

DCOP 62.

Sheila Healy

From: Michael Nevin
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Some comment on the economic development chapter on the draft CDP

Regards

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The Community Call

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Tá an t-eolas sa ríomhphost seo, agus in aon cheangaltán leis, faoi phribhléid agus faoi rún agus le h-ghaigh an seolaí amháin. D'fhéadfadh ábhar an seoladh seo bheith faoi phribhléid proifisiúnta nó dlíthiúil. Mura tusa an seolaí a bhí beartaithe leis an ríomhphost seo a fháil, tá cosc air, nó aon chuid de, a úsáid, a chóipeál, nó a scaoileadh. Má tháinig sé chugat de bharr dearmad, téigh i dteagmháil leis an seoltóir agus scríos an t-ábhar ó do ríomhaire le do thoil.

Chapter 8 Economic Development

Page 236 – The 572 hectares of land available potentially conveys a message that there plenty of suitably zoned land available for development when I assume that is both developed and undeveloped land and most of it already developed.

A breakdown of that figure might extrapolate the quantum of land that is yet undeveloped and available to support specific investment opportunities where 'greenfield' is required.

An analysis of current zoned industrial land still undeveloped should highlight the fact that:

- Much of this land is comprised of un-serviced landbanks that might be difficult to develop in terms of delivery of infrastructure & services. They are often of insufficient size to attain medium/large scale enterprise and they are not necessarily located in premier locations in terms of preferred locations to develop clusters or strategic corridors
- Some of the land currently zoned industrial/commercial is clearly not available for that purpose in the short to medium term mainly because the owners of that land have no desire to sell or facilitate commercial developments
- Some of the zoned land is impacted by water tables that make it difficult to develop.

Much thought needs to be given to the reclassification of land around Longford Town in particular. In the last two months we have been approached by two promoters with serious proposals looking for parcels of 6 and 11 acres of around Longford Town. The only land currently available to meet such demand is either land owned by Pat McDonagh inside the bypass or a narrow strip for sale to the north of the bypass and west of Abbott.

Opportunities to attract investment of scale may be lost to other growth centres unless we can highlight zoned landbanks in preferable areas. For example, the IDA would contend that a landbank of between 20 to 40 acres would be needed to attract another firm comparable with Abbott.

In my opinion an exercise is required that conducts a detailed examination of the transport corridors around Longford Town to determine landbanks that might be suitable for commercial/industrial development. In particular, landbanks bordering the N4 from Shroid Chapel to going West along the old bypass to extend along the new bypass to the N5 roundabout should be considered carefully. This corridor has potential perhaps to become a strategic industrial corridor affording for the development of new industrial parks or facilitating the attraction of individual medium/large scale industries.

This exercise could also potentially highlight land currently zoned industrial that might be rezoned agriculture to satisfy owner requirements. My understanding is that the parcel of land to the East of Abbott and North of the bypass would meet such a requirement.

I don't understand the technical intricacies around permission to rezone but I believe that an intensive exercise to consider further greenfield requirements is required to help formulate the CDP. (Ref: CPO 8.5, CPO 8.8, 8.9, 8.10)

In the Offaly CPD they have an enterprise development objective(Ent 04) 'It is an objective of the Council to identify and quantify suitable locations in Tullamore for strategic employment development, for large scale employment and enterprise activity'.

Argument above is best captured in CPO 8.24 and supported by 8.25.

Some other observations

Page 239 – Edgewortstown reference could state it has 1 large employer in agri-food. C&D Foods

Ballymahon has a **relatively** strongbase.

Missing an objective perhaps around the development of appropriately scaled business sites or parks to facilitate new industrial development that will contribute to continued economic growth in each centre. This is slightly different to the objective 8.31 that has a focus on re-generation and renewal.

Regeneration suggests 'repair' while new industrial development suggest 'growth'?

8.7.1.3 'Granard has **potential** to develop' a growing tourism and heritage sector (not there yet?) A general point about Granard, I understand the rationale for its classification as a key employment centre rather than a secondary economic growth form. We could perhaps be a little more ambitious in economic development objectives given the fact it is strategically located on an important North/South axis and has existing significant employers already.

Withstanding the constraints of the plan if I thought economic objectives for all four towns could apply rather than breaking it down into two divisions.

So I would suggest give town descriptions and classifications but group all objectives to be more inclusive of the key employment centres.

Smart Enterprises – first paragraph is generic and suggests maybe strength we don't have.

Smart Specialisation which involves the County identifying and developing its own competitive advantages might be a better heading leading directly into Paragraph 2.

8.7.7 I would include an objective around facilitate the provision of digital hub spaces in each of the 5 principal towns to accommodate remote working opportunities that may arise as shifting work patterns evolve over the next few years.

One final comment is around the reference to stakeholders who might help deliver the objectives in the plan. It is probably not appropriate to mention all potential stakeholders and there is always a danger of omitting stakeholders if you were to reference them. I do think, however, in a chapter the Economic Development direct reference should be made to

some agencies for only to ensure that they will feel some sort of obligation during the term of the plan. So for example, the IDA has a plan to deliver an advance factory to Longford by 2021 (plan delayed). An objective might be to facilitate the development of advance factory or landing space facilities by the IDA to encourage future IDA investments in the County.

Likewise another specific objective might be to facilitate the IDA to develop a business park in Longford that will facilitate new investment in the County.

Most of the other principal towns in the County have a dedicated business park. We have none currently.

