



THORNTON O'CONNOR
TOWN PLANNING

***Submission In Respect Of The Material Amendments To
The Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027***

**In Respect Of Lands Proposed To Be Rezoned From
Objective 'R/A' – Rural Area To Objective 'F1' – Open
Space At Killegland, Ashbourne, County Meath**

**Submitted on Behalf of St. Oliver Killegland Trust
Company Limited By Guarantee**

June 2021

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Senior Executive Officer
Planning Department
Meath County Council
Buvinda House
Dublin Road
Navan
Co. Meath
C15 Y291

Tuesday, 29th June 2021

Dear Sir/ Madam,

RE: SUBMISSION IN RESPECT OF PROPOSED MATERIAL AMENDMENTS TO THE *DRAFT MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027* IN RESPECT OF LANDS PROPOSED TO BE REZONED FROM OBJECTIVE 'R/A' – RURAL AREA TO OBJECTIVE 'F1' – OPEN SPACE AT KILLEGLAND, ASHBOURNE, COUNTY MEATH.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this Submission - Oppose the Proposed Rezoning of the Lands to 'Open Space'

Thornton O'Connor Town Planning¹ have been retained by the St. Oliver Killegland Trust Company Limited by Guarantee² to prepare this Submission to Meath County Council in relation to lands at Killegland, Ashbourne, County Meath which are subject to a Material Amendment to the *Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027* (Draft Plan). The Material Amendments to the Draft Plan were published on Monday 21st May 2021.

The final day for submissions on this phase of public consultation is Tuesday, 29th June 2021.

The lands subject to this Submission are located at Killegland, Ashbourne, County Meath and are shown in Figure 1.1 below.

¹ No. 1 Kilmacud Road Upper, Dundrum, Dublin 14 D14 EA89

² Ashbourne/Donaghmore Parish Office, Ashbourne, County Meath



Figure 1.1: Map Showing the Location of the Lands Subject to this Submission Outlined in Red

Source: Myplan.ie, OSI Map, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021

Key Point: The key purpose of this Submission is to oppose the proposed rezoning of the subject lands from their current unzoned 'R/A' (Rural Area) status to 'F1' (Open Space). The lands are currently held in trust and the sole purpose of the trust is to *'promote and/or advance the religion of the Roman Catholic faith in the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore, County Meath.'* Therefore, the trust is required to ensure that any use of the lands is to the benefit of the Catholic faith.

It is the intention of the Trust to seek the future rezoning of the lands to residential use as part of the making of the next Meath County Council Development Plan in 6 No. years, to allow for the development of a high-quality residential development to meet the medium term growth and expansion needs of the town. The funds generated by the residential development would be used by the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore for the development of community facilities.

The Trustees have advised that substantive efforts have been made to provide access and services to the lands to ensure their suitability for residential use and furthermore that the Trust could not legally consent to the sale of the lands if the end use did not maximise the potential of the lands to *'promote and/or advance the religion of the Roman Catholic faith in the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore'*. This will be discussed further in Section 7 of this Submission.



1.2 Format of Submission

The following is the format of this submission:

Section 1 provides the **Introduction of the Submission**;

Section 2 provides an **Executive Summary of the Submission**;

Section 3 provides an **Overview of Subject Lands - Location, Description and Planning Status**;

Section 4 provides an **Overview of the Proposed Material Amendments and Chief Executive's Response**;

Section 5 sets out **Why Our Client is Opposed to the Provision of the Envisioned Public Park and the Anticipated Construction Costs which Exceeds €20 Million**

Section 6 provides an overview of the **Housing Need in Ashbourne**;

Section 7 sets out details of the **Subject Lands in Trust**; and

Section 8 provides the **Conclusion**.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The subject lands at Killegland are entrusted to the Catholic Church and the role of the Trustees managing the landholding is to ensure that the lands are used to *'promote and/or advance the religion of the Roman Catholic faith in the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore'*.

The lands are now proposed to be zoned 'Objective F1- Open Space' as part of the Material Amendment to the *Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027*. We understand that the intention of the new proposed zoning is to amalgamate the lands with adjacent land holdings for the delivery of a significant scale park to serve the town. In our opinion, the proposed park is overscaled and could be delivered on a smaller landholding to the south of the subject lands without impacting the subject lands and in particular their future potential to deliver housing to the settlement of Ashbourne in a consolidated manner. We are further advised by the Trustees legal representatives that the inclusion of the subject lands in the current design and vision for the park has the potential to prevent the delivery of the park as 'parkland' would not be in accordance with the objective of the Trust and thus the Trustees would not be in a position to allow the sale or purchase of the lands for a purpose that does not align with requirements of the Trust.

The Trustees can approve the sale of the lands but only if such a sale would maximise opportunities for the promotion of the Catholic faith. For that reason, the Trustees have recently put in place a right of way and easement for services to the subject lands to ensure that the lands are not landlocked and can maximise their potential. It has always been the intention of the Trust to seek the rezoning of the lands as part of the next Development Plan in 6 No. years' time, to allow the subject lands to accommodate the sustainable growth of Ashbourne. The sale of such a residential scheme would deliver sufficient gains to *'promote and/or advance the religion of the Roman Catholic faith in the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore'* and thus in principle could be approved by the Trustees with the monies to be invested into the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore.

Whilst we understand the needs for open space to serve the recreational requirements of an expanding town, we concur with the Opinion of the Chief Executive that the correct forum to consider the scale and location of such a park is in the making of the *Ashbourne Local Area Plan 2009-2015*. As part of that process, the needs of the town can be considered on a more micro-level with more exacting park requirements identified. The envisioned park, as currently designed, does not appear to have been designed with any professional inputs – how has the scale been determined? Has a landscape architect considered the layout and form? It appears to have been 'rushed' through at a late stage in the Development Plan making process and in our opinion the town would benefit from a more thorough consideration of its open space needs to ensure that any park to be delivered is of the appropriate scale and design, is at the most appropriate location to serve the residents and is a realistic project in terms of affordability to ensure it can be delivered in the short term. The park as currently designed will cost in excess of €20 million to construct (excluding land acquisition costs and other costs such as VAT, legal costs etc). Is such a budget available to allow this park to be delivered? Are the annual maintenance costs of €500,000 a year also available?

3.0 OVERVIEW OF SUBJECT LANDS - LOCATION, DESCRIPTION AND PLANNING STATUS

3.1 Location and Description of Subject Lands

The subject lands, currently greenfield in nature, have an approximate area of 2.43 ha and are shown in Figure 3.1 and 3.2 below.



Figure 3.1: Aerial View of the Subject Lands and Surrounding Context

Source: Google Maps, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021



Figure 3.2: View of the Subject Lands, Taken from Westview

Source: Google Maps, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021

The lands are bounded to the south, west and north by greenfield lands and to the east by part greenfield lands and part Bourne View Housing Estate. Rear gardens of Bourne Avenue and Bourne View directly abut the subject lands. The subject lands are located approximately 150 metres to the south of the Killegland Cemetery and represent a natural extension of Bourne View Housing Estate.

Key Point: As detailed in Section 3.2.2 of this Submission, there is a live application for a residential development on residential zoned lands directly to the north of the subject lands and thus the subject lands directly abut the urban edge and may in the future directly abut residential development.

The wider surrounding area includes a broad range of services and amenities which would support the potential for future residential development on the subject lands (subject to appropriate rezoning in the next Development Plan). Ashbourne Town Centre is located approximately 800 metres (c. 10 No. minute walk) to the north, Lidl and Tesco Supermarket are located within 500 metres (c.6 No. minute walk), St Declan's National School within 500 metres (c.6 No. minute walk), Coláiste De Lacy Secondary School within 1.3 km (c.15 No. minute walk) and Donaghmore Ashbourne GAA Club within 1 km (c.12 No. minute walk).

There is a neighbourhood centre located within a 10 No. minute walk (c. 700 metres) to the east of the subject lands at the junction of Bourne Avenue and Castle Way. The neighbourhood centre is comprised of approximately 10 No. commercial units including, but not limited to, a local shop with a delicatessen and post office, a café, a pharmacy, a takeaway, a hair salon and a launderette.

3.2 Planning Status of the Subject Lands and its Immediate Context

3.2.1 Zoning of Subject Lands

The subject lands are currently unzoned 'R/A' Rural Area as part of the *Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 (As Varied)* and are situated outside the settlement boundary of Ashbourne. An Extract from the current Development Plan is provided below for reference:

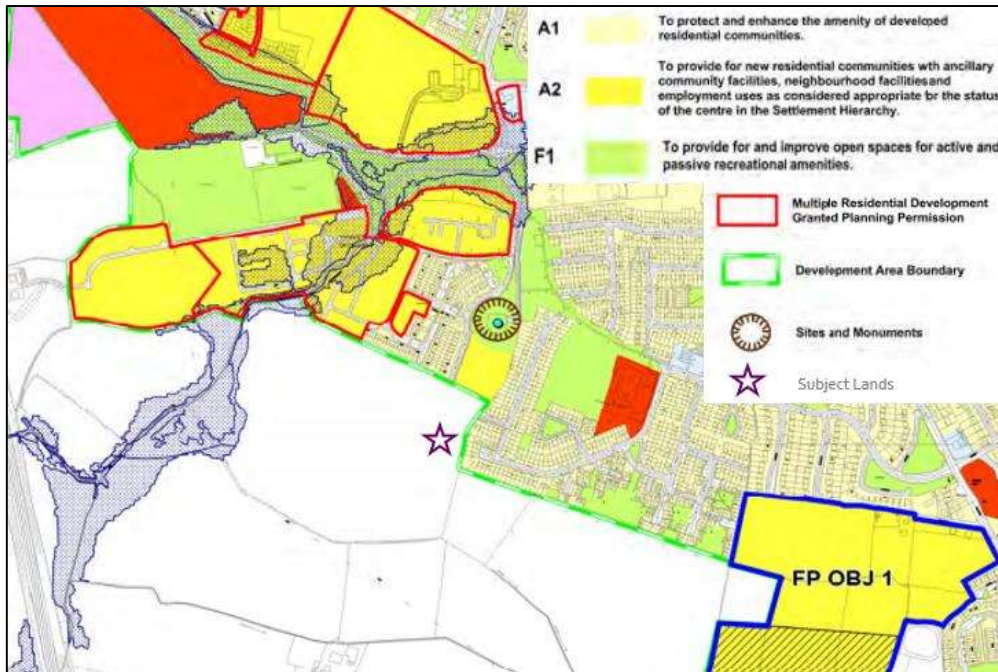


Figure 3.3: Current Zoning of the Subject Lands as annotated by a Purple Star

Source: *Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (As Varied)*, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021

There was no change to the planning status of the subject lands in the *Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027*. An extract from the *Draft Plan* is provided below for reference:

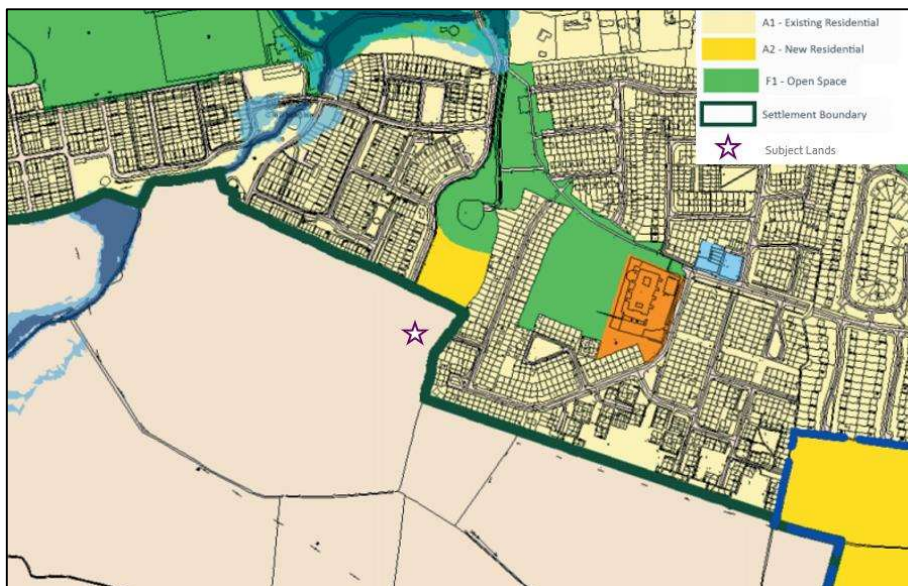


Figure 3.4: Zoning of the Subject Lands, as annotated by a Purple Star, as indicated in the *Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027*.

Source: *Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027*, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021

Key Point: Our Client did not make a Submission in respect of the Draft Plan as they had no difficulty with the unchanged nature of the planning status of the lands. The long term intention for the site is to seek the rezoning of the lands in the next Development Plan in 6 No. years' time to provide for an extension of the housing development that is currently proposed on residential lands to the north. A right of way and deed of easement over lands to the north has been obtained to ensure that the subject lands are ready for development, pending securing a residential zoning in the medium term to ensure the sustainable development of the town.

3.2.2 Planning Status of Adjacent Lands to the North

In understanding the subject land holding, it is also important to provide an overview of the planning status of the adjoining landholding directly to the north as both sites are intrinsically linked. That land is currently zoned 'A2' New Residential and is subject to a live planning application for residential use (Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: 211037). The application, by Killeland Estates Limited, was lodged on 28th May 2021 and proposes to provide 19 No. two storey houses and 12 No. apartments together with a new access road from the Churchfields estate. The scheme will provide high quality yet affordable homes for the local community and a computer generated image of the proposed development is shown in Figure 3.5 below. A decision on that application is due by 22nd July 2021.



Figure 3.5: Computer Generated Image of the Proposed Development to the North of the Subject Lands

Source: Declan Duffy Architect, MRIAI

A Site Layout Plan of the proposed development showing its relationship to the subject lands is shown in Figure 3.6 below. The Site Layout Plan provides for a future access to the subject lands to allow for their future development.



Figure 3.6: Site Layout Plan of Adjoining Site (Subject Lands Identified with a Star)

Source: Meath County Council Planning File (Reg. Ref.: 211037), annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021

Key Point: The live planning application at the lands to the north proposes an attractive high-quality scheme of 31 No. homes. The future developer of that site, Ashcroft Developments, has an established reputation as a small scale and reliable housebuilder in Meath having completed a number of successful developments in the County. If the scheme to the north is granted permission, the subject lands form a natural extension to those residential lands and thus the medium term intention is to seek the rezoning of the subject lands to allow for more high quality and affordable homes to meet the needs of the local community.

3.3 Accessibility of Subject Lands

The subject lands are located within a short distance of the M2 Motorway and within comfortable walking distance of a number of public transport services.

3.3.1 Existing Bus Services

The nearest bus stop to the subject lands is the Bourne Avenue Bus Stop, located 1.1 km (c.13 No. minute walk) to the east of the subject lands and is serviced by a number of public transport providers as listed below:

Bus Eireann Services

- **Route No. 103** – Dublin - Ashbourne - Ratoath - Tayto Park, a 20-minute frequency (6am – 11pm);
- **Route No. 103X** – Dublin - Ashbourne – Navan, a 20-minute frequency (5pm – 7pm);
- **Route No. 105** – Drogheda - Ashbourne - Ratoath – Blanchardstown, a 30-minute frequency (8am – 10pm); and

- **Route No. 109A** – Dublin Airport/City Centre - Ashbourne - Ratoath - Dunshaughlin - Navan – Kells, a 1-hour frequency (8am – midnight).

Ashbourne Connect

- **Route No. 193** – Ashbourne – Dublin City Centre, 7 No. services daily; and
- **Route No. 194** – Ashbourne – Dublin City Centre – Ratoath 2 No. services daily.

Go-Ahead Ireland

- **Route No. 197** – Swords – Ashbourne, a 1-hour frequency (6am – 10pm).

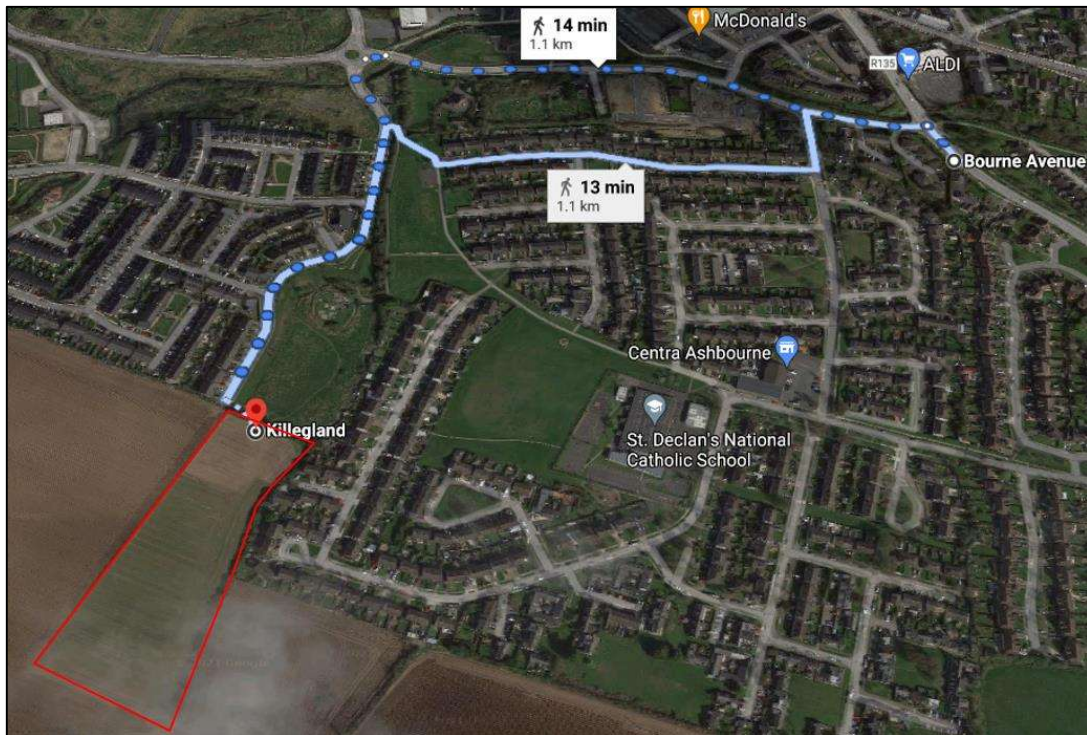


Figure 3.7: Aerial Image Showing the Walking Route from the Subject Lands to Bourne Avenue Bus Stop

Source: Google Earth, Annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021

3.3.2 Road Network

Ashbourne is accessible from Exit No. 3 of the M2 Motorway. Exit No.3 can be reached in 7 No. minutes from the subject lands which provides accessibility to Dublin and Belfast using the M50 Motorway and the N2 National Primary Road.

4.0 OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED MATERIAL AMENDMENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSE

4.1 Proposed Zoning Change to Allow for the Future Delivery of a Park

The proposed material amendment that relates to this submission is the Proposed Ashbourne Material Amendment No. 7 which is shown in Figure 4.1 below. The suggested amendment proposes to bring the subject lands within the settlement of Ashbourne and zone the lands Objective 'F1' Open Space. The Open Space zoning is also proposed to pertain to substantial tracts surrounding the subject lands to allow the wider landholding to deliver a park.

We further note that the lands to the north, which are currently subject to a live planning application for residential development, are proposed to be rezoned from 'New Residential' to 'Community Infrastructure'.

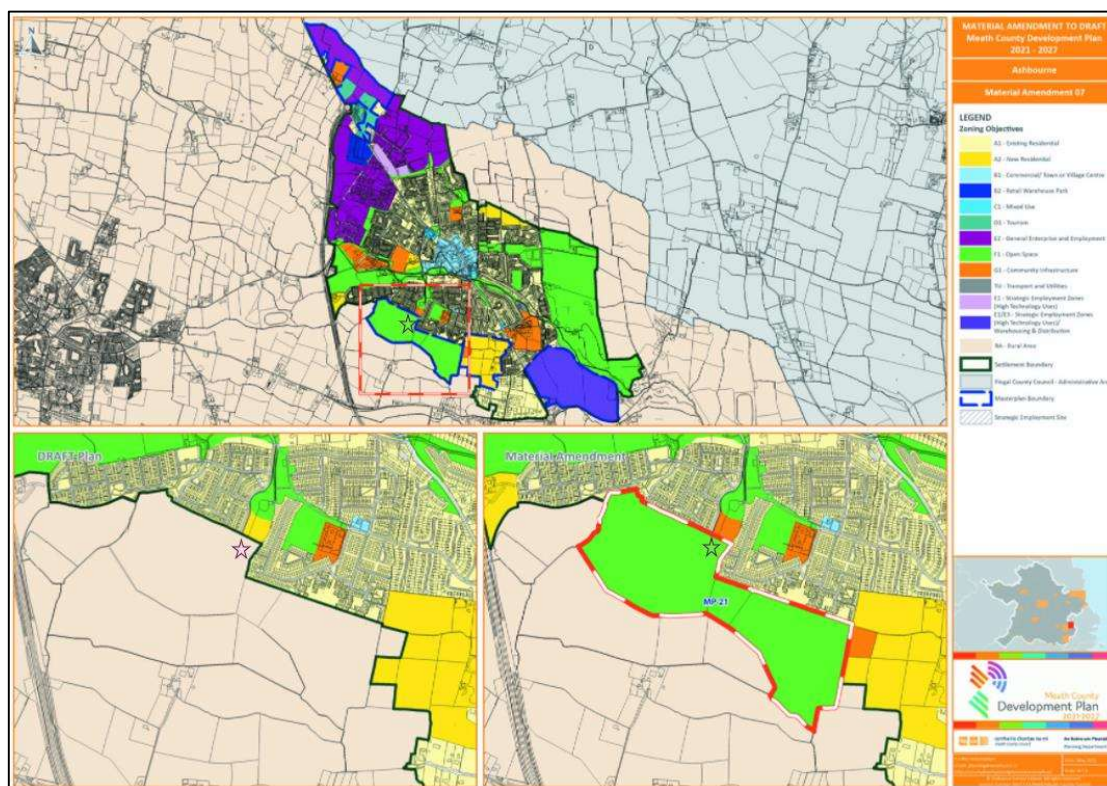


Figure 4.1: Proposed Ashbourne Amendment No. 7 (Subject Lands marked by a Star)

Source: *Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, Annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021*

4.2 Background to the Proposed Rezoning – Motion

We note that the background to the proposed rezoning is a Motion (No. 111) that was put forward by Councillors Tobin, Tormey, Jamal Smith and O'Neill.

The Councillors' rationale for proposing the rezoning is outlined below:

'To zone attached lands (33 hectares) to F1 Open space, with a view to create a public park, the Killegland Biodiversity Park. Over the past 30 years, the town of Ashbourne has grown from a small village to the 2nd most populous town in Meath. The plan has not addressed fully the citizens overwhelming desire for a public park. A detailed survey carried out by Future Analytics, presented to the Council in 2017, backs up our belief that Ashbourne is now ready to zone lands to meet our previous deficit, our current need, and our future obligation. Ashbourne is ahead of calculated population estimates, so future proofing now definitely makes sense. It will also allow sufficient time to raise funds, both public and private, to purchase and landscape the lands identified.'

'New Covid reality – During the lockdown March to June 2020, the realisation that Ashbourne lacks open parkland or an area to get away from traffic and associated air pollution as well as the hustle and bustle of the town became very apparent. Our citizens mental health and well-being must also be taken into consideration.

We propose that a total of 33 hectares or 80 acres are zoned F1 open space. These lands are ideally situated and are close to the main residential areas in Ashbourne. They are within walking distance, do not require any major new roadways. The adjoining lands also proposed for F1/G1 is the natural entrance into the Park and are required to link up with the existing Linear Park and Crestwood/Garden City greenspace as well as to allow for some limited public parking (see separate motion)

This is part of the justification for the land zoning from the attached Future Analytics independent report.

- *In Nov 2017, Future Analytics projected a population of 14,860 by 2026, which lead to the figure of 25.9–33.4 ha*
- *MCC's own projection as per the Ashbourne Written Statement of the CDP is 15,879, which now leads to a figure of 28-35.9 ha if same calculation applied.*

'The 3.8 ha refers to the existing area in which the playground is located (approx. 1.2 ha) and also the lands to the east (Aldi/Deerpark area) of 2.6ha - see pages 4 and 5 of original report 159 Climate Change and Biodiversity It is imperative that we take action locally to meet our climate change obligations, this public park and the designate lands offer a real opportunity to offset our carbon footprint by creating an area that protects wildlife, allows us to plant hundreds of trees and protect hedgerows and pollinators that would otherwise cease to exist, close to our town centre. Being in close proximity to our primary and secondary schools, the park would also offer a range of outdoor educational possibilities for generations to come.'

4.3 Chief Executive's Response – Does Not Support the Proposed Park

In relation to the Proposed Ashbourne Amendment No. 7, the Chief Executive had the following comments:

*'The quantum of land detailed on the map submitted with this motion is **far in excess** of that required to facilitate the public park **and that for which funding would be available.**' [Our Emphasis]*

'In relation to the provision of a public park, there is a substantial landbank to the west of the subject lands between the M2, R125 and the R135 which is proximate to the town centre and a significant quantum of residential development. This land is considered sequentially preferable as a location for a public park in that it is closer to the town centre.'

The Chief Executive also questions the impartial nature of the Future Analytics report:

*'It must also be pointed out that the information provided within the Future Analytics Consulting Report does not reflect the open space provision throughout Ashbourne and has been **tailored provide a particular view point**. It is the strongly held view of the Chief Executive that the formal designation of the public park for Ashbourne should be considered **within the proposed Local Area Plan for Ashbourne**.'* [Our Emphasis]

Key Point: The Chief Executive does not support the delivery of a public park at the subject lands and believes it to be overscaled. It also the belief of the Chief Executive that if a park is required, it should be identified during the renewal of the Ashbourne Local Area Plan, which is due to take place following the completion of this Development Plan.

We fully support the opinion of the Chief Executive that the making of the upcoming Ashbourne Local Area Plan represents a more appropriate forum to thoroughly and robustly consider the most appropriate location and scale for a public park, as a more detailed assessment of Ashbourne can be carried out as the town is analysed at a more micro-level.

We agree with the comment by the Executive that the Future Analytics Report findings were tailored to a particular viewpoint, and we note that the report is now 4 No. years old and thus the findings should be updated before being relied upon.

While the importance of public open space is acknowledged, the size and layout of the proposed park has not been adequately considered and such a 'rushed' planning decision may be to the detriment of the town, potentially creating undesirable spaces especially in times of darkness and the creation of security concerns for properties that abut the open space.

4.4 The Most Appropriate Location and Scale for a Park can be Determined During the Renewal of the Local Area Plan

The Chief Executive made a logical suggestion that the following Objective be included in the County Development Plan:

'Facilitate the provision of a public park on proximate lands to the southwest of the town centre with appropriate lands to be zoned as part of the Ashbourne local area Plan.'

The Chief Executive further made the commitment that:

'It will also be a priority of the Executive that the development of the Ashbourne LAP will be in the first tranche of LAPs being drafted after the adoption of the Meath CDP 2021-2017.'

In our opinion, this solution which proposes zoning a park as part of the Local Area Plan renewal process, would be most appropriate to ensure the plan-led and sustainable development of the town. We further note that this approach is aligned with the objectives of the current *Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019* which in Section 5.10.2 outlines the role the Local Area Plan plays in identifying suitable sites for the provision of public open space:

'In new development areas, local area plans should identify the preferred location of larger open spaces including, if considered appropriate, locations in adjoining non-development areas.' [Our Emphasis]

Key Point: A key consideration for the delivery of parks is the creation of passive surveillance. The lands directly to the north of the subject lands (that are subject to a live planning application) have the potential for anti-social behaviour to be generated as the entire eastern boundary of the lands comprises the rear boundary wall of private gardens. We are strongly of the opinion that providing a car park that is envisaged to serve a park that has an entire boundary that provides poor passive surveillance could cause a severe anti-social behaviour problem for the area. These are examples of issues that need to be comprehensively considered through the making of the Local Area Plan.

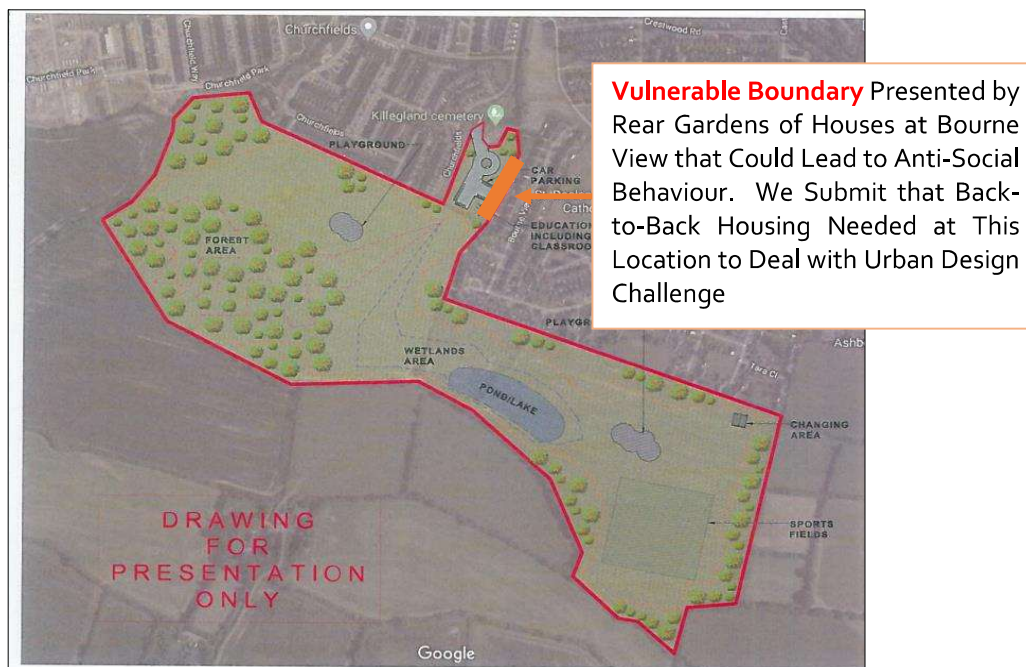


Figure 4.2: Site Layout Plan of Proposed Park, as annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning to Show the Area with No Passive Surveillance

Source: Tom Byrne Designs, prepared for Councillor Alan Tobin

5.0 WHY OUR CLIENT IS OPPOSED TO THE PROVISION OF THE ENVISIONED PUBLIC PARK

5.1 'Rushed' Decision Making Does Not Appear to Demonstrate That Key Assessments for Suitability Have Been Undertaken

As detailed in Section 4.4 about, the 'rushed' decision to provide the envisioned park has meant that many planning considerations do not appear to have been fully assessed.

Key Point: For example, has there been any consideration of alternatives? Providing a substantial park for the town will be a significant amenity benefit – what alternative sites have been considered? Are the subject lands the most appropriate to serve the maximum number of residents? Is the scale the most appropriate to meet residents' needs but also be of a cost that it can be delivered? Would multiple smaller scale parks be more appropriate? Are there alternative uses for the envisioned public park lands that would provide a better use having regard to the needs for residents of Ashbourne?

5.2 Ashbourne Public Realm Strategy Focuses on the Need for Delivery of Pocket Park Typologies and Safe Public Realm Spaces

Looking to the *Ashbourne Public Realm Strategy* published in 2018, it is important to note the focus of the strategy is the Town Centre area as far south as the Broadmeadow River (and thus does not include the subject lands) however, the scale of the projects being undertaken is of relevance to this Submission. In particular, we have reviewed the 7 No. Public Realm projects included and note that each of the projects focus on a particular area of the town for improvements including the Declan Street Pocket Park with the Site Layout of the plans included below for reference:



Figure 5.1: Site Layout Plan of Declan Street Pocket Park Public Realm Project

Source: *Ashbourne Public Realm Strategy (2018)*

Similarly, a new 1.2 No. hectare linear park along Broadmeadow River has recently been completed in October 2019, located 900 metres (c. 7 No. minute walk) to the north of the subject lands. It is evident Ashbourne has set out the scale of the public open space projects it wishes to pursue and views as viable.

Key Point: By comparison, the proposed 33 hectare park envisaged appears to be significantly overscaled when compared against current projects being undertaken by Meath County Council in Ashbourne with these concerns echoed by the Chief Executive. The notion that all of Ashbourne's future public open space provision should be met in one location is not desirable. The onus is on Meath County Council to ensure that public open space is distributed evenly throughout Ashbourne for the benefit of all. Failing to achieve this will result in public open space lying well outside walking or cycling distance for many impacting on the residential amenity of large parts of Ashbourne.

A key concept underpinning the *Ashbourne Public Realm Strategy* is the idea that public spaces should be 'connected and safe.' The provision of a 33 No. hectare park at an edge of town location would contravene the objectives of the *Ashbourne Public Realm Strategy* as there are limited existing connections given the lands are bounded to the south, east and west by currently agricultural greenfield lands. The proposed public park will also be located to the rear of residential properties along Bourne Avenue which has the potential to create security concerns for residents.

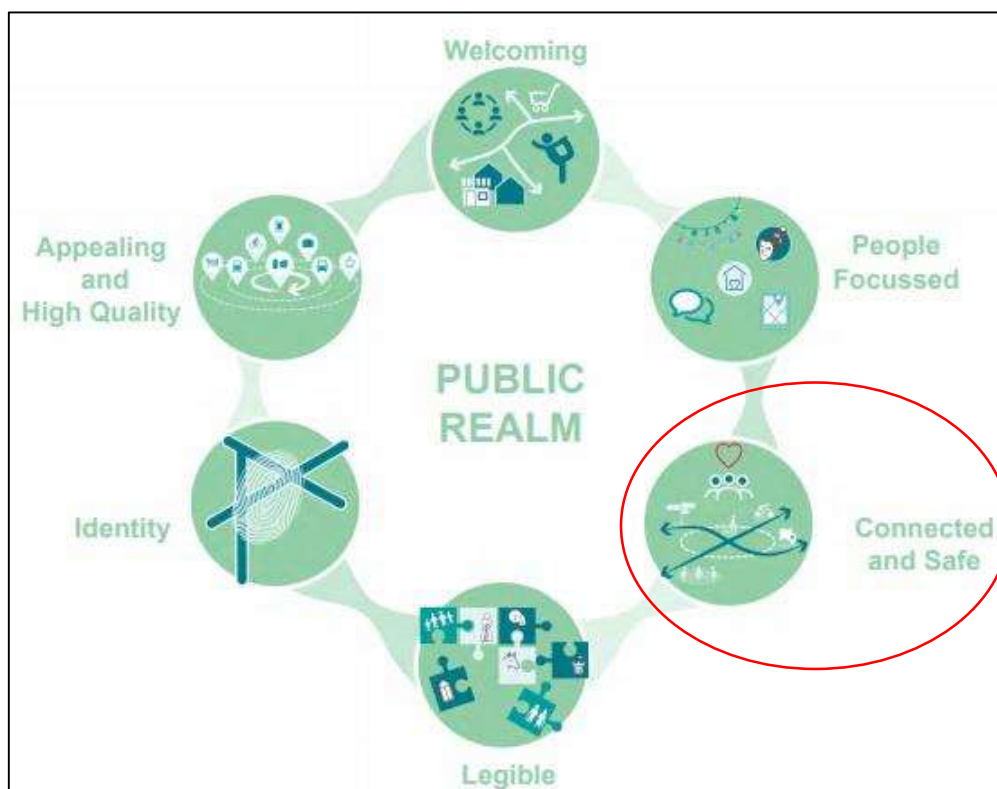


Figure 5.2: Objectives for a Successful Public Realm

Source: *Ashbourne Public Realm Strategy (2018)*, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021.

The *Ashbourne Public Realm Strategy* has been informed through analysis of the Town Centre, but also through consultation with local interest groups, private and commercial stakeholders, and the public. The public consultation and engagement uncovered unanimous support and belief that 'enhanced open spaces/ civic spaces' would bring value to the Town.

As part of the comments section of the public consultation, two comments included in the *Ashbourne Public Realm Strategy* are of note:

'Town lacks character due to dominance of the private car.'

'Fear of evening time anti-social issues.'

Key Point: The provision of an edge of town public open space of which access would require the use of a private car from many parts of Ashbourne, coupled with a public open space that abuts numerous properties inhibiting passive surveillance, inadvertently creates suitable conditions for anti-social activity and represents the unsuitable use of the subject lands. The provision of a number of smaller open spaces throughout Ashbourne, would represent a more viable approach to the provision of public open space rendering more public open space accessible by foot or by bicycle for the population of Ashbourne.

5.2 No Specialist Design Input for Such a Major Decision for the Town

The delivery of this public park appears to be lacking in input suitably qualified park delivery specialists including a landscape architect or a team familiar with the design and deliverability of parks.

One oversight of note is the location of the playing pitches in the far eastern corner of the park requiring users of the park to pass from one side of the park to the other to access car parking, which raises safety concerns especially in times of darkness. Also, as mentioned in Section 4.2 above, an entire boundary to the car parking area of the park will be very vulnerable to anti-social behaviour as it is not overlooked and presents directly adjacent to the rear boundary of gardens.

5.3 A More Suitably Scaled Park Could be Provided on Lands to the South

Thornton O'Connor Town Planning have been in discussions with the agent for the adjacent landowner to the south and we are of the understanding that as part of the future development of their lands, the landowner is happy to provide a more suitably scaled park of approximately 8 No. hectares which would be located to the southwest of the subject lands and would connect into the existing linear park at Broadmeadow River. In our opinion, such a scale would be much more appropriate and much more likely to be delivered in Ashbourne.

5.3.1 Similar Sized Parks

When looking at comparisons of similar sized parks that serve similar sized populations, one recurring theme emerges; public open spaces the size of the envisioned public park are a rarity and instead, public open space requirements are often met through the provision of a number of smaller sized open spaces in a town.

In Naas, County Kildare, a population of 21,393 is served by the 13 No. hectare 'Monread Park' which contains car parking, looped walks, 3 soccer pitches, GAA pitches, playground and wildflower area. Furthermore, Naas is also served by the 8 hectares 'The Lakes' public park containing lakes, seating, chess tables, looped walks and an outdoor gym. Similarly, the 7 No. hectare 'St. Helena' is one of 5 No. public parks serving the 21,393 population of Dundalk, County Louth and contains looped forest walks and playing pitches. Ashbourne, with a population of 12,679, could seek to replicate Dundalk's and Naas' approach to public open space through the provision of a number of suitably scaled and located public parks, allowing Ashbourne to meet its future public open space requirements.

Key Point: A single site seldom represents the solution to the lack of open space for a town and instead, a number of more manageable, evenly distributed spaces would serve to benefit the entirety of the future population of Ashbourne and not just those who reside in close proximity to the subject lands.

5.4 Seeing the 33 No. Hectare Public Park through to Completion – Construction Costs in Excess of €20 Million.

Are the costs of delivering this public park fully understood by the Elected Members? Furthermore, are the long term maintenance costs understood?

When viewed in its totality, the 33 No. hectare public park is likely to be a significant undertaking considering site acquisition costs, long term maintenance costs and construction costs and in an effort to ensure these costs are understood, our client has retained Mitchel McDermott³ to provide specialist advice in this regard. Please find enclosed as Appendix A, a costing from Mitchell McDermott construction consultants which sets out the likely construction costs only for a project of this size.

Mitchell McDermott has advised that the construction of a park of this size would be estimated to cost in excess of €20 million, specifically €20,135,000. That cost specifically excludes other significant costs such as site acquisition costs, VAT, Development Contributions and Capital Contributions for services connections, professional and legal fees etc. In addition, Mitchell McDermott have advised that the likely annual maintenance cost for the park is €550,000 per annum. On that basis, will this park ever be delivered? Would the lands be more suitably used for the delivery of housing in the future expansion of Ashbourne?

Key Point: The cost of a public open park of this size would be significant and the key question is whether it will be so exorbitant that no such park is ever delivered? We believe creating liveable and walkable communities where public open space and high-quality residential developments are provided simultaneously is an achievable objective.

³ 72 Leeson Street Upper, Rathmines, Dublin, Do4 XD92

6.0 HOUSING NEED IN ASHBOURNE

6.1 The Need to Maintain Current Zoning in *Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027*

The key purpose of this Submission is to oppose the proposed rezoning of the subject lands in the *Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027*, and to maintain its current zoning 'R/A' Rural Area. It is our Client's intention to seek the rezoning of the lands as part of the next Development Plan making process in 6 No. years. As aforementioned, preparations for residential development have already begun as our client has recently obtained a right of way and deed of easements on the adjacent landholding to the north in order to facilitate access to the subject lands.

6.2 The Subject Lands are Ideally Suited to Accommodate the Future Residential Expansion of Ashbourne

It is the future (medium term) intention of our Client to develop a high quality residential scheme on the subject lands. The subject lands are ideally located within walking distance of Ashbourne Town Centre providing access to a wide range of services and amenities. The area surrounding the subject lands provide access to a number of public transport service providers in the form of numerous bus routes along the Dublin Road, rendering the subject lands ideal for residential development.

Key Point: Having regard to the surrounding context of the subject lands, which is predominantly residential in nature with a number of large open spaces, it is our professional planning opinion that the proposed rezoning of the lands as 'F1' Open Space would be a missed opportunity to consider the future expansion needs of Ashbourne and the medium term potential of the subject lands to deliver much needed high quality residential units in Ashbourne.

While a residential rezoning of the subject lands is not sought as part of the current Development Plan, it is our Client's intention to seek its rezoning for residential use as part of the next Development Plan making process. In an effort to demonstrate the suitability of the lands for their future residential development we have prepared the following comparison:



Figure 6.1: Aerial View of the Subject Lands and Surrounding Zoning Context

Source: Google Maps, annotated by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021

	Subject Lands	Proposed Amendment No. 8	1. Existing 'A2' New Residential	2. Existing 'A2' New Residential	3. Existing 'A2' New Residential
Distance from Ashbourne Town Centre	800 metres (c. 10 No. min walk)	2 km (c.24 No. min walk)	1 km (c.12 No. min walk)	850 metres (c.11 No. min walk)	1.4 km (c.17 No. min walk)
Distance from Public Transport	1.1 km (c.14 No. min walk)	1.8 km (c.22 No. min walk)	650 metres (c.8 No. min walk)	800 metres (c.10 No. min walk)	900 metres (c.11 No. min walk)
Distance from nearest Primary School	300 metres (c.5 No. min walk)	1.7 km (c.20 No. min walk)	450 metres (c.6 No. min walk)	1 km (c.12 No. min walk)	270 metres (c.3 No. min walk)
Distance from nearest Secondary School	1.3 km (c.15 No. min walk)	1.4 km (c.17 No. min walk)	800 metres (c.10 No. min walk)	1.9 km (c.23 No. min walk)	550 metres (c.7 No. min walk)

Table 6.2: Proximity of Lands to Local Services and Amenities

Source: Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2021

In relation to the site of the Proposed Amendment No.8, it is the intention of Cllrs Tobin, Tormey, Jamal Smith and O'Neill to seek the rezoning of 'A2' New Residential lands abutting the subject lands to 'F1' Open Space and to amend the zoning of the highlighted Proposed Amendment no.8 lands from their unzoned 'R/A' Rural Area status to 'A2' New Residential.

It is our contention that the lands now proposed as 'A2' New Residential are less suitable for residential development given their edge of town location and proximity to the heavily trafficked M2 Motorway abutting the lands. The lands of the Proposed Amendment No.8 are less connected with respect to proximity to Ashbourne Town Centre, Schools and access to public transport requiring future residents to have access to a private car.

When looking at existing 'A2' New Residential zoned lands, many of the lands are suitably located for residential development, akin to the subject lands. The subject lands provide access to a range of local services and amenities with a maximum walking distance of 15 No. minutes rendering the subject lands suitable for the creation of a compact and connected residential development in line with national, regional and local policy.

7.0 SUBJECT LANDS IN TRUST

7.1 Implications of Ashbourne/ Donaghmore Parish Trust – Prevents the Use of the Lands as a Park

The subject lands are unsuitable for the delivery of a public park because the lands are the subject to a Trust. Details of the Trust are included below for reference:

<p>NAME OF THE TRUST:</p> <p>2. The Trust shall be known and may be referred to as “Ashbourne/Donaghmore Parish Trust.”</p> <p>OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF THE TRUST:</p> <p>3. The exclusively charitable and sole purpose of the trust is to promote and/or advance the religion of the Roman Catholic faith in the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore, County Meath or such extended boundaries of the parish as apply from time to time.</p>
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Figure 7.1: Object and Purpose of the Trust

Source: Declaration Trust

These lands were left by [REDACTED] for the sole intention of *'promoting and/or advancing the religion of the Roman Catholic Church faith in the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore, County Meath.'* We are advised that the provision of a public park on these lands would materially contravene the objectives of the trust given the lands would not be able to be sold for use as public open space given that this would not be in the best interests of the Roman Catholic Faith.

We are further advised by the Trustees legal representatives that the inclusion of the subject lands in the current design and vision for the park has the potential to prevent the delivery of the park as 'parkland' would not be in accordance with the objective of the Trust and thus the Trustees would not be in a position to allow the sale or purchase of the lands for a purpose that does not align with requirements of the Trust.

Key Point: The Trustees can approve the sale of the lands but only if such a sale would maximise opportunities for the promotion of the Catholic faith. For that reason, the Trustees have recently put in place a right of way and easement for services to the subject lands to ensure that the lands are not landlocked and can maximise their potential. It has always been the intention of the Trust to seek the rezoning of the lands as part of the next Development Plan in 6 No. years' time, to allow the subject lands to accommodate the sustainable growth of Ashbourne. The sale of such a residential scheme would deliver sufficient gains to *'promote and/or advance the religion of the Roman Catholic faith in the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore'* and thus in principle could be approved by the Trustees with the monies to be invested into the parish of Ashbourne and Donaghmore.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this submission is to oppose the proposed amendments made as part of the Proposed Ashbourne Material Amendment No. 7 which forms part of the *Material Amendments to Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027*. As part of these amendments, the subject lands are proposed to be rezoned from their current unzoned 'R/A' Rural Area status to F1 'Open Space' to allow for an envisioned 33 No. hectare public park. There are significant concerns that the park as envisaged has not been fully assessed and particularly that it is overscale and thus may never be delivered. We concur with the Opinion of the Chief Executive that the need for a park in Ashbourne should be considered through the more micro-scale assessment that will take place in the forthcoming renewal of the Ashbourne Local Area Plan.

It is the intention of our Client to seek the rezoning of the lands as part of the next Meath County Council Development Plan in 6 No. years, for the development of a high-quality residential development when population and the demand for housing increases in Ashbourne as existing zoned sites become developed. The subject lands are ideally located within walking distance of the Ashbourne Town Centre, Primary and Secondary Schools as well as recreational facilities provided by the GAA.

We trust that due consideration will be given to the role of the subject site in the overall future development of Ashbourne.

Thank you for considering this proposal.

Yours Sincerely



Sadhbh O'Connor
Director
Thornton O'Connor Town Planning



Appendix A: Mitchell McDermott Cost Plan for 33 Hectare Park

OMC Nr.1 (Rev.1)

for

Ashbourne New Public Park

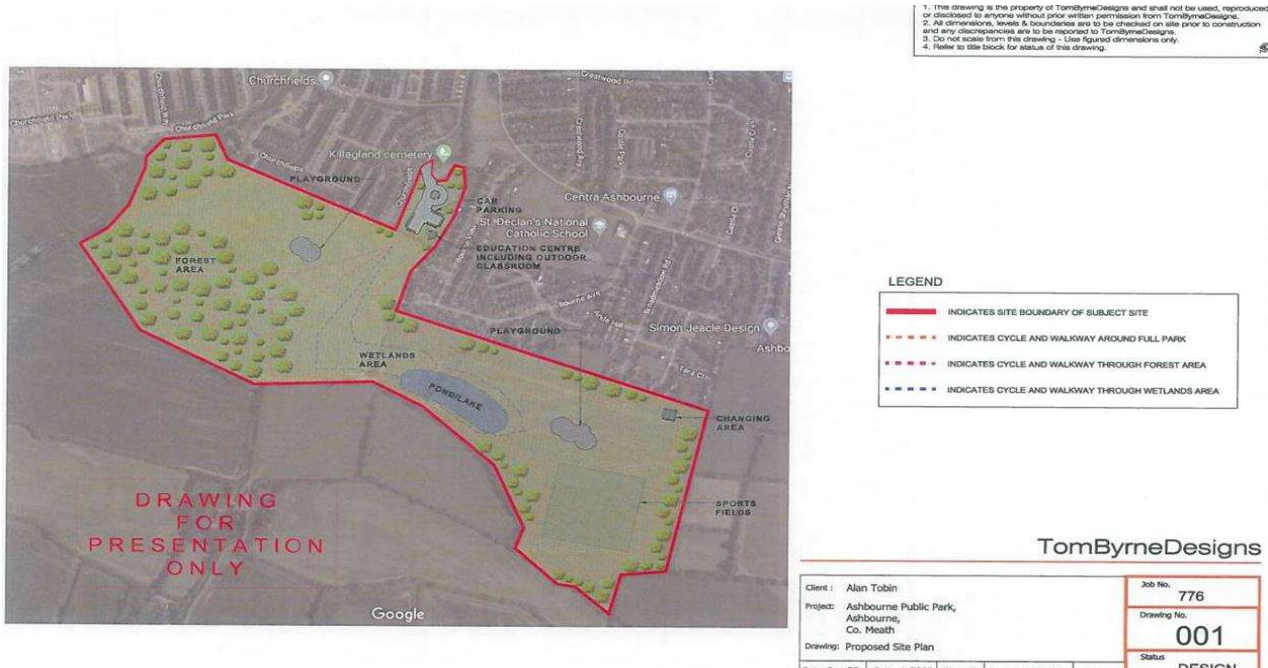
for

Thornton O'Connor

29 June 2021

NOTES/ASSUMPTIONS

basis of costs Costs are based on the below sketch received from Thornton O' Connor on the 16 June 2021. We have received no further information at present.



prepared site Costs include for general cutting and filling to the site. There is no allowance made for abnormal ground conditions, rock below ground etc.

ancillary site structures We have included an allowance for ancillary site structures such as shelters, canopies to the park for shelter or picnic area's.

site enclosures We have included for a 1.2m high timber fence to the perimeter of the park.

roads , paths and pavings We have included an allowance for paths for the cycle and walk ways as indicated on the legend and a new carpark to the education centre

site services piped and ducted We have included an allowance for site services piped and ducted for drainage to the changing area, education centre and sports field.

site services mainly electrical We have included an allowance for site ducting and lighting to cycle and walk ways.

site fittings We have included allowance for playgrounds, benches, picnic benches, directional signage.

landscaping We have included allowance for new trees, grass and pond/lake as indicated on the drawing, allowance for planting and shrubbery and we have included an allowance for a new sports field.

building works There is no gross floor area schedule for the new education centre including the outdoor classroom, therefore we have included an allowance for this facility

maintenance works We have provided an indicative costs for the annual maintenance costs of the park.

OVERALL SUMMARY

overall summary The construction costs for the project are summarised below. Please read in conjunction with Assumptions and Exclusions.

Section	GFA (sq m)	Unit Cost	Total €
Prepared Site	330,000 sq m	€6.50/sq m	2,145,000
Education Centre	1 Item	€3,000,000	3,000,000
Changing Area	1 Item	€500,000	500,000
Ancillary Site Structures	1 Item	€1,000,000	1,000,000
Site Enclosures	1 Item	€700,000	700,000
Roads, paths, pavings	1 Item	€3,150,000	3,150,000
Site services piped and ducted	1 Item	€500,000	500,000
Site services mainly electrical	1 Item	€2,300,000	2,300,000
Site fittings	1 Item	€1,100,000	1,100,000
Landscaping, Playground, Pitches, Ponds	1 Item	€5,740,000	5,740,000
TOTAL			20,135,000
Maintenance Costs	1 Year	€550,000/annum	

EXCLUSIONS

exclusions The following items are excluded from the Cost Document:

1. VAT
2. Tender Inflation from June 21
3. Site Acquisition
4. Planning and Statutory Fees
5. Development Contributions
6. Capital Contributions for Services connections
7. Bonds
8. Professional Fees
9. Legals
10. Valuers
11. Accountancy Costs
12. Finance Costs
13. Works outside the boundary of the site
14. Owner Insurances
15. Diversion of existing services
16. Abnormal ground conditions
17. Covid-19 implications
18. Brexit
19. Irrigation
20. Rock

