Planning Department

Leitrim County Council

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**Submission to Leitrim County Development Plan 2022-2028 by**

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My submission is as follows:

**VISION**

The current vision statements need revision. The central tenets should be Sustainability,

Wellbeing, living spaces, economy, culture, heritage, pride and celebration. For example-

Develop Leitrim as a sustainable, creative, inclusive and unique place, fostering

wellbeing of communities through balanced economic development, creating attractive

life places, valuing our unique culture, environment, natural heritage, becoming a Green

and Proud County.

The strategic issues document could be interpreted as promoting the vision of the recently

revised Corporate (“legal person”) Plan. However, that vision appears to weigh “legal person”

over “human person”, but both are important for sustainability. The Corporate Plan vision is

inappropriate for the CDP vision.

**1. Delivering for our people.**

There are many things to be proud of in Leitrim, but dying communities are evident. The

loss of pride fosters neglect and abandonment of previously sustainable communities.

The CDP vision must be sustainability and regeneration of people and places.

**2. Delivering for our places**

Foster an understanding of the unique history and heritage of our places, understand

why a place is resilient, and encapsulate that in our vision. A heritage officer can only do

so much, we need consistent regional visions - and some place-biased community

organisations must reinvent as regional-biased focus groups.

**3. Delivering for our economy**

The CDP plan must rejuvenate pride of place. Current and future proud generations will

drive sustainable and deliver on our economy. Short term gain, often national policy, is

killing our county. Economic growth is driven by motivated and well people..

**Q. What kind of County would I like to see Leitrim become by 2028?**

A county that delivers on an appropriate vision.

**Q. What critical elements would need to be in place to achieve the kind of County we are**

**striving for?**

The GAA is the only community-driven organisation delivering for every community who

is interested in that organisation's mission. All other count organisations are focused on

specific places and communities - so sustainable development of people and places is

hit and miss. We need to encourage community-based organisations involved in

important cultural, heritage, environmental, economic, and educational activities to

ensure regional coverage (i.e. All Leitrim, south Leitirm, north Leitrim) scope so disparate

people and places can belong! It should be the policy of the CDP to encourage unique,

place-specific, community organisations to develop a more regional focus. The GAA

organisation is one example of effective coverage of vision and place.

**• What are the main challenges which would prevent this happening?**

People need to ask themselves what am I doing to realize the CDP vision.

**How would you change the current vision statement for County Leitrim?**

See above.

**Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework**

“550,000 new houses are going to be required and a further 660,000 jobs”.

Houses nurture families, places, and communities. Sustainable housing matching “Green

vision” with creation/reuse of our built environment will deliver the housing. People in Leitrim are

missing opportunities to obtain high-value employment in high-growth services industries

(including remote work). That must be addressed. Part of our workforce is forced to obtain and

defend low-paid services jobs in unsustainable industries like Sitka Spruce harvesting, which

destroys community wellbeing and pride. The correct vision will deliver jobs and houses but

sustainable places and people and economy are intertwined.

**Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region**

Some successful investments in Carrick on Shannon, Ballinamore and Manorhamilton are

noted. This is correct - identify a few key towns and address economic growth here. The CDP

must treat all people and places equally and deliver for ALL stakeholders. Digital infrastructure

is critical for globalized, inclusive, sustainable place and person development and wellbeing.

Never stop building the economy but follow the correct vision.

Core Strategy

**Give Mohill tier-2 status.** It was the ecclestical capital of south Leitrim since forever. Canons of

the Diocese of Ardagh were based in Saint Mary’s Priory of Mohill). Mohill has a well defined

history traced to at least 500AD (Carrick on Shannon only dates to the 1600's). CDP should

acknowledge the fact Mohill sustains communities in Mohill, Cloone, Carrigallen areas. Ideally

Ballinamore-Mohill would be jointly tier-2A. An explanation is warranted why Mohill, south

Leitrims oldest recorded community, is missing from tier-2A

Develop sustainable communities in lower-tiers by identifying the key attributes of these places

(through the ages) around which a future can be wrapped. For example Granard, county

Longford was dying so they identified the fact a medieval Motte was the key attribute of Granard

so they developed a “Knights and Conquerors” sustainable community-based centre and future

looks brighter. Granard is a low-tier town but when a key attribute is identified in any tier pace,

o our vision must be to develop a sustainable community-based future around that key attribute.

Examples of (ancient) heritage based attributes in south Leitrim include the following and no

heritage and historical trail development has occurred yet. Community-based groups need to

collaborate and coordinate a response to develop a sustainable future based on a resilient past.

This will drive our vision for people, places, economy, and reinvent ourselves. Our history must

be inclusive and recognize we are an ancient land (Leitrim before Leitrim moto).

● Heritage Network (Sli Conmaicne, South Leitrim)

○ Carrick on Shannon

■ Druma Ruisc = Skirmish hill (after 1270)

■ Bridge = Ath Cora Connaill (before 1270)

■ Sli Iarla (Ears trail) from Summerhill to Gowel (1270 English camp)

■ Cortober = Puirt Na Leice (1270 English Camp)

■ Woods of Conmaicne = Carrick on Shannon Electoral area (1270)

■ English Fort (1600s)

○ Grange

■ Monastic Farm ruins (atonement for the slaughter of 1270)

○ Sheemore

■ Sacred landscape, neolithic (cairn of Nissi?) - beware opening up access

to this amenity because Sligo is experiencing unprecedented vandalism

of its neolithic monuments and the Cairn on Sheemore is one of our few

examples. Protect Sheemore/Sheebeg monuments at all costs.

○ Leitrim Village

■ Ath an Chip = Battlebridge = Ford marked by upright tree stump

■ Beal Atha an Chip = Battlefield (multiple townlands, 1270)

■ Port townland = Caiseal Ath an Chip (1245-47)

■ Proposed Blueway trail = Sli Aedh O’Conchobar (start/end)

○ Kilclare

■ Lios Conchobar = O’Conchobar’s fort (army fort 1260-1270)

■ Existing Blueway trail = Sli Aedh O’Conchobar (middle of)

○ Lough Scur

■ Agha Scur = field of the Scur = Gael and Islesmen Camp (1260-70 )

■ Castle Island = Caiseal Aedh (1265)

■ Caiseal Sean Na gCeann Reynolds (1570 to present)

■ Proposed Blueway trail = Sli Aedh O’Conchobar (start/end)

○ Mohill

■ Established circa 500AD

■ Saint Manchan of Maothail (d. 538)

■ Shrine of Manchan of Maothail (created 1100’s) = Mohil Saint

■ Saint Mary’s Priory of Maotheail Manchan (1200’s)

■ Charles Reynolds (Catholic Martyr), tomb in Vatican (1535 Rebellion)

■ Plague of Justianian graveyards in 3 Tamlaght townlands (540-700s)

■ Mohills incredible history and heritage needs development!

○ Cloone

■ Well definied ancient history (500AD)

■ Former monastic site / two high crosses recorded

■ English Fort (1600s)

○ Ballinamore

■ Hospital of Saint John the Baptist (recorded in Annals, 1200’s)

■ Archaeology around Drumreilly/Lakelands

○ Drumsna

■ Called “Snamh Da Ein” (swim-two-birds) in life of Saint Patrick (700AD)

■ Dun of Drumsna defensive mound (neolithic?)

○ Fenagh

■ Saint Cailin heritage (connect the dots by building heritage network)

○ Dromod

■ Town of Dromod MacShanley (medieval)

■ MagRaghnaills fortress on Innis-Murrin (1500-1600), Dromod Bay

● Suffocated by Sitka Spruce

○ Ballinamore/Drumshanbo

■ Sliabh an Iariann heritage

● Iron smelting / loss of native forests

● Iron smelting at Cornashamsoge

● Narrow Canal (cannot remember technical name) running across the

mountain mentioned in Leitrim Folklore. Donkeys/Horse pulled

narrow barge transporting trees/ iron

○ Brought to Furnace Hill Drumshanbo/Dromod

■ Tuath De Dannan mythology

● Why is this ignored

● “ *They landed on the mountain of the Conmaicne Rein in Connacht”* =

Sliabh An Iarainn. Our landscape is just as ancient as Boyne Valley,

we need to accept and incorporate this.

■ Namurian Geology

● See Patrica Yates (1962) for landmark study of Sliabh an Iarainn.

● “Unique” and “Abundance” of fossils dating > 100 million years

● Patrica Yates died tragically 2 days before defending PhD

● Her research considered so important, posthumously published

■ GeoPark

● We need to develop as Geopark (not Sitka Spruce land).

● Heritage Network (Sli Breifne, North Leitrim)

○ Manorhamilton

■ Fredric Hamilton castle (1600s)

■ Clunin Ua Ruairc (medieval) .. revive this name!!

■ Resilient communty

○ Etc etc

**4.2 Population Change**

Modest population growth is desirable. However if we fail to promote our culture and heritage in

county Leitrim the population, over time, becomes increasingly detached from the heritage of

Leitrim and are less proud. Pride comes from achievements so we need to celebrate our

achievements inclusively and comprehensively to ensure pride endures. If we fail to do this

then population and places are not sustainable, decline causes social issues, and wellbeing of

communities is degraded. Communities have a duty here with Council support.

**4.3 Housing**

Reuse the existing empty housing stock in the country. Promote Green Schemes to reinvigorate

communities. Focus on pride of place to build sustainable long term communities. Tier 1 and

Tier 2 towns could absorb population growth but the decline of non-Tier1 places is a concern.

Developments like the apartment complex in Leitrim Village should not be repeated.

**4.4 Rural Housing**

Try to accomodate the rural tradition. The county plan must vigorously introduce policy

measures to reverse the blanket afforestation of non-native trees in the county. Historically

Leitrim is a buffer county between greater powers and that is true today. Leitrim/Longford/Cavan

will need to vigorously defend the right to policy equality. We are reading that Coillte is replacing

non-native forests with native-broadleafs in Galway/Donegal but their (national) policy is to

afforest county Letirim to the greatest extent due to our historical marginalised geopolitical

situation. Rural houses are being surrounded by Scandinvian trees and the opportunity costs

are nature economy, rewilding economy, sustainable rural communities and pride - nobody is

proud to live in Sitka Spruce landscapes and have tree harvesting on their doorsteps.

Vigorously defend Leitrim’s right to equality in national policy and consult with the people and

places of the county. Leitrim was once covered by vast forests and natural reserves (thus the

bad agricultural land) but we will accept rewilding/native forests (economic growth) but we will

not accept tree-harvesting industry (low value jobs/destruction of our vision).

**4.5 Compact Growth**

**Other than Carrick on Shannon, what other towns and villages should be promoted for**

**population growth and why?**

Tier 1 and Tier 2 towns shall be targeted. Pride of place (engine for economic and social

growth) demands balanced development to promote community development and

disincentivize corporations (legal person) from holding housing stock (NAMA).

**Do you think your town or village has the capacity to sustain more housing growth?**

My town Leitrim Village does not have the capacity for more housing growth? When I

was a child it was about 50 houses now it is hundreds - enough. High capacity housing

development should never again be directed at lower tier towns - the policy failings in

Leitrim county council and Government must not be allowed to manifest again - Policy!

**Do you think that the level of housing development in your town or village has been**

**matched by adequate infrastructure and services?**

Infrastructure is improved.

**• What are the service shortfalls in your area?**

Fast Broadband!

Tourism / Interpretation centres

Blueways

Native Tree rewilding economy (instead of tree harvesting economy) policy

Battlefield Project (to preserve 1270 battlefield)

**What is needed to make your town or village a more desirable place in which to live?**

Fast Broadband. Sustainable development. Stop Sitka Spruce disease.

**How should we deliver compact growth in each of the County’s towns and villages?**

Learn from the Granard, Roscommon Castle, Boyne Valley project. People in those

communities are proud of their place because they understand their identity better. For

low tier towns compact growth is correct - growth in wellbeing, economy, infrastructure,

supports, and halting foreign-tree plantations. I propose the following:

● Develop a Sli Conmaicne brand networking the heritage of south Leitrim tribes.

● Develop a Sli West Breifne brand networking the heritage of north Leitrim tribes.

● The heritage project follows tiered approach:

○ Museum in Carrick on Shannon and Manorhamilton

○ Historical Trails across the region

○ Based on Boyne Valley model.

**What is required to make our towns and villages more self sustaining?**

● Frameworks allowing easy access to community supports.

● Micro loans for non-invasive community improvements or once-off jobs.

● Opt-in Programmes for Global/National/Regional long term policy goals.

**What can we do to encourage the multiple house construction sector in our County to**

**build homes where they are required?**

● Defend the County Development Plan vision

● Make it hard for multi-house development to occur in low-tier towns.

● Review on each subsequent development plan

**How can the Development Plan aid and facilitate the delivery of more homes in the right**

**locations to increase supply**

● Get the vision right and focus on that vision for 2022-2028

● Build a foundation for future growth (2028-2033)

● Focus on Pride of Place in CDP 2022-28

● Treat county as singularity for equitable wellbeing development

● Treat county as tiered place for right location identity

● Cross-county wellbeing and pride of place will encourage demand in the right locations

(i.e. tier1 towns). Not everyone wants to live in rural places.

**Why are rural areas experiencing pressure to accommodate rural housing whilst our**

**rural villages are continuing to decline?**

● People are losing their identity

● FAS schemes year ago addressed local heritage - this stopped

● History societies and cultural societies are stagnant / struggling

● Boyne Valley / Granard / Fenagh are sustainable models for development and growth of

rural villages.

● Scandinvian Trees are not wanted in county Leitrim

**If the Local Authority were to pursue sites in villages and smaller towns where people**

**could build individual dwellings, would this be an attractive option?**

● Qualification rules must be stringent (strong connection with these sites)

**How do we balance the requirements of avoiding pollution of ground and surface water**

**whilst allowing more people to build one off houses in rural areas?**

● Landscape planning. Building beside and above Lakes and Rivers must be stopped.

● High capacity building projects in major Tier1 towns (avoid sprawl)

● My percolation area cost nearly 20K (in 2008); same rules for me should apply for others

● Grant aid (individual dwellings + generational connection + reuse of existing stock)

**How can we improve the design of rural dwellings and buildings in County Leitrim?**

Rectangle shape is both traditional and Green (the envelope is easier to make airtight). For me

Rectangle and traditional shaped houses are an improvement over tall fortress type rural

dwellings which are not ideal, and unsustainable. Some could be an eyesore for future

generations.

**Economic Strategy**

The world has fundamentally changed in 2020. The COVID pandemic is encouraging

companies to allow remote working - this is a huge opportunity and risk for county Leitrim.

Firstly we need to fast-track Fast Broadband infrastructure across the county, following the

tiered model for prioritization. This must be the central and core economic policy aim for county

Leitrim. The new world will turn Leitrims economic statistics on its head and Leitrim GDP will

being growth.

The risk is that pressure on housing in rural areas will increase. The problem for Leitrim is that

its cultural, heritage, historical, natural, and environmental policies are critical for developing the

soul and heart of sustainable and viable communities. When we neglect this rural economy

shrinks. The new world of remote working can allow repopulation of declining towns and

villages but if the newcomers are instilled with pride of place, heritage celebration, and

encouraged to invest in timeless rural infrastructure population will grow but rural decline will

accelerate and social problems (vandalism, theft, suicide) will increase.

For 2022-2028 a focus on reinvigorating Pride of place and cementing the identity of our

communities locally and regionally must be a core aim. Economic growth strategy requires

infrastructure, and people with a sense of purpose, identity, belonging to places which promote

their unique identity. The failure to provide progressive economic growth and associated

high-quality service-orientated employment is that rural people are forced to invest in tree

harvesting causing conflict with neighbours and economic decay within the wider community.

The tree harvesting industry is unsustainable in county Leitrim and damaging the soul. Before

Sitka we had property speculation. The third wave (if you like) should be economic growth

based on improved infrastructure, education/upskilling, and giving highly experienced computing

experts like me a platform to re-educate, advise, or train others. I am also interested in the

historical heritage in county Leitrim - ancient lands should promote the fact - we are an ancient

land!!! (like Boyne Valley, Granard, Fenagh).

**Retail**

**How can the Plan promote / facilitate new economic opportunities?**

Eat our own cake. Leitrim county council should get ahead of the wave and aim to

become fully e-working by 2028.

**Where should new economic development be located?**

Retail must go digitally online! Creative and cultural retail included.

Bricks and Mortar retail has a place. Digital education and supports are needed so that:

(a) Traditional retail can compete online

(b) Online retail can get bricks+mortar presence

One strategy for retail is to seek franchise support. There are many online e-commerce

companies like overstock, amazon, apple which recognize the benefit of investing in

bricks and mortar (retail) for brand awareness and community well-being. This is

perhaps a growth avenue.

**What of promoting brownfield sites for new development?**

No - focus on pride of place, soul, identity, reinvigorating communities and broadband

infrastructure for next seven years. See how the new world unfolds but brownfield site

lacks proper definition. The new wave is to develop working and living spaces in existing

building stock - the green digital wave.

**• Are there new ways of working that should be facilitated e.g. co-working hubs, working**

**from home, live-work units, etc.?**

Yes - get national fast broadband rollout accelerated. The CDP needs to move away

from green-brownfield site development and focus on growth area - online economy.

What type of economic development is appropriate for rural areas? • How can the County’s rural

economy be diversified to sustain rural areas?

**What are your views on economic development in the County?**

Given above.

**What measures can be put in place to ensure Leitrim is viewed as a more attractive**

**employment base?**

The world is now Digital - Retail must adopt - Creative enterprise should be promoted

like never before - the availability of online courses, self-development, and

skill-acquisition programmes on youtube and other providers is remarkable and

free/cheap. Leitrim county Council must be more proactive in educating the population

about career development possibilities and supports. Never before has the world had

such unhindered access to educational resources - assuming the broadband is working -

we need to educate/educate/educate people how to avail of the opportunities.

**How can the County Development Plan support tourism?**

New visions are needed. Consultation forum.

**What can Leitrim do to attract more domestic and overseas visitors?**

● Develop the Battle of Ath an Chip Battle landscape in south Leitrim

● Learn from Granard/Meath and launch twin heritage programs

○ Sli Conmaicne (southern historical heritage network)

○ Sli West Breifne (northern)

● Make “Leitrim before Leitrim” a strategic goal.

**• Are we making best use of our existing heritage sites?**

No - absolutely not!!!

**• How can a balance be achieved between protecting natural landscapes of Leitrim as a**

**resource for tourism and residents of the county whilst accommodating development**

**necessary to sustain the rural community?**

Develop our heritage sites. Pride of place, economic development, etc.

**What policies do you think should be included in the Plan to support rural diversification**

**and industry?**

Digital infrastructure rollout must be priority.

What policies would you like to see in the Plan to support indigenous rural and small scale

industries?

● Develop a two tribes vision for north south Leitrim heritage networks.

● Celebrate the fact we are diverse tribes

● Build South Leitrim rural development model

● Build N. “ “ “ “

●

**• What type of development and services are required in rural areas in order to support**

**existing rural communities?**

Stop rural decline.

**What is your ‘vision’ for rural Leitrim over the life of the next County Development Plan**

**and beyond and how do you think this could be achieved?**

I want our ancient identity and heritage to be acknowledged (like Meath does).

• How do you think the countryside can be safeguarded in terms of biodiversity and habitats

while accommodating development?

Stop tree harvesting industry

Promote Rewilding economy

I ran out of time.

Thank you.

Noel MacLochlainn