

Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022 – 2028

The Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 makes reference to Listowel as “the capital of North Kerry”, part of the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation, a designated heritage town with unique architecture and streetscapes with a strong sense of identity and a unique place to invest, work and live.

As part of Listowel Town Strategic Objectives it is the objective of the Council to:

- Support the development of Listowel as part of the North Kerry/West Limerick/Clare network in accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)
- Re-establishing the “Town Square” as the Cultural Heart and Economic Centre of Listowel

One does not need drone footage to realise that there is only a pair of entry/exit points to the town square along with a cul de sac towards the river. With two controlled pedestrian crossings together with a right-turn allowed at Scully’s corner for traffic travelling south, there is a physical limit as to the throughput of traffic through the town square. The new ring road will not be completed until 2024/2025 and with thousands of cyclists being directed up Bridge Road there is a real danger that the Square will get completely clogged up, pitching car users against cyclists.

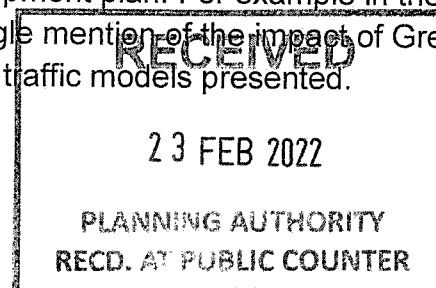
In contrast the area of Upper William Street is neglected, one of the oldest and most historic parts of the town. The Post Office has moved, a famous pub and restaurant is closed, Sluagh Hall is falling into disrepair, what was Walsh’s Ballroom is underutilised, the cinema has closed, the creamery is just about there and the totally unique Lartigue Monorail is not even worthy of a mention in the county development plan (part of it is listed as a protected structure). Yet there is a big focus on the Food Hub and the industrial park of Cleveragh.

One might therefore reasonably conclude that planning in accordance with RSES is to direct everything across town to the square adding to traffic congestion.

Mike the Pies at 28 Patrick Street seems to be the only independent venue with a clear strategy at this side of town and bucking the trend.

Lighting is poor around here at night in an area classed as deprived. Kerry Parents & Friends and St. John of Gods centres also have nowhere nearby to take their patrons during the day.

It would seem to this writer that there is a clear disconnect between what is actually possible and practical versus some form of utopia that is envisioned in the town square and small square in the County development plan. For example in the official EIS for the so called bypass there is not a single mention of the impact of Greenway cyclists, pedestrians and new car users in the traffic models presented.



Secondly, the famous Listowel Race Course gets a fleeting, aspiration heavy mention in the development plan. Closed to the public for 50 weeks of the year it is surprising that no concrete plans have ever been developed to make use of it outside of race meetings.

For example as part of the Greenway it should be possible for the Council to work with Listowel Race Company and open the two footbridges during daylight hours so that cyclists and pedestrians could access the Square from Greenville and vice a versa. Some controlled, casual trading could also be allowed around the grandstands at the back (access to front sealed off). The possibilities are endless here. A simple, electrified fence would keep pets and people off of the racetrack along the river walkway at the Square end. Gates at either end would be closed at night.

Additional town parking could be added at Castleinch – a flood plain that will never have houses built on, to facilitate the above.

Last but not least, Listowel Bridge and the 90 degree turn to Duagh or Tralee. Has it ever occurred to planners the amount of rubber, nitric oxide and black carbon that is emitted from lorries, cattle trucks and all heavy goods vehicles as they attempt to navigate this junction, not to mention ordinary motorists? A slip road from Kerry Ingredients straight onto the Duagh road would eliminate all of the above and improve traffic flow immensely at the 'Big Bridge'.

Sincerely,

Tom McElligott

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February 21st 2022

