



Forward Planning Section,  
Offaly County Council,  
Áras an Chontae,  
Charleville Road,  
Tullamore,  
County Offaly

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2023

**Re: Draft Edenderry Local Area Plan 2023-2029**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of notification of the above draft LAP. The Department of Education has examined the contents therein and would like to make the following submission.

In the context of future population trends and their potential impact on school place requirements, the Department notes that this draft LAP refers to the population growth identified for Edenderry in the recent draft CDP 2021-2027. In the context of the Core Strategy of the draft CDP, Table 2.1.7 estimates that the population of the county will grow to 87,200 by 2027. It is also noted that the 2031 NPF/RSES target for County Offaly is 90,000. This would see a further increase in population by cc 2,800 between 2027 and 2031. It is reasonable to assume that a proportion of the potential increase to 2031 will be applied to Edenderry. In 5.2 Compliance with Core Strategy of the Draft LAP it is anticipated that Edenderry will have a population growth of 721 persons above the 2016 Census population of 7,359. The Department considered this data and made its submission to the draft CDP 2021-2027 regarding Edenderry on the basis of potential population growth within the town and its environs between 2021 and 2031. In that submission, the Department stated the following:

*This Department has not identified the requirement for school site reservations at any other settlement at this time, however school accommodation requirements across the county will continue to be kept under review.*

This remains the Department's position at this time. There are 7 schools (five primary and two post-primary) located in Edenderry town. The Department's preference would be to expand these existing facilities (if possible) should there be a requirement for additional school places as a result of the planned population increases. At post-primary level, the Department anticipates that a relatively modest potential increase in school place requirements would be capable of being met at the existing school facilities (or expansion thereof). The Department requests the Planning Authority to examine the potential of protecting a land buffer around each of the five primary schools to enable them expand further if required to meet the future population growth in Edenderry town. The schools in question are:

- Edenderry NS 15638K



- Gaelscoil Édan Doire 20332N
- Scoil Bhríde 20267F
- St Patrick's National School 18364O
- Edenderry Convent NS 16013V

Also, it is noted in Table 7.2 Assessment of Future Demand & Requirements that it states *“projected population increases will require new Primary or Post primary school sites for expansion within Plan Period”*. That statement could be interpreted to mean that new schools are required due to population growth. Of course, it is possible that expansion of existing schools could require moving to new locations and therefore, it is equally true that the statement in Table 7.2. is trying to reflect that possibility. Nevertheless, the Department requests that the Council amend the wording to reflect its opinion that any potential increase in school place requirements both at primary and post-primary level would be capable of being met at the existing school facilities (or expansion thereof), whilst understanding that the expansion of any school facility might best be served by relocation to a new site.

The Department notes and supports 7.5 Community Policies CP-02 to support and facilitate improvements to existing primary and post-primary schools if necessary to facilitate increased population including the influx of refugees in the short-medium term.

The Department notes and supports 7.5 Community Policies CP-09 to continue to work with the DoES, LOETB, and other training providers in assisting with the delivery of educational requirements in Edenderry during the lifetime of the Edenderry LAP.

The Department acknowledges Table 10.2: Site Appraisals to zone the sites in Monasteroris west of Gaelscoil Éadan Doire and Scoil Bhríde Primary School as Community Services/Facilities to allow for expansion of existing schools and safeguard land for new schools to potentially locate into the future.

The Department notes and supports 11.4.8 Community Services/Facilities Land Use Zoning Objective 09 to provide necessary community, social, health, public administration and educational services and facilities.

The Department notes that section 1.2.4 of the Edenderry Local Area Transport Plan indicates that *“A new Oaklands College campus is planned in the near future, to cater for approximately 1,000 pupils. The LOETB has selected and purchased a site for same, which is highlighted on the map included in Appendix A”*. The site in question is identified in the plan's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment report as “FR1”. The site lies in Flood Zone B and therefore is subject to a justification test. The Department notes that the viability and appropriateness of a school campus at this site is subject to the outcome of a Specific Flood Risk Assessment of the area as outlined in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment report. In this regard, the Department requests that the completion of the Justification test take place as soon as possible.



The Department notes that land in the north east of the town, which was previously zoned Public/Community/Educational in the 2017-2023 Local Area Plan has now changed. The Department is not aware of the rationale for this change and therefore, it would be premature at this stage to request a reversal of this zoning. Nevertheless, the Department is mindful of the need to have adequate and appropriately zoned land for potential use by existing or new schools if such land is required and acknowledges the Council's support in this matter as identified in community policies CP-01, CP-02, CP-09 and community objective CO-03.

The Department notes 4.3 Walking Infrastructure Proposals WP1 to improve pedestrian access along School Lane from St. Mary's Road and the consideration of either land acquisition from St. Mary's Primary School or alternatively one-way system along School Lane anticipated.

The Department supports the development of sustainable travel links between schools and residential areas and the promotion of enhanced connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists within Edenderry in order to improve access to the town centre, local schools, residential areas, recreational facilities, public transport services and other amenities as per SEA Environmental Report CIP-01.

In terms of assessing current and future capacity, the Department of Education has to be mindful of potential unforeseen circumstances such as the Ukrainian crisis, which have the ability to put undue pressure on school place provision and could necessitate reassessments of school place provision from time to time. The Department will engage with the Council where the findings of an assessment require a review of existing or future school site provision within a specific location. The Department also anticipates that additional Special Education Needs provision at both Primary and Post Primary level will be required in the future throughout the country and this may result in schools requiring additional accommodation to meet this growing need. The Department will consult with the Council if and when additional SEN accommodation is required within specific locations.

Finally, the Department welcomes the continued engagement with the Council regarding the development of both new and existing schools, as appropriate, and emphasizes the critical importance of the ongoing work of the Council in ensuring sufficient land is zoned for this purpose.

Yours sincerely,

  
Mairead Garry  
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Forward Planning Section

