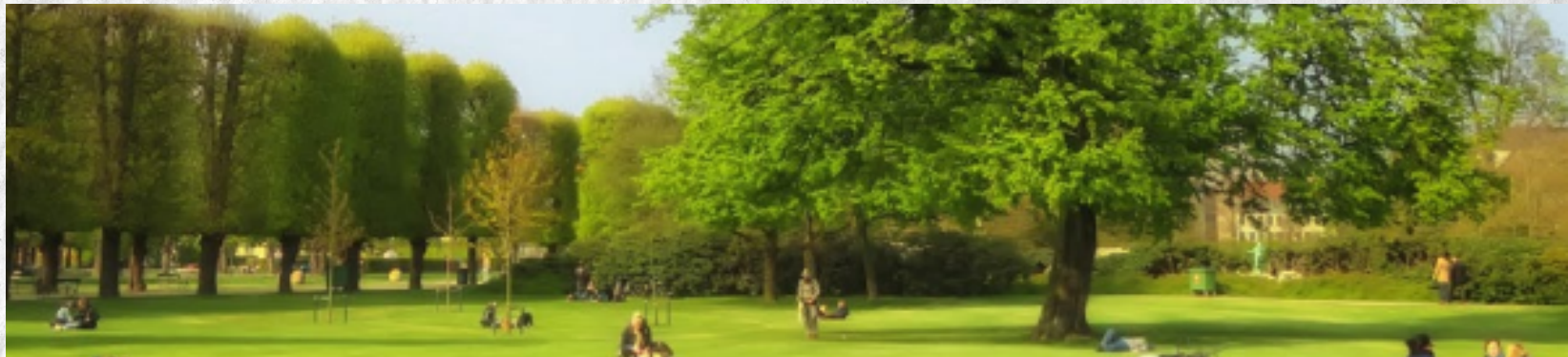


Issue 22/2

# FRIENDS OF THE COMMUNITY PARK NEWLETTER

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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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<http://www.ashgreenspaces.com/>



# THE NEWS

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## Greenspaces launch the Draft Utopia Report



In the January issue we promised a February launch of 'The Draft Utopia Report', the categorised list of ideas that have emerged so far, from a trawl of historic and current 'idea lists' relating to the park and for Ashbourne generally. So, the report will be launched on our website on Monday February 28. Get it by clicking here (but not until February 28).

<http://www.ashgreenspaces.com/>





We hope it will excite your imagination and get the creative juices going. You will find it a cornucopia of the mundane and the grand, the simple and the complex, the easily achieved and the spectacularly ambitious. Some might take weeks to implement, other will take decades. We have applied the rule 'no judgement until all ideas are in'; that is why you will find concepts that could be delivered for €100's and projects that might cost tens of €millions. We are firm believers in thinking both immediate and long-term, and some of these ideas, if they translate into projects, may not mature until

the 2040's. But this small group is the exception; the vast majority of these ideas would have relevance in the short or medium-term.

The ideas spring from many sources.

Some, (principally from the ADCC) first appeared on to-do lists in the 'noughties'. Their implementation was stopped in their tracks by the financial implosion of 2008 (remember that?). But good ideas will keep coming back, and these deserve a good dusting down and re-consideration. The preparations for Ash2020 threw up lots of good ideas that fell victim to the pandemic. Maybe now is their time?





In any case, we've included them on the list. More recent brainstorming has thrown up many new ideas, so our 'initial draft' can boast around 80 possibilities!!

We have categorised the suggestions accumulated so far across ten groupings and classified them along multiple dimensions, e.g., park or non-park; timeframe; investment called for; etc.

Here are the ten categories:

1. Amenities
2. Culture: Music, Art, Drama, etc.
3. History
4. Sports
5. Education
6. Health and Wellness
7. Environmental
8. Community Development
9. Social
10. Commercial.





All in all, as we said, at this stage we have about 80 ideas. But the process is only starting. Over the next three months, we look forward to receiving many more, both novel ideas and adaptations to or comments on those already on the list. Then we'll declare the search closed, all get into a huddle, and produce the evaluated and ranked list. This we'll feed as appropriate into the Local Area Plan (LAP) and later implementation plans as 'The Utopia Report - 2022'.



.....and those which don't make the final cut will nevertheless be archived for the possible attention of later generations.

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# Major new development at Cherry Lane

One of the largest housing developments in Ashbourne for many years is currently going through the planning process using the Strategic Housing Development (SHD) route. The intention is to build 694 units (418 houses and 276 apartments) on a site at Cherry Lane. This site is bounded by the R135 on the east, the land zoned for the community park on

the west, Alderbrook to the north, and The Briars on the south (see map). An SHD Application is one where planning permission is sought by a developer going directly to An Bord Pleanala (ABP), rather than by going through the Local Authority. It can only be used for large developments (> 100 units). The purpose of the Act was to fast-track housing development.







The SHD Act was discontinued last December, but those applications which 'got in before the closing date' will be processed. This development, on land zoned 'Residential' for some years now, got in before the closing date and is due to exit the Consultancy stage (the first stage) on 25 February.



Following that (exactly when we don't know, but probably fairly soon), the plan will go on public display and observations can be made.

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We hear that the plan as submitted to ABP ticks all the boxes in terms of density, local greenspace, a road to access the community park, provision for schools, social housing, etc. We look forward to confirming this when the planning application is made public. We should pay careful attention to this application until the final plan is agreed and thereafter. This will give rise to a 20% increase in Ashbourne's population over time and will and has the potential to impact the character of the Town, for better or for worse. Let's make sure it's the former.





# A THOUGHT..... PLANNING EXPERTISE IN GENERAL

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Over the past few years, and increasingly in recent months, pockets of 'planning familiarity', if not 'expertise', have developed in different areas in Ashbourne, among both the elected representatives and members of the public. Also, links to experts, both philanthropic and commercial, have been forged. These pockets are as fragmented as the issues that gave rise to them, e.g., Millbourne, Killeglad Graveyard, Tudor/Rathlodge, and also within groups such as Greenspaces, Playspaces, etc. In the general run of things, the learning from these incidents is lost as the issues get resolved and the lessons must be relearned from scratch when the next planning issue arises.

This loss of learning and constant re-learning is wasteful and keeps the public competence on planning at a relatively modest level. Is there a way of capturing these 'lessons learned' and sharing them with the next group who must fight 'the good fight'?

There's certainly a need for an engaged citizenry on matters to do with planning, as the sheer audacity of some of the recent issues illustrate.

Any ideas? Any Volunteers?



## EDITOR'S TOPIC OF THE MONTH.....

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**THIS MONTH'S CHOSEN TOPIC IS RISK MANAGEMENT WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON ITS APPLICATION TO COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AND COHESION.**

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In short, **Teamwork – Team Ashbourne.**

Projects on the scale of the Community Park will do well to apply some Risk Management techniques from the outset. If this is done well, there will be fewer 'curved balls' coming 'out of left field' (sorry!) as we proceed with the

project; those balls that do hit us will have been anticipated to some extent and the impact better absorbed. That is how Risk Management works and this is why Greenspaces are setting up a Risk Management team.

Unity does not come easily, particularly to large groups; it can be difficult to achieve common purpose when rivalries are part of the natural order



of things, e.g., in politics; in sports (where it is of the essence); new residents versus long-settled; the extent and location of social housing, etc. This is not made easier by the everyday clash of personalities that mark our individuality. Indeed, many of these rivalries are healthy and productive, though some are far from that.

There will be a small group of powerful interests who will seek to frustrate the park project, often but not solely for economic reasons. They will be small in number, well-resourced and well-coordinated. History shows that such groups almost always triumph over large groups with more modest resources. But usually, it's not the lack of resources that lose the day; rather it's the absence of a culture that values and nurtures Unity and Cohesion

So, over the next few months we'll craft a model of engagement of all parties connected to the park project, a model which will nurture and protect a culture of collaboration and a sense of common purpose. We don't expect this model to change the world; we do expect it will focus everyone on staying in a collaborative mindset, for the duration of this project and beyond.

Achieving a long-term vision for Ashbourne will call on a unity that embraces all 'Four Corners of the Public Square'. 1) community, 2) elected representatives, 3) business and 4) administration. All have and will have a role to play. The big challenge, the critical success factor, will be finding and nurturing the 'unity in diversity' (e pluribus unum) that allows great things to happen. that subsumes myriad interests into an over-arching goal - In this case: The Community Park and the Future of our Town.





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This section will be the 'Letters' page. Use it 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.

**That's all until next month. When next we talk, we'll be into the longer evening's and perhaps be a bit clearer on the plans for Cherry Lane. A Happy Founder's Day on March 4 and also St Patricks Day/weekend.**

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

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

