



28th May 2015

Submission to the Kildare County Council Development Plan 2017 -2023

North Kildare Chamber

Executive Summary

North Kildare Chamber's mission is to work with businesses, community groups, central and local government to provide information, support and the framework that will enable businesses and their employees reach their potential in Kildare.

The Chamber actively promotes the development of Kildare. Kildare is a unique county with both urban and rural characteristics. Urban Kildare has a high number of towns and villages that are diverse. Rural Kildare is a regionally important agricultural base; it is spatially diverse with a mixed and dispersed household, settlement and population pattern.

The county has a highly notably young and educated population base.

Our vision for Kildare is quite simple: To make Kildare the location of choice for existing and potential business enterprises.

Kildare is an excellent county to work, to live, to learn, to visit and to do business

The present reality of congestion means strategic decisions must be taken now to avoid total gridlock and ensure a sustainable future for movement into, out of, and around the county. Insufficient infrastructure or barriers that impact on Kildare's competitiveness will cause a slowdown in the county's growth and would have a disastrous effect on the economy.

However, addressing these issues will create a competitive advantage for the county which will allow indigenous companies to grow, encourage further FDI, and a foster an innovative and entrepreneurial culture in Kildare. Creating a county that people want to live and work in also requires attention to a number of quality of life issues.



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This includes improving the supply of housing and office space, increasing density and developing flexible regulations on all aspects of the planning system. Regeneration is essential in several of our towns. It is the belief of the Chamber that where possible, Kildare County Council should look at taking ownership of key sites in the county that remain derelict. Working with key stakeholders will then allow these vacant units become “Fit for purpose” leading into the future.

The future is bright. Kildare is well placed in the forthcoming years to continue to thrive. Our proximity to Dublin, coupled with our unique selling points which include a thriving hospitality and tourism sector, state of the art business parks, available talent, unrivalled arts, heritage and cultural attractions all that makes Kildare an ideal location for FDI.

The quality of life that is on offer in Kildare is unrivalled. We must remain cognisance of the legacy issues from the economic turmoil that we faced in recent years. Particular attention must be focused on our social and community infrastructure. Ensuring a great quality of life in Kildare also means supporting the thriving sectors for which Kildare has become known. The Chamber is confident that our future is bright. We look forward to engaging with the Council throughout the preparation of this Development Plan



Vision for Kildare

Our vision is to make Kildare the location of choice for existing and potential business enterprises.

Kildare should be the most successful county in Ireland, to achieve this we must become a knowledge based county, rich with innovation and entrepreneurial clusters.

A county that works and is easy to operate in.

A county that will be renowned as a county where all key stake holders work together with a common purpose - "Excellent county to work, to live, to learn, to visit and to do business in."

Improved Planning

A coherent planning system is required for the county. Although welcome, growth both in economic terms and in population can mean congestion, high prices and environmental issues as experienced during the previous economic boom. Then, insufficient investment in infrastructure contributed to severe congestion and reduced quality of life in the county. This development plan must allow for continued growth in terms of the population in Kildare.

Capital expenditure is a necessity. Road improvements are required throughout the county. Of immediate necessity is the M7 Upgrade, Osberstown Interchange and Sallins Bypass, the Southern Distributor Road in Athy and a new river crossing in Celbridge Town

The Chamber recognises that capital expenditure is a Government priority each year and this development plan needs a coherent plan in terms of planning for the county.

Zoning of large land banks for residential and commercial activity will allow towns to prosper. Naas, the capital town of Kildare requires zoning specifically in Millennium Park



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that will service the growing population of the town and its hinterland. The removal of the village centre zoning in Millennium Park will have a huge economic benefit to the town.

The rezoning of this coupled with a designated transport corridor linking Sallins / Naas Rail Station through Millennium Park to Naas Town centre is extremely important.

Urban towns, such as Naas will prosper with improved planning. Retail zoning must remain in the heart of our towns in Kildare. Out of town retail developments can have a disastrous effect on our high streets.

Employment Hub centres throughout Kildare must be identified during the consultation phase of this development plan. Hubs in areas such as opposite Toughers/Ladytown Business Park on the Newbridge Naas Road (R445) are easily identified as employment hubs. This land is easily accessible to both national and regional road networks.

Increasing the connectivity of transport hubs with towns such as Naas, Athy, Celbridge and Leixlip can be of immense economic benefit in the lifespan of this development plan.

Housing

The availability and affordability of housing is particularly important for incoming talent. Housing demand is unique in the county; the demand for one- and two-person households is forecasted to grow significantly in the coming years. Also, detached and “one off houses” are in demand.

A recent Colliers Report initiated by both the Chamber and Council shows that housing developments within town centres are both achievable and will have demand. The type of people who like to live in apartments will like to live in town centres. With several multinationals based in the county, a young vibrant workforce attracted to Kildare. It is our belief that adequate housing is required to attract this workforce to not only work in the county but also to live in it.



This development plan must ensure we plan for a diverse range of housing types, based on housing needs which is linked to the economic and community development of the county.

Our aim must be for energy efficient, long-lasting housing with minimal impact on the environment. The Chamber recommends that as part of the next Development Plan consultation phase, that Kildare County Council seeks to identify the specifics of such requirements that would maximise the BER ratings or similar environment efficiencies of the next wave of building stock at a cost effective level.

Naas as the County town of Kildare has a population growth target under the Regional Planning Guidelines and the National Spatial Strategy of 50,000 which is more than double its current population. With the commercial centre of Naas Town currently in disarray, it is only with the planned population growth, along the guided targets, that the centre of Naas Town can once again be invigorated. To achieve this we need an adequate supply of residentially zoned lands, where a number of construction companies can competitively compete to provide for the Town a dual approach positive effect. These being:

1. The effect of reinvigorating Naas town Centre with the increased population dynamic.
2. The effect of creating a sustainable housing market where supply matches demand to ensure that the cost of houses remain competitive and affordable.

Commercial Activity

The availability and location of office space must meet the demands in the county. Demand in 2014 and the first 5 months of 2015 is very healthy. Our close proximity to Dublin is our advantage. Lack of space in Dublin is driving rents higher. Kildare is now becoming an attractive offering for companies.

If companies opt for a new development in Kildare, they can be faced with a three year wait due to a lengthy and inflexible planning process. For most, this delay is unacceptable and



companies choose to move elsewhere. This needs to change. Kildare should have an open door policy but with an efficient and streamlined line planning process. Kildare must become the county that is seen as the county to go to first.

It is our belief that a planning decision should take no longer than 3 months. Of course, interested parties must maintain their right to object to ill-considered development, but the importance of office space for our growing economy should be acknowledged.

Public sector and private sector must engage more effectively. It is in all our interest to make sure Kildare becomes the “Go to County”. We must now within this new development plan period of 2017 – 2023 become a county that attracts business locally, nationally and internationally.

Public Transport

EU directives, Government policies and Kildare County Council policies lack clarity. Public Transport will change within the lifetime of this plan. North Kildare Chamber believes no amendments should be made to public transport/parking policies/cycle ways in Kildare without extensive and open consultation and engagement with the business community. This should take place prior to any plan being put forward for consideration.

We are using unsustainable modes of transport. Our workforce is largely working outside of Kildare. This development plan must adhere to Smarter Travel 2020. Attention must be paid to our cycle routes and in particular our underutilised canal cycle and walk ways.



Tourism in Kildare

Kildare is renowned throughout the world for its offerings, be it with our multitude of Hotels, leisure and tourist destinations and our thriving equine industry to name but a few. The economic impact of festivals such as the annual Punchestown Festival and The Derby is of huge importance to business. Yet, we continually fail with a joint up approach.

An independent tourism and hospitality board is a necessity. The Chamber is a continued supporter of the Tourism and Hospitality sector in Kildare. We are alone in the country in what we have at our disposal. Tourism and Hospitality is on the crest of a wave. We need a joint up approach with all key stake holders in the county to come together. The creation a Kildare Convention Bureau will enhance our offering in relation to Tourism and Hospitality.

Conclusion

The Chamber is highly optimistic for Kildare's future. Kildare is still growing and has the potential to achieve even greater things. The above recommendations are designed to tap into that potential and consolidate Kildare's position as an excellent county to work, to live, to learn, to visit and to do business in. The Chamber looks forward to providing leadership on behalf of Kildare based businesses and engaging with the Council as the Development Plan process progresses.

Signed on behalf of North Kildare Chamber

Allan Shine
Chief Executive