



**Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil:** MH-C52-276

**Stádas:** Submitted

**Aighneacht:**

Ashbourne Community Regional Park and the Health & Well Being of our Community

**Údar:** Ciara Houlihan

**Comhairliúchán:**

Material Amendments to Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

**Dáta a cuireadh isteach:** 29.06.2021 - 15:24

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## Litir Chumhdaigh

A long standing resident of Ashbourne for nearly forty years, I have watched our community grow through the decades from a small rural village to the densely populated town it now encompasses. Like so many of my contemporaries who have also chosen to stay and raise the next generation of Ashbourne natives, I have seen the affects of our sprawling population. The back roads we once roamed on our nature walks from school have been heavily populated now with row upon row of new houses. We were the first students to attend secondary school in Ashbourne and now our schools have doubled in size to meet the demand brought about by the increase in families leaving Dublin and choosing to make Meath their new home. I have seen our beautiful green fields eroded and trees torn down to be replaced with the building of new homes, new schools, new retail units (- many of which stand vacant decades later), office blocks and industrial units. We commuters spend at least two hours per day (pre-COVID-19 times) traversing into the city and our saving grace is coming home each evening and seeing the clear skies, lush farmland and age old trees on the commute home. It is alarming that it took the plight of a national pandemic to truly show how badly we need access to open public green space within our town border. Green space that can be used by all people, of all ages and all ethnicities, a place where we can meet up, play sports and unwind - a space where our community can flourish and do just that, be a community. Mental health and well-being has been a hot topic this past year and a half and research has shown being in nature is key. 'Being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature, reduces anger, fear, and stress. Exposure to nature not only makes you feel better emotionally, it contributes to your physical wellbeing, reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones.' I cannot understand with a population such as ours, that is second only to our county's capital, is deprived of so much, our children given so little. We have ONE public playground, ONE! The idea that there would be any change to our proposed new park which so many residents have fought so long and so hard for is horrifying. Long-standing residents of Ashbourne, Ashbourne Playspace and our councillors have been fighting for many years now for us to get to this stage and the mere suggestion that any changes should be made to the draft plan in favour of more houses is not acceptable. The access to the park, all 80 acres of it must progress as is and not be cut up and watered down based on monetary value. Future Analytics reported that 80 acres was the bare minimum of greenspace required just to bring us up to standard with our contemporaries and a town of our size. Please put our community first, please have the foresight to allow our community to thrive. One of the back roads we walked during our school nature walks was [Redacted\_Personal Information] lane up to the old church ground, how fitting would it be for the land that [Redacted\_Personal Information] donated to the Church to be used by all of the parish, people of all ethnicities and religions to now welcome visitors, Ashbourne residents of all age, nationality and religion into our park.

**Tuairimí:**

## Ashbourne

Caibidil: Volume 2: Settlements »  
Ashbourne

**Proposed Amendment Number:** Proposed Ashbourne Amendment No. 7, Proposed Ashbourne Amendment No. 8

- The current lands (80 acres) identified for rezoning as public greenspace are perfect, this is a golden opportunity for our town. The park would be situated within 1.5 KM walking distance from almost all of the houses in the town, it would transform Ashbourne and reap rewards in multiple areas of life - personal, health, community and business.

- Any redirection of decisions on a park back to Local Area Level is a repeat of work already done. Extensive assessment work was done six years ago locally and potential lands were explored. To re-commence a process already exhausted would be a poor use of public resources and a severe delay for the expanding community in getting the greenspace it badly needs.

- MCC state that the necessary funds are not available to purchase and develop an 80 acre park. However, once the land is secured, multiple funding channels can be accessed. We are a very active and engaged community willing to work with the Council on the question of funding channels, as are our Councillors.

- COVID-19 and lockdown within 5km again highlighted how badly served Ashbourne is regarding OPEN and PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE GREENSPACE. Independent research conducted by Future Analytics determined that the town needs a minimum of 80 acres to address the historical and current shortfall in public greenspace. This is not our opinion, this is FACT.

- The park needs an entrance. Lands at Churchfields, gifted to the church by [Redacted\_Personal Information], have been identified as most appropriate in this regard - linked to the town centre, schools, main arteries of the town etc. To put houses where this perfect access point exists would be a mistake.

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**Documents Attached:** Níl

**Teorainneacha Gafa ar an léarscáil:** Níl