



Public Participation Network **Kildare**

Kildare PPN Submission

to: Kildare County Council

Issues paper for the pre-draft public consultation for
the Newbridge Local Area Plan 2025-2031

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INTRODUCTION

The Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in 2014 as the representative voice for all Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups. This was following the publication of a report from the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the formal establishment of Public Participation Networks, and they are now operational in all Local Authority areas.

Kildare Public Participation Network will identify the issues that matter and try to influence policy in a way that improves the quality of life and opportunities for people within the Local Authority area.

Membership of the Public Participation Network is open to all community and voluntary groups, clubs and organisations, working on a voluntary, co-operative or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community.

Kildare Public Participation Network is the main link through which the Local Authority and other decision-making bodies connect with the community. Currently, we have representatives on the Local Community Development Committee, the Joint Policing Committee, and the Strategic Policy Committees within Kildare County Council. Kildare Public Participation Network therefore provide a mechanism to facilitate the two-way flow of information between the Local Authority and their groups to influence policy development and the delivery of services to the wider community.

Kildare Public Participation Network welcomes the opportunity to make this Submission.

Basis for this submission

This submission provides findings from a comprehensive consultation process undertaken by Kildare PPN. This process was conducted in July 2023. An in-person consultation was held in Newbridge, followed by an online survey which was circulated to ensure maximum participation. In total twenty-six groups participated which generated over twenty pages of detailed data. This submission encapsulates the key findings. This submission is a testament to the commitment of community groups in Newbridge, furthermore, it is a real reflection of the strength and commitment of volunteerism in the county and should be commended.

Social Infrastructure

1. Community Facilities and Recreational Spaces:

- The community has expressed a need for improved community facilities and recreational spaces.
- Suggestions include the development of multipurpose community hubs to cater to workshops, senior citizen gatherings, youth activities, and communal events.
- The creation of safe walking spaces and areas for people to come together and socialize is also emphasized.

2. Education:

- Expansion of local schools and the establishment of a community college are highlighted, catering to both academic and vocational courses.
- Access to second-level education within the town is a priority, reducing the need for residents to travel for education.

3. Recreational Facilities:

- Suggestions include an indoor swimming pool, municipal sports facilities for various sports in a large central complex, and outdoor gyms.
- The need for dedicated facilities for minority sports and a community/arts centre is highlighted, providing a multifunctional space for events and activities.

4. Nature Conservation and Green Spaces:

- The Corbally harbour development plan, extending to Great Connell priory site and onward to Athgarvan, with a focus on nature conservation, is mentioned.
- Residents stress the importance of allocating spaces for parks, recreation areas, and green corridors to ensure ample access to nature.

5. Support for Vulnerable Populations:

- Enhanced social services and support systems for vulnerable populations are deemed crucial to promoting a sense of safety and inclusion for all community members.
- Specific mentions include a dedicated travelers' center and rehab facilities for the aging population.

6. Community Participation and Affordable Meeting Spaces:

- The community advocates for areas that facilitate free or affordable community participation, including proper playing pitches, basketball courts, tennis courts, and a proper theatre.
- Affordable meeting spaces are desired, especially for voluntary and community groups, with a call for flexibility in tariff and access requirements.
- The need for a multifunctional community space that supports creativity, including a shared media booth, is welcomed.

7. Youth Facilities:

- Improved youth facilities, including dedicated meeting and recreational spaces, are requested to allow for socialization, recreation, and chill-out spaces.
- Affordability and accessibility for public meeting spaces are emphasized, particularly for voluntary and community groups.

8. Parking:

- The lack of quality free parking is highlighted as a significant need for the area, particularly for families.

Housing and Community

1. Future Housing Needs:

- Introduction of affordable housing projects: The community strongly recommends the implementation of affordable housing projects that cater to all income groups, ensuring inclusivity and affordability for all residents.
- Diverse housing options: The community emphasises the need for neighborhoods with diverse housing options to foster integration among residents from different backgrounds and age groups.
- Special housing complexes for senior citizens: Recommendations include creating special housing complexes with medical and recreational facilities tailored for senior citizens.
- Sustainable construction: Encouraging the use of sustainable building materials and renewable energy sources in all housing projects is highlighted as a priority.

2. Connectivity and Transportation:

- Public transport enhancement: The community suggests enhancing bus, cycle, and pedestrian pathways to ensure smooth connectivity throughout the town from all developments.
- Emphasis on creating more a walkable and cyclable town that are well connected to the town center, schools, and public transport is highlighted.
- Vertical construction models: The focus on vertical construction models is suggested to maximize space without encroaching on green areas, ensuring affordable housing for lower and middle-income groups.

3. Retrofitting and Sustainability:

- Retrofit homes with solar energy: The community recommends retrofitting homes with solar energy at an affordable rate, promoting sustainable practices within the housing sector.
- Sustainable and community-centric designs: Advocating for mixed-use developments that cater to a variety of household sizes and incomes, with a focus on sustainable and community-centric designs.

4. Specialised Housing:

- Housing for special needs people: The community recognizes the importance of providing housing options tailored to the needs of special populations, ensuring inclusivity and support.
- Assisted independent living: The concept of assisted independent living is suggested to cater to individuals who may require support while maintaining autonomy.
- Integrated housing for older/single people: Creating integrated housing options for older and single individuals is recommended, promoting a sense of community and social connection.
- "Step-down" housing: The community proposes the development of more "step-down" housing options, allowing people to downsize while still enjoying a comfortable living environment.

5. Community Spaces and Centers:

- The community highlights the need for community spaces or centers strategically located to foster community engagement and social interaction.

Town Centre

1. Regeneration and Attractiveness:

- Retaining historical architecture: The community emphasizes the importance of preserving the historical architecture of the town center while integrating modern facilities to maintain its unique character.
- Encouraging local businesses: Recommendations include offering incentives and developing dedicated commercial zones to encourage and support local businesses.
- Designing attractive public spaces: The community envisions the creation of walkways, seating areas, and green spaces to transform the town center into a bustling yet relaxed gathering place.

2. Cultural and Historical Preservation:

- Protecting landmarks: The community places high importance on protecting and enhancing Newbridge's cultural and historical landmarks, ensuring they remain integral to the town's identity and attractiveness.

3. Livability and Age-Friendliness:

- Garda resources: Concerns are raised about insufficient Garda resources for the growing size of the community. Addressing this issue is crucial for enhancing safety and the overall livability of the town center.
- Public transport and less car-focused design: Recommendations include the enhancement of public transport options and the creation of a less car-focused town center, promoting alternative modes of transportation and reducing congestion.
- Age-friendly initiatives: The community suggests implementing age-friendly initiatives to ensure the town center is accessible and accommodating for residents of all ages.

4. Retail Provision:

- Upgrading to a key town: The community proposes upgrading Newbridge to a key town, attracting more visitors and supporting the growth of diverse retail offerings.
- New signage: Suggestions include the implementation of new signage for the town, enhancing wayfinding and promoting key attractions and businesses.

Open Space & Amenity

1. New Parks/Open Spaces and Recreational Areas:

- Creating spaces for cultural enrichment: The community suggests allocating areas for artists, musicians, and performers to showcase their talents, enriching the town's cultural tapestry.
- Parks, gardens, and recreational grounds: Recommendations include the development of parks, gardens, and recreational grounds catering to residents of all ages, fostering community engagement and well-being.

2. Utilising and Enhancing Existing Amenity Areas:

- Utilizing the River Liffey: The community emphasizes the need for the Local Area Plan (LAP) to utilize and enhance existing amenity areas, such as the River Liffey, for both passive and active recreation.
- Scenic preservation: Suggestions include the preservation of existing water bodies, organizing clean-up drives, and introducing aquatic recreational activities to maximize the potential of these natural assets.
- Re-instate Slí na Sláinte with benches.

3. Integrated Green Infrastructure Network:

- Safe, interactive play zones: The community recommends designing safe, interactive, and innovative play zones that cater to children's physical and cognitive development, promoting active and healthy lifestyles.
- Biodiversity and carbon reduction: The feedback underscores the importance of the LAP in creating an integrated Green Infrastructure network within the town to support increased levels of biodiversity and contribute to carbon reduction.

Climate Action & Movement

1. Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society:

- **Environmental Stewardship:** The community emphasises promoting environmental stewardship, including green building standards and waste reduction initiatives.
- **Blueways & Greenways:** The development of expansive networks of walking and cycling paths, prioritizing green spaces along waterways, is recommended.

2. Coordinated Land Use and Transport:

- **Transportation Initiatives:** Suggestions include reintroducing the train station on the Curragh to foster better connectivity, improving parking, boosting public transport in rural areas, and implementing segregated cycle lanes for safer commuting.

3. Maximizing Renewable Energy Provision:

- **Sustainable Practices:** Encouraging sustainable practices in construction and resource management is highlighted.
- **Renewable Energy:** The community recommends promoting renewable energy and waste reduction efforts to maximize the provision of clean energy.

4. Infrastructural Constraints:

- **Sustainable Housing:** The community stresses the importance of sustainable housing and retrofitting existing homes for energy efficiency, with a focus on affordability and environmentally friendly design.
- **Transportation Planning:** Concerns are raised about road expansion and car dependency, advocating for compact, upward development with green areas and affordability considerations.

5. Community Engagement and Heritage Protection:

- Engagement and Appreciation: The community highlights the importance of knowledge and appreciation of the local environment, built, and industrial heritage, promoting easy access to nature areas.
- Community Gardens: The community suggests promoting gardens in homes or community gardens to foster sustainable living and community engagement.

Economic Development

1. Attracting Economic Investment and Fostering Local Development:

- Provide resources and training: The plan should focus on offering resources and training for local businesses and entrepreneurs, fostering innovation and competitiveness.
- Support workforce development and education: Emphasis should be placed on supporting workforce development and education to ensure a skilled and adaptable local workforce.
- Diverse and resilient local economy: The plan should aim to foster a diverse and resilient local economy through sustainable practices, resource management, and innovation.

2. Living and Working in Newbridge:

- Support local businesses and attract investments: Encourage initiatives that support local businesses and attract new investments, positioning Newbridge as a hub for innovation and enterprise.
- Designate areas for commercial activities: Ensure designated areas for commercial activities are easily accessible and contribute to the town's aesthetic appeal.
- Inclusive employment: Encourage businesses to prioritize employing people over automated processes, supporting workforce diversity and inclusivity.
- Co-op and schemes for retired workers: Explore the establishment of a co-op and schemes that include opportunities for retired individuals who wish to continue working.

3. Employment Opportunities and Industry Type:

- Industrial units outside town centers: Suggest designating industrial units outside town centers, prioritising residential units in central areas with essential services, promoting walkability and cycling.

- Engagement between businesses and schools: Promote greater engagement between businesses and schools to enhance understanding of the world of work and respond to evolving workplace challenges.
- Skills focus for the future: Focus on higher-level skills for the future, ensuring training aligns with emerging demands and offering a variety of courses for all age groups.

4. Sustainable Enterprise:

- Launch an enterprise project: Explore the launch of an enterprise project utilising sheep's wool for insulation and wool production, contributing to sustainability.
- Sustainable agriculture: Encourage sustainable agriculture practices, including organic vegetable cultivation, supporting local farmers and promoting environmentally friendly practices.
- Regeneration of old buildings: Promote the regeneration of old buildings, aligning with heritage conservation and sustainability goals.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.