

Name of Committee: Planning & Development Strategic Policy Committee

Name of Representative: Joan Campbell

Date of meeting; Monday 7th March 2016

The main item on the Agenda for Monday was the draft of the new County Development Plan, (“CDP”). *(Note; by law a CDP is supposed to set out an overall strategy for proper planning and sustainable development.)*

It was reported that the Council responded to a letter from the Department seeking information on the SAAO for the Sugar Loaf. There was no actual discussion on this issue; no mention of what information the Department sought or what the Council said in its response. *(SAAO is short for Special Area Amenity Order. Under Planning Law an area can be declared to be an area of special amenity if it is an area of outstanding natural beauty or has a special recreational value. The objective in making an SAAO is often to preserve or enhance the character of the area in question and to prevent or limit development in the area).*

The Council received about 1700 submissions from the public on the draft CDP. These included submissions in relation to the following:

- The Murrough;
- The “No-Fry Zone”; this is a reference to including a provision in the CDP which prohibits the siting of fast-food outlets within 400m of a school. There were about 200 submissions in favour of the prohibition and a handful against. Those opposed to the prohibition expressed the view that the owners/operators of such outlets are good employers.
- The Rocks in Kilcoole/Farrenkelly corner;
- Fitzwilliam Square in Wicklow town;
- Submissions from statutory bodies (or consultees), for example, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (“TII”). *(Note: Under Planning Law a planning authority is required to consult with providers of necessary infrastructure and services, for example, energy, telecommunications, public transport, roads, education, health and policing. The CDP should also take account of relevant policies or objectives of the Government or of any Minister of Government.)*
- Submissions from elected members or councillors

The Council is working its way through the various submissions and preparing a summary. The Manager will then issue a report in about mid-April. If the Manager recommends changes to the draft CDP as a result of the submissions the changes will have to be referred to the Environmental Consultants for their approval. The final CDP will probably be voted on at the main Council Meeting in June; at that meeting elected councillors will vote on the final contents of the CDP. Anyone interested in the CDP might like to consider attending that meeting.

(Note: under Planning Law the manager of a planning authority is obliged to prepare a report on submissions and give an opinion on the issues raised and state his recommendations.)

It was reported that there are significant conflicts between the growth strategy set out in the draft CDP and the priorities of the various providers of necessary infrastructure and services, for example the transport authorities and Irish Water and it is not clear how these differences can be reconciled.

The CDP expands Bray westwards but such expansion is not a priority for the transport authorities.

The elected members of the Council want the Luas to come to Fassaroe.

The transport authorities see the M11/N11 as a through route between Dublin and the south of the country; the CDP see the M11/N11 as a means of opening up lands in Wicklow for development.

The transport authorities have no strategy for West Wicklow; they are opposed to expansion of any town not connected by train to Bray or Wicklow.

Elected members see a need for a long term plan to bring light rail from Tallaght to Blessington. A Strip of land should be frozen now and designated as the route for future light rail.

There was mention of difficulties and uncertainties caused by the Government's decision to get rid of the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 ("NSS") before having something ready to replace the NSS. WCC understands that it is obliged to observe NSS guidelines until such time as they are replaced with something else. It is possible that if in the future the NSS is replaced by new regional plans it will be necessary to look again CDP and to do a new CDP at that stage. It will be difficult to de-zone land use if it turns out that the CDP is not consistent with whatever replaces the NSS.

(Note: The NSS aimed to achieve balanced regional development over the entire country of Ireland. Critics of the NSS felt it aimed to scatter development over too wide an area and ought instead to have concentrated on a smaller number of "Gateways" or "Hubs" for example Cork and Limerick).

Concern was expressed about how to get in money *"to keep the Council going"*. Rates from commercial occupants and businesses are a source of funding; therefore the Council wants to attract new businesses and jobs. Some think they do this by zoning land for development. They feel that business will be attracted if the county has new developments *"in turnkey condition"* and ready for occupation.

Members were pleased that there *"was a back-up of cars in Blacklion"* over the weekend to view and purchase *"off plans"* houses in the new Woods development. This is regarded as evidence of a need for more new starter-homes. Others expressed annoyance that *"Wicklow is reduced to housing"*; to being *"a garden or backyard for Dublin to play in"*.

Some elected members feel the IDA could do more to bring business to Wicklow. It was decided that;

- The IDA should be invited to give a presentation not to the Planning SPC but to the main Council Meeting.
- Since Meath seems to have problems similar to Wicklow maybe Wicklow's problems should be discussed in the Regional Assembly and support for Wicklow sought in the assembly.

- The Regional Assembly meets on the second Friday of the month. Minutes of those meetings will be circulated to the Planning SPC.

The No-Fry Zone

The discussion returned to the “No-Fry Zone”. There was a reference to correspondence with the Minister. Doubt was expressed about whether the wording inserted into the CDP to prohibit fast-food outlets and outlets selling food high in sugar near schools would be enforceable. At least one member at the meeting made his opposition to the prohibition very clear. In his view it is up to parents, not the State, to control what children eat.

*(Note; Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in June 2013 state (see page 32) that when drafting local area plans (“LAP”) Local Authorities should use the LAP to promote active and healthy lifestyles. One way to do this is to reduce the exposure of children to the promotion of foods that are high in fat, salt or sugar and this reduction in exposure can be achieved by “**ensuring that**” careful consideration is given to the appropriateness and or location of fast food outlets in the vicinity of schools and parks).*

Drones

One of the elected members is very concerned about the proliferation of drones. He regards them as an infringement of privacy. He would like the CDP to designate areas where Drones may be flown; the inference being that Drones should not be flown in areas not designated. This is a matter that came up for discussion at previous meetings.

Agenda

The Chairman stated that he would welcome suggestions for the agenda. Let us know if you want us to put something on the agenda.