

Offaly Development Plan 2021-2027 submission. Offaly needs to reinvent itself urgently. Since the 1940's the County has been sustained by Bord na Mona and the residual peat burning power stations in Rhode, Portarlinton, Lumcloon and Shannonbridge. In addition there were briquette making factories at Mountlucas and Derrinlough. The threatened demise of all this activity requires an urgent response. A reinvigorated Offaly can contribute greatly to the future of the midlands and Ireland. The County has significant resources not least its people and the large tracts of lands owned by Bord na Mona , OPW ,Parks and Wildlife and Coillte. The Council needs to lead the preparation of a strategy for the future regeneration of the County. Fergal Mc Cabe has already articulated an approach to the regeneration of Tullamore which I wholeheartedly endorse. Tullamore is fortunate that there are a number of key Town Centre sites ripe for development. The towns of Birr, Clara, Portarlinton, and Edenderry likewise need investment. While smaller settlements like Banagher, Daingean, Ferbane, Kinnity, Kilcormac and Shannonbridge, are significant service and Educational Centres. Accessibility and Connectivity are key to the future. Accessibility between Offaly and the rest of the world requires the urgent development of the N52/N80 links from the M 6 at Kilbeggan to the M 7 south of Portlaoise. The section from Kilbeggan to Tullamore needs urgent improvement to allow the development of Durrow Abbey site. If the road improvement is likely to be delayed then a short term solution will be required. Temporary radar controlled traffic lights coupled with a temporary speed limit and traffic calming would allow the development of access to the Durrow site in the interim. Bus services from Birr, Tullamore and Edenderry and between these towns and to Dublin, Dublin airport and elsewhere need urgent improvement. Bus services from Tullamore to Dublin Airport need to be on a par with services from Athlone, Mullingar and Portlaoise. The Bus service from Edenderry needs to be routed via Enfield to make possible a link with the train service from there to Dublin and Sligo.. The rail service from Tullamore needs urgent improvement particularly early morning services to Dublin and Galway. The integration of the two modes of public transport needs the development of a bus/rail interchange at Tullamore railway station. The provision of a commuter style train service from Tullamore to Dublin will have a great bearing on the speed at which Tullamore expands. Bypasses are needed for Birr, Clara, and Edenderry. New roads are also required to improve accessibility and permeability within Tullamore e.g. from Tanyard Lane to the High Street, Harbour Street to Kilbride Plaza, and O'Neill's Place to O'Moore Street. CONNECTIVITY Connectivity with Broadband and third level education need to be priority objectives of the plan. In addition connectivity with other agencies needs urgent attention. The initiation of a

task force strategy mobilising the resources of other agencies and the Offaly Diaspora needs to be pursued without delay. Ferghal McCabe, I think it was, who stated that Tullamore has the potential to become the Cambridge of the Midlands. It has very good primary schools and four very good secondary schools . All that is required now is a University to complete the cycle. 940 people sat the Leaving Cert in Offaly in 2019 and there will be a need to provide facilities for the people who would have gone into Bord na Mona /E.S.B. type employment in the recent past. A linkage between the Midland School of Nursing, University of Limerick (UL) and The Midland Regional Hospital at Tullamore already exists. Trinity College Dublin (TCD) is leading the development of the ILOFAR project in Birr with the provision of a postgraduate research centre there . Many Universities currently use midland sites for research purposes. This activity could be coordinated and developed from a centre in Tullamore leading to the foundation of a University. HOUSING Houses provided by the Local Authorities are the predominant type of housing in Offaly towns and villages. The local authority needs resources to again contribute to the alleviation of the Housing Shortage. The desire to use brownfield sites is commendable. Some of these sites are too valuable to be diverted from town centre uses to housing. Similarly additional surface car parking in Tullamore town centre should be avoided. HERITAGE AND CULTURE Heritage and culture can become vehicles for regeneration . Individual sites such as monastic and bog sites can be presented as elements of heritage and tourist trails. Similarly the Tullamore Dew visitor centre and Kilbeggan distillery site can be linked into a national whiskey trail from Cork to Bushmills. Ancient routes like the Sli mor (from Clonard and Enfield to Loughrea via Edenderry, Tullamore, Clara, Ferbane, and Shannonbridge.) should be developed as an alternative route to the M4/M6. Sites like Durrow Abbey, Daingean, Croghan, Seir kleran, Lemonaghan, Birr and Banagher need to be developed and made accessible. Cycling and walking routes need investment and promotion. The development of key sites need to be developed as a priority to demonstrate what is possible and achievable e.g. Durrow, Daingean and Croghan Hill. Continued investment in the The Grand Canal, Slieve Blooms , Shannon Corridor and Bogland sites like Boora, Ballycon, Cavemount, Clara, Clongowney, Derryonce, Drinagh, Killaun, Lullymore, Mountlucas, Mongan, Noggus and Raheenmore need to be pursued with vigour and the sites need to be connected to a greater extent.