
Shannonbridge Action Group



Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly

Date 31st July 2020

Re: Shannonbridge Village Draft Development Plan 2021 - 2027

To whom it concerns

This submission is being made in respect of the Shannonbridge Draft Village Plan 2021 -2027 which addresses a number of important Settlement Objectives.

The overall approach to the development of Shannonbridge as proposed is welcomed it is further welcomed that the Local Authority wish to explore enhancing the links between Shannonbridge and Clonmacnoise Monastic site by creating provision for a visitor centre in Shannonbridge. It is also acknowledged that significant portions of land in the vicinity of the village core are restricted from development due to Environmental and Flood designations.

It is also noted that the village population has continued to decline - 15% since census 2011 and over all -21% since 2006. Furthermore, the future of West Offaly Power and Bord Na Mona as significant employers and economic drivers in the area is very much in doubt.

It is therefore welcome to see the Economic Development and Regeneration Objectives as detailed to provide for enterprise development in the area. With peat extraction and traditional energy generation industries ceasing the Community is very much in transition.

1. Notwithstanding the Objectives SO5 and SO6 which are welcome; it is opined that given the location of Shannonbridge within a number of Special Areas of Conservation and National Heritage Areas Shannonbridge has the potential to be a significant base for tourists from which to explore the more sensitive sites of the area. It is accepted that these sites are not settlement-based but are of outstanding natural beauty with protected views. Should Shannonbridge be designated for such a purpose it would facilitate the more effective management of sensitive sites while still facilitating public access. It would also facilitate the establishment of visitor-related enterprises in Shannonbridge in order to enhance its employment potential.

It is submitted, therefore that SO6 be expanded to include "To make provision for developments that establish Shannonbridge as a visitor base for Clonmacnoise Monastic site *and its Cultural Landscape* and as a destination...."

2. It is public knowledge that West Offaly Power is progressing towards decommissioning and possible demolition with reversion to a brown filed site. Regarding the future of these lands it is submitted that it would be appropriate for the Planning Authority to indicate its future intentions regarding the area and lands in question.

It is welcome that the “Council considers that there is significant potential to develop a Green Energy Hub in County Offaly, which focuses on the higher order aspects of the industry such as research, new technologies, headquarter development, assembly, maintenance and financing, due to its extensive area of peatlands, its long history in power generation and its proactive position in relation to renewable energy developments over the past decade.”

Given the long history in Shannonbridge of peat extraction and electricity production it is submitted that Offaly County Council consider including in the Shannonbridge Draft Development Plan a specific objective statement within the Economic Development and Regeneration Objectives such as “To explore the development of a Green Energy Hub in Shannonbridge”

3. It is noted that there is little area zoned for green space, a specific objective of Shannonbridge Village plan 2014 to 2020 for the provision of a civic green space for the village was not achieved.

It is therefore submitted that the area outlined in green on the attached map be zoned as open space.

