



**Maynooth Community Council
Submission on Kildare County Council Issues
Paper for the Pre-Draft Stage of Kildare
County Development Plan 2023 -2029**

Maynooth Community Council





Introduction

Maynooth Community Council is a voluntary group representing Residents' Associations and Voluntary Groups in Maynooth. The Planning and Development Subcommittee of Maynooth Community Council welcomes the opportunity to make the following submission on behalf of our members.

General Comment

Maynooth is identified as a Key town and we see significant housing development already in progress with more yet to come. Maynooth Community Council would like to see the provision of infrastructure and services in line with this expansion:

- Primary Care Centre
- Performance and Arts Centre
- Swimming Pool
- Community Creche
- Proper Roads Infrastructure
- Public Transport
- Public green spaces
- Cycle infrastructure for active travel

The current County Development Plan (CDP) 2017-2023 contains excellent initiatives, but it seems that many of the initiatives have not been implemented nor are likely to be implemented before the expiry of the current CDP in 2023. We would ask that the new CDP 2024-2029 includes key performance indicators (KPIs) with actions, timeframes and expected outcomes clearly documented. We would also ask that provision is made for a public mid-term review of the CDP 2023-2029 to ensure that the plan is on course to being implemented and that Kildare County Council (KCC) are accountable for any inaction that arises.

On page 4 of the Issues Paper some key achievements of the current plan are listed. Despite being a key town Maynooth does not appear on this list.

Healthy Placemaking: People and Places

The current CDP and LAP provide for a significant increase in housing in Maynooth. We have already experienced much intense building activity in our town over the last 4 years which has caused stress to residents in various ways for example noise, dust and traffic pollution. The traffic in the town in particular has been a major issue with road works, major building works such as the new schools, strategic housing development and university traffic coinciding. Despite some respite during this past year because of the pandemic, we are acutely aware that Maynooth will see yet further significant building over the lifetime of the next plan.

KCC could implement a policy which protects the residents from construction traffic at certain times of the day. KCC could introduce a policy that enables the introduction of cycle or walking buses for young children during the peak rush hour times and construction traffic could be banned from town centre during those times.

To promote a healthier, more active lifestyle, KCC should implement a policy that requires developers to include multiple areas for community gardens and orchards within new estates. KCC should also implement a policy promoting community involvement within new estates by encouraging new residents to form residents associations and outlining the role of management companies.



Management Companies have proven to be a barrier to residents participating in the development of their estates as residents routinely feel powerless as they do not have a say in management of their estate.

In addition, we need a community sports amenity centre as there is a severe shortage of astro turf pitches in our town resulting in a large exodus from Maynooth to surrounding towns for use of their sports training facilities.

We would like a mix of high-quality housing estate developments near the town along with more compact developments such as over-shop living and in-fill development in the town centre. In the Town Centre Renewal Project in June 2018, we learned that Maynooth actually has a reasonable level of population living in the centre. We would like this to continue with suitable new development and renewal of existing housing in the centre.

In order to reduce the amount of car journeys and avoid worsening of our already challenging traffic problems we would like to see improved infrastructure for active travel such as walking and cycling. The current lockdown has, more than ever, brought people outdoors onto our streets and public spaces. Main St. in particular would benefit from less through traffic and better quality spaces for people. KCC could implement a policy of 'Car Free Sundays', enabling pedestrianisation of streets and more outdoor dining space being allocated to restaurants. This would greatly enhance public well being. A Public Realm plan is needed to see the coordinated improvement of the area from St Patrick's College to Carton Avenue including Courthouse Square.

Maynooth is a historical town and housing construction, and particularly the construction of apartments, needs to be sympathetic with the historical nature of the town.

Maynooth has a growing population of older people. In recent years we have seen the establishment of more nursing homes taking advantage of proximity to Dublin and the benefit of lower costs. With this in mind, we would like to see a policy on the development of nursing homes at a county level. We would also like to see more emphasis in the plan on the development and provision of sheltered housing.

Economic Opportunity: Innovation, Enterprise and Employment

Maynooth is a very beautiful, historic town with great potential for tourism. We would like to see a plan to improve our Public Realm in the town centre to complement the beautiful St. Patrick's College, Maynooth Castle, Courthouse Square and Carton Avenue. At the 2018 Town Centre Renewal consultations the development of the public realm was among the most popular of projects discussed. The majority favoured the development of the Harbour Field followed by Town Gateways and the improvement of Courthouse Square. Maynooth is a Purple Flag town and has a full complement of excellent restaurants to attract tourists from far and wide. It makes sense to improve our public realm to enhance the experience for our visitors and natives alike.

The Royal Canal Greenway is currently being improved with the section from Maynooth to Kilcock already complete. In a recent informal survey on our Facebook page, of people's favourite walks around the town, this was one of the most popular. The section from Maynooth to Confey is the next to be upgraded. We would like to see this project go ahead in a timely fashion as it is currently very muddy and practically unusable in Winter.

The Covid-19 lockdown has had a massive impact on our commuting population, with those who can work from home doing so. In the past, such workers may have worked from home one or two days per week but now work from home every day. Post-Covid, we can imagine that based on this



experience, people would continue to work from home with significant impact on the numbers commuting into Dublin. One of the learnings from lockdown is that not everyone had enough space and facilities to continue working from home on a long-term basis. To this end, we would like to see the development of remote flexible working hubs with high-quality broadband, meeting rooms, auditoriums, business equipment like printers and copiers etc. Maynooth is very well placed for such a development as The Maynooth Business Campus located just off the M4 would be an excellent site for such a hub.

A great opportunity also exists for the development of a community centre / green/ climate action hub with community sharing libraries (toys, tools etc), a zero waste store, cafe and a recycling centre.

Climate Action: Environment, Climate Change and Adaption

Maynooth is well positioned to become a 10-minute town. We have a compact town centre with excellent shops and restaurants and considerable population living in the centre. The train station, bus stops, schools and university are all within walking distance of each other. The Town Centre is however blighted by traffic, an issue which is well summarized in the Maynooth Community Council submission to KCC on 7th October 2019. The CDP should include solutions to move through traffic away from the centre and to improve the streets for people on foot or cycling. Maynooth could have an almost car-free Main St with pedestrian- and cyclist- friendly routes through and around the town. The resulting reduction in car usage would greatly reduce our pollution and production of green-house gases.

The new housing and road developments around Maynooth will result in the loss and destruction of large numbers of mature trees and hedgerows. There are some examples where developments have retained some older trees and hedgerows. However the general practice by developers is the removal of trees and hedgerows, and while they are required to replant like- with- like native species this does not materialise as we see more and more non native laurel being planted for instant greenery. We understand that in some cases trees and hedgerows must be removed for road-widening schemes, but these should be replaced with planting in the same place or in other suitable locations around the town. For example, in June 2019 we wrote to the Road Dept (CASE:44296) about tree cutting on the Moyglare Road which was particularly distressing. We would like assurances in the CDP that such tree losses will always be mitigated by new planting schemes and that the guidelines in the current CDP relating to replacement planting are strictly adhered to by developers and enforced by KCC.

Maynooth does not score well on biodiversity and provision of natural habitats. We welcome initiatives like the reduced grass cutting regime undertaken on Carton Avenue which has resulted in improved habitats for biodiversity. The recent survey on the grass cutting plans for public green spaces showed a preference for reduced mowing and herbicide use and the chance for our grass verges to become corridors for wildlife. We would like the new CDP to include measures to further build on such initiatives to protect and preserve our natural environment.

The Covid lockdown has seen a big return to gardening and growing food at home. In the CDP we would like to see a policy on the provision of allotments and a significant increase in availability. In the lifetime of the current plan we have seen the removal of the allotments on the Dunboyne Road Maynooth and there has been no effort to replace these in close proximity to the town. We would like to see this issue positively addressed.



Sustainable Mobility: Movement and Transport

Maynooth has a significant population who commute to Dublin and the surrounding areas for work so high-quality public transport is required to prevent total gridlock of road traffic. Our traffic submission to KCC on 7/10/19 paints a picture of our pre-lockdown traffic chaos experiences.

We welcome the DART+ expansion to Maynooth which will further improve our train service to Dublin. We would like the CDP to drive the best use of the DART as a means of reducing traffic in our town. There is bound to be an increase in commuters in the town with the arrival of the Dart+. There is a danger that commuters from neighbouring areas will drive to Maynooth, park in the town for the day while taking the train to work. To address this situation we would like to see suitable Park & Ride and Park & Stride facilities provided on the outskirts of the town. For residents of Maynooth we need a strong policy on the provision of safe walking and cycling routes to the train station to reduce the need for locals to use their cars for drop off and collection. Particularly for pedestrians we need to open up the shortest routes to the station. Some of these are already in place via the canal greenway, along Leinster St and through the Harbour Field. However the need for additional routes through existing housing estates should be planned for, to discourage car use by those living further out from town centre. Recently announced NTA funding for cycling routes through the town are very welcome and we would like to see these prioritised in the CDP, in addition to the provision of safe bicycle storage/parking facilities at the station.

We need proper segregated cycle lanes as a matter of urgency.

Bike hire such as that found in major cities (Dublin bikes) is sorely needed in Maynooth.

The Bus Connects initiative brings enhancements to the bus service complementing the train service. We would like to see a coordinated approach in the planning to ensure the best and most cost-effective solutions possible. The Bus service needs to consider the interconnectivity between the towns of the metropolitan area, Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge and Kilcock as well as further afield such as Blanchardstown and Tallaght.

Maynooth has a somewhat unusual commuting pattern in that we have a high population of students commuting from Dublin to Maynooth University in the morning while workers are commuting into the city. The reverse is the case in the evening commute. In designing public transport services it should be possible to provide a service that ensures that trains and buses are not travelling empty in one direction at these critical commuter times.

The LAP for Maynooth designates significant expansion along the planned Maynooth Eastern Relief Road (MERR). The CDP should include a plan to ensure that such developments have adequate access to cycle and walking routes to the town either by using the canal greenways, enhanced Celbridge Road infrastructure, and permeability through existing estates. For existing estates, we need to ensure we have at least footpaths and where possible cycle lanes into town. The Newtown Road, for example, is very badly served as there are parts along the route that have no footpath at all and very high levels of pedestrian traffic.

The extra population planned for Maynooth will exacerbate an already difficult traffic problem. As well as the active transport and reduction in car usage measures mentioned above, Maynooth needs proper roads infrastructure consisting of a ring roads around the town and a second exit off the M4 motorway. The CDP needs to lay down a comprehensive strategy on how this might be achieved. The MERR is delayed due to Covid, likewise the southern link from the Celbridge road to the Straffan



road. The rest of the ring road including the part through Co. Meath needs to be designed and advanced over the life of the CDP 2023-2029.

Creative Places: Social Community and Cultural Development

Despite being a Key Town with a well-documented increase in population Maynooth continues to be sadly lacking in certain essential community services. We feel that we are taking the brunt of the building development without much support in the development of our social infrastructure.

What is urgently needed is a performing arts and cultural centre, including stage, performance space, kitchen facilities, meeting rooms etc. This can be a low-cost resource for the various community groups in the town. One suggestion is to convert the Fire Station into such a space when the fire service vacates the premises. This location has the advantage of being near the Harbour Field for which significant outdoor amenity is planned.

The other major gap in our social infrastructure is the lack of a Primary Care Centre. We have a small medical centre providing some dental services etc, but this building is in poor repair and had to close for part of this year for roof repairs. Over the life of this CDP we need to see a full set of healthcare services in a fit for purpose medical centre commensurate with the ever-growing population.

The need for a swimming pool in North Kildare is well documented and an application for funding of a joint facility in Maynooth University was made under the Large-Scale Sports Infrastructure Scheme. This proposal is currently under appeal, but whatever the result a swimming pool is needed for the people of Maynooth and North Kildare.

Maynooth has a major crisis with the provision of creche places. Surveys carried out by The Maynooth Community Action Group have firmly established that there is insufficient capacity in the town and parents have to travel far afield to get suitable places for their children. We'd like to see the CDP address this issue and outline a policy on the provision of community creches.

Maynooth has excellent schools at primary, secondary and even third-level but with continued growth and high population projections, careful coordination with the Department of Education needs to be mandated in the CDP.

Enhanced Amenity and Heritage: Landscape and Green Infrastructure

Maynooth is blessed to have access to two excellent green spaces in the grounds of St Patrick's College and Carton Estate. However, these are in private ownership and during Covid are only open thanks to the goodwill and community spirit of their owners. They could just as easily have locked their gates and the people of Maynooth would have been left with very little in the 5km radius. We have, in fact, no public parks of meaningful size in Maynooth. The Harbour Field, The Green and Carton Avenue are small green spaces and are earmarked for upgrade and further development. However the master plans have not yet been designed so any development works are a long way off. The Royal Canal Greenway provides walking and cycling amenity however the stretch between Mullen Bridge and Leixlip has not yet been developed or surfaced and is not very suitable for walking or cycling. The development and advancement of these projects should be given priority in the CDP together with the provision of a public park for the citizens of Maynooth.



Land should be allocated for planting trees or small woodlands especially given the amount of mature trees that have been lost to construction activity. Also we need designated spaces for community gardens, allotments and orchards.

Making it happen: Infrastructure, Energy and Communications

Covid lockdown has highlighted the limitations of our broadband services. The CDP needs to address this gap and provide policy in conjunction with the National Broadband plan to ensure the population can work from home successfully.

A coordinated water infrastructure plan is needed for Maynooth and the surrounding areas if the current level of development is to continue. Last year's well publicized issues at the Leixlip water treatment plant highlighted just how fragile our water system is and the urgency to go ahead with upgrade plans. The development at Mariavilla required extensions to the water system and this type of piecemeal extension will lead to problems. The CDP needs to address this issue and outline measures to cope with the planned population increase across the metropolitan area of Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge and Kilcock.