



Ms. Eimear Cody,
A/ Senior Executive Engineer,
Housing Section,
Kilkenny County Council,
John Street,
Kilkenny.

E: eimear.cody@kilkennycoco.ie

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Re: Kilkenny County Council - Residential Development at Piltown, Co. Kilkenny

Dear Eimear,

Please note the following design responses to the *12 No. design criteria for sustainable residential developments* for the proposed new residential development at Piltown, Co. Kilkenny

• *Context: How does the development respond to its surroundings?*

The design proposals included have been developed with consideration of existing features, natural landscaping and the natural topography of the site. The scheme serves to link the existing village centre of the Piltown community to the Belline Vale estate, by utilising an existing green field area located between the two. The existing gradient of the site has been utilised to allow a hierarchy of dwellings to be formed towards the main road, allowing retention of existing views of the mountains to the south from dwellings to the rear of the site. The form and architecture of the individual house types has been developed to reflect and enhance the neighbourhood and existing character of surrounding developments. The single storey dwellings along the main road have been included to continue the existing streetscape, with individual amenity space provided to the front and screened by the extension of the stone boundary wall, evident along the existing main road. Appropriate responses have been made to existing boundary conditions, with natural trees and hedgerows retained to site boundaries in so much as possible. The privacy of the existing back gardens along the boundary to Belline Vale have been carefully considered with separation distances retained in accordance with the Kilkenny County Council Development plan and site development guidelines to provide secure and private areas for residents while also restricting any potential overlooking issues. Shared amenity space has been provided within the scheme by the creation of a shared surface and open landscaped areas, creating vibrant new home zone spaces.



Partners:
Christopher John Falconer FRM, RIBA, ARB, CIAB, Dip Arch
Gareth Matthew Falconer MRM, RIBA, CBE, AICADE, RIA Arch Tech
Juneanne Falconer MRM, RIBA, ARB, B.Arch (Hons), B.Sc (Hons)

Associates:
Colin Falconer MRM, RIBA, ARB, Prof Dip (Arch), Dip Arch, Dip Arch Tech
Philip Blake MRM, Prof Dip (Arch), Dip Arch, Dip Arch Tech
David Falconer MRM, Prof Dip (Arch), B.Arch (Hons), B.Sc (Hons)



• *Connections: How well is the new neighbourhood / site connected?*

The proposed development utilises existing pedestrian connections from Belline Vale, with permeable and well-defined routes throughout the site connected to existing public footpaths along the main road to the centre of the village. These existing routes contain generously wide footpaths which are provided with adequate street lighting to offer secure and efficient access to the village centre and associated shops and amenities. Utilising existing public transport corridors along the main road have linked the development to the existing village fabric and local area beyond, enhancing the quality and sustainability of the proposed development and also access to adjoining existing residential areas. The density of the scheme supports the continued uses of the existing public transport system and will be in itself advantageous to the viability of such links from the village. Visual connections are maintained across the site to the surrounding countryside beyond, by utilising the existing topography and the tiered arrangement of houses across the site.

• *Inclusivity: How easily can people use and access the development?*

The design and layout of this proposed new neighbourhood provides access for all ages and abilities by offering a range of accommodation and dwelling types. The diversity in housing types offer a range of accommodation for families, elderly people and the ambulant disabled. Private amenity space to the front allows interaction between occupants, while the new shared home zones provide communal spaces to be enjoyed by all. The new building layouts incorporate open plan front gardens, along clearly defined and accessible routes which form strong visual connections from private dwellings to the public and amenity spaces throughout the site. This enhances residents' inclusivity, while avoiding unnecessary physical and visual barriers throughout the proposed scheme. Passive surveillance is provided to all green open plan spaces and home zone areas, lending to a more secure and manageable development, which can be taken in charge or privately managed by the residents themselves. The 4 No. one bedroom homes all face the existing main road and public footpath, helping to generate activity along the main street with privacy retained by the inclusion of low-level perimeter stone walls and landscaping.

• *Variety: How does the development promote a good mix of activities?*

The diversity of population and types of residents proposed for the development will help to contribute to and enhance the local community. The variety of social housing types proposed will allow greater choice for local people in need of such residential accommodation but also ensure the development is compatible with adjoining neighbourhoods and residential areas. The proposed housing types will compliment those already in existence within the area and will encourage sustainable use of the development by their occupants. By encouraging a wide range of people from differing socio-economic backgrounds, the aim would be to develop a sustainable and quality connection for the scheme and its residents to the existing established local community. The proposed development would not be distinguishable in finish, quality or appearance from the adjoining private estates of Belline Vale or Clonmore Hall.

- *Efficiency: How does the development make appropriate use of resources, including land?*

Scheme densities have been developed in line with the current Kilkenny County Council development plan and with adjoining residential developments previously completed within the area. The proposals aim to provide a sustainable neighbourhood, adjacent to the main village centre. The existing site is currently an area of unutilised land between the existing Belline Lane estate and the main village centre. By developing this area for new residential and social housing, it will connect the site to the surrounding built fabric and with the existing streetscape and village beyond. Access to existing public drainage systems and utilities allow for an efficient and sustainable solution to be developed for the site. New landscaped areas provide amenity within the site and the existing boundary treatment is utilised to provide shelter from the elements where applicable. Consideration of the existing topography and adjoining building layout have been utilised to create the most sustainable solution for the site but also enhance the amenity of the public spaces provided within. The individual orientation of the dwellings and proposed housing layout have been produced to maximise the existing views and environmental aspects available on the site, with consideration provided for solar gains, elemental u-values and refuse facilities for each house type, completed in line with best environmental practice. Recycling has been considered and is proposed to be undertaken within the existing recycling and waste management programmes currently in operation within the area. The proposed scheme will help to incorporate this existing greenfield site within the existing village fabric and help to reinvent the adjoining neighbourhood environs in which it sits.

- *Distinctiveness: How do the proposals create a sense of place?*

The proposals will offer a distinct sense of place for the residents, with common design features used throughout to form a specific identity for this development within the local community. The proposals offered will provide a positive addition to an already established residential area within Piltown. Universal access is to be provided to the core of the existing village. The additional landscaping areas add to the existing biodiversity surrounding the site and the encapsulation of existing mountain views have all been carefully considered to form a unique residential development with its own distinct character. The design of the environmental aspects of the dwellings themselves completed to current best practice, helps to provide an effective environmental solution for the overall site. These strategic enhancements help to create a better place to live and are a viable and economical benefit for the new residents. The positive reinforcement of the existing features and the sites topography, along with the existing ecological attributes of the site, help to form a special sense of place for the residents within the local area. The proposals successfully exploit these features to create a sustainable, connected neighbourhood within the overall village context. The tiered arrangement and hierarchy of housing types exploits views into and from the site.

- *Layout: How does the proposal create people friendly streets and spaces.*

The design of the development has been carefully considered in relation to the wider village context and is an essential integrated element within this predominantly residential area. The layout of spaces and

shared surface home zones within the scheme have been identified using alternative surface materials. Traffic speeds have been controlled using alternative finishes to parking and shared activity spaces. These shared home zones have been created as communal break out spaces, connected via a short vehicular and pedestrian corridor. The integration of vehicular and pedestrians along the same routeways encourages pedestrian activity and the segregation of footpaths and roadways will ensure road users safety when using them. Positioning footpaths along a common corridor between public open spaces within the scheme aims to enhance the viability of pedestrian usage of shared surfaces and increases the sustainability of the development. Shared surface areas, on street parking and landscaping all form part of the overall integrated solution for the site. 2 No. car parking spaces are provided for each individual dwelling, as well as designated on street parking facilities for visitors. Turning bays at each cul-de-sac allow for efficient road usage and the fluid but controlled movement for vehicles within the scheme. The layout proposals offered mimic the existing natural topography and permeable routeways across the site and possible future connections to the rear of the Belline Lane development have been retained. Active frontage to individual dwelling units is encouraged with front doors directly serving the street and front lawn areas with onsite car parking areas linked to the front of dwellings. The use of low level walled areas also enhances the shared community feel to open plan areas and the overlooking of public open spaces helps reduce any anti-social behaviour. The inclusion of rear access to all dwellings, including the 4 No. terrace houses to the South, allows for the safekeeping of refuse bins and provides an alternative point of access to the rear of individual dwellings.

• *Public realm; How safe, secure and enjoyable are public areas?*

Public open spaces within the scheme are designed to feel inviting, open and conveniently located for the variety of users. Passive surveillance is encouraged by the inclusion of windows to gables of houses which overlook adjoining amenity and social spaces. These are strategically positioned to not undermine the privacy of the residents within or of surrounding homes. This creates a sense of integration between both private and public open space areas, without compromising on the integrity of either. The integration of the public spaces is considered within the overall scheme with roads and carparking areas treated as part of the overall landscaping solution. They are strategically positioned to align with the shared surface areas and allow ease of access to and from proposed new dwellings. The alternative treatment of surfaces will allow a clear definition to be drawn between public, private and semi-private spaces, without the need for physical barriers or fencing. The layout and location of public and communal spaces offer an opportunity for adjoining residents to establish a sense of ownership over them and through regular usage encourage residents to actively maintain them. Rear gardens between dwellings are completed in 1.8m high walls, completed with concrete post and with timber hit and miss infill fencing to maintain privacy and soften the aesthetic overall. Boundaries to neighbouring developments are completed in 1.8m high blockwork walls where applicable.

- *Adaptability; How the buildings cope with change?*

The proposed scheme has been designed in so much as is reasonably possible to allow for potential future expansion. This is achieved by the careful placement of the internal road network and adjoining public open space. The shared surface area to the north of the site has been left open to either side to allow further road networks or connections to adjoining lands, should the issue arise in the future. The site naturally abuts the Belline Vale estate to the northwest corner and this has been purposely left as public open space should the requirement be to connect the two adjoining estates, either by pedestrian or vehicular routeways be required. The houses themselves are to be completed to a very high environmental standard and specification, ensuring the developments will compete with anticipated climate changes and to meet energy requirements for many years to come. Their environmental and thermal attributes will ensure the dwellings continue to successfully meet the requirements in elemental heat loss and energy saving required by progressive regulation. Ventilation and daylighting factors have all been considered in accordance with best practice guidelines and the internal layout of dwellings have been positioned on site to maximise any possible solar gains. The houses are designed with open plan living, kitchen and dining rooms spaces which will allow them to maximise their potential in terms of adaptability and/or subdivision and large oversized rear garden areas allow for ease of expansion without materially effecting the existing house character or open space requirements.

- *Privacy and Amenity; How does the scheme provide a decent standard of amenity?*

The houses are designed to allow the garden areas to be an extension of the living spaces internally and extend to the streets and shared surface areas beyond. Each home has access to an area of useable outdoor space to the rear and front and rear garden areas provide a place where residents can comfortably sit without being directly overlooked. The layout of the site maximises the number of homes enjoying dual aspect with each home has been designed to ensure dual aspect provision from within, while windows sizes and locations are designed to avoid direct views from one house to another. All houses have been designed with adequate internal storage in accordance with the criteria outlined in the DoEHLG publication 'Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities' (2007).

- *Parking; How will the parking be secure and attractive?*

Appropriate parking provision is provided throughout the site and is located within easy access of each dwelling entrance. Parking is provided to the front yard areas for each individual dwelling, with adequate space for 2 No. vehicles, with the exception of the 4 No. units to the main road, which have designated parking provision to front and rear of the housing units. These parking bays are overlooked from within the dwelling itself or passively surveyed from adjoining neighbours and routeway users. Soft landscaping is used adjacent to parking bays and visitors on street parking is scattered throughout the site, to breakdown any negative visual aspects associated and in accordance with best practice as noted in the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*. The materials used to all parking areas are to be of similar

high quality to the other public areas within the scheme thus allowing them to be seen as extensions of the other hard surface, shared spaces within the scheme when not in use.

• *Detailed Design; How well thought through is the building and landscape design?*

The overall scheme has been carefully thought out in relation to building layout and form, material selection, site layout and overall external appearance. The individual dwellings have been thought through in terms of orientation, daylighting, ventilation and energy consumption, and practical, environmental and sustainable solutions have been incorporated in their design and material fabric. The site layout design has incorporated aspects of the best practice landscape design and guidance as noted in the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* and the provision of usable and shared public open space has been considered throughout. Materials have been selected to enhance the area and the overall design of the proposed housing scheme has been considered in the context of the local community. The external landscaping has been designed to facilitate easy and regular maintenance and the overall lifespan and sustainability of the project has been considered in the detailed design strategy proposed. Green and biodiverse areas encourage natural wildlife and fauna and are proposed to enhance the quality of life for the residents living within. The variety of public spaces provided encourage their use in all weather and the careful location of quality trees and landscaping will help highlight the overall quality of the development. The provision of rear access to all units will ensure unsightly refuse areas or bin stores are also not required.

I trust the above is to your satisfaction, however should you require any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact us,

Yours sincerely,



Philip Blake MRIAI

Copy to: Ms. Lisa Mulcahy, Kilkenny County Council
Mr. Robert Nolan, Nolan Construction Consultants
Mr. John Dunphy, Nolan Construction Consultants
Mr. William Kee, Nolan Construction Consultants
Mr. Dermot O'Shea, David Kelly Partnership
Mr. Michael Purcell, Douglas Carroll
Mr. Gareth M. Falconer, C.J. Falconer & Assoc.
Mr. John Lennon C.J. Falconer & Assoc.

E: Lisa.Mulcahy@kilkennycoco.ie
E: robert@nolancc.ie
E: john@nolancc.ie
E: William@nolancc.ie
E: dermot@dkp.ie
E: Michael.Purcell@dceng.ie
E: GaryFalconer@cjfa.ie
E: johnlennon@cjfa.ie