

*Bennettstown Residents,  
Bennettstown,  
Dunboyne  
Co Meath*

Care of 

24<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
Planning Department  
Meath County Council  
Buvinda House  
Dublin Road  
Navan  
County Meath  
C15 Y291  
[planning@meathcoco.ie](mailto:planning@meathcoco.ie)

**Re: Planning Application Ref 2360290 - Permission for Large-Scale Residential Development comprising 267 no. residential units and all associated ancillary / infrastructure works on lands principally located in Bennettstown (townland) to the south of the M3 Parkway park and ride and rail station, and also extending into Pace & Dunboyne (townlands), Dunboyne North, Co. Meath**

Dear Sirs,

We write to make known our objections in response to the above referenced planning application submitted to Meath County Council (MCC) for a *"Development consisting of: i) 267 no. residential units comprising 145 no. dwelling houses and 122 no. apartments/duplexes providing a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4-bed units. The dwelling houses range in height from 2-3 storeys. The apartments/duplexes are in 8 no. blocks (i.e. Blocks A-H, with Blocks B and C joined) ranging in height from 3 to 5 storeys; ii) a single storey creche; iii) modifications to the R157 regional road including changes to the existing carriageway/traffic lanes and the replacement of an existing roundabout with a new signalised junction; iv) a new signalised junction and link road (including new bridge over the River Tolka) connecting the R157 and the Old Navan Road; v) the provision of footpaths, cycle lanes and 2 no. pedestrian crossings on the existing M3 Parkway access road, vi) a foul pumping station and connection to the existing public sewerage system via the Old Navan Road; vii) a watermain connection to the north of the site at Pace (townland); viii) 3 no. ESB substation/kiosks and the undergrounding/re-routing of existing electricity lines; ix) reprofiling of land and relocation of existing berm adjoining the River Tolka as part of flood mitigation measures; and x) all associated ancillary development works including footpaths, cycle lanes, car and bicycle parking, drainage, public lighting, bin storage, boundary treatments and landscaping/amenity areas at this site measuring 14.17 hectares principally located in Bennettstown (townland) to the south of the M3 Parkway park and ride and rail station, and also extending into Pace & Dunboyne (townlands), Dunboyne North, Co. Meath. Access will be via 2 no. new vehicular access points along the new link road between the R157 and the Old Navan Road. Pedestrian access will also be provided on to the existing M3 Parkway access road"*.

Our objections principally concern the following matters which will be discussed in further detail in ensuing sections.

- A. Flood risk to existing dwellings
- B. Proposed link road to Old Navan Road
- C. Pedestrian connection to Dunboyne Village
- D. Combined environmental impact of this and future development
- E. Future maintenance / taking in charge

**A. Flood risk to existing dwellings**

The application seeks permission to make alterations to the existing proven flood defence barrier without regard for the impact this will have on residents on the Old Navan Road in Bennettstown. Following severe flooding in Dunboyne village and surrounding areas in late 2002 a berm was constructed by the OPW along the Eastern bank of the river Tolka as part of their River Tolka (Clonee and Dunboyne) Scheme. The berm which is directly in front of the houses on the Old Navan Road is our only line of defence against floodwaters from the Tolka affecting our houses.



*Aerial photograph facing South shows existing berm line (orange) holding back floodwaters 21/10/23*

Thankfully the measures put in place by the OPW (completed in 2008) have proven successful to date and the flooding experienced in 2002 has yet to be repeated

1. The proposed relocation of the berm line is such that it anticipates and allows for flooding to occur East



of the river Tolka. It seems the overriding purpose of this proposal is to allow a new previously unaffected area (highlighted yellow in adjacent image) to flood, thus preventing floodwaters following their natural course and extending into the subject site in a Westerly direction. If the floodwaters extend further into the subject lands this reduces the area upon which the developer could build safely and so the proposal to allow flooding East of the river is solely for commercial gain with no regard for the existing residents along the Old Navan Road.

2. The new large body of water will only be some 50m from our dwellings whereas the river is currently over 100m away. The proposal to move any body of water closer to our dwellings will most likely make them uninsurable due to the perceived increased risk. Insurers already consider Dunboyne in general as a high risk area with many new developments uninsured against flooding.

Our experience is that any property less than 100m from a river, stream or body of water is likely to be declined insurance. This is an untenable situation for existing Bennettstown residents and cannot be allowed to occur. Why should residents who have lived in these homes all their lives be placed at increased risk of flooding, a risk which they will be unable to insure against?

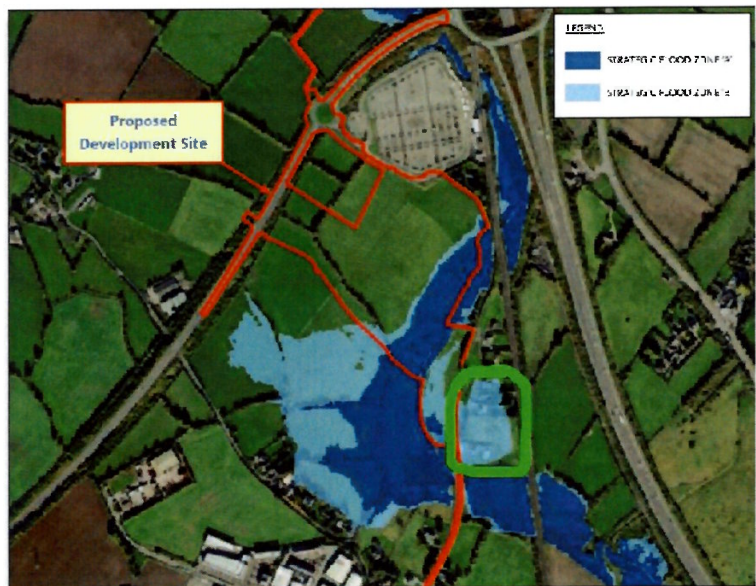
3. If the permission as submitted is granted the proven flood defence will be removed in large part. Notwithstanding the intention to replace this with a new berm in an alternate location there is no guarantee the new berm (construction or indeed location) will be successful. Furthermore, if permission is granted it may be well-nigh impossible to prevent the river flooding in an Easterly direction during the course of construction i.e. in any period where the existing proven flood defence measure has been removed but the new unproven berm has yet to be completed.





*Location of proposed housing development outlined in red. Proposed berm relocation will allow previously unaffected area outlined in yellow to flood*

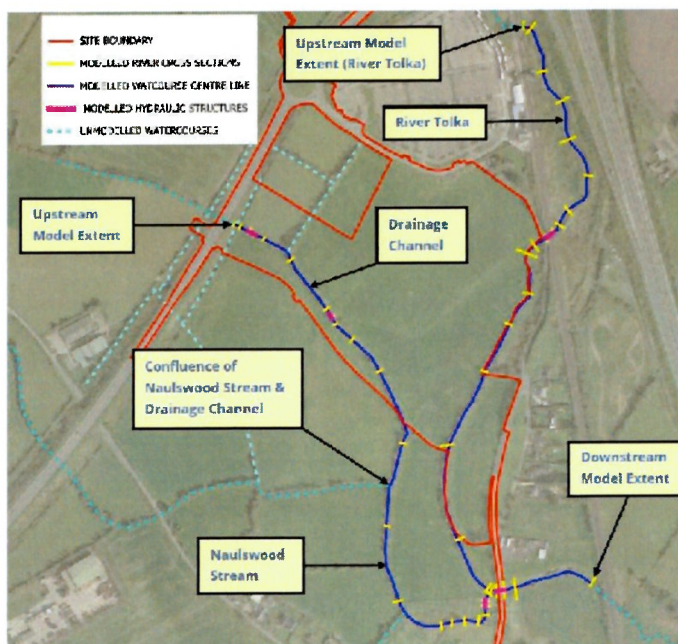
4. Meath County Council Online Strategic Flood Risk Assessment mapping portal clearly shows that a number of our existing houses East of the Tolka are already within Strategic Flood Zone B (those properties outlined in green opposite). This mapping was produced as part of the 2021-2027 Meath Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and does not account for waters from a local drainage channel and Naulswood Stream both of which hugely contribute to flood risk in this area. It is also important to note that this mapping (completed in 2019) cannot have taken account of the additional surface water which will be diverted to the Tolka as a result of the proposed development nor the further commercial development which this application directly facilitates. The purpose of the Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment included as part of the application is to demonstrate that the applicants have accounted for flood risk as part of their new scheme design and have kept proposed housing units away from areas destined to flood. What it does not consider is what we believe to be an inevitable increased risk of flooding to the existing houses in the locale as a direct result of the introduction of huge additional volumes of surface water which will emanate from the subject site during periods of heavy rain.
5. The accelerated impact of climate change in recent years cannot be denied and we contend that neither the Meath Co Co SFRA nor the Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment submitted as part of this application can have sufficiently accounted for the increased frequency nor severity of extreme weather events. No amount of desktop studies nor data analysis can contradict local knowledge of the area.



Flooding occurs to the extent of Strategic Flood Zone A regularly throughout the year and in fact after any period of sudden or prolonged rainfall. As the attached appendix of photographs taken in the immediate vicinity only 3 days ago (21/10/23) show it also occurs to the extents indicated as Strategic Flood Zone B several times a year and far more regularly than any 1% AEP (1 in 100 years) event as predicted in the risk assessment. Such is our concern that we have commissioned drone videography of the flooding over last weekend demonstrating the extent of flooding which occurred after a single day of continuous rain, by no means an exceptional or a 1 in 100 year weather event.

6. We note that the planning application includes for revision of an existing and provision of a new junction on the R157 road. This permission is therefore designed to accommodate the future commercial development of lands directly West of the applicant site (in line with Meath County Development Plan) however the Upstream Model Extent of the flood risk calculations do not factor in the effect of the future commercial development?

The cut off for upstream extent of survey is clearly shown in the adjacent image as being within or adjacent the subject site only – no account of additional surface water generated as a result of the future commercial development has been factored into the flood risk assessment. How can an application for planning incorporate access provisions to future development lands yet fail to account for the impact such future development will have on flood risk amongst other things? We contend the application is principally flawed as a result.



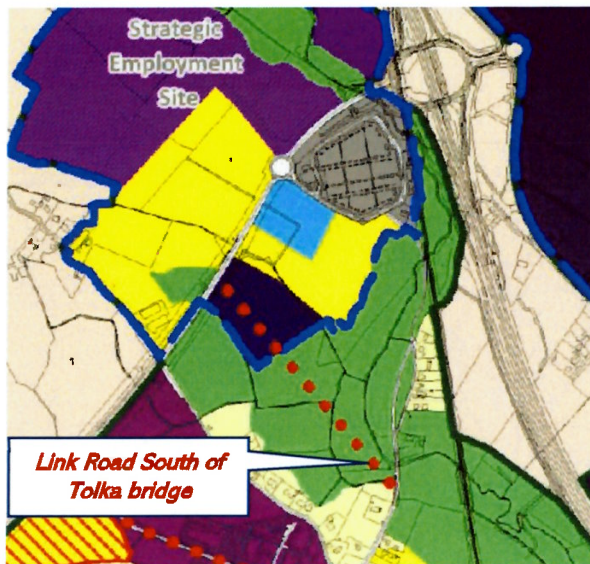
7. The introduction of a new and unprotected body of water in such close proximity to existing dwellings creates an immediate danger to those residents with small children for whom it would create an inquisitive attraction.

## B. Proposed link road to Old Navan Road

The application as submitted differs vastly from the plans which form part of the Dunboyne North Masterplan MP22 Version 1. We believe it differs to the extent that it no longer complies with the County Development Plan, in accordance with the Large Residential Development (LRD) legislation we contend such non-compliance is grounds for refusal of permission. Some of our key objections in this regard are as follows.

1. We acknowledge the Dunboyne North Masterplan MP22 always indicated creation of a link road through the subject lands onto the R157. Where this application strays from the master plan is in the proposed route of such a link road. The proposed link road was always indicated as connecting to the Old Navan Road South of the bridge over the Tolka from which point it would veer Westward before terminating at a T Junction on the R157. Below image extracted from the Meath County Development Plan 2021- 2027 Dunboyne/ Clonee/ Pace Sheet No: 13 (a) Land Use Zoning outlines this route as commencing South of the river as does Figure 2.4 from Atkins Traffic & Transport Assessment submitted as part of the subject planning application.

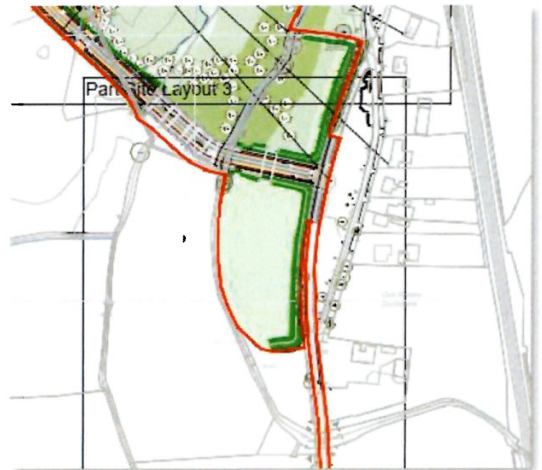




*Extract from ADOPTED Meath County Development Plan 2021- 2027 Dunboyne/ Clonee/ Pace Sheet No: 13 (a) Land Use Zoning*

This proposal would mean that the existing flood defence berm could remain intact safeguarding us from flooding. Furthermore this proposal would mean that any new bridge constructed over the Tolka could be designed to accommodate a proper pedestrian and cycle link to Dunboyne Village compliant with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS). The requirement for planning authorities to adhere to DMURS is clearly set out in Policy and Objective 4.1 of the recently published Sustainable and Compact Settlements - Guidelines for Planning Authorities. The subject planning application does not comply with DMURS (which requires that the needs of pedestrian, cyclists and public transport should be placed ahead of the private car) as no pedestrian / cycle link to Dunboyne Village is catered for and the existing Tolka bridge infrastructure is incapable of accommodating it.

2. In the subject planning application the newly proposed link road exiting the site and joining the Old Navan Road is now shown as terminating in a T-junction onto the existing road directly opposite the existing dwellings at Bennettstown. The image opposite shows the proposed road layout from North of the Tolka Bridge. This road location and layout is completely contrary to the layout as outlined in 1. above and raises a number of concerns such as (but not limited to) the following;



- The necessity for all traffic coming from the development to come to a complete stop at the junction before moving off again will create a far more significant level of traffic noise than would a continuous traffic flow on a road without such a junction.
- The introduction of such a junction will increase the risk of accident. The proposed road hierarchy is completely wrong in that the vehicular traffic from a maximum of 4 existing Bennettstown households is given priority over traffic from 267 households and that is before any through traffic volumes on the proposed link road are considered. Any proposed link road design should prioritise traffic from the new development with the houses on Old Navan Road at Bennettstown remaining in a Cul-de-sac.
- During the hours of darkness there will be constant light pollution from traffic at the proposed new T junction shining directly into the existing dwellings, a situation never previously encountered and bound to cause significant disturbance to residents given the expected traffic volumes, the elevation of the new bridge and
- Traffic unfamiliar with the new road layout runs a high risk of failing to stop at the newly introduced T junction with the consequence of crashing onto the locally maintained green space directly in front our houses. This would create a serious risk of injury again to local children and walkers who use this as a recreational area.

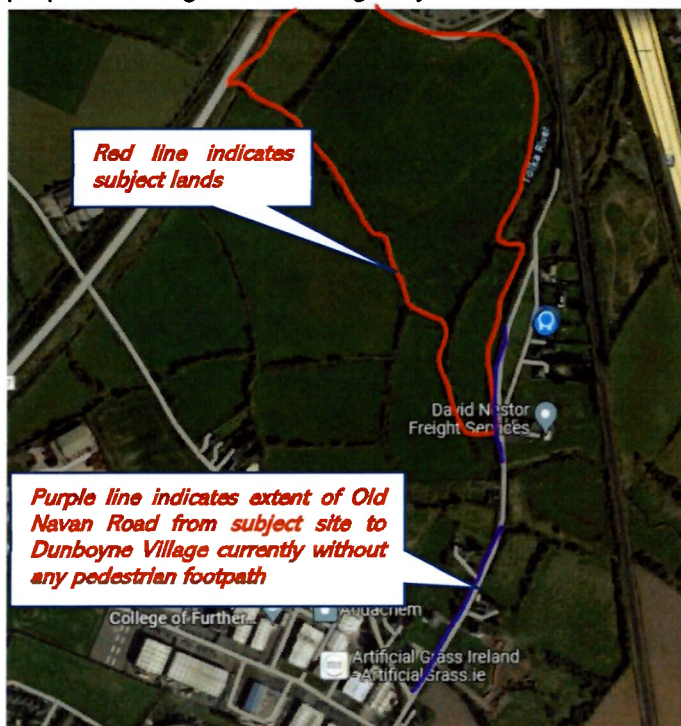
### **C. Pedestrian connection to Dunboyne Village**

The Dunboyne North Masterplan MP22 from October 2022 states “Any Planning Application for the development of the Dunboyne North lands should be aligned and consistent with this Masterplan”. We do not believe the proposed permission to be consistent with the masterplan with regard to prioritisation of pedestrian traffic amongst other things and our concerns are summarised as follows.

1. The current Old Navan Road is a Cul-de-sac of some 800m (extending from Kennedy Road to the last house on the public roadway). It ceased being a through road more than 15 years ago and currently serves a total of only 16 households. As a result it caters for minimal traffic and those residing there

from before it became a Cul-de-sac are thankful for that change. There are many children in these households who have never known it as anything other than a quiet road. Significant number of pedestrians, joggers, dog walkers, athletics and boxing clubs etc from Dunboyne Village use this Cul-de-sac as an amenity, a quiet and safe place to train, take a walk and so on. The reintroduction of traffic poses a serious risk to those who use this amenity and it will no longer be safe to walk this route due to traffic volumes.

2. There is no current pedestrian link between the houses at Bennettstown and Dunboyne Village. As is evidenced in the photograph opposite the footpaths on both sides of the Old Navan Road cease at the Kennedy Road junction and do not continue to Bennettstown from this point. With minimal traffic volumes on the Cul-de-sac from this point onwards the road width has decreased significantly in the last 15 years due to growth on the verges and a total lack of maintenance. The result is that this road is for all intents and purposes a single lane carriageway.



The lack of footpath means the road caters for pedestrian as well as vehicular traffic. To re-open this road to traffic without major improvements will put pedestrians at serious risk of injury / accident due to the lack of pedestrian footpaths.

3. The Dunboyne North Masterplan MP22 states *"The development of the Masterplan lands represents an opportunity to promote pedestrian and cycle links between Dunboyne town centre and the subject lands. The development of the Old Navan Road and the linear park along the Tolka River will create additional links to Dunboyne town centre, representing a sustainable and healthy option for future residents of the Masterplan lands wishing to travel to Dunboyne"*.

We contend that this application fails in this regard as it does not provide any pedestrian or cycle link between the proposed new development and Dunboyne Village. This is despite the fact the site boundary as indicated in the planning application includes the Old Navan Road as far as the Kennedy Road junction and as such is within the realm of the developer. If the development is to proceed surely provision must be made, in compliance with MP22, for cyclists and pedestrians to connect with Dunboyne Village in advance of works commencing. If these are not constructed existing residents of the Cul-de-sac will no longer be able to safely walk or cycle to the village once the road is open to through traffic into the subject lands and linking to R157.





The subject planning application displays disregard for planning guidelines in that the proposed new development indicates a new link road to the Old Navan Road (complete with dedicated cycle lanes and pedestrian footpaths) only for these to terminate at the proposed T-junction. This leaves a half kilometre stretch of road to Kennedy Road junction with barely sufficient provision for vehicular traffic and absolutely no provision for cyclists or pedestrians.

4. Per the Dunboyne North Masterplan any development of Masterplan Lands (of which the subject site forms part) should be a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). MP22 defines a TOD as *“one which provides the following standards:*
  1. *WALK: Develop neighbourhoods that promote walking*
  2. *CYCLE: Prioritize non-motorised transport networks”*

The proposed development fails to meet these standards in that no pedestrian nor cycle ways currently exist between the development and Dunboyne Village and more importantly no such routes even form part of the planning application.

The Atkins External Road Infrastructure Quality Audit & Road Safety Audit Stage 1 item 2.2.2 considers the abrupt discontinuity of the footpath at the proposed link road junction to the Old Navan Road to be a problem. The report states *“MCC are to design an active travel scheme for Old Navan Road to the Station”* however the complete lack of any pedestrian or cyclist connectivity from the proposed link road South towards Dunboyne Village is not even worthy of mention. How can any Infrastructure Quality Audit & Road Safety Audit fail to consider this glaring problem?



*View South to Dunboyne Village at Tolka Bridge*

5. Any new cycle / pedestrian link from the proposed development to Dunboyne Village will need to comply with DMURS and the National Transport Authorities Cycle Design Manual 2023. Based on these guidance documents we note that the existing bridge over the Tolka (as shown in photograph) is of insufficient width to accommodate a two lane carriageway, a cycle track (even of minimum permissible width) and a pedestrian footpath. The subject planning application does not indicate any proposal to overcome this issue nor does it indicate any intention to provide cycle or pedestrian connectivity to Dunboyne Village whatsoever. In this regard we believe it contravenes the Masterplan and should be considered non-compliant on that basis alone. As outlined in B.1. above if the link road is designed to connect South of this bridge there is opportunity to remedy the problem by constructing a new bridge capable of complying with DMURS.

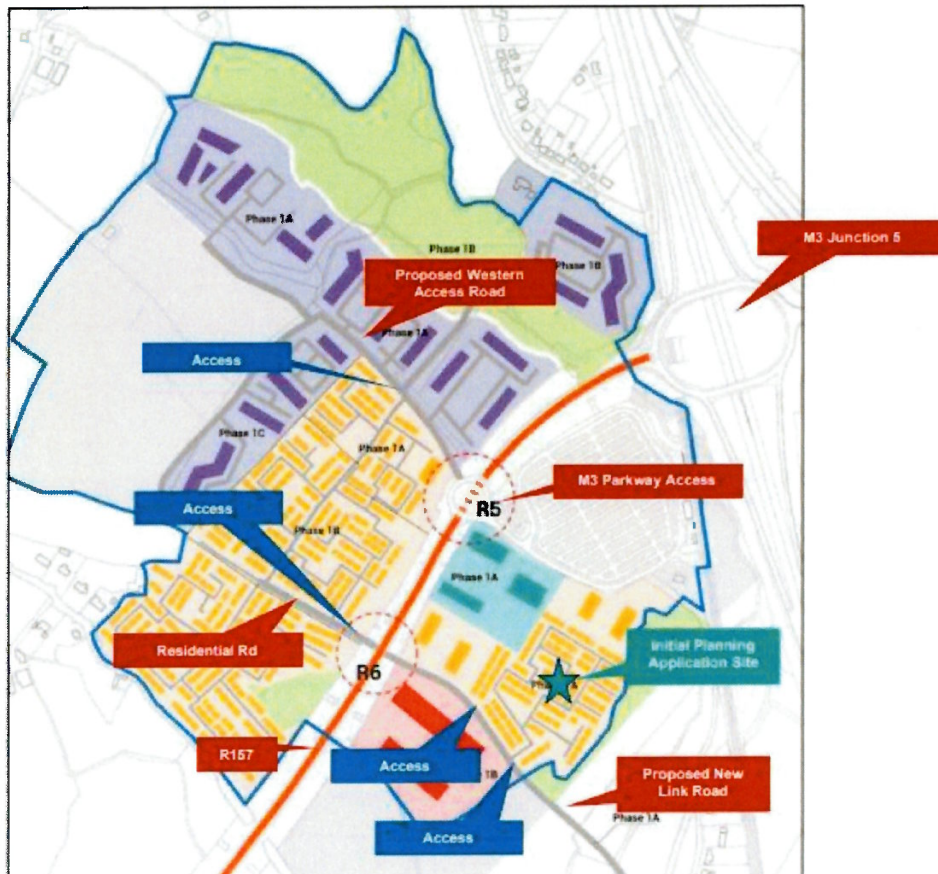
#### **D. Combined environmental impact of this and future development**

Having examined the extensive information on the applicant's dedicated website <https://bennetstown1lrd.ie> we did not find any Environmental Impact Assessment as part of the planning application. As noted in A.6. above this planning application makes provision for construction of a completely new junction onto the R157 as well as removal of an existing roundabout at M3 Parkway creating 2 new 4 way signalised junctions. These junctions service future development lands to North / West of the subject site (refer to Figure 2.1 from Atkins Traffic & Transport Assessment below) and as such the combined impact of that future development in conjunction with the subject development must be considered together.

The environmental and associated impacts of the subject development (Initial Planning Application Site as denoted below) cannot be considered on a standalone basis if part of this application facilitates the future works. Has a Combined Environmental Impact Assessment for the subject lands AND the future development lands been provided as part of this planning application?

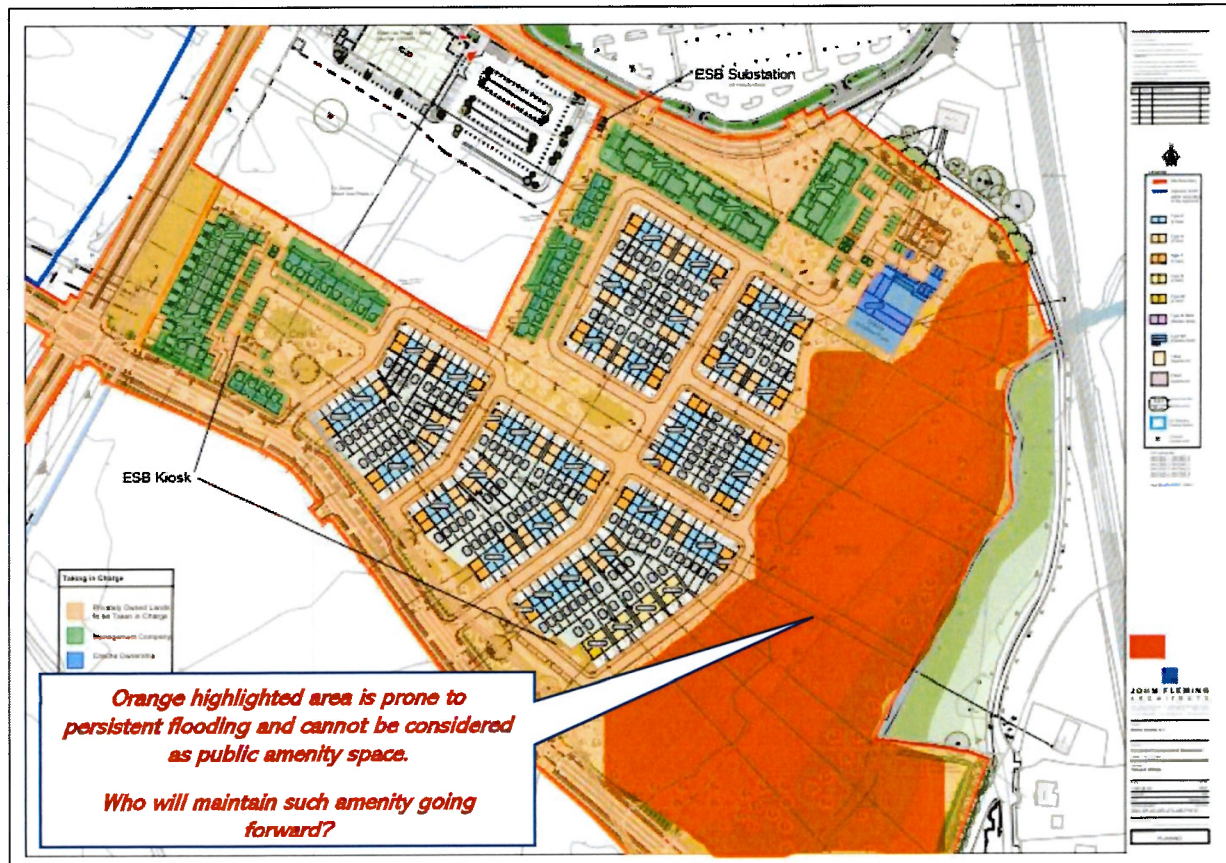


Figure 2-1 - Site Location and site access



#### E. Future Maintenance / taking in charge

We refer to John Fleming Architects "13. Taking in Charge" drawing submitted as part of the proposal. We note that a large area between the river Tolka and the residential units (highlighted orange per below extract) is





indicated as being taken in charge. As it is not down to be maintained / taken in charge by a management company can we conclude that the intention is for this large parcel of land to be taken in charge by Meath County Council? If this conclusion is correct, please advise the plan for upkeep, management and maintenance of this land as it is our understanding Meath County Council do not have any Parks / Public Space Maintenance department?

Furthermore in all the applicant's submitted information the areas in question are shown to contain hard and soft landscaping, access walkways, planting, trees etc and are undoubtedly intended to fulfil the necessary planning requirements for public amenity space. How can this space be considered as qualifying as a public amenity for the development when it is clearly documented (not only in the applicant's supporting information but by reference to appendix photographs also) as being within a regularly flooded zone. This amenity will not be accessible for long periods after any spell of rain nor will it be safe for use by residents of the new development.

### Conclusion

We acknowledge the Meath County Development Plan and the desire for residential and commercial development in the Masterplan Lands. Notwithstanding this we feel that the subject application falls short of meeting the requirements and objectives of this plan in a number of key areas outlined above. We believe we have adequately outlined these deficiencies and as such request that this planning application be denied at this point.

We further acknowledge that we cannot impede progress particularly in light of the immediate housing shortages in the county and country generally. We believe that by properly considering our genuine concerns with regard to this proposed development the application can be suitably amended to either fully address or significantly alleviate these apprehensions resulting in a development satisfying the needs of Meath County Council, the developers and in turn ourselves.

Yours faithfully

\_\_\_\_\_  
Peter Moran  
[petermoran06@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:petermoran06@yahoo.co.uk)  
087 930 4072  
On behalf of the below Bennettstown residents

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APPENDIX 1 – Supporting photographs (taken 21/10/23)



Tolka in foreground, flooding extending into subject lands West of Tolka River



Existing flood berm providing protection to homes on Old Navan Road at Bennetts town





River Tolka at bridge over Old Navan Road



Extensive flooding in subject lands West of Tolka Bridge and also East with M3 Parkway railway in background





View South along Old Navan Road to Dunboyne from directly over subject lands



View North along Tolka river (flooding into subject lands) with M3 Parkway in background