



**Shannon  
Chamber**  
Advancing business together

**SHANNON TOWN AND ENVIRONS**

**LOCAL AREA PLAN 2024 – 2030**

**PRE-DRAFT ISSUES PAPER**

**SHANNON CHAMBER SUBMISSION**

**September 2023**

## Preface

Shannon Chamber welcomes this opportunity to partake in the ‘Pre-Draft: Phase 1 – Presentation of an Issues Paper’ stage of the development of the Shannon Town and Environs, Local Area Plan 2024 – 2030.

In responding to the sets of questions presented in the call for submissions, we were cognizant of the contributions we have made to a number of other ‘calls for submissions’ that should also be taken into account when preparing this Plan, namely: the Shannon Town Masterplan, the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) Southern Region, the N19 Airport Access Road Improvement Scheme. Comments provided below also include direct feedback from Shannon Chamber member companies.

In developing a Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan, Shannon’s strategic positioning as the gateway to the region should not be overlooked. The look and vibe of Shannon and the image it portrays to international and/or first-time visitors should reflect the level of investment that multinational companies are making in Shannon. Currently, the entry point looks poor and uncared for and lacking investment. Shannon has a history of firsts and needs to be show it has advanced and is not stuck in a time warp.

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## Shannon Chamber Response to Stage 1 of the Public Consultation Process– Issues Paper

### POPULATION, PLACEMAKING AND URBAN DESIGN

#### Q: How can the quality of existing residential areas be enhanced?

- Lack of Council funding results in limited maintenance of existing services. For example, roadside kerbs are regularly overgrown with weeds. The cleaning truck used for this service needs to operate more frequently and to ensure that all areas are covered.
- Landscape maintenance and grass cutting has improved but this needs to be maintained and enhanced.
- Public realm areas such as the forests, estuary walkways, wetlands area, are not regularly maintained. Doing so would enhance residential amenities.
- Older housing should be retrofitted, windows replaced and houses painted.
- Grants could be given to upgrade housing for climate impacts.
- Investment to ensure housing provision by Clare CC is high standard.
- Local sports club facilities are crucial in provision of quality residential areas/ attraction of key talent.

#### Q: What type of housing is required in Shannon Town and Environs and where should it be located?

- A mix of housing types is required - public and private:
  - starter homes for young families.
  - step-down or shared residential facilities for older residents.
  - step-up or aspirational types for established families ready to move to next stage or senior managers looking for middle-class homes in a good environment.
  - Mixture of detached, semi-detached and apartments.

**Q: Where are the key opportunity sites for (re) development in Shannon Town and Environs?**

- The community of Shannon has become more like other Irish towns with an ageing population. This means that there is a range of long-occupied older homes potentially becoming available for re-invention and re-use.
- Terraced houses in places such as Drumgeely, Tullyvarraga, Cronin, when vacated by older people, provide opportunities for refurbishment as starter homes.
- Larger standalone homes in places like Tullyglass, Tullyvarraga, Ballycasey, could be regenerated as aspirational homes.
- Sites close to the town centre (as highlighted in the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan) could be used for development of shared residential areas suitable for those planning for places to live in later life.
- Plans and policies could be implemented to encourage this type of movement between generations.
- Shannon needs detached and semi-detached homes. In terms of location away from the river as there are renewed struggles for people getting house insurance in particular areas. Perhaps the land where Park Rangers, St. Senan's Rugby and Newtown FC once had their pitches ... the area opposite the Shannon Spring Hotel.
- A good bit of development land close to Ballycasey House.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOWN CENTRE AND RETAIL DEVELOPMENT**

**Q: What supports/services are required in the area to sustain and grow employment and employment potential?**

- Attraction and retention of new and existing skills is a key issue for employers.
- The quality of the living environment and availability of places to live has been consistently highlighted by employers as a barrier to skills.
- This links back to the responses given in the previous section.
- Maybe a local bus to run a few times during the day and again in the evening time, more taxi/cab or uber.
- There needs to be an increase in housing supply.
- Enhanced shopping outlets.
- Greater recreational facilities (outdoor and indoor).
- More Housing for workers/ their families.
- Town plan with adequate zoning to provide current and future stock of suitable office, industrial commercial and residential space.
- Sustainable business rates.
- Community amenities (e.g., sports grounds, town hall etc) School provision.
- Suggest reference to in/out trips to Shannon – people commute to work here/ do not live here. Need to reverse this trend – the provision of accommodation and services is the route to address it. The town centre existing housing stock is tired, and there is no 'town centre' per se. You need a 'main street' with cafes/ restaurants etc to provide a focal point.... implementation of the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan is critical.

**Q: How can Shannon Town and Environs further capitalise on business opportunities?**

- In connection with the Shannon Group, look at identifying more vacant sites for development thus attracting more international companies to the area.
- Promote airport for inward investment.
- Create reasons for workers to visit (a) the shops; (b) recreational facilities and (c) housing, to ensure workers can live locally.
- Coherent strategy and implementation of same promoting the region as an attractive place to live and do business.

**Q: What type of retail/commercial services are required to serve the population and where should developments be located?**

- This has been well covered in previous plans, most recently the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan.
- Shannon Chamber would call for the implementation of all the recommendations made in this Plan so that they move from plan to reality.
- There needs to be significant development of a wide array of retail outlets, located in the existing Town Centre building or areas immediately around it.
- Clothing.
- Technology-related.

**Q: How can the Local Area Plan support tourism in Shannon Town and Environs?**

- Position Shannon as the Gateway to the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW).
- Use the One Shannon Hub (when delivered) or a nearby facility in the town centre as an attraction or briefing point linked to the WAW.
- Facilitate the development and expansion of the Shannon Aviation Museum.
- Actively promote the Shannon drop-off point on the Shannon Estuary Way.
- Further develop the greenway by the river and out to Bunratty.
- Promotion of key Tourism activities ... Shannon Loop Walk.
- Ensure adequate supply of suitable accommodation for tourists...particularly in Bunratty.
- Look to redevelop Shannon Shamrock Hotel and ensure that Bunratty Castle Hotel is reopened to tourism once suitable accommodation for the current residents is sourced.
- Focus on hotel capacity and leisure pursuits!

## **MOVEMENT, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Q: What are the key transport and infrastructure related issues facing Shannon Town and Environs?**

- Implement the N19 Airport Access Road Improvement Scheme.
- Keep attention on the long-term potential for rail.
- Improve bus services (public and private) to/from Shannon Airport.
- Increase taxi or ride-sharing options in the town, airport and zone.
- There is an urgent need to improve/upgrade/extend bus services between Shannon and Limerick/Ennis as there has been a lot of negative comment and feedback on this in recent times. It is important, from a long-term sustainability perspective, that this aspect of public transport is adequately dealt with, for various reasons: tourism, town residents, and airport perspectives.
- The traffic lights at Aidan Park need to be upgraded; they are currently slow to change, and this is not a good entry point/introduction to Shannon.
- Lack of public transport late at night.
- Not enough public transport for Shannon town and its environs.
- Airport and Industrial-estate connectivity must be enhanced - bus / rail.

**Q: What additional infrastructure is required to support development in Shannon Town and Environs?**

- Move from feasibility to action on the greenway from Shannon to Bunratty. Develop this further to connect with Limerick and Ennis.
- 24-hour bus and taxi terminal.
- The addition of the train link to Shannon Airport would be helpful.

**Q: How can the plan support agencies in the provision of water and wastewater infrastructure?**

- The water supply network is old and may need upgrading to address vulnerabilities and water pressure issues.

**Q: How can energy conservation and alternative sources of renewable energy be encouraged?**

- Photovoltaic solutions for roofing on buildings in the Shannon Free Zone and on residential areas.
- Review potential for biomass given compact nature of the airport, industrial and residential zones.
- There are large open areas that lend themselves to the development of large-scale solar PV energy projects, including the airfield itself, as well as open areas within the industrial parks.
- Further grants for the installation of Solar PVs.
- Incentivise - incentivise and incentivise (bring the people with you). Most people WANT to do it but take car transport as an example. The things holding back people relate to lack of EVs, cost of same, range anxiety and lack of charging infrastructure. As these issues are addressed there will be 100% take-up but telling people to stop buying cars and to use non-existent public transport is FUTILE.

**Q: Where should new or improved footpaths and cycleway links and connections be located in Shannon Town and Environs?**

- See previous inputs to Shannon Town Centre Master Plan and the N19 Airport Road Access Improvement Scheme. There is an opportunity, highlighted multiple times, to piggyback on the flood relief works to create a greenway on the embankments from Shannon Airport, via the town to Bunratty and beyond.
- New footpath should be developed from the first roundabout near Ballycasey and joined to the main town footpaths.
- Additional pedestrian crossing from the residential areas to the industrial estate.
- A link to Bunratty would help significantly. It is also important that the Shannon Loop Walk is maintained.
- Residential/Free Zone cycle route links to promote increased use of bikes / decrease car dependency for those living/working in the town and its environs.

**Q: How can the Local Area Plan best promote and support a modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport?**

- Timing and frequency of bus services.
- Taxi services are limited.
- Introduce ride sharing options.
- Locate drop-off and pick-up points for bike sharing at a greater number of locations around the town.
- More e-bikes like are currently available and electric bus around the town.
- Charging locations for EV transport modes and increase car charge points.

**Q: How can the safety of vulnerable users i.e., cyclists/pedestrians be managed?**

- Plan for and implement segregated walk and cycle ways.
- Use the existing pathways through green areas in the town.
- Add lighting to these paths to encourage safe and secure use at times of darkness.
- Through the provision of further cycle lanes and footpaths ... however, in the town itself these are already largely present.
- Teach them and enforce the rules of the road. The concept of personal responsibility seems to have been abandoned.
- Whose idea was it to put cyclists on the inside of drivers - ON the road? I was taught as a young child to NEVER cycle on the inside of a car as it was so dangerous. In most cases abroad, the cycle lanes are on elevated footpaths.

**Q: Should parking standards for new developments reflect the need to reduce car dependence?**

- Yes, Shannon was built as a town where everyone travelled to/from outside locations by bus. The requirement for parking cannot be eliminated without developing realistic, frequent, timely and affordable travel options such as bus transport. Without adequate support infrastructures in place (bus, rail, cycle), reduction in car space provision is premature.
- No, not until there is significant and viable public transport alternatives.

**CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION, FLOODING AND DRAINAGE**

**Q: What are the main environmental issues facing Shannon Town and Environs and how can the Local Area Plan address these?**

- Flood relief works are planned. Some work has been completed by the airport. The plans for areas protecting the industrial zone and town need to be implemented. In doing so the amenity and leisure value of the existing walkways along the embankments should be protected, enhanced, and widened to include cycle and other e-friendly options.
- This will also serve to protect the treeline, birdwatch and wetland strengths of the area. All of these contribute to social wellbeing as well as to an attractive and sustainable environment.

**Q: How can the Local Area Plan achieve a balance between the growth of Shannon Town and Environs and the protection of the environment?**

- Develop areas for nature and more sports fields.
- Designated protected areas, particularly close to the river could be implemented and other areas prioritized for housing.
- Develop a carbon neutral/saving plan (model) for the town i.e., more industry, lower emissions from all industry, inhabitants etc.

**Q: How can Shannon Town and Environs be established as a centre for low carbon commerce and community?**

- As highlighted in earlier comments, there is potential to properly manage and extend the thousands of trees and shrubs that were planted in the 1970s and 1980s.
- They serve as wind shelters, absorbers of excess moisture and carbon and have strong amenity and biodiversity value.
- Encourage government to extend the grants to entice all business and homeowners to install some green energy, solar panels, heat pumps.
- Council to engage with industry and Shannon inhabitants - collaboratively working together versus through regulation, back-office decisions etc.

**COMMUNITY, RECREATION, GREEN/BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE, BUILT AND NATURAL**

**HERITAGE**

**Q: What community infrastructure and facilities are lacking in Shannon Town and Environs and where should these be located?**

- The 2008 local area plan highlighted the need for civic, community and cultural facilities. The business case was developed extensively and implemented to planning permission level with private sector funding from 2012 onwards with The Venue project. The land has been transferred to the council so that they can lead and implemented the One Shannon Hub identified in the Shannon Town Master Plan. The Implementation of this project has to be prioritised, given companies' investment in time to contribute to its formulation and their expectations of its delivery in full.
- Civic, cultural and community facilities are severely lacking despite the wealth of talent in the town. This absence also detracts from the living appeal of the town and negatively affects attraction and retention of staff to the large number of internationally traded and knowledge intensive businesses located in Shannon.
- Large sports centre.

**Q: Are there sufficient sports, amenity and recreation facilities in the Town and Environs?**

- Shannon has an extensive range of community-led, developed, owned, and operated sporting facilities in the town.
- There is potential to re-develop the former all-weather pitch and running track. This is located in a designated sporting area surrounded by other sporting uses including rugby, soccer, GAA, camogie. The Illaunamanagh Park Run starts and finishes next to the track but without any means of access.
- There is potential for the local area plan to map out an integrated development vision for this area with potential for shared infrastructure and services.
- This is about building on what exists in a way that modernises and increases the resources available to a range of sporting and outdoor facilities for all ages.
- More playing pitches for underage.

**Q: Are there any other natural features /routes that could be developed as walkways/greenways?**

- Yes, see previous comments on the river embankments and flood protection (in response to Q1 in the Climate Change Adaptation section).
- See also the comments on the last-mile development opportunity for the embankments between the water treatment facilities and Bunratty (in response to Q4 in the Climate Change Adaptation section)

**Q: What features of the town's natural and built heritage should be conserved and enhanced?**

- The town has been developed around the geographic features of the drumlins that form Drumgeely, Tullyglass and Tullyvarraga hills. These combine both residential and community use that should be reinstated, enhanced, and maintained.
- There are extensive wetlands and diversity areas throughout the town with large open green spaces, forests, and riverside areas. These should also be conserved and enhanced.
- The same is true of the original road to the town ("the boreen") that runs from Smithstown to Hastings Cottage. The remaining cottage and remnants of previous cottages should be retained.
- The restoration of Hastings Cottage should be supported and highlighted as an important asset for Shannon as a tourism attraction and community amenity.
- The town park enhanced further and look at incorporating another park in the Ballycasey area.
- Area close to the river should be preserved. There is limited built heritage due to the age of the town.
- Don't make use of the unique story of the creation of Shannon Town, Airport, Ind. Estate etc.

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