

Kinvara Hockey Club,
Kinvara,
Co. Galway

Planning Department,
Galway County Council,
Áras an Chontae,
Prospect Hill,
Galway

Submission to the draft Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

Dear Sir/Madam,

We wish to make a submission to the draft Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 on behalf of Kinvara Hockey Club, Kinvara, Co. Galway:

Background

From humble beginnings on the sloped grass pitch at Seamount College Kinvara, our club was established 40 years ago. Over that time, the game of hockey has changed entirely, with astro pitches becoming the mainstay of the sport. The development of a small astro pitch at nearby St. Joseph's National School in 2010 was a major changing point and reignited hockey in our area. While not a hockey-playing surface, it was a major step forward in allowing our players to move off sloped grass for the first time, as well as enabling the club to open to youth players. Exponential demand for hockey followed and in a short space of time, our needs began to outgrow this facility, with more space required to accommodate larger squad sizes along with a need to access a proper playing surface as skill levels advanced. With only one oversubscribed full-size hockey pitch in the Galway region, located 35km from Kinvara, the community pitch at Oranmore provided us with a base for our older groups until its redevelopment (with a change in playing surface) in 2020 made it permanently closed to hockey which was a devastating blow for our rapidly-growing club

Current needs

Left suddenly with nowhere to train for many of our squads, KHC faced closure. A temporary training solution was found at Athenry (some 30km away), however **to access a full-size pitch, we must travel to Athlone! (90km away)**. Without question, the time has arrived for us to find a permanent home of our own: not only to continue to cater for our Women in Sport and the growing numbers of girls from south Galway and north Clare wanting to play this Olympic sport but also to allow us to offer hockey training for boys and Hockey4All. In 40 years, Kinvara has never hosted a hockey match! The club has strong ties with local schools, in particular Seamount College, Kinvara with shared goals and needs in terms of hockey playing facilities. Currently, our local school teams must travel for all their matches meaning every game is an away game. Our goal is to give hockey the grassroots support it needs in our community – a community with a strong and successful tradition of hockey for over 40 years, despite the odds

We currently have a well advertised public awareness and funding campaign, #PushForAPitch, where this has had both regional and national coverage and strongly supported by both Connacht Hockey and Hockey Ireland

Our vision is for a full-size Astro pitch with a multisport surface, suitable for hockey as well as other sports to play on – a community multisport pitch. The future of our club hangs in the balance and we now know for certain that we must secure a base to safeguard the future of this Olympic sport in South Galway and North Clare

Submission

Kinvara Hockey Club would therefore like to see planning for sports facilities, and in particular, a community multisport pitch included in the proposed county development plan, 2022-2028. Such a facility is needed to support our work in increasing participation in sport and needs to be planned centrally in our town, to support our local secondary school as well as sports clubs in the area such as Kinvara Hockey Club.

A multisport pitch & facilities is needed to support the rapidly growing demand for hockey in the area and the important work we are already doing for Women in Sport. We envisage that such a facility would enable our club to offer opportunities for all members of the community (male or female, young or old as well as people living with physical or intellectual disabilities) to participate in sport. Rather unique to field sports, hockey provides not only for competitive and elite players, but opens recreational playing with its numerous adapted hockey programmes, making it truly a sport for everyone. With our vision for a multisport pitch surface, other field sports and minority sports could utilise this facility rendering it fully as a community facility.

In terms of numbers we have grown from 20 youth players in 2010 to over 220. Waiting list implemented since 2018 as we cannot accommodate demands on current training which is area approx 1/4 size of full hockey pitch

Lack of access to correct surface and full sizes training area means we cannot retain players a key issue for Women in Sport as fall our greatest at this stage

Current & proposed Local area plan

We note where the proposed draft Kinvara Land Use Zoning Map within the development plan seeks to support the urgent need for further residential, however we would urge that continued consideration be given to the ancillary services, amenity & community space such as ours that is required to serve such current & future needs and the provision of associated zoned area's to provide for same

At present, we would offer that Open space/Amenity zoning is largely confined to existing 'green' spaces such as that within existing residential developments with little 'new' open space/amenity zoning that could be developed as such

We would content that this use is best provided for either within, or on the fringes of the village (rather than for example on a remote rural site) where it would be within safe pedestrian and bicycle access from the village for persons of all ages and where it has strong connections, intended shared use and mutual benefit by Seamount College secondary school also located within the village

Recent Covid lockdowns and restrictions has also shone a spotlight on the critical importance and availability of quality external community/amenity space, but also on the extent of pedestrian and bicycle usage, particularly by younger people which is to be encouraged. The recently completed cycle path between Ballinderreen/Kinvara has supported this further. The provision of sports facilities externally and remote from a village due to the prevalence of residential zoning and lack of community/amenity zoning within or close to the village we would content would be counter to this

Funding and land costs

With the above in mind, there is also difficulty in a use such as ours in acquiring new lands in/or on the fringes of a village if much of this is only zoned predominantly residential. Typical funding models for public sports facilities such as ours are where facilities can be grant aided by the likes of Sports Ireland, however lands must be purchased by the club themselves.

The result is where lands within or on the fringes of the village zoned as such are prohibitively expensive for a club to purchase

Conclusion

For the above reasons, we would urge that strong consideration be given to the further zoning of lands for Open Space/Recreation & Amenity(OS) or Community Facilities(CF) and see attached sketch to illustrate same

One solution we would offer for the development of sporting amenities is where there can be a mutual benefit of lands which are zoned residential (Phase 1) to have the adjoining zoning of Open Space/Recreation & Amenity(OS) or Community Facilities(CF) where these mutual uses can be then developed in tandem. With this solution, the 'heavy lifting' can be done by those developing residential lands and with sports amenities/facilities such as ours then being provided as part of development with a mutual gain and benefit for **all** of the community

We trust the above can be considered as part of the future development plan

Yours sincerely,

Chairperson on behalf of
Kinvara Hockey Club

