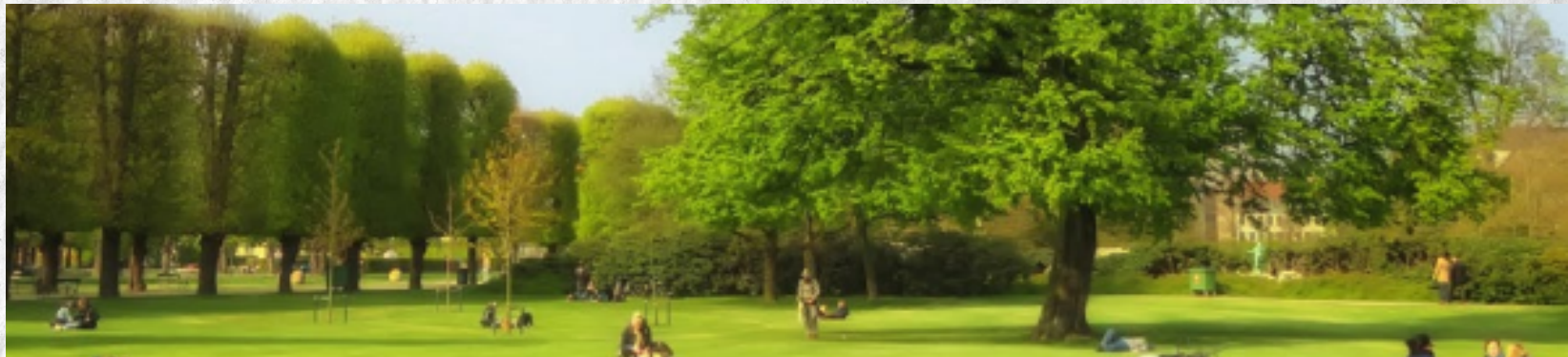


Issue 22/1

FRIENDS OF THE COMMUNITY PARK NEWLETTER



The Friends Newsletter is published periodically to keep the citizens of Ashbourne informed on how the park project is developing and to provide a forum for all to participate in the design and delivery of the park. It is published by the Greenspaces group, a community organisation set up in 2018 by the PPN Secretariat at the request of MCC Executive to promote the cause of a community park in Ashbourne.



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NEWS

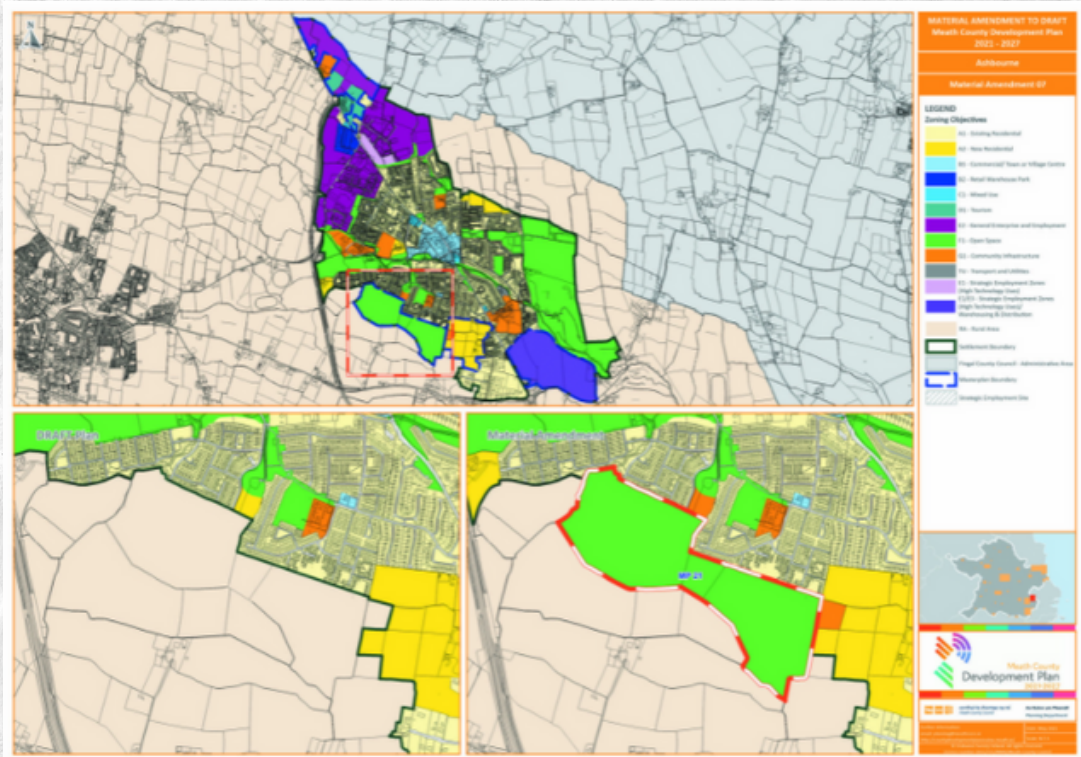
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JANUARY 2022

The new County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-27 came into force on November 3 2021, having been voted by the Councillors on September 22 2021.

The statutory intervening period is to permit interested parties to challenge the plan through the legal process.

Several legal challenges were indeed lodged, but happily none of these touches on the 80-acre zoning for the Community Park. So, the zoning for the park has been achieved. All that's left is to convert zoning to owning, design the park, and build it!!!



We'll be busy for a while!



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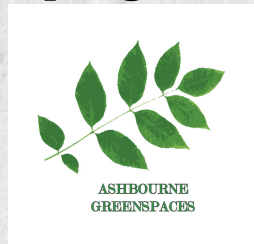
THE KILLEGLAND GRAVEYARD SITE - CONDITIONAL PLANNING GRANTED - RESIDENTS, COUNCILLORS AND GREENSPACES APPEAL TO AN BORD PLEANALA (ABP)

A separate but related issue is the status of the three-acre site between Killeglan Graveyard and the boundary of Killeglan farm, 150 metres to the south of the graveyard. A couple of decades ago, this was left to the Diocese of Meath (St Finian's Trust, Mullingar) by Ned Nulty, a local landowner who lived in Ned's cottage on Castle Street. It was zoned 'Residential' around 2007 and was

rezoned to 'Community Infrastructure' in the latest plan; it is considered that it would make the ideal spot for the principal entrance to the park. However, in Spring 2021 St Finian's Trust sold the land to a developer, who immediately applied for planning permission for 30-plus houses. Local residents and other interested parties made Submissions objecting on multiple grounds.

In the heel of the hunt, MCC granted conditional approval in late October. Local residents, some Councillors and Greenspaces have lodged appeals with An Bord Pleanála, and we await the outcome of their deliberations.

Greenspaces made an Observation to ABP proposing a land-swap which would leave all parties emerging as winners. We keep our fingers crossed.



NEXT UP
THE LOCAL AREA PLANNING (LAP) STAGE
...NO TIME TO LOSE....

The next stage on the planning front is the LAP. To put it in context, the County Development Plan (CDP) specifies the high-level plan for all of County Meath; the LAP is a more detailed version of the CDP, perhaps for a Municipal District or for a large urban area. The CDP is the 'Paramount Plan', and the degree to which the LAP can change decisions already embedded in the CDP is quite limited. Its value to the cause of the Park is that we can use the process to register a general (or even a detailed) statement of how the Ashbourne community intend to use the 80 acres, what features, functions and facilities we envision. Indeed, the Ministerial Guidelines for preparing a LAP (see link below) stress the importance of involving the community and other stakeholders in the process.

That puts the onus on the Ashbourne community to put our heads together and work towards a consensus on how the 80 acres should be used. The sooner we do that, the more influence we will have on the contents of the LAP and the eventual shape of the Park. Our experience with the CDP has shown that the Planners, the Executives, and the Councillors do listen, when the case is well made and backed by public support.

As for when the LAP process starts? Having spoken to the Planning Department, our best guess is that it will start in the second half of 2022, i.e., this year. That puts it up to us!!! The process is a microcosm of the CDP process, with ample opportunity for public consultation, but telescoped into a shorter time period.

NEXT UP THE LOCAL AREA PLANNING (LAP) STAGE ...continued

We continue to research the precise details of the LAP process and will update this item as we learn more. But one thing is sure, we have no time to waste if we wish to influence the initial draft and ultimately the final outcome.

Note: If you're of a legalistic frame of mind, or wish to dig deeper, you might consult:

- <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/30/enacted/en/html>
Planning & Development Act
- <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8f54f-local-area-plans-guidelines-for-planning-authorities-june-2013/> LAP Guidelines for Planning Authorities



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GETTING DOWN TO WORK WE NEED YOUR IDEAS

In February, Greenspaces will publish 'The Utopia Report - Draft'. This will be the starting point for a discussion on what features, functions and facilities the Park project could consider. As the title implies, it will not be short on ambition.

We stress it is only the start of the discussion, and at this point only a small group, less than twenty, have had an input to it. We want as many people as possible to have their say; we expect the list to expand significantly (although it's already quite large) before beginning the process of idea evaluation, ranking, prioritisation, then winnowing it down and 'cutting our cloth to suit our measure'.

This discussion and synthesis will take a few months and the draft Utopia report will advise on how everyone can participate, and how the assessment and selection will happen. The outcome of this exercise will be published as 'The Utopia Report - 2022'; we expect it will be at least as ambitious as the Draft!!! This report will then feed into the LAP consultation process and other discussions at many levels that will shape the Community Park in its formative years.



EDITOR'S COMMENTS

ASHBOURNE GREENSPACES HEREBY LAUNCH THE INAUGURAL ISSUE OF THE FRIENDS OF THE COMMUNITY PARK NEWSLETTER.

So, in years to come, you can tell your Grandchildren that you were on the mailing list for the very first issue!!!

Whether the grandchildren will be impressed or not will depend primarily on the determination and effort of the present adult population over the next few months and years (that's us all!!). MCC Executive and our Councillors have delivered a County Development Plan (CDP) that has zoned 80 acres of Killeglad Farm as Open Space for a Community Park; their continued involvement and support will be essential to taking the 'zoning' to the 'owning' stage and beyond. But for now it's largely over to us.

A Caveat: There is a general sense that, now that the zoning is achieved, the park will emerge in the fullness of time - 'sure all we need to do is prod our Councillors from time to time and be patient'. That is not the way it works; our experience to date is that public engagement (the Playspaces' Report, the thousands of submissions - over 2,700 in total) was critical in achieving the 80-acre zoning. If we now sit back and expect delivery to follow, we'll most likely end up with a 20-acre park at some future date.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

.....continued

WHEN THE COUNCILLORS VOTED IN JAN 2021 TO PROVISIONALLY ZONE THE 80 ACRES, GREENSPACES HEADLINED THE NEWS ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE:



We borrowed this headline from the speech of MCC Chief Executive, Jackie Maguire, delivered on Founder's Day 2020 at the Civic Centre in Ashbourne. It proved true in achieving the zoning, and we heartily believe it will do so in delivering the park.

That is why Greenspaces instituted Friends of the Park as soon as the new CDP came into force, and why we are now launching this Newsletter, to keep everyone informed and to provide a forum where all can engage and share ideas and views.

.....and remember: the Park that those Grandchildren enjoy will depend on all our efforts over the next few years. Let's make them proud of us!!!



This section will be the 'Letters' page. Use it to submit an idea, to seek like-minded persons to help develop an idea, to pose a question, to let off steam, whatever..... Don't use it to malign anybody or any body, rules of common courtesy apply and remember we're apolitical.

.....and if you feel inclined to lend a hand

We stress that the principal purpose in setting up Friends of the Community Park is to keep people informed and to act as a wellspring of public opinion and ideas; it is not intended to be a surreptitious recruitment channel. Most Friends will remain passively involved, and their involvement at that level of activity will be very valuable. That said, we know that many citizens will want to get more actively involved, and what better place to connect than through this Newsletter?

How much time will it take? That will depend on the role in which you wish to get involved. We can use people with an hour a week to spare, or with 5 or more hours. We'll need scores of volunteers as this project ramps up. We expect to build an organisation that will achieve performance levels on a par with a well-run business. This may seem a tall order but in reality, it is not. Many of the mature Community groups in the Ashbourne Munciple District compare with the best out there.



...and don't let the titles in the list below put you off. We'll need people from all walks of life, professional, specialist but many 'foot soldiers' as well.

We'll need volunteers with experience in the following disciplines:

1. Organizational development/Training
2. Financial planning and fund-raising
3. Risk management
4. Marketing and PR, social media and website maintenance/design/building and management
5. Planning (as in Land use planning) and Legal
6. Convenors who would form and lead special interest groups, e.g., dog lovers, gardeners, etc.
7. General administrative, Secretarial
8. Researchers, Librarians/archivists
9. Project management
10. General Foot-Soldiers

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If your particular calling does not feature in the above list, don't let that deter you. Anybody who believes in the Park, in the value of Community and who has a bit of time and energy can play a role in this historic undertaking, and will give you 'Boasting rights' in your old age!

....and if you know someone who you think might fit the bill, sound them out and point them at us. they can get in touch by enrolling in Friends of the Community Park or by emailing us at info@ashgreenspaces.com

That's all until next month. Let's hope our new freedom still reigns and that we all rediscover our health and energy as we ease into a beautiful Spring!!!!

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<https://www.facebook.com/AshbourneGreenspaces/>

Or view our website at <http://www.ashgreenspaces.com/>

