

Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 - Material Amendment No 7

To: Planning Department, Meath County Council, Buvinda House, Dublin Road, Navan, Co. Meath C15 Y291.

By (name): Owen Downing

of (address): [REDACTED]

This submission stems from my interest in the provision of adequate green space for the recreation and enjoyment of the population of Ashbourne. The health and social benefits flowing from the availability of such facilities are well-documented in the academic and practitioner literature.

On January 21 last 32 Meath County Councillors unanimously voted to zone 80 acres of Killelland Farm as Open Space for the provision of a Community Park. I understand from the Chief Executive's response in her report of 19 April that some MCC Execs consider this excessive (15-20 acres has been mentioned in various public forums) and seek to postpone the decision on park size until later (the LAP stage), when the Councillors' influence may be less final. This can only give comfort to opponents of the Community Park and signs are that it already has.

I ask that the County Development Plan 2021-2027 incorporate an unequivocal commitment to a Community Park of at least 80 acres. In support of this I contend that:

- On 21 Jan, 80 acres minimum was the outcome of the democratic process.
- Based on Ashbourne's population alone, all the research on Health and Wellness benefits supports an 80-acre minimum. Some examples:
 - The Future Analytics report, commissioned by Playspaces Network, recommends 33.4 ha (80 acres).
 - The World Health organization parameters give a recommendation of 160 acres.
 - The formula in Dublin City Council's Parks Strategy would recommend between 90 and 130 acres.
 - The Fields in Trust (UK – used by >75% of Local Authorities) standard (6 acres per 1000 pop. comes out at 90 acres plus. All of the above assumes the Park serves a population of 15,000.
- In reality, the Park will be serving a far wider catchment area than just Ashbourne (South-east Meath and indeed North-west Fingal), perhaps as many as 50k citizens all told.
- On the question of cost constraints, multiple alternative funding models are available but do not appear to have been considered. In any case, the timescale for the delivery of the Park can be 'flexed' to suit resource availability (People, Funds, Benevolent suppliers, etc).
- The Ashbourne Community has an excellent track record for delivering large projects.

The Community and Councillors of Ashbourne support the 80-acre minimum scale. They have marshalled and delivered extensive evidence supporting their case. Many challenges will emerge on the journey towards this great goal for Ashbourne. I sincerely ask that unity of purpose not be one of them. It is essential that we all, Community, Councillors and Executive, present a united front to those who may seek to frustrate this project. **Therefore, please ensure that the County Development Plan 2021-2027 be 100% clear in its unanimous support for the 80-acre minimum for the Community Park, the future heart and lungs of Ashbourne.**

Signed:

