traffic issue will be a consideration for the CDP. Planning is partnering up with the transport department in Kildare to ensure we are fully informed.

- With reference to the National Planning Framework and compact growth. KCC welcome submissions on how to achieve this. How do we convince people not to use their cars?
- There are cases of cycle paths for certain distances and then they just suddenly stop. If planning is granted for large developments, they should be located near towns where people can walk/cycle. The routes need to be completed and link up together.

Timelines for LAPs

- What are the timelines for LAPs?
- The draft Athy LAP is currently on display, the Draft Naas LAP will hopefully be ready in the next 4-6 weeks, Maynooth thereafter.
- KCC are working through LAPs currently along with local transport plans. A Transport Strategy will be published with the plans.

Vision for Kildare 2020

- People coming into Kildare (inward not just outwards): therefore more trains stopping in County Kildare rather than travelling through to get to other counties and shops, markets etc. to make this attractive.
- Linked to this a Kildare with better open spaces and public realm
- Better quality of life in Kildare, making the best of what we have: green ways and blue ways along our canals and bogs and a greater emphasis on cycling and walking in our vision.
- A sustainable vision, linked to national sustainability: train Lines and electrification. Provision of zoned land. Sustainable methods of construction.
- A measureable vision with targets and KPIs – so we know if we are on track

4. Close

Caroline closed the meeting. The high level of participation was noted, with the vast majority of participants taking an active part in the discussions. Caroline thanked everyone for their active participation and the KCC team for their work in organising the meeting and answering questions.

Caroline again gave the consult.kildarecoco.ie contact for the Issues Paper, the presentation from the meeting, the Youth Photographic Competition and other links.

She strongly encourages submissions and reminded everyone of the closing date of 8th March, 2021.

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Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Pre-Draft Stage

Public online Meeting: 11th February, 2021

1. Introduction

Caroline O'Donnell, Acting Senior Planner opened the online meeting, welcomed the participants and said she looked forward to their engagement in this early (pre-draft) stage consultation. This was the second of two (two hour) public consultations at this pre-draft stage. Participants registered in advance of the meeting and received the Issues Paper along with an agenda. The Issues Paper was prepared to give people an overview of the main development issues. It is also available online on the consultation portal (consult.kildarecoco.ie).

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2. Presentation

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- The purpose of a County Development Plan
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- The 7 key themes: Healthy Placemaking, Economic Opportunity, Climate Action, Sustainable Mobility, Creative Spaces, Enhanced Amenity and Heritage and Making It Happen

A number of participants said they found the presentation very useful. The presentation was followed by a wide range of questions and comments. The questions, in the main, went initially to Caroline O'Donnell and she asked different members of the Kildare County Council staff in attendance at the meeting to answer in their respective areas. Eoghan Ryan (Director of Services and Planning) also contributed to a number of topics.

Caroline said that all questions were welcomed and also encouraged participants to make submissions on their area of interest post the meeting.

3. Questions and Issues

Making a submission

- Is there a need for the use of specific language when making a submission?
- KCC said that when a submission is received it must be read and summarised in order to respond to the questions made. Everyday language can be used. Some submissions will have specific objectives listed but all formats are accepted.

Sustainable Rural Housing

- The trend in other counties where very few rural houses are getting planning permission was highlighted. The problems with septic tanks, infrastructural issues and transport were all noted. *"How can we accommodate communities and ensure the infrastructure is also put in place?"* was the question raised for the CDP.
- KCC aim to get the balance right between rural development and development in towns. There are challenges with rural housing in terms of water and services in general. There is better potential for infrastructure in towns, but KCC are looking to find a healthy balance.

Innovation and Enterprise, Covid and Work Hubs

- Working Hubs and services for the current work hub was an area of interest in the context of the changing working environment. KCC said there was recognition of the new types, making these sustainable and the need for new responses. Policies and objectives will be included for this and the new plan will certainly incorporate these responses. Submissions are welcomed on these issues.
- KCC is working on a number of working hubs such as the MERITS hub, Equine Hub, Athy Food and Drinks hub and is also aware of private hubs. The potential to link

these hubs together and the role of the County Economic Strategy in this area were noted.

- Will there be an opportunity in the CDP to look at road usage in the context of increases in working from home? People's needs and the need for roads will now change. For example are there future plans for roads around Finlay Park in Naas and near the canal?
- KCC said that the issue would fall under the LAP (watch the Naas LAP and make a submission) more so than the CDP. KCC look at traffic reports, but it would be hard to determine the effects of Covid-19 on transport at this time.

Environment/Bogs

- There is opportunity/scope to increase the percentage of land designated for biodiversity over the next 30 years. Is it possible to cover this in the CDP?
- KCC said that the plan will recognise natural sites. The Heritage Officer has also been doing heritage mapping. This could be a way of achieving climate change goals. The plan will be looking at many ideas to protect the land and any specific areas of land identified should be included in submissions.
- There is now greater emphasis on 'green infrastructure' nationally (rivers, lakes, canals, flood plains etc.). Kildare is unique as a county with Bord na Mona looking at around 25% of their lands for 're-wilding' and letting nature re-generate itself. The forthcoming Open Space Strategy was highlighted in this regard. KCC also recognised that some of the areas are privately owned lands. Again KCC said they would welcome submissions on this matter.
- In relation to rewetting bogs (and the Umerus Bog in particular), KCC said there has been a study to explore amenity benefits e.g. walkways. Section 10.4.6 of the current CDP relates to boglands. It could be beneficial to look at the current plan and advise how Kildare might change through a submission.
- The CDP needs to include the protection of land with the possibility of the rehabilitation of bogs (30% by 2030 noted). The importance of this biodiversity enhancement while pushing for Bord na Mona to get Kildare bogs re-wetted was highlighted.
- The climate change response versus the Covid-19 response and the differences between these was highlighted. Covid-19 responses may need to now translate into long term responses. The importance of community and local areas in Covid and long term responses was highlighted.
- KCC said that Covid responses and long term responses go hand-in-hand (Tactical Urbanism). There have been government incentives to make public spaces better. Kildare town for example had parking spaces removed to incorporate a new open space, increase open space, one way systems etc. These initiatives were instigated due to Covid-19 but are also longer term climate change responses.

- Re-greening and protecting trees in Kildare were highlighted as priorities.

Water Supply/Community Energy

- Research from Maynooth shows increases in droughts. What are the plans for this? For example is there a plan to build a reservoir to ensure water supply and how can this be included in the CDP ?
- In looking at what has worked elsewhere – Claremorris has a disused landfill site as a solar park owned by the community. Have the council considered sites for community energy sites in the plan and could the plan support this ?
- KCC said they were interested in a variety of community plans, this is a very interesting option and they would welcome submissions on sustainable energy solutions (with some reference to specific examples if possible). (Kildare currently gets its water from Poulaphouca Reservoir, the river Liffey and the river Barrow).

Planning for the Population

- Are the population projections for the CDP based on the 2016 census? KCC recognised that the census may not happen in the timeframe planned. A lot has changed since 2016. There will be a Housing Needs Assessment carried out by consultants to have evidence-based figures. There will be difficulties with population growth figures but KCC will continue to work with the Department on this area. KCC will also review water/wastewater in towns, public transport etc.
- Some towns have had extraordinary growth and infrastructure will be needed to match housing, this infrastructure needs to be a priority for the CDP (also see next section re. Celbridge infrastructure)
- There is a plan to electrify the line to Maynooth.
- The high number of SHDs in Maynooth was highlighted

Metropolitan Areas/Self-Sustaining Town/Celbridge

- Celbridge is a part of the metropolitan area and a self-sustaining town (looking at the designation of towns). However, it is not clear what the strategy is for Celbridge compared to the rest of the county. It cannot be a 'self-sustaining- town' without the basic amenities, for example it does not have clothes shops. People would need to travel very far and outside of the 5km Covid-19 allowances for some amenities. Therefore the CDP needs to be very clear in how it will sustain the community and also be very clear on what are the basics that need to be in place for designation as a self-sustaining town.

- KCC highlighted the 4 towns in the metropolitan area which have grown because of their location. Social infrastructure needs to be addressed.
- From a transport perspective there is a synergy between Celbridge/Leixlip and Maynooth. Work is underway on a North Kildare study (NTA) to inform longer term transport needs.
- The flood risks and the single bridge crossing in Celbridge were also noted.
- The Department of Education is also looking at a school campus (Ballyoulster) which would move 3 schools to a new campus potentially freeing up space.
- For the planning of services it would be useful to see an example of what an infrastructural audit looks like – is there an example? What metrics are used for the decisions made for example?
- KCC said that under the NPF, there is a requirement to provide an SIA with each plan. Athy for example has an SIA attached to the draft plan and this can be found on the website. Also look at environmental audits. These all feed into a LAP.
**Link sent by e-mail the following day to SIA and SPIA for draft Athy LAP.*

Young People and Open Space

- The plan should provide services for the young members of the county. Lots of clubs have old buildings that are no longer adequate e.g. Monasterevin. All weather pitches would be great. Is there a plan to roll more of these facilities and pitches out– commencing with the CDP?
- The KCC Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy, had a public consultation and the issue of pitches and space was raised by many people. This is a real issue for many clubs across the county. There is potential to look at shared facilities. KCC said that this won't happen this year or next year, but KCC are looking at it in the long term for larger towns. KCC are now in the process of writing up the Open Space Strategy which will feed into the CDP, so these issues will feed into the CDP.
- There are opportunities in Celbridge e.g. Castletown/ opening up lands beside the river Liffey for parks/ amenity (it is disappointing that Celbridge did not feature in the key achievements from the last CDP)
- KCC highlighted that in the Open Space Strategy consultations there was lots of feedback on the lack of playgrounds in Celbridge. The CDP and the next LAP will be looking to reignite the idea of the River Liffey Linear Park. KCC owns land to the south of the river and recently began looking at how KCC can develop it. It is on the KCC radar.
- Over 700 responses to the Open Space Strategy survey and a high % named play space. The timeline is to have the Open Space Strategy finalised in June and it will feed into the CDP.

- KCC hope to have the draft CDP plan ready in late 2021.

Vision for Kildare 2030

The participants discussed elements of the vision for County Kildare at the end of the CDP planning cycle (2029). The facilitator asked participants to consider their vision for Kildare in 2030.

- The vision should use what is unique to Kildare and in that context there is a huge opportunity with our bogs as part of the vision with being a low carbon sustainable county.
- There are opportunities for a vision that includes biodiversity in estates: food walks and trails as part of that would encourage well-being, greening of towns and encouragement for estates
- In hockey terms – don't go for the puck; go for where it's going to be. We need to look 50-100 years on to make real change – so a 10-year plan is not ideal. The CDP needs to look to that timeframe i.e. be long term and sustainable.
- The transport hierarchy in the vision should clearly be stated as pedestrian, cyclist, public transport, taxi and then car (Towpaths need to be used)
- For this we need to put pedestrians at the top of the hierarchy of transport – the vision should mean that we are able to walk/cycle anywhere
- The future vision needs to recognise the importance of communities and what is local (moving around should not be car dependent) - the 15 minute neighbourhood
- For this vision to work, the connectivity within the county (between communities within Kildare) throughout the county will be important. Public transport and a network of buses, like south Sweden where you can hop on a bus and go anywhere.
- The innovation and business part of the vision should include people moving back to rural areas and people working from home. The idea that you would not have to go on the M9/M7 to commute to work.
- Our vision needs to recognise the aging population in 10 years' time and in this regard Covid19 highlighted vulnerabilities in accessibility in local areas. It would be a wonderful achievement to make towns more accessible. For this the vision needs to include the detailed things. For example, older estates in Monasterevin have few lowered kerbs meaning people in mobility scooters must go longer distances just to cross the road.
- Currently there are 5 people working for every person retired, going forward we will have 2 people working for every person retired.
- Therefore any vision needs to include facilities for the elderly whereby they can stay in their communities. This includes accessibility and inclusivity – there has been lots

of retrofitting of paths (they need to be accessible from the get-go). KCC said looking at the aging population is on their agenda.

- A vision with the social infrastructure that's needed for each area (doctors, public health services, community centres etc.) and land set aside for this infrastructure. They need to be accessible and inclusive. An example is Maynooth which has an inadequate infrastructure.

4. Next Steps and Closing Remarks

Caroline closed the meeting. The high level of engagement by the participants at the meeting was noted, as was the vast majority of participants taking an active part in the discussions. Caroline thanked everyone for their participation and the KCC team for their work in organising the meeting and answering questions.

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