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Tipper Rd.,
Naas
Co.Kildare
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9th July 2009

Ken Kavanagh,
Town Clerk,
Naas Town Council,

Submission to Naas Town Council Development Plan 2011 – 2017

Dear Mr. Kavanagh,

I wish to submit the following observations and suggestions for the process of producing the next Town Development Plan 2011 - 2017.

1. INTRODUCTION

The people of Naas are the most important factor in the business of the Town Council and its planning must be prioritised towards their benefit rather than that of the various vested interests of businesses, developers and builders.

Despite its modernity and the doubling of its population in the past 23 years Naas is still a country town, and the emphasis the Town Council has given to the environment and preserving its rural areas and enhancing the country character of its smaller roads in the current Development Plan is to be complimented. It is hoped that this will be continued and enhanced in the 2011-17 plan.

In former years much planning was driven by the demands of builders and developers with some pressure from landowners wishing to piggyback on them and benefit from the late Celtic Tiger. In present circumstances with the drop in the financial fortunes of the developers/builders it is likely that this pressure will have dropped significantly. It is essential for the good of Naas that these pressures are resisted. In addition little notice appears to have been taken of the situation regarding all the essential services e.g. sewerage, roads, water supplies, schools, shops and recreational facilities before rezoning was done. The town and its hinterland are currently suffering from these deficiencies. It would appear essential for proper planning for the future that serious thought be given to this aspect of things where rezoning is considered.

It would appear that at present and for the duration of the next plan, due to the major recession we have and the amount of land that has already been zoned for the different purposes and not used to date – 116 Hectares for Residential alone, there is little or no need to have any new re-zoning in the new plan. The challenge for the Town and County Councils will be to ensure that the housing units that are built and unsold are occupied. This might be an opportunity to clear the housing list. With the help of the County Enterprise Board and the local Business Bodies both Councils could assess the vacant Commercial and Industrial units in the town and its surroundings and endeavour to have them taken up by businesses which will bring back jobs and commerce for the benefit of the Town and its people.

Accordingly it would appear that the thrust of the next plan should include, inter alia, the consolidation of the existing concepts of the present Plan, the enhancement of the Environment, dealing with the Traffic situation in the Town and its surroundings and preserving our Heritage. Doing so would give a breathing space of a few years in which the necessary services e.g. Schools,

Water & Sewerage, Roads, Shopping and Recreational facilities, can be put in place for the existing population as well as any population increase likely in the period.

2. Enhancing the Rural Nature of Naas

The Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use and Transportation – IFPLUT - proposals were a major input into the current Plan and it is to be expected that it will have a bearing on the next one. However according to some vested interests in building and development IFPLUT would cause the town to have an unbalanced type of development. This of course is an opinion held by those who would like to have all the land rezoned and built upon. Over recent years, mainly to cater for the influx of people into Naas, there has been a huge rise in the number of housing estates in the town. These in the main are dormitory areas and do little to enhance either the town or the lives of the people living there. In fact, due to the soulless nature of many of them and deficient as they are in essential social, educational and other infrastructure, they could contain the seeds of future social problems. It is essential that this type of development is drastically curtailed and now is the opportunity for the Council to do so.

Rather than rezone them for development Naas needs to retain and improve its Rural areas to provide a breathing areas for the town, areas where the people can get out of the concrete jungles and enjoy the countryside within walking distance of their homes. To this end the major existing Rural areas of the town principally Craddockstown, Tipper South, West, North & Kingsfurze areas must be preserved for this purpose.

I feel that it is important that the triangular area bounded by the Blessington Rd, Beggars End to Four Corners road and the Tipper Rd be preserved as a Green Belt for the benefit of all the population of the town and surrounding areas. Since I returned to live here in 1970 the "Triangle" of the two Tipper roads and the road by the Rugby Club has been a major area for walking, running and cycling by people of all ages not just to train for various events, marathons and other races, but mostly just for good healthy exercise. This is all the more important in these times with the drive against obesity. For some time the road surface was poor with lots of Pot Holes which made walking/running/cycling quite dangerous but recently part of it has been improved by the both Councils. This area forms a major "lung" for the town and in my opinion it is vital to retain it for such purposes. Doing so is necessary to counterbalance the major building of all types to the N East, North and North West of the town. Development of housing estates or Industrial and/or Commercial premises in this area would destroy this asset. There is already a strong basis for adopting this approach due to the Racecourse, the Craddockstown Golf Course and the Rugby Club all being in this area. These together with the lands of the Tipper Townlands could form such a Recreational Area/Green Belt which would allow the existing "Triangle" to continue and improve.

With the shift in emphasis, as a result of IFPLUT, in the future development of the town from the traditional residential areas of Blessington, Dublin and Tipper Roads and the Town centre to the development of the retail and other services as well as schools and new housing in the Monread/Millennium Park and Newbridge & Kilcullen Road areas any new residential development in the, older areas would seriously unbalance the vision of Naas for the future. The existing housing stock seems to cater adequately for the existing employment generating activities of the town centre and South/South East and there are generally adequate shopping and other services, except schools, available to this area. In addition the thrust of the IFPLUT concept of integration of residential and employment and other facilities would be set at nought if further residential development was allowed in the South East of the town.

3. Transport

The lack of a proper road system to cater for the existing traffic, apart from the extra traffic which any development of the Tipper area would cause, is another factor in militating against such

development. In this regard the Inner Relief road through the Racecourse to the Blessington Road **MUST** be completed in the interests of the whole town. There is also a need for a proper Outer Relief road on the Eastern and Southern side of the town to compliment the Inner one but this will be outside the jurisdiction of the Town Council. Some time ago some landowners were offering to sell land to the Council for a so called alternative Inner Relief road from the Blessington Road through Tipper West, South, North and Kingsfurze to the Fishery Lane. Of course the intention of this was to get their lands rezoned. This type of activity must be resisted.

The current level of traffic on the Tipper Road and the speed at which it travels is very dangerous for pedestrians. This has been much worsened in the recent years by the vast increase in the population of Johnstown Village as Tipper Road is being used as the main route for them to and from Naas. During the current Plan there have been two deaths on the Tipper Road and as a result the speed limit has been reduced to 60 KPH from the Paddocks Estate to the outskirts of Johnstown and part of the way towards Beggars End Cross and the Garda Traffic Corps has been operating sporadic speed checks. These measures have somewhat reduced the speeds but while the County Council has put in repeater speed limit signs the Town Council has failed to do so. It would be appreciated if the Council in the new plan could introduce a suitable traffic management policy, including Traffic Calming measures, for this road and the other similar roads which it has designated as Rural in the current 2005/11 Development Plan. If further development is allowed and such a plan not put in place the very laudable policy of maintaining the character of the country roads would be seriously undermined.

4. Recommendations

I would therefore strongly recommend that in its drafting of the 2011 - 2016 Plan the Council

- A. Uses the period of the Plan as one of Consolidation and very minimal change in Land Zoning.
- B. Does not change the existing zoning of the lands of the proposed Recreational/Green Belt Area.
- C. Puts together a Strategic Plan for the future of this area to cater for the Environmental and Recreational concepts cited above for the benefit of the people of Naas.
- D. Produces a Traffic Management Plan for the country roads which would best benefit the area.
- E. Prioritises the completion of the Inner Relief Road through the Racecourse.
- F. Will not be swayed by landowners and/or developers who offer to provide land swops or other deals in return for rezoning which is not in conformity with best planning practice and/or the interests of the people of Naas.

Yours Sincerely,

_____, Col. (Retd.)
Joe O'Sullivan.