

Job Number: MeathCoCo/LIDL
Letter Reference: 290621
Date: 29 June 2021

Planning Department
Meath County Council
Buvinda House
Navan
Co Meath



Airport Hub, Furry Park, Swords Road
Santry
Dublin 9
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Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Submission to the Material Amendments associated with the Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 for lands at the Navan Road, Kells (Townparks).

Submission to Material Amendment No.4.

Deadline for submission 29 June 2021

Introduction:

Tony Bamford Planning has been instructed by LIDL Ireland GmbH, with an address at Head Office, Main Road, Tallaght, Dublin, to make the following submission to the Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

Subject Lands:

Located on the Navan Road, Kells.

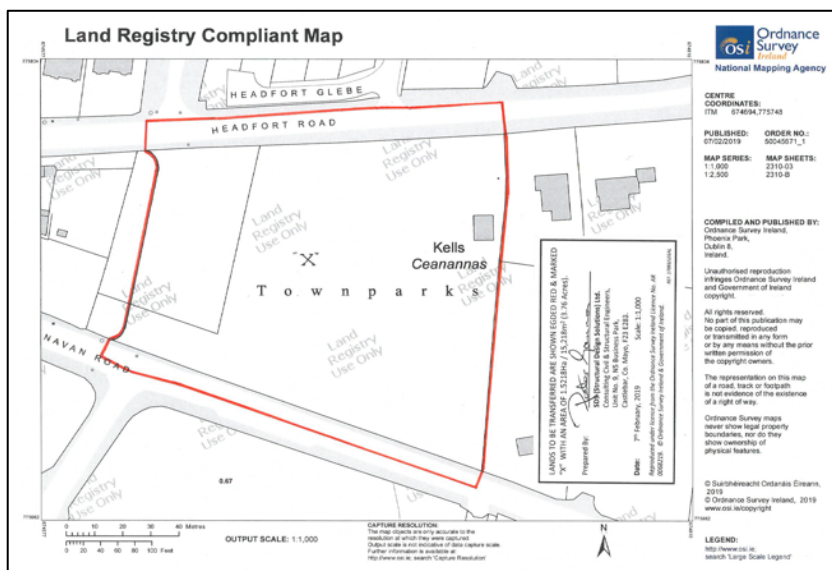


Figure 1.0: extent of subject lands.

Proposed Material Amendment:

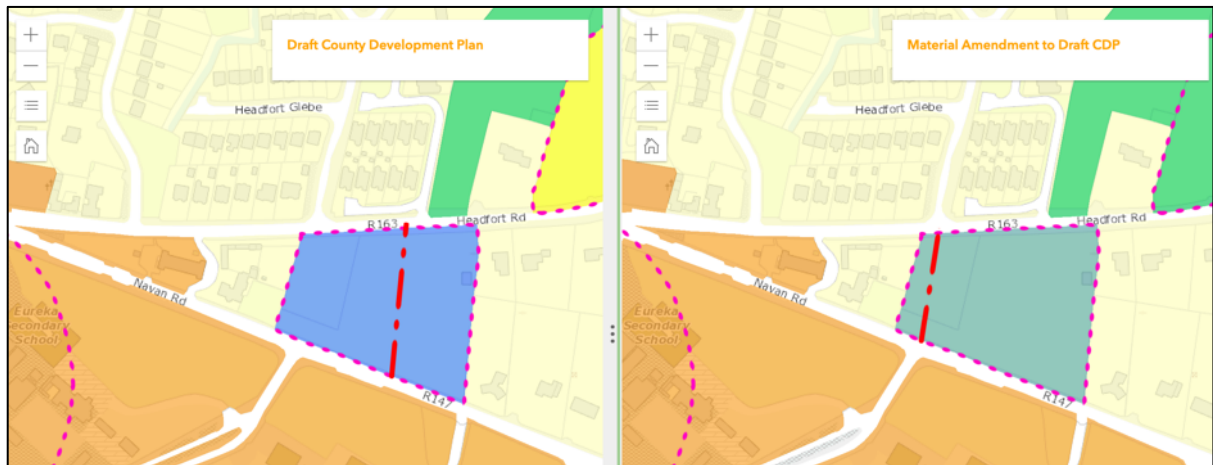


Figure 2.0: Zoning of lands in Draft Development Plan and Material Amendments.

The subject lands were zoned “Mixed Use C1” in the Draft County Development Plan 2021-2027 and has an “Indicative Road Route” route running through the centre of the lands from north to south.

- Zone: C1 Mixed Use
- Objective: To provide for and facilitate mixed residential and employment generating uses

Following a Notice of Motion (NOM) by Cllr. Sean Drew the subject lands zoning was changed from C1 Mixed Use, to D1 Tourism. The proposed road objective line remains on the zoning map albeit its indicative location has changed to reflect the location preferred by our client. Its explicit location is subject, in any event, to a planning application.

Aligned to the indicative link road location marking above, the Chief Executive agreed with our submission to the Draft Plan, that a written road objective would be preferable. Same was included in the material amendments for insertion at Section 7.0 of the Development Plan:

‘KEL OBJ XX – to promote and facilitate the delivering of a link road between the R163 and R147 at the Town parks, Zoned D1 Tourism, north of the Navan Road, in conjunction with a tourism related development. The specific location of the link road will be determined as part of any future planning application’. (Our emphasis)

The proposed objective was originally drafted in the Chief Executive’s report on submissions to the Draft Plan with reference to Zoned C1 Mixed Use lands. Due to the change arising from Cllr. Drew’s NOM, that reference was changed to “Zoned D1 Tourism”.

Submission – Remedy Sought:

1. Our client strongly objects to the proposed material amendment (No.4) to change the zoning of the site from “C1” to “D1”. We ask that the Members adopt the Plan without the material amendment.

2. We support the proposed link road objective connecting the R163 (north of the lands) with the R147 (south of the subject lands). This should be adopted with one minor modification. *This would include changing the reference to “Zoned D1 Tourism” to “Zoned C1 Mixed Use”.* This would be a minor modification to reflect a reversion back to the “C1” zoning if the Plan is adopted without the material amendment at item 1 above.

Justification

The subject site has several significant benefits which means this is a particularly appropriate location for mixed development under the C1 zoning:

- The site is located close to the town centre, within walking distance;
- Land uses to the site's north are predominantly residential with mainly commercial and community uses (schools) etc. to the south.
- It is an accessible site for the residential population to walk and cycle to;
- It is set in mature landscape;
- It is located close to the proposed road network associated with the “backlands”.
- The land has benefited from flood relief works which mean the entire site is now in the Zone C flood area.
- There was permission on the site for a 77-bedroom nursing home which only expired 6 months ago, so commercial development has been permitted on the site in the recent past.

The site's development for mixed uses much more fully accords with various proposed objectives of the Draft Development plan including: KEL POL 1 which states:

To continue to support the sustainable growth of Kells by encouraging high quality development in appropriate locations that enhances the built environment, meets the needs of all sections of the community, respects the heritage status of the town, and allows the town to fulfil its designation as an important employment and service centre in the north of the County.

We would also note some other major features of contemporaneous LIDL projects and LIDL as a core family food retailer in Ireland:

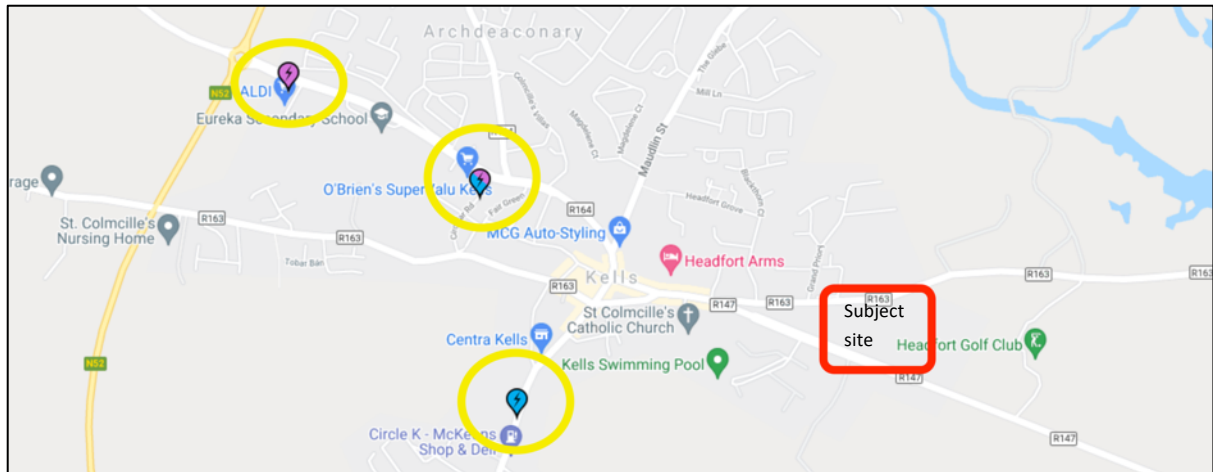
- LIDL support 225 local suppliers in Ireland with a yearly purchase value in the order of €1bn
- 100% of fresh beef, lamb, pork, chicken and duck is sourced in Ireland
- LIDL are members of the Bord Bia Origin Green food and drink sustainability program
- Plastic packaging will be reduced by 20% by 2022 (relative to 2018)
- 100% of own brand packaging will be widely recyclable by 2025
- 50% of own brand packaging will be made with recycled materials by 2025

- Lidl is a long-time sponsor of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association and is the biggest sponsor of women's sport in Ireland. Reported on 8 February 2021 on the LGFA website Carla Rowe (all Ireland Winner and Dublin LGFA Player) said

“Since Lidl’s partnership with the LGFA began, we’ve seen a fantastic upsurge in terms of awareness and support for ladies’ football. This has been reflected in attendance at games and overall support from the public. I see it every day when I meet people and talk to young school kids, boys, and girls. There is an increased appreciation of the effort required to compete at a high level in our sport. There is no doubt in my mind that Lidl’s contribution to this has been immense”.

- All new stores are constructed not just to exceed the energy conservation requirements within the Building Regulations but are more closely aligned with the future energy standards that are proposed for 2030. In 2018, LIDL committed to adding photovoltaic solar panels of a significant scale to all new stores and major refurbishments and to purchase 100% of the remaining electricity required from renewable sources. LIDL are continuously enhancing the environmental performance of their stores and are in the process of developing a fully zero carbon store model that not only has zero carbon emissions in its operation but also addresses the carbon content of construction materials used.
- New LIDL stores have 20% of spaces allocated to high efficiency Electric Vehicle charging. This means in an average LIDL project there would be as many as 25 dedicated EV charging spaces. Also, the chargers provided will have higher output ratings meaning the person could charge an average BEV to 80% whilst doing a food shop. This makes LIDL a genuine early adopter of such technology. Their roll out plans are far ahead of other retailers.
- At the time of writing Zapmap.ie confirms Kells only has 2 x 50KWhr¹ chargers and 1 x 150KWhr charger. The balance of charging is 22KWhr which is regarded as a slow charging speed. The town has a total of 5 spaces allowing only 5 EV cars to charge at once. Moreover, the existing spaces are in the west of the town and not the east.

¹ KWhr is “Kilowatts per hour” and denotes the maximum speed a charging point can deliver. The higher the speed the faster an EV car battery can be recharged. A car with a 50KWhr battery capacity takes 1 hour to fully charge at a 50KWhr charging point or 20 minutes at a 150KWhr charging point.



- Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) sales have increased 55% in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the first quarter of 2020 (RTE News 9 April 2021)². EV ownership is projected to rise exponentially over the next 2-3 years for the following reasons: most “legacy” car makers are now producing dedicated EV models to rival Tesla; battery costs are reducing and thus EV car prices are falling; Benefit in Kind for EVs is now set at Zero %; Vehicle Registration Tax is 7%; Road tax is Euro 120 per annum; generally insurance costs are lower; SEAI grants of Euro5000 are available at purchase and petrol and diesel prices are rising. But importantly the range of many new models now sits in the 400-500km distance. **The LIDL project will help future proof Kells for the rapid uptake in EV’s.**
- LIDL is introducing other uses on many of their sites. There is a move toward including community facilities and office hubs with the increase in home-based working or decentralised working models. Co-location of these facilities with the shop creates sustainable synergies and in this case in a central town location, close to where people live and other services, so people can easily walk or cycle. Offices are not permitted under D1 but are permitted under C1.
- The above plan also indicates the imbalance in main food shopping in the town which is biased towards the west of the town (ALDI and Supervalu) with no reasonably scaled family food shopping serving the residential community in the east of Kells. The development of the subject lands would help balance the offer. Indeed, whilst ALDI is located well out of centre, the subject site is as close to the town centre area as the existing Supervalu on Circular Road.
- A new LIDL store on its own, without any other development formats would create 35 jobs with 80 construction jobs.
- LIDL’s project is non-speculative and deliverable shortly after the grant of planning permission.

² PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles) which also have a petrol or diesel engine increased by 142%.

No reasonable or justifiable basis for zoning the site “D1 Tourism”

In contrast to the positive reasons for zoning the site C1, the proposed tourism zoning has no tangible merit. When the motion to rezone the lands to Tourism was made there was no identified tourism project for the site.

The Tourism zoning on this site, in the east of the town is a glaring contradiction when read in the context of the wider Draft Development Plan. We submit it dilutes and conflicts with a key objective of the Draft Development Plan which has already benefitted from tacit adoption namely Kel Obj 9:

To facilitate the Identification and development of an appropriate type and scaled tourism offer/experience to the west of the town on the open space and tourism zoned lands, that respects and complements the heritage of the town. KEL OBJ 10 To support and facilitate complementary uses such as retail and leisure to locate adjacent to tourist attractions. KEL OBJ 11 To require high quality design along the frontage of enterprise and employment lands where they interface with the main road from Navan entering Kells via Headfort Place. (Our emphasis)

This is the key tourism project, objective in the Draft Development Plan for Kells. The Council members proposal to now also zone Tourism lands to the east of the town directly contradicts objective Kel Obj 9.

There is no explanation or justification for the proposed zoning amendment to Tourism. In fact, we argue that the amendment places the above objective at risk and at the very least dilutes its potential to realise the delivery of a project in the west, if our client's land is zoned in a manner that potentially creates the basis for a rival project to the east.

It is clear there has been a good deal of forethought given to the germination and adoption of Kel Obj 9, unlike the proposed material amendment which lacks any consideration for the reality of delivering a tourism product; what that product might be; why it is needed; the cost of delivering it; who will deliver it; the environmental impact of such a project on the surrounding roads and junctions, flora and fauna etc. None of this information is available to the Members as a basis for adopting this amendment into the final Plan.

We consider there can be no rational basis, that accords with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, on which to adopt the Development Plan with the proposed D1 zoning.

Moreover, the Members appear to have given little thought as to the costs of or who will deliver the link road which itself is an objective of the Draft Development Plan.

Link Road Objective

The Link Road through the site that would join the Headfort Road to the Navan Road is substantial, costly and a much needed piece of road infrastructure. For absolute clarity LIDL would fund and build the link road themselves as part of a mixed retail project.

The link road is a substantial cost. CQS Group (Chartered Quantity Surveyors) have costed the works which take account of the standards applied by Meath County Council (including junctions, traffic lights etc.). CQS estimates the cost of building the link road excluding all other work on the wider site at:

- **Euro 1,117,100 Excluding VAT. (1.117 million Euros ex. VAT)**

These costs are present day and do not take account of inflation up to point of construction. They assume the link road would be constructed at the same time as wider development on the subject lands thus benefiting from economies of scale. In other words, the costs could increase further.

The link road objective is an objective of the current Development Plan 2013-2019. So, it has remained "on the books" not having been delivered, for close to 10 years. **We are quite certain that without a non-speculative, commercial, retail project on a site benefiting from a C1 zoning, the link road will remain undelivered for the term of the new Development Plan, if the Tourism zoning is adopted.**

Why is the link road important?

- The link road allows the closure of certain movements at the forked junction to the west and removes the current southbound 'rat-run' through the Old Court House roadway to avoid the fork if coming from Headfort Road east to the Navan Road/schools.
- alignment for a signal crossroads simplifies movements across the R147 instead of having staggered movements between the two side roads with double turning movements
- crossroads alignment with Toucan provision also resolves complex pedestrian and cyclist movements (including school kids) caused by staggered arrangement if the junction is located per Draft CDP.
- alignment as a crossroads at western end of site is at a point on R147 where carriageway road is already widened for the existing RTL into Jim Brunnock Rd so easier to form the opposing RTL from R147 into link road.
- there is zoning for residential at north end of Grand Priory which could allow for future cycle and pedestrian permeability through from the estates in northwest part of the town on both sides of Maudlin Rd. This means that school students can avoid the congested Main Street/Market St area where there are a number of crossings and heavy turning traffic movements to negotiate and is not conducive to school students cycling due to the current on-street parking activity.

Concluding Comments

Adopting the Plan without the change in zoning to D1 Tourism will have a series of major benefits:

1. It will attract private sector investment to the town which is non-speculative
2. It will lead to the creation of full-time employment for many people

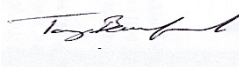
3. It will assist in the realisation of a much-needed link road the costs to be borne by the developer.
4. Zoning the site C1 will avoid potential conflicts with the desired tourism project in the west of the town
5. It will balance the provision of family food shopping which is presently bias toward the west of the town.
6. It is a central, walkable location close to the town centre.
7. It is a highly sustainable location
8. The owner can deliver a new hub for EV charging significantly enhancing the town's charging offer

Remedy Sought – Material Amendment No.4

1. Our client strongly objects to the proposed material amendment (No.4) to change the zoning of the site from “C1” to “D1”. We ask that the Members adopt the Plan without the material amendment. This would mean the proposed C1 zoning would be adopted.
2. We support the proposed link road objective connecting the R163 (north of the lands) with the R147 (south of the subject lands). This should be adopted with one minor modification. *This would include changing the reference to “Zoned D1 Tourism” to “Zoned C1 Mixed Use”*. This would be a minor modification to reflect a reversion back to the “C1” zoning if the Plan is adopted without the material amendment at item 1 above.

We trust this is in order.

Yours faithfully



Tony Bamford
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