

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

MINUTES OF THE TUAM AREA COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE ON Friday December 12th 2008

I LATHAIR:

Baill: Cllr. T. McHugh, Chairman.
Cllr. T. Reilly, Cllr. T. Walsh, Cllr. M Connolly, Cllr. S. Canney

Oifigh: Mr. P. Ridge, Director of Services Planning, Ms. C. McConnell, Senior Planner, Ms. M. McGrath, S.S.O. Ms. B. Wright, Graduate Planner, Ms. G. Kavanagh, Assistant Planner, Mr. J. Leahy, Senior Executive Engineer, Mr. P. Gavin, Executive Engineer Ms. M. Cunningham, S.O..

1.To consider the Manager's report on the submissions received on the Draft Galway County Development Plan 2009-2015 under Section 12(5) (a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

Mr. Ridge spoke about the part of the County Development plan that dealt with Ardaun. He stated that the Ardaun plan had benefits and downsides. He proposed that the Members could vote for Ardaun but as a part of a framework within which other development could take place. This framework would be an integral part of any permission for Ardaun and Ardaun should not be accepted unless this framework was accepted. Mr. Ridge then went on to outline what that framework would be. Information for deriving the framework came from the POWCAR (Place of Work Census Anonymous Records) statistics from the CSO 2006 which shows that the eastern approaches to the City on the County/City are the critical interfaces of City congestion. The East City/West City internal traffic movements are not at a critical level.

This information was shown on a map distributed to the Members. Mr. Ridge said that the issue of critical mass was a very important one and that it should be defined as the number of people who can access a place using whatever means available at a reasonable time. He then went on to state that any proposals to develop Metropolitan Galway should seek to reduce traffic flows within the whole area mapped here, not just in the general vicinity of the city.

The Garraun proposals, N17 Parkmore QBC to Front Roundabout and the N84 QBC are the areas in need of priority public transport measures. The development of Ardaun with a population of almost 18,000 in 2016 according to the GTPS Study, on

top of the present residential areas in the County and City will add further to the eastern interface public transport requirement.

Mr. Ridge went on to state that the Local Authority had reached agreement with Iarnrod Eireann to reopen the railway station in Oranmore but to move its location. This new location would be a Transportation Hub for Park and Ride facilities, a Quality Bus corridor and would join to the City proposals and alleviate transportation problems from the east of the City. A joint Local Area Plan (LAP) for Ardaun is proposed. Park and Ride facilities and public bus transport are also proposed for Carnmore Airport and to the Industrial Estates including Boston Scientific.

Mr. Ridge finished by stating that the Members had until the 15th of January to make a decision but that it was important to remember that if Ardaun was refused, the Members would be taking themselves out of the decision making process.

Cllr. Reilly stated that he was concerned that if the plan for Ardaun went ahead it would stifle any job creation opportunity for ever for Tuam.

Mr. Ridge stated that the focus would have to be on making urban centres like Tuam more attractive places to live.

Cllr. Canney stated that what was required was a master plan for the next 5 to 10 year period. He said that there was no sense of how Tuam would connect with Galway City. He also enquired what Galway County Council's visions were for the Tuam Hub and for Ballinasloe.

Mr. Ridge stated that this was what the Development Plan was for but that the limitations of the Development Plan need to be realized in that it is not an investment programme. He then stated that the National Spatial Strategy will be used nationally to drive future investments and in this will there will be a stronger link back to the County Development Plan.

Cllr. Connolly stated that he accepted this was the right approach but that his preference would be for the development of the Garraun Area. Mr. Ridge stated that the best way to get national support for Garraun would be through joint co-operation with the city on the Ardaun plan.

Cllr. McHugh stated that it would be important to be involved in any negotiations to do with Ardaun, but permitting and encouraging commercial activity in County areas would also be vital. Cllr. Connolly stated that Tuam is a dormitory town, the jobs are not in that part of the County, and currently the town is not facilitating those who live in Tuam and work in Galway.

Mr. Ridge stated that in time it would be possible to extract more information and to get an idea of the type of employment that people were traveling to.

The Members again expressed concern that supporting Ardaun would mean less investment for the rest of the County.

Cllr. Canney stated that the priority for the Members present was Tuam and that they did not want to have two separate discussions about Tuam and about Garraun.

Mr. Ridge acknowledged this and stated that once Ardaun is agreed, the rest of the County Development Plan could be focused on.

Ms. McConnell stated that Garruan was more achievable in the short term.

Cllr. McHugh then stated that the view around the table was that there was support for Mr. Ridge's proposals for conditional acceptance of Ardaun. He also raised concerns regarding daily commuter traffic from Tuam to Galway City and questioned what was going to be done to alleviate this traffic flow problem. Both he and the Tuam Hub Committee have endorsed Tuam as a Transportation Hub.

Mr Ridge stated that once Ardarun/Garraun is accepted he would return to the issue of Tuam being developed as Transportation Hub.

Ms. McConnell then presented the Members with a synopsis of the 112 submissions received on the Draft County Development Plan. She informed the Members that they would also be receiving a synopsis on a submission by submission basis. Ms. McConnell then went through the synopsis drawing attention to the main changes made to the Draft County Development Plan.

Cllr. Connolly raised the issue of quarries and stated that it was ridiculous that such an amount of paperwork had to be dealt with even in the case where the deposit was very small.

Ms. McConnell stated that it was something that the Planning Authority had very little discretion over as there were statutory guidelines that had to be followed.

During the discussion of the submissions to do with the allocation of Local Authority housing Cllr. Connolly raised his concerns about Local Authorities allowing individuals to dictate how housing was allocated. Ms. McConnell stated that the Plan was committed to ensuring that no ghettoizing would take place. Cllr. Connolly stated that he was still concerned that Planning Authority was not treating people fairly as regards its policies for single rural housing.

Cllr. McHugh stated that there had been numerous debates regarding 'one off' rural housing and that with some exceptions most people were being catered for.

Cllr. Canney queried as to what was deemed sufficient infrastructure to allow an area to be designated a Settlement Centre. Ms. McConnell stated that it was judged on the social infrastructure of an area such as a church or school.

Cllr. Canney expressed concern that areas were being designated Settlement Centres without a clear statement of the criteria necessary and that if An Bord Pleanala had the power to reject Settlement Centres, they were in effect, pointless.

Mr. Ridge acknowledged his concerns and stated that it didn't mean that Settlement Centres should be done away with but that they needed to be more realistic and this was what the Draft Plan hoped to achieve.

During the discussion of submission involving public roads, the Members raised their concerns with the volume of traffic and loads being carried on secondary and regional roads. Ms. McConnell stated that a public road is a public road and there is nothing that could be written in to the Plan to deal with illegal loads and traffic volumes, but that national routes should still be recognized as strategic once they are downgraded to regional roads.

During the discussion on the submission regarding allotments, Cllr. McHugh queried as to whether allotments would be subject to the planning process.

Ms. McConnell stated that they were not. The Members were positively disposed towards the idea of allotments.

During the discussion on the submission received regarding the Habitats Directive, Cllr. Connolly stated that the Local Authority would have to be careful not to incur huge costs in dealing with the requirements of the above and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Mr. Ridge stated the Planning Authority was being very careful and had agreed that each step of the Plan would be signed off on by the Department. He also stated that this meant that the Members had to aware that any last minute changes were not to be recommended because all changes needed to processed from an environmental and ecological point of view.

Ms. McConnell concluded by stating that most of the changes to the Plan are inclusions as opposed to items being dropped from the Plan.

Cllr. McHugh stated that the Members needed to read through the document and that if any aspects needed to be discussed, this could be done at the next meeting.

Ms. McConnell stated that the Members can make amendments on the basis of submissions received, but that they could not reopen any issues that have already been signed off on.

Cllr. Connolly stated that the Planning Authority needed to be more accommodating in situations where people were attempting to regularize situations where proper permissions may not have been in place.

Ms. McConnell stated that there was a policy in the Draft Plan on vernacular housing and the reuse of them, but also that Cllr. Connolly's concerns would be looked at.

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