

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ**

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING  
OF OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL ON  
PRE -DRAFT OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021 -2027:**

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE ON  
MONDAY, 30TH JUNE AT 10.30 A.M.**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll (Presiding), Cllrs. J. Carroll, C. Claffey, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, M. Hackett, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran, S. O'Brien, Cllr. P. Ormond, D. Owens, L. Quinn and K. Smollen (R)</p> <p><i>[(R) denotes remote access]</i></p>
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. (R); Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. (R); Mr. M. Connolly, H.O.F.; Ms. A. Dillon, A/D.O.S., Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator, Mr. R. Bell, H.I.S.; Mr. A. Murray, S.P.; Ms. L. Mitchell, S.E.P.; Mr. J. Condron, E.P.; Mr. D. Meehan, P.; Mr. J. Egan, A.P.; Ms. K. Gray, C.O. and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O. David L'Estrange of CAAS Ltd; Professor William Hynes; Jamie McGrath, Future Analytics</p> <p><i>[(R) denotes remote access]</i></p>
<b>PRE- DRAFT OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021 - 2027</b>	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll opened the meeting, highlighting the importance of this document for future development and acknowledged the amount of work that goes into the plan. Ms. A. Delaney outlined the proposed timeline from approving the Pre-Draft plan to public consultation and welcomed Mr. Jamie McGrath, Professor William Hynes, Future Analytics and Mr. David L'Estrange, CAAS. She acknowledged the work of the planning team in bringing the Pre-Draft plan to this stage.</p> <p>Mr. A. Murray informed the members of the process, noting that the plan is reviewed every 6 years, it is restricted by government guidelines and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the National Planning Framework 2018. He advised the members that in taking account of the members' considerations the plan addresses areas such as quality of life, local strength, community opportunities, medical requirements and tourism. He acknowledged that a range of housing is required and the importance of environmental considerations such as wind energy. He informed the members of the requirement for compact growth, using land assets and protecting agriculture.</p> <p>Ms. L. Mitchell read out the pecuniary / beneficial interests protocol.</p>
<b><u>CAAS Ltd</u></b>	<p>Mr. David L'Estrange provided the members with a detailed presentation outlining the environmental issues, including flood risks, strategic environmental assessments, appropriate assessments and the Strategic Flood Risk assessment. He</p>

advised the members that under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), their decisions are subject to scrutiny with EU directives taking precedence. He outlined the EU Directive 2001/42/EC advising on environmental considerations to ensure the best areas are developed and that they are robust and well serviced. He brought the members attention to various maps indicating ecological sensitivity noting that green areas are robust and red areas need protection e.g. Slieve Blooms, the Brosna and bogland.

He advised the members on the findings of their assessment noting Offaly's natural capital and eco system, the need to minimise impact, protection of the waterways and avoidance of development in flood risk areas. He informed the members of the Special Areas of Conservation, such as the Shannon Callows and Special Protection Areas, e.g. Hen Harriers. He outlined the varying flooding risk, such as fluvial flooding, ground water and blocked drains, noting the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. He summarised the key points, that the plan must comply with Strategic Environmental Assessment and The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, using evidence based planning to achieve robust development.

Cllr. J. Carroll joined the members in thanking Mr. L'Estrange for his informative presentation and he reiterated the importance of compliant decision making. The members raised queries on flood areas, highlighting the cost of insurance to property owners in designated flood areas and queried if some areas should not be classed as flood risk. Cllr. D. Harvey queried the 5km local needs requirement. Cllr. J. Leahy questioned if there is any reference to CFRAM and if dredging would alleviate flooding issues.

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick said it is important to preserve flood risk areas.

In responding to the members queries Mr. D. L'Estrange outlined the ministerial guidelines taking into account historical flooding of one in one hundred years and one in one thousand, to ensure the protection of property. He advised the members that the nationally improved mapping system is very sophisticated and predictive. He informed the members that local housing is under the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. He agreed that dredging is one of many measures used to alleviate flooding issues, but that it would need to be on a continuous basis which can be an issue.

Mr. A. Murray informed the members that Strategic Environment Assessment is maintained throughout the county development plan process with the consultant screening at each stage.

Ms. A. Delaney ensured the members that the consultants would continue to provide their expertise to assist them in

	<p>adopting a fully compliant plan. She advised members that the making of the Development Plan is a reserved function, but the Executive will ensure that legislation is complied with.</p>
<p><b>FUTURE ANALYTICS PRESENTATION</b></p>	<p>Professor William Hynes provided the members with a detailed analysis of the requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the National Planning Framework. He advised of the 94(1) a - key requirements for future needs, varying income levels, mixtures of housing types and the need to counteract undue segregation. He updated the members on 94(5) a, - having regard for to supply and demand, price, income, rates of interest and affordability. He informed the members of Future Analytics objective of evidence based analysis using a new approach piloted by Louth County Council and the National Planning Framework. He advised the members that the approach looks at a fusion of elements including population, housing needs and economy and he brought the members through the analysis carried out for the Pre-Draft County Development Plan.</p> <p>Mr. Jamie McGrath updated the members on the modelling approach comprising of population statistics, the economy, capacity to repay, capacity for housing and affordability. He highlighted that population increases, growth, incomes and rent are key outputs to the model.</p> <p>The members thanked Future Analytics for the presentation and responded with a number of issues including the decline of small villages and rural areas, closure of Bord na Mona and unemployment, need for affordable housing and the unprecedented effects of Covid 19.</p> <p>Mr. Jamie McGrath responded that affordability needs to be considered and it is crucial to get the balance correct.</p>
<p><b>CHAPTER 2 CORE STRATEGY, SETTLEMENT STRATEGY AND HOUSING STRATEGY</b></p>	<p>Ms. L. Mitchell provided the members with a detailed presentation on Chapter 2, Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and the housing Strategy. She updated the members on the growth principles, including compact growth of settlements, allow significant growth of Tullamore the Key Town, to strengthen town and village centres, transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society, the county population increase, reverse village stagnation through regeneration, sustainable communities, healthy place-making, sequential development, high quality housing of a sufficient scale, mix, tenure and density. She outlined the core strategy to provide a transparent robust evidence-based rationale for the amount &amp; location of land proposed to be zoned residential and a mix of residential and other uses. She advised that this will entail higher densities applied to higher order towns, with a graded reduction down the settlement hierarchy (efficient use of land) and an asset-based approach to spatial development.</p>

	<p>She updated the members on the Settlement Hierarchy and the Rural Housing Policy influences. She brought the members attention to the relevant statistics noting that a significant majority of housing planning permissions in Offaly have been one-off houses in the open countryside and this has contributed to spatial and social imbalance resulting in decline in population in smaller settlements and the loss of many key services She advised that we now need to focus on building up Offaly’s towns and villages to make them more viable.</p> <p>Ms. L. Mitchell outlined the commuting areas, the areas of special control (SPA, SAC) and updated the members on the requirements for Local Needs. She informed the members on the objectives for housing including 10% of land zoned shall be for Part V social and affordable housing, procuring vacant homes, develop housing in infill /brownfield sites in town and village centres and promoting the provision of serviced sites supported by Irish Water in order to attract people to build their own homes and live in small towns and villages.</p> <p>She highlighted the provision to encourage purpose-built student accommodation proximate to any third level educational facility in Offaly, to encourage re-use of upper floors above commercial for residential and the retention of town centre residential units &amp; discourage conversion into non-residential uses.</p> <p>She advised that focus is on the principles of universal design &amp; life-long adaptability, energy efficiency and healthy place-making and to provide balanced supply of private, social and affordable housing with no over-concentration of any one type of accommodation in a settlement. She highlighted the need to ensure that groups with special housing needs (e.g. older people, persons with disabilities etc.) are accommodated in a way suitable to their needs and to provide high quality housing of a sufficient scale, mix, tenure, sequence and density, located in optimum locations and aligned with adequate infrastructure, services and amenities, and which support permeability and sustainable mobility.</p> <p>Cllr. Smollen said it is important to manage urban generated growth. Cllr. Cribbin said we need to develop all uses and not just housing. Cllr. Leahy asked for clarity on what compact growth is which L. Mitchell explained</p> <p>The members thanked Ms. Mitchell for her presentation.</p>
<p><b>TULLAMORE SETTLEMENT PLAN VOLUME 2</b></p>	<p>Mr. D. Meehan provided the members with a presentation on zoning categories and the Tullamore Settlement Plan volume 2. He advised the members that 43 hectares is proposed for new residential zoning and the emphasis is on compact growth and centrality. He noted that 22 hectares are zoned as</p>

	<p>existing development and new residential could potentially accommodate 1,750 units. He gave the members an overview of the various areas in the zoning and outlined the considerations, including services, amenities, flood risks and infrastructure.</p> <p>Mr. D. Meehan outlined the potential future development in the proposed areas and highlighted the opportunity sites. He advised that the opportunity sites were chosen due to their prominence and under-utilisation, noting that their re-development would contribute to regeneration.</p> <p>He advised the members that the objective of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy states that key towns, such as Tullamore, shall act as economic drivers and provide strategic locations to improve the economic base and increase employment.</p> <p>He highlighted the strategic employment zones at Ballyduff and on the Ardan Road. He noted the proposed Ballyduff SEZ has the potential to provide a Business/Technology Park and Enterprise Zone leveraging its proximity to the Axis Business Park, Burlington Business Park and Srah IDA Business Park in the area.</p> <p>The Ardan SEZ adjacent to the unfinished hospital with excellent local access and proximity to the bypass and the motorway. He highlighted the need for complementary third level outreach educational facilities at Tullamore, particularly with regard to support for Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore and where appropriate, its continued development as a Teaching/University Hospital, together with potential for linkages to existing and new med-tech businesses and research facilities. He outlined the possibilities and advantages and that Offaly County Council could have control of this and kick start the future direction of the Med-Tech Park.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney thanked the planning staff for their comprehensive and on-going work.</p>
<p><b>VOLUME 2 – SETTLEMENT PLANS</b></p>	<p>Mr. J. Egan provided the members with a presentation on the Birr/Crinkill Town Plan. He advised the members that 14 hectares is proposed for new residential zoning, and outlined the location of the zonings across Birr and Crinkill, noting the emphasis on compact growth. He advised members of the 2 no. opportunity sites in Birr, the Mart Site and the Rectory Lands, noting that it is recommended that the eastern half of the Rectory Land be zoned ‘New Residential’ and the western half, being the opportunity site element, be zoned ‘Town Centre/Mixed Use’ given its proximity to the core retail area of the town. He also advised that suitable policies on economic development and tourism development in the town are contained within the Plan.</p> <p>Mr. J. Egan provided the members with a presentation on the Banagher Town Plan. He gave an overview of the ‘New Residential’ zonings and opportunity sites in the town, which</p>

include the Royal Shannon Hotel, outlined the key objectives on economic development and tourism, and advised that additional 'Industrial & Warehousing' zoned land was being provided on the south side of the bypass.

Mr. J. Egan provided the members with a presentation on the Kilcormac Town Plan. He gave an overview of the 'New Residential' zonings and opportunity site in the town, being the former convent, and outlined the key objectives on economic development. He also explained a proposal change the zoning of a site west of Church behind ball alley from 'Town Centre/Mixed Use' to 'Open Space, Amenity, Recreation', due to late confirmation from the SFRA consultants that the land has a flood risk.

Mr. J. Egan provided the members with a presentation on the Daingean Town Plan. He gave an overview of the 'New Residential' zonings and opportunity sites in the town, namely the courthouse and reformatory school.

Mr. J. Egan provided the members with a presentation on the 21 no. villages across the 3 MDs. He advised that each village has a Village Plan, comprising a settlement description, objectives and a zoning map, and explained that the land use zonings, particularly the 'New Residential' zoning has been informed by the principle of compact growth. He drew the members' attention to the Rhode Village Plan, advising of the vision for the Rhode Green Energy Park north west of the village.

Mr. J. Egan provided the members with a presentation on the 28 no. Sráids across the 3 MDs. He advised of the function of Sráids as a viable alternative to one-off housing and the vision in terms of incremental growth, and that each Sráid has a Sráid Plan, comprising a settlement description, objectives and a map showing a development boundary. He advised that Rahan has been reclassified from Village to Sráid due to characteristics of the settlement and lack of mains wastewater treatment. He advised that Kilclonfert and Ballycommon were being designated as new Sráids.

Mr. J. Condrón provided the members with a presentation on the Clara Town Plan. He gave an overview of the proposed 'New Residential' zonings and opportunity sites in the town; (1) Erry Mill and lands at Frederick Street, (2) Charlestown Mill and County Council yard and (3) lands to the rear of River Street and Main Street. He advised of proposed objectives, certain economic opportunities that would be addressed in the Draft Plan and the potential for the development of green infrastructure and walking trails in the town.

Mr. J. Condrón provided the members with a presentation on the Ferbane Town Plan. He gave an overview of the proposed 'New Residential' zonings and opportunity sites in the town; (1) Convent Building and Grounds and (2) Backlands of Old Chapel Lane and Main Street. He advised

