

**Newtownmountkennedy**

**Community**

**Forum**



7<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**RE Submission CDP**

To whom it may concern,

The Newtownmountkennedy Community Forum welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the County Development Plan 2021-2027. We are an umbrella group representing the clubs, groups, associations and residents of Newtownmountkennedy. The following are our comments on the relevant categories:

**1 The Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy**

Newtownmountkennedy has been designated as a growth town. The community of Newtownmountkennedy will still refer to it as a village and we work hard to maintain a village like community. Despite growing rapidly, we are not self-sustaining in that we rely on other areas for employment opportunities, services, and facilities. We feel that once an area has been designated for large growth in the CDP all development levies received from that area should be ringfenced to be spent within the area. Until the required services, infrastructures and community facilities required to meet the needs of the residents are provided the development levies should remain ringfenced to be spent within that area.

There is more zoned land to be developed in Newtownmountkennedy so we are in a position to sustain more houses but we do not have the infrastructures or facilities to cater for the residents. The lands zoned currently will more than reach the population targets in the old CDP we would like to see these reduced until a plan for services, facilities and infrastructures is in place. There are not enough infrastructures, facilities or services to cater for the existing population. The N11 is over capacity and continuing to build with no solution in place is reckless. This is leading to very real problems on the ground. New residents are joining clubs and groups outside of the area because our clubs don't have the facilities or capacities to cater for them. We have no youth club, scouts den, soccer club, library or play facilities for older children. We have a high percentage of young families

**c/o Community Centre, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow**

after moving to the area and limited resources to cater for them locally. This is not supportive of an inclusive/ engaged community. Despite this planning continues to be granted and no plan is in place to provide for these new residents.

It is important for a phasing scheme to be implemented in the CDP so that development must be phased in line with community facilities, infrastructures and services. The Government are pushing for higher densities then they must support building amenities and transport infrastructures in line with development. Commitments from central government regarding infrastructures and services and in particular public transport should be tied into phasing sequences of large developments.

## **2 Climate Change**

We applaud Wicklow County Council in declaring a Climate Emergency. It is in all our interests to work to reducing energy consumption. We feel that the CDP should introduce incentives for businesses that can demonstrate reduced energy spends whilst maintaining sales in the form of discounted rates.

We feel that large scale developments should be using surfaces which retain and slowly release surface water. Large industrial estates are full of hard surfaces that flood drainage systems with surface water in heavy rains. Water harvesting and softer surfaces should be implemented in all large-scale developments.

We would like priority given to greenway/ cycleways and walking routes to reduce car journeys and promote a healthier lifestyle in Wicklow. Our feeder second level school is located in Kilcoole, a short distance away but no safe path or cycle route for children from Newtownmountkennedy to access the school. There is no public transport to link Newtownmountkennedy to Kilcoole. All children from Newtownmountkennedy travel to and from school by school bus or car. As part of the new CDP we would like to see all Education zoned land have greenway access routes through neighbouring zoned lands. This should be outlined in the zoning.

## **3 Housing**

We are disappointed that housing in the towns of Wicklow bears no distinctive qualities to other counties. Every town seems to have a collection of magnolia semi -ds with PVC windows and no distinctive or native characteristics. We hope that this CDP will make the most of its scope and identify some “Wicklow” styles or materials that can be used going forward to support a sense of place in the county. Wicklow has an abundance of natural and built heritage that we can draw influence from.

New guidelines regarding higher densities will create smaller homes. This is a problem for communities. To get on the property ladder people buy small starter homes and hope to move or need to move as their family grows. As people do not see themselves in the starter homes long term, they are reluctant to engage with their communities and get involved locally. This is very damaging to local and in particular rural communities. Urban designs and densities are not compatible with Rural lifestyles.

We would like to see all houses as part of large developments be constructed with higher roofs to accommodate attic conversions. This way a home can be renovated to accommodate a growing family.

We would like to see more homes being built to cater for elderly or disabled people. If new guidelines are for 10% of new developments to be social housing then at least 2% of those homes should be suitable for elderly or disabled.

Social housing should be peppered through developments and not put all in one area segregated from the rest of the units.

We feel that high density development can only be justified when there are infrastructures and services in place to compensate for living in a smaller home. To offset the restrictions of living in a smaller home you should have close proximity to a public park and recreation facilities, restaurants and shops, employment opportunities and effective public transport links. High density units are often undesirable because the urban style of living is not matched by the benefits of living in an urban environment. This is leading to a real problem of high-density developments being sold in bulk to housing bodies and the segregation of social units. A high-density development in Newtownmountkennedy, Glenbrook sold a bulk number of units to 3 different housing bodies. The development has been plagued with anti-social behaviour and the residents have not integrated into the community.

We feel that exceptions should be allowed for within the CDP that where high density is zoned but not justified or does not have the required amenities and supporting services a development can lower its density.

Traffic calming in residential developments should be mandatory.

#### **4 Economic and Employment Development**

We feel that more could be done to maximise on the opportunities offered by existing tourism enterprises. Popular locations such as Brittas Bay or Glendalough could be made more of. There is a thriving home industry for food producers and crafters in Wicklow. A simple country market with stalls available to rent by the week or month at the popular tourist spots would give local producers a destination to sell. Appropriate zoning surrounding these tourist spots should be considered.

We would like to see co-working hubs and shared enterprise units supported in the CDP.

We think that a provision within the CDP for farm direct shops would support rural industry and work towards reducing food miles.

#### **5 Town and Village Centres and Retail**

We would like to see the council work with the local communities to establish the niche or USP of a town. For example, Gorey is now the place to go to buy an outfit for a wedding and Greystones is the place to go for coffee or something to eat. Too many small retail units were built on the Main Street of Newtownmountkennedy only suitable for a take away or small café. These lay vacant for years. There is a shortage of alternative sized units. There is a thriving craft industry in and around Newtownmountkennedy that we could promote as our niche.

Community lead Main St Plans should be carried out for all villages and towns in Wicklow to establish the flow for traffic, parking, pedestrians and disability users. The local retail needs could be defined as part of the plan and retail space designed accordingly.

Accessibility is a strong factor when people plan to go shopping. Well lit, well sign posted parking needs to be provided in all areas with retail. Our shops are closing because it is easier to buy on line than to get in and out of a town without getting clamped or fined for parking.

## **6 Tourism and Recreation**

In light of the new policies pushing for higher housing densities we think it is important to protect existing outdoor recreational amenities. There are Coillte forests located centrally in Newtownmountkennedy and at walking distance in Kilmurry and Callow Hill. These woods provide a valued natural resource for the residents of Newtownmountkennedy where open space is limited and we would like to see these amenities protected.

As a growth town Newtownmountkennedy is badly in need of a large sports campus within walking distance of the town.

We think the existing tourism facilities should be supported and their potential maximised. Most are not accessible by public transport which makes them expensive to get to for tourists. Traffic is an issue for Glendalough and a park and ride which links to Dublin based public transport should be a priority.

To capitalise on Irelands Ancient East the CDP should identify greenway links between attractions. Supported by bike rentals, hostels, camp sites, glamping, coffee huts along the routes would boost the local economy in the surrounding areas. Domestic sports tourism such as walking holidays, biking holidays and horse-riding trails should be facilitated and promoted.

Considering the success of various Hell and Back and Ironman events it would suggest that there is a market for outdoor natural sports facilities. A permanent facility that can cater for a variety of sports such as cross country running, assault courses, mountain biking, off road biking and horse riding would be very welcome in the county.

## **7 Community Development**

The current CDP contains a list of community amenities which are considered necessary for different sized settlements. There appears to be no requirement to furnish these amenities before development proceeds. We think that development should be phased along with the necessary amenities as outlined in the CDP. If it is established that a settlement of 6000 requires a public park. Library, community hall, hardcore multiuse games area, playgrounds and playing pitches then development should not be allowed progress until the amenities or plans for the amenities are in place. This would be in the interest of building an engaged and inclusive community.

In Newtownmountkennedy we have some centrally based community facilities such as playing pitch and community centre. We do think that for accessibility and safety this is the best model to follow. There are various sports and age groups crossing paths at the community centre and we also feel

that this provides a great opportunity for social interaction. We would like to see where possible community facilities being clustered together and located as centrally as possible.

Newtownmountkennedy requires a large land parcel zoned for sport and recreation to cater for a multi use sports facility to meet the needs of all our new residents.

In Newtownmountkennedy there is a large development with small creches located throughout. These smaller creches are not viable for childcare providers and we would like to see larger scale creches contained in new developments going forward that are viable for childcare providers.

We feel that the open space requirements in the current CDP are not adequate to accommodate the needs of residents. Children need large open space to play games and sports especially when garden sizes are so small. We would like to see larger open space that is safely accessible for all residents in developments with dedicated flat areas for play.

We think that there should be an over-all long-term plan for recreational facilities and open space carried out with input from the local groups and residents for all areas. All community needs both current and future should be identified and possible locations earmarked for facilities. All future development' community contributions and a percentage of LPT should be ringfenced for these facilities. This way a community will have a clear plan to work to and can apply for match funding and work with the council to build their future.

A fully transparent statement of account should be made available at year end. Locals can fundraise towards and be involved in allocation of the funds. Discretionary funding could be allocated to meet targets and provide the facilities. The plan should be reviewed every 5 years.

## **8 Transport and Infrastructure**

Wicklow needs all forms of public transport. Park and rides with efficient and effective bus service is needed along the N11.

The community of Newtownmountkennedy has to contend with the traffic along the N11 on a daily basis. We do not think that the cost to Homes, Heritage and Habitats involved with the proposed upgrades are worth what little relief the works will offer. We want better public transport to offset the traffic along the N11.

More people would be encouraged to walk and cycle if there were appropriate paths to do so.

We suggest a park and ride at the Texaco Junction 13 in Newtownmountkennedy with an electric bus service directly to the DART in Greystones or Luas in Sandyford or both.