



Boherboy,
Dunlavin

January 7th 2020

Re: Development Plan 2021-2027 – Public Consultation

To whom it may concern;

Dunlavin & District Forum welcome the opportunity to participate in the public consultation stage on the Development Plan 2021-2027 for Wicklow. We take seriously our responsibility to be involved in this process and look forward to making a significant, constructive contribution to the formulation of the Development Plan.

Background:

Dunlavin & District Forum was established in 2006 and has worked continuously to help improve Dunlavin as a place to live, work and visit. We have been actively involved in numerous projects such as the establishment of the playground, MUGA, sensory garden and outdoor gym, provision of street name signs, establishing Dunlavin Text Alert, Christmas lights project and a programme of Heritage Week activities as examples. Dunlavin & District Forum work hard to establish links and build relationships with all public agencies involved in the development of our community. We are in continuous communication with our public representatives (councillors and TDs), the local municipal district and staff in the various departments of Wicklow County Council.

Factual Information: the Town Plan refers to Dunlavin as a 18th Century Town – Dunlavin is a 17th Century planned estate town.

General comments in relation to the Plan for Level 5 Towns (2016-2022)

“...The aim of these plans is to establish a framework for the planned, co-ordinated and sustainable development of each settlement...”

The key for us here is the word sustainable – we query the feasibility of retaining the services we currently have and development of more – has there been enough thought to ensure the retention of services and facilities? During the current Development Plan we have seen the closure of four commercial premises – there has been no increase in the number of commercial premises. We are now without services we previously had in our community.

.....The retail provision in these small towns would be expected to include one supermarket / two medium sized convenience stores (up to 1,000sqm aggregate) and perhaps 10-20 smaller shops.....

“Infrastructure Strategy - In accordance with the County Development Plan:

- Sufficient wastewater treatment capacity is required to cater for the projected population within the plan area*
- Sufficient water supply is required capable of meeting the demands of projected population within the plan area.*
- Measures to improve the capacity and efficiency of local roads and connections to national routes in close proximity to the plan area are required.*

There has been a dearth of information in relation to the water supply in our community – we have raised the issue at a number of different levels. We have engaged with Irish Water, with public representatives (both councillors and TDs) and we have had no clear pathway of information in relation to the water supply for Dunlavin. The vacuum left by this absence of information has been filled with speculation, rumour and hearsay. We feel strongly that this is not the basis for the development of good working relationships with communities. The community voice needs to be recognised and we would argue that despite numerous efforts on our part there has been a reluctance to share the plans for the development of a water supply.

Conflicting messages are being sent to our community. Lack of water supply is consistently cited as a reason not to provide planning permission for housing during the term of the current Development Plan and then we find in 2019 that housing is being developed without any upgrade to a water supply as far as we are aware. Our community are seeking clarity on this issue and would like to see a clear, transparent reference to water supply in the next Development Plan for Dunlavin.

In relation to **Population Growth** we would have concerns about the level planned for in the current Development Plan. We would take issue with the rate of growth included in the plan – 169% for Dunlavin. This is completely at odds with the rates for other towns in Level 5 – Aughrim at 33%, Tinahely at 37% and Baltinglass at 44% for example. We are not asserting to be against growth in our community we are questioning the rate of growth and expansion.

Unfortunately, history and public observation tells us that the rate of housing and population growth is rarely matched by the growth of services and infrastructure. History tells us it is almost always a game of “catch-up”. This is something we do not want for our community. The education places, healthcare services, public services, commercial premises and community facilities needed for such a population growth would be hugely significant and we would have huge concerns that they would not arrive when needed. A sustainable community is not built when its’ children need to find school places elsewhere or when petrol and other commodities are bought in another town. We look forward to reading the draft Development Plan and will be paying close attention to the rate of population and housing growth included and the plan for the provision of all necessary infrastructure and services.

.....supporting and facilitating, to the highest degree possible (subject to environmental and other relevant planning considerations) all forms of employment generation appropriate to such small towns.....

Dunlavin & District Forum have recently established Hive@W91 – a fresh, new, innovative co-working space within the village. This has not been easy and has come with very significant financial commitments. Unfortunately, despite exploring numerous avenues, we have been completely unable

to secure any support through Wicklow County Council, government grant aid. We would ask that in the next Development Plan there is a recognition of the enormous efforts being made within communities to sustain themselves, it must be remembered that all this work is voluntary, that finances are a constant struggle and that support from outside is needed – be that in the form of professional advice from those with expertise in given areas or financial support to sustain projects in their infancy. There is also an added benefit in that we have used a commercial unit that was vacant breathing new life into the street also. We would feel that at the very least perhaps the rates on the venture could be considered for a different approach.

Observations in relation to objectives in the Dunlavin Town Plan (2016-2022)

Residential Development Objectives

DUN2 *To facilitate and support the growth of the Town Centre of Dunlavin in accordance with the provisions set out in Section 5.5 of this town plan and to encourage the development of new retail / retail services and business support services (such as solicitors, accountants, architects etc) within the TC zone.*

In conjunction with the above we would like to see provision for adequate parking provision in the next Development Plan – this is essential to the success of commercial premises.

DUN3 *To facilitate and support the development of the tourism industry in Dunlavin and maximise the town's location as a gateway between the tourism assets within Co. Wicklow and Co. Kildare.*

We feel there needs to be a more strategic and focused approach taken on this than heretofore. Previously a brochure was produced in relation to a West Wicklow Heritage Trail – there were no brochures in Dunlavin – there was no consultation with community groups or business interests in Dunlavin on what might be included in the trail. In our opinion there has been little or no marketing of the project and there is no signposting etc.

We were fortunate to have been granted support under the Town & Village Scheme last year for our Historical Trail in Dunlavin and when we receive the funding we look forward to developing same. We have sought guidance and advice on support for this or if there is a large overarching plan we should be feeding into but have been unable to find answers to this. Therefore, we feel a cohesive, structured plan for the support and development of the tourism industry needs to be established.

DUN4 *To promote the development of the undeveloped zoned employment lands at Dunlavin Lower in the following manner:*

- Access to and within these lands shall be subject to an initial overall design proposal and shall facilitate a through access road in accordance with objective DUN8 as set out in Section 5.7 of this plan.

It needs to be borne in mind that the planned for Railway Walk as included in the Development Plan (DUN6) intersects with the lands in question. The establishment of both the walkway and a new access road will require a detailed plan and provision needs to be made for same in the next Development Plan.

Service Infrastructure Objectives

DUN8 *To facilitate the realignment of the Milltown Road and provide for a new link road to the L-4309 through the employment lands at Tornant Lower.*

Our comment on this objective is as above.

DUN9 *To provide a continuous footpath from the town centre to the GAA club grounds along Sparrow Road and to restrict parking along this road in close proximity to the church grounds.*

An issue that is constantly reported to Dunlavin & District Forum is the speed at which vehicles travel on this road – we understand that speed limits review has taken place and look forward to hearing the outcome of same. Before any money is invested in the work noted in DUN9 it would be important to investigate if any measures need to be taken in relation to speed limits on that road. An improved footpath increases pedestrian traffic and with the current speed concern this, in our opinion, would not be best practice.

Heritage Objectives

DUN11 *In the interests of the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Dunlavin, it is an objective of this plan to:*

- protect trees, hedgerows and wooded areas (particularly those containing indigenous species), watercourses and other features of the natural landscape - development that requires the felling of mature trees of conservation and/or amenity value, even though they may not be listed in the Development Plan, will be discouraged; and

- require the planting of indigenous plant and tree species in new developments and along new vehicular and pedestrian routes.

Dunlavin & District Forum were very pleased to see the recent work in Dunlavin Council Yard – following engagement with the Local Municipal District it was agreed to carry out some work to improve the appearance of the entrance. This work is very much welcomed. We would ask, however, that consideration be given to planting in future work carried out. In line with the objective above we would very much like to see indigenous plant and tree species being used. This was also commented on in the recent Tidy Towns Adjudication Report.

DUN12 *The Council shall seek to protect and enhance, where opportunities arise, the former Great Southern and Western Railway line and its related structures i.e. bridges, mounds, cuttings, old platforms and station buildings and facilitate the use of the former railway line in accordance with the provisions of objectives DUN10 and AA1 of this plan.*

It needs to be borne in mind that the planned for Railway Walk as included in the Development Plan (DUN6) intersects with the lands in question. The establishment of both the walkway and a new access road will require a detailed plan and provision needs to be made for same in the next Development Plan.

DUN13 *In order to preserve the character of the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) in accordance with the details set out at Section 5.10 of this plan, all development proposals within the designated ACA, including any change of use to existing buildings will be controlled. The repair and refurbishment*

of existing buildings within the ACA will be favoured over demolition/new build in so far as practicable.

We have had a lengthy discussion with Wicklow County Council previously on the protection on the unique granite kerbstones we have in our village. They were removed during work to our footpaths and then following intervention by Dunlavin & District Forum which resulted in conversation with the local Municipal District the kerbstones were reinstated. Dunlavin Tidy Towns and Dunlavin Arts Festival were also involved in these discussions. We are very thankful for the engagement we have had with our local municipal district and the community voice was very respected in the process. However, we would ask that reference to the granite kerbstones could be included in some form in the next Development Plan so that we can avoid a similar issue in the future.

Protected Structures in Dunlavin Town Plan

1. With reference to the above paragraph we suggest that the granite kerbstones be included in the protected structures section of the plan.
2. Another query in relation to the protected structures was that one water hydrant has been included. Could the other three hydrants be included? (Dunlavin Green, Stephen Street and corner of Church Road).

Conclusion:

In drafting the above submission we have referred to minutes of past Dunlavin & District Forum meetings where many issues concerning our community are regularly discussed. We also held a public meeting on the Development Plan for Dunlavin where a number of issues were discussed in relation to the current plan. The community came together to form this submission and while drafted by Dunlavin & District Forum it has the support of the following clubs and associations also:

- Dunlavin Tidy Towns
- Dunlavin Arts Festival Committee
- Dunlavin Parents Group
- Imaal Hall Committee
- Dunlavin AFC
- Dunlavin GAA Club
- Dunlavin Residents Association
- Dunlavin Text Alert
- Dunlavin Playground Committee

We wish you well in your work and look forward to reading the Draft Development Plan and engaging in the consultation process at that stage also.

Should you have any queries in relation to any of the above please do not hesitate to contact either of the undersigned.

Kind Regards,

Aisling Grace
Chairperson

Antoinette Whelan
Secretary