

**Kells Development Plan Review,
Forward Planning Section,
Meath County Council Planning and Community Department,
Abbey Road,
Navan,
County Meath.**

29th November 2011

Re: Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 – Strategic Issues Paper

Dear Madam/ Sir,

The National Transport Authority (“the Authority”) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 – Strategic Issues Paper.

Section 31B(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000¹ assigns the Authority certain functions in the preparation of a development plan. Where a notice is received by the Authority under section 11(2) it is required to prepare and submit to the relevant planning authority a report on the issues which, in its opinion, should be considered by the planning authority in the review of its existing development plan and the preparation of a new development plan.

Among other issues, such reports should address the following issues,

- (a) the transport investment priorities for the period of the development plan,*
- (b) the scope, if any, to maximise the performance of the transport system by effective land use planning,*
- (c) recommendations regarding the optimal use, location, pattern and density of new development taking account of its transport strategy, and*
- (d) recommendations on the matters to be addressed in the development plan to ensure the effective integration of transport and land use planning.*

¹ As inserted by Section 95 of the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008

General Comment

Infrastructure

Comment

The Authority has published a Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and the consultation process for the Draft Transport Strategy is complete. The final document has been submitted to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport for approval. The Authority has no plans for major transport projects for Kells and its environs for the 2013-2019 period. However, the Authority will continue to invest in the upgrade of the pedestrian, cycle and bus infrastructure in Kells on a case by case basis.

Recommendation

To facilitate the implementation of projects, it is recommended that pedestrian, cycle, bus and road infrastructure is identified, prioritised and phased in the Kells Development Plan to ensure that future transport investment is directed to appropriate areas. The Authority is willing to assist Meath County Council/ Kells Town Council in this process.

Land Use Planning Issues

Comment

The Issues Paper states there is a c.85 hectare of undeveloped and uncommitted zoned land which has the potential to accommodate residential development. The Authority notes that this amount of residential zoned land is well in excess of the allocation of housing in the proposed variation no. 12 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 and what is likely to be allocated in the 2013-2019 period.

Recommendation

To be consistent with the Draft Transport Strategy, it is recommended that a sequential approach to the development of residential zoned land is adopted in the Development Plan whereby residential zoned lands closest to the town centre/public transport is prioritised for development. This may involve a significant reduction of zoned residential land and/or that existing residential zoned land is subjected to an order of priority for their release for development.

Measures LU1, LU2, LU3 and LU4 of the draft Transport Strategy outline land use measures that should be considered when preparing the Kells Development Plan. In particular, the Development Plan would be strengthened by taking account of the following principles/measures:

- Local services such as convenience stores, doctors' surgeries and schools should be located and provided in a manner which ensures that access for the local community by walking and cycling is direct, safe and convenient;
- All development areas should provide for internal permeability for walking and cycling;

- The design of new developments should incorporate new walking and cycling routes, or exploit existing direct routes, to social and commercial facilities in the central areas of Kells;
- Parking, where required, should be located and designed in such a manner that it does not dominate the streetscape and does not compromise walking, cycling and public transport;
- The provision for the delivery of goods and services should be considered in the design of new and existing development, to improve efficiency and minimise impact on the local community in Kells, and the built and natural environment;
- Severance within local catchments, particularly on key access routes, should be avoided as far as practicable; and
- A mix of dwelling types should be provided to facilitate and encourage mixed residential communities.

Transport planning for Kells town and environs is an integral part of the preparation of the Kells Development Plan. As part of this process, it is recommended that the Development Plan is prepared in consultation with the Authority and addresses, inter alia, the implementation of the following relevant measures contained in the Strategy.

1. Traffic Management Measures/ Roads Issues

Comment

The M3/N52 bypass of Kells town centre is now complete which means that through traffic can bypass the town. This facilitates the implementation of traffic management measures which could address safety issues and facilitate more sustainable transport provision within Kells and in its environs. It could also facilitate, in line with measure FRT2 of the draft Transport Strategy, the potential of introducing a heavy goods vehicle (HGV) management system for the town of Kells.

It is stated in the Issues Paper that *“an alignment of the road identified in the existing Development Plan, which would link the former N52 road at Maudlin Bridge to the Headford Road, has been confirmed and agreed with both Local Authorities. This alignment shall be contained in the new Kells Development Plan”*. As the town has been largely bypassed through the M3/N52 routes, the Authority does not consider this proposed road link to be a high priority from a transport perspective.

Recommendations

The Authority recommends that a major focus of the Kells Development Plan should be on managing traffic, addressing safety issues and facilitating more sustainable transport provision within Kells and in its environs.

The Authority recommends that a system of HGV controls/ restrictions would be considered for Kells town centre.

It is recommended that all new road proposals should be assessed against Measure ROAD 1 of the Draft Transport Strategy.

2. Walking Measures

Comment

Increasing the share of people travelling on foot and by bicycle supports the objectives of the Draft Transport Strategy and the success of the Strategy is fundamentally dependent on achieving an increase in such movement. There is significant potential to increase the mode share for walking and cycling in Kells, given the provision of the M3/N52 bypass and the potential to introduce cycle/pedestrian friendly traffic management measures within Kells.

Recommendation

In relation to walking measures, the Authority recommends the following measures from the Draft Transport Plan to be considered for inclusion in the Kells Development Plan:

- the inclusion in of policies and specific measures to support walking and improvements to walking facilities (WCY8);
- restrictions on general motorised traffic travelling through the heart Kells, by diverting through traffic onto suitable alternative routes, whilst permitting through movement for public service vehicles (WCY1);
- the retention of access for town centre deliveries and visitor car parking in appropriate locations and at appropriate times (WCY1);
- reductions in traffic speeds in town centres (WCY2);
- reconfigurations to street space including widening of footpaths and rationalisation of street furniture, poles and signs, and removal of redundant poles, signs or other clutter in Kells and its approaches (WCY3);
- the design of new residential areas to provide a safe and pleasant movement environment for pedestrians and cyclists, including suitable lighting, with residential frontages overlooking routes, and provision of appropriate landscaping and streetscaping features along routes (WCY4);
- the provision of adequately lit footpaths on both sides of roads and streets in built up areas, except in exceptional circumstances (WCY5);
- the widening of existing footpaths, where these are too narrow to comfortably and safely cater for users (WCY5);
- the maintenance of footpaths to a good standard, and where appropriate the upgrade of footpath surfaces with higher quality materials (WCY5);
- audits of existing footpaths, identifying existing constraints and barriers to pedestrian movement such as redundant poles, signage, guardrails or telephone kiosks followed by removal or relocation of barriers or clutter where appropriate, whilst taking account of signage requirements (WCY5);
- the provision of tactile paving and the raising of carriageways or lowering of kerbs at pedestrian crossing points and the provision of audible signals at controlled crossing points, where appropriate (WCY6);
- revisions in junction layouts where appropriate, to reduce pedestrian crossing distances, provide more direct pedestrian routes and reduce the speed of turning traffic;

- the provision of zebra crossing points or pedestrian signals on all junction arms, at junctions where it is likely to be beneficial to pedestrian safety or convenience, starting with junctions on major roads and with higher pedestrian numbers;
- the adjusting of traffic signal controls where appropriate to reduce the wait time for pedestrians in Kells town centre and environs;
- additional pedestrian crossing points away from junctions, with greater use of zebra crossing facilities or rapid response pedestrian signal facilities;
- provision of wheelchair and buggy friendly pedestrian islands where islands are provided at crossing points.

3. Cycling Measures

Comment

See comment under walking measures.

Recommendation

In relation to cycling measures, the Authority recommends the following measures from the Draft Transport Plan to be considered for inclusion in the Kells Development Plan:

- Measures to improve the cycling environment in Kells and its inner approaches before other areas of the network (WCY11);
- improving cyclist priority and safety at junctions (WCY12);
- providing high quality segregated cycle lanes, or off road cycle tracks, where speeds or volumes of traffic remain high (WCY12);
- providing more direct routes for cyclists, including the introduction of cycle contraflow lanes on one-way streets, and the creation of new pedestrian and cycle only links where appropriate (WCY12);
- providing secure on-street cycle parking (WCY15) and secure, sheltered on-site cycle parking and supporting facilities for cycle commuters at:
 - Schools and other education facilities;
 - Workplaces; and
 - Other destinations likely to attract cyclists (WCY16);

4. Bus Infrastructure Measures

Comment

For the foreseeable future, bus will be the primary mode of public transport in Kells and environs and will provide an essential link to Navan and the Dublin Metropolitan Area. Given this role, it is critical that appropriate infrastructure is provided in Kells to make this mode more attractive to users and improve the overall public transport travel experience.

Recommendation

In relation to the bus infrastructure in Kells, the Authority recommends that consideration is given to the incorporation in the Kells Development Plan of the type of measures set out in Section 10.2 of the Authority's Draft Transport Strategy, to the extent relevant.

5. Car Parking

Comment

The supply and management of parking at a destination is central to the management of transport demand.

Recommendation

In relation to car parking in Kells, the Authority recommends that all non-residential development proposals in the GDA should be subject to maximum parking standards (see Table 8.1 of the Draft Transport Strategy, which shows a number of these land uses and sets out regional maximum standards which should apply to them).

6. Park and Ride Measures

Comment

Measure INT 5 of the Draft Transport Strategy provides that the Authority will consider the potential for bus based park and ride close to high quality road corridors leading from Hinterland towns, with good bus priority to commuter destinations in the Metropolitan Area, and will seek the provision of such facilities where appropriate and feasible. The Authority will work with Meath County Council/ Kells Town Council to assist in the identification of potential bus park and ride sites in the Kells environs.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Development Plan reflects the outcome from discussions on the location of park and ride between the Authority and Meath County Council/ Kells Town Council.

The National Transport Authority requests your consideration of the above comments and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the delivery of some of the transport objectives in this plan.

Yours sincerely,



Hugh Creegan
Director of Planning and Investment