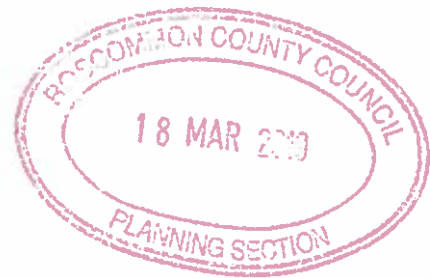


Forward Planning Section,
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Proposed Variation No. 2 to Monksland/Bellanamullia (Athlone West) Local Area Plan 2016-2022

Submission: From Eamon Martin [REDACTED]

The observations in this submission ref, Proposed Athlone Joint Retail Strategy and the following content is not to undermine the importance of the of a joint strategy. It can said, that to produce an effective strategy relevant to a specific area, particularly Athlone West where development/retail strategies are unpredictable, is a daunting task. It may be noted that the planning Authority recently granted permission for a large Business enterprise development close to the Athlone Springs Hotel, it is hoped that this application is consequence of a dedicated tenant and not a speculative application, as the latter would be inconsistent with the policies set in the LAP, policies to utilize the vacant units already in the area. The current Vacant Units already creating an atmosphere of neglect or misery.

The proposed new Strategy has to merge what's on the table to the different county development plans. It is noted that the Proposed Athlone Joint Retail Strategy does not cover commercial activity on the Roscommon road, while the M/Blap has excluded this area from the plan. This area appears under developed with large vacant plots, a bit like having farming in an urban setting. This area presents a poor reflection of the vitality of Athlone and the status of regional town. The Council promoted this area, there were many proposals for development, with substantial investment been attributed to it and while it had never been excluded from development by any of the planning decisions, it appears to be the forgotten area.

One noticeable fact is that the Monksland and Bellanmullia LAP has presented retail as the fabric of the plan. In doing so there appears to be a mixing of industrial, business, commercial and amenity. All of which is condensed, but remarkably set astride the main roadway. How this is practicable or achievable in creating a vibrant area remains, it appears more of a presentation of a Town based in an industrial estate, rather than an industrial estate situated in a town. An amenity park which appears to be a piece from a different jigsaw is portrayed as public realm.

The new Tuam Road was constructed consequence of the M6/N6, It is the foremost piece of infrastructure in the area, In condensing District Centre activities in the designated area particularly the quarry site, would be comparable to building on the avenue to the manor house, incompatible with the formal design and initial concept. Now if somebody wants to distort or un-develop their own master plan, that's their prerogative, but in public terms it would be a disaster to redesign an area without perspective of the long term implications.

In focusing on the preferential development sites, sites which have strategic potential, the area plan is supplementing development strategy for the sake of development rather than considered approach.

The new proposed Athlone Joint retail Strategy appears to accept the concept of a town on the side of the road, a traditional town 'Moate', The planners have the opportunity to evaluate that such towns evolved in a practical manner for the era, and while it can be commended that such town designs, however anticipated incorporated motorway sized streets, the planners currently have an opportunity to plan or promote practical solutions for Athlone West Area. This could only involve a strategy that would 'not' create traffic congestion or undermine the infrastructure in place. The previous RCCDP restricted any new access junctions on the new Tuam Road, The TII reports concern regards the roads and any further development, while the residents currently suffer major delays at peak times.

The new Proposed Joint Retail Strategy, refers to the Athlone Boundary Commission Review, the Boundary Committee recommends a Joint area Plan and also Joint Retail Strategy, It may be suggested that a combined plan would be the precursor of a Retail Strategy. The Boundary Commission Report presents a circumstance where the Athlone west LAP was adopted "However" irrespective of the concerns of Athlone Town Council, the ATC stating that the increase in DC would affect the viability of the town centre. The commission also reports on the inconsistency relating to the RCC's own polices and the extension in Retail area. The TII states the LAP did not implement the recommended critical traffic strategies, this indicates or suggests that guidelines are now being presented after the cards were dealt or in the middle of the game. The promotion of a proposed retail strategy in such circumstances or its adoption in current format, would imply an acceptance of inconsistent policies, policies independently assessed as dubious. Bad Planning. It is expected that, this platform of public consultation implies such anomalies will be considered before there is a conclusion, a conclusion set which may leave the planning system in disrepute. To advance the current strategy would be bypassing the fundamental evidence basis of the planning system. It is therefore asked that the concerns be considered, that this variation No 2 is unfitting in the circumstances.

Thank you Eamon Martin



Reference documents,
Athlone Boundary Commission Report 2016,
The RPGs 2012 The Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012
RCCDP 2014-2022, RCCDP 2008-2014 , Current Roscommon Retail Strategy
Monksland/Bellanamullia Lap 2016-2022

