



**Shannon  
Chamber**  
Advancing business together

# SHANNON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

## A VISION FOR SHANNON TOWN CENTRE

Shannon Chamber Submission

September 2021

## INTRODUCTION

Having engaged extensively in the research process and preparation phase of the draft Shannon Town Masterplan, with Chamber directors and key business stakeholders actively participating in and contributing to the preparatory phases with Clare County Council's team and its consultants, Shannon Chamber welcomes this opportunity to provide commentary and views on the draft Masterplan now presented

In our June 2020 Submission, we expressed the view that while innovation is happening at an enterprise level, and a major programme of investment is in place to reinvigorate Shannon Airport and the Shannon Free Zone, little is happening to enhance the Living Town aspects of Shannon - a town where 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation families now reside.

We also expressed the view that Shannon lacks the natural town centre or streetscape that would be typical in most Irish towns of this size, that there is an absence of significant public buildings that would normally feature in urban areas with the economic significance of a town like Shannon and, that there is a deficit of facilities for community, civic and creative activity.

We welcomed the work that had been done by a group of experienced businesspeople from the community to draw on almost €1m private funds on a not for profit and pro bono basis to deliver a turn-key solution developed to address Shannon's socio-economic and civic deficit. Their ambition was to create a new Heart within the Town Centre that would facilitate retail and restaurants, encourage the use of the town centre, and create a night-time economy and the development of civic, cultural and creative facilities for the community.

In framing a new Masterplan for Shannon Town Centre, we stressed that the vision for Shannon should not be defined in the narrow context as the development of particular plots of town centre land but in the context of what Shannon means and needs to offer to all residents of Shannon – living and working in the town. We stressed that:

- Retail and community growth should not be confined to Shannon Town Centre
- Consideration should be given to reviewing the zoning and ownership status of the land in/around Shannon Town with a view to creating a visible link between the M18 and N19.
- A varied residential mix is essential for Shannon to create the spending power within the town and to attract the ABC1 class resident to Shannon and thereby a different mix of retailers in the town.
- An area in the town centre be ringfenced for the development of a centrally located civic and arts centre to draw footprint to the town and to boost the retail and commercial aspects of the town.

**Key business stakeholders expressed the view that:**

- The town needs an iconic and attractive centre to act as a beacon for people to naturally and conveniently visit.
- The mix of retail and entertainment/experience-based activities needs to be dramatically improved.
- The town is fractured - starts from its centre and ripples outward – a ripple that needs to be reversed, be that through creating a central pulsing plaza, ideally something resembling a street with a strong mix of small shops, bistros, cafes, drawing residents, browsers, and visitors in... as you would find in any other town of its size...or in fact any other town.
- An iconic community, civic & cultural centre could be the cornerstone for a re-imagined town. A focal point, that improved and new facilities could naturally gravitate around.

## Shannon Chamber Review of The Draft Masterplan

Having comprehensively reviewed the Draft Masterplan, Shannon Chamber welcomes the fact that it has taken the Chamber's and key stakeholders' contributions and suggestions into consideration. However, we regard its publication as a first step in the process of arriving at a Final Plan that meets the needs and derives buy-in from all strata of Shannon's community.

We welcome the fact that it has been shared via public consultation and would hope that feedback from this process is given due consideration in arriving at a final draft.

### Note 1:

Our key observation is that this is a comprehensive plan, which, if implemented would dramatically change Shannon's landscape. However, the key to its success is **demonstrable implementation with key actions, timelines and milestones** built in.

### Note 2:

The success to its delivery is the appointment of a **dedicated and full-time Project Director** whose key focus would be on the delivery of the Plan in a timely manner.

### Note 3:

Given that so many past Plans for Shannon lack this delivery aspect, the appointment of a full-time Project Director would **demonstrate commitment by Clare County Council to creating a new vision for Shannon**. It would also facilitate early delivery of flagship projects such as the One Shannon Hub, retail, and residential developments along the Main Street.

### Note 4:

**How is the Masterplan to be financed?** If totally dependent on URDF funding, how speedily or successful will such an application be, or will its implementation be dependent on multi-phased applications, adversely affecting the delivery of the Masterplan in a speedy and timely manner?

### Note 5:

We welcome the inclusion of the One Shannon Hub in the Masterplan to act as a focal point for the town, the presence of Clare County Council in the Hub and the multi-functional use as a civic and community hub with a civic theatre; and the 'Glasshouse' proposal in the Hub as a seed for emerging start-ups / hot desking etc., is very welcome, but, we question the space allocation therein between civic offices, community and creative spaces.

Note 6:

We welcome the proposal to create a new 'Main Street' at the heart of the 'Innovation Corridor'. We would request that the 'Flight' sculpture, currently located in the Town Square, which was inaugurated by the then President Mary McAleese to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in 1999, of Shannon Development, together with the adjoining flagpoles, be repositioned, in a prominent location, on the new 'Main Street'. This could be accompanied by a suitable plaque or information panel giving details of the origins and evolution of the Shannon Story - Shannon Airport, Shannon Free Zone and Shannon Town.

Note 7:

We recognise and agree with the approach to consolidate retail to the south of Bothar Mor to enable increased footfall and opportunity for spin-off trips between the anchor retailers, and the focus on urban design to make Shannon Town Centre visually attractive is very welcome.

Note 8:

While the Masterplan proposed the delivery of mixed-use developments south of the proposed 'Main Street', and this is in line with the need to increase footfall to the Town Centre, it would be beneficial to provide examples of where this concept has worked successfully. As stated in our pre-Draft submission, care should be taken to deliver a full mix of residential solutions that cater for the needs of all stages and types of family life and encourage more people to choose to live in Shannon.

Note 9:

We also welcome the Enterprise / Campus and Centre of Excellence for industry on the lands to the north. The success of this will depend on engagement between Clare County Council/ IDA/ Industry and Higher-Level education. This will build on Shannon's history of innovation. Shannon Chamber will be delighted to assist in the achievement of this vision through its linkages with industry. The location of such a Centre of Excellence and an enterprise campus in the town centre would create huge spin-off benefits for the enterprise and

the commercial core of Shannon town itself. Shannon Chamber would suggest that the creation of an Innovation Campus should, however, not detract from but rather enhance other industrial areas in the town. The development of a definitive vision for this Campus should be an integral element of the dedicated and full-time Project Director's role.

**Note 10:**

As stated in our previous submission, the Shannon Town Masterplan should also **focus on sustainable transport and functional linkages** between the Town Centre and other industry locations around Shannon e.g., Shannon Free Zone, Shannon Airport, Smithstown etc. Shannon Chamber is concerned with the plans to divert current traffic flows along the R471 as this is currently the connector route between Ballycasey, the Town Centre and Drumgeely. More and substantive detail on the management of traffic between these three locations and for delivery to retail centres etc., is warranted in the compilation of the final Masterplan.

## **Summary**

Shannon Chamber, once again, welcomes this opportunity to present our views to Clare County Council on the draft Shannon Town Masterplan – A Vision for Shannon Town Centre.

We welcome the collaboration that has taken place to date with the Clare County Council team to reach this point and we are committed to maintaining and building on this collaboration to attain the successful finalisation of and roll out of this very important Masterplan for Shannon.

This Plan, unlike previous Plans, MUST be delivered on, and rolled out in its entirety to definitive timelines, set down at the outset.

The appointment of a **dedicated and full-time Project Director** and **an implementation plan with key actions, timelines and milestones** built in is therefore crucial to the attainment of this goal.

Shannon Chamber earnestly calls for this appointment to be guaranteed to ensure that the vision, as set out in the draft Masterplan, is attained, thus demonstrating a commitment by Clare County Council to delivery of this enhanced vision for Shannon.

ENDS