



**BALLINCOLLIG
BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**
Working Together .. Building A Better Future

Padraig Moore
A/Senior Planner
Planning Policy Unit
Cork County Council
County Hall
Cork

25 February 2014

Re: Submission to Draft Cork County Development Plan 2013

Dear Mr. Moore,

Ballincollig Business Association represents the interests of over 100 businesses operating in Ballincollig, as well as the wider Ballincollig business community. The objective of the Association is to promote the area through the creation and sustainment of business activity and employment so as to ensure that Ballincollig continues to be a thriving and vibrant business base and an attractive location for external interest and investment.

Ballincollig is the County's largest town and given its close proximity to Cork City, third level institutions and the availability of quality education and recreational facilities makes it an attractive residential and employment location. To date Ballincollig has been successful in attracting large multi-national companies in the IT sector to the town and at present EMC, VCE and VM Ware have a very strong presence and a total workforce of 3,000 in the town.

Ballincollig Business Association welcomes the fact that the Draft County Development Plan envisages a key strategic role for Ballincollig in the future growth of Metropolitan Cork with the second largest population growth target of the 10 Metropolitan Cork Towns. The town has a target for 4,033 new houses between 2011-2022 and a jobs target of 4,000. Ballincollig Business Association welcomes and supports the strategic ambitions for Ballincollig and considers that the residential and employment targets set for the Town are both appropriate and achievable. From discussions with EMC, VCE and VM Ware about the future of their businesses and the sector in general, these key players consider that Ballincollig has the ability to develop and expand as an IT hub built around the presence and expansion of EMC, VCE and VM Ware.

The key factor in the Ballincollig's ability to attract players such as EMC, VCE and VM Ware was the availability of quality office space. Ballincollig Business Association is concerned with the recent decision of EMC to take up some office space in Mahon. We understand that EMC would have preferred to stay within Ballincollig, but a lack of available office space forced them to look outside the town. The majority of the future growth identified for Ballincollig has been earmarked to take place on the 180 hectares of land zoned as X-01 to the south of the Town. In response to queries made by The Business Association in respect of progress on the preparation of the Masterplan identified for the X-01 lands, the Planning Authority have indicated that the delivery of the development envisaged for Ballincollig will require considerable investment in new infrastructure.

Ballincollig Business Association is concerned that the unavailability of land could become an impediment to future development. We are concerned that a failure to capitalise on the success of our key industries could result in opportunities to facilitate expansion and develop a hub being lost, which would be a significant blow to Ballincollig and also jeopardise the Council's ability to achieve its employment targets. We request that the Draft County Plan be amended to facilitate and accelerate the realisation of the Town's strategic objectives. The insertion of supporting text and policies will expedite the delivery of the required infrastructure and make funding and support from other statutory bodies such as the NTA, Irish Water as well as Government itself, easier to achieve and allow for the implementation of the strategic vision for Ballincollig. This submission focuses primarily on the provision of infrastructure and the following issues

1. Transport & Mobility
2. Physical Infrastructure
3. Town Centre & Retail
4. Social/Green Infrastructure

Transport & Mobility

Ballincollig has become the County's largest and most successful Town in terms of its scale its close proximity to Cork City and availability of amenities makes it attractive for expansion. We understand from discussions with Cork County Council that the future development of the Town through the delivery of the X-01 Masterplan is constrained by infrastructure and transport infrastructure in particular. Section 10.2.21 of the Draft County Plan recognise the deficiencies in the public transport service to the Town and Table 10.1 indicates that it is an objective to have a bus service which runs every 15 minutes to Ballincollig. The deficiencies in the public transport service are highlighted by the fact that EMC, VCE and VM Ware are all forced to use private bus operators to run a private service from Cork City to Ballincollig to ensure that their employees can get to and from work in time efficiently.

We note that the Cork Area Transit Study (CATS) has a long term ambition to deliver an improved public transport service to Ballincollig in the form of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). We understand that CATS envisages that the proposed BRT would serve the proposed Cork Science and Innovation Park at Curraheen and travel through the Metropolitan Greenbelt to serve the X-01 Masterplan lands to the south of the town and then the Town Centre. We understand that little progress has been made on identifying a route or even options for routes and until this or other options for improved public transport to the X-01 lands and Ballincollig in general are resolved, that development in the town and on the X-01 lands in particular will be constrained and/or prevented.

To date Cork County Council have invested a significant amount of money in Ballincollig Town Centre and this included the provision of the Green Route through the town centre. The Green Route aimed to encourage a modal shift to more sustainable forms of cycling and walking. Despite this the trips to schools and work remains dominated by private car trips and the return on the infrastructural investment has been poor. The failure of the Green Route to encourage a higher modal shift may be due to the fact that it becomes severed at certain locations and the final successful and safe integration between existing cycle paths and footpaths has not been achieved. We also note that while the infrastructure was put in place there was very little publicity or encouragement for the use of the facilities and Ballincollig did not benefit from the preparation of an Active Town Walking and Cycling Strategy that has been prepared for Bandon, Fermoy, Kinsale and Youghal. Given Ballincollig's proximity to Cork City, third level institutions and large employers such as Cork County Council limited investment in improving and integrating existing cycling and walking routes and appropriate promotion could result in a significant modal shift to cycling and walking for trips within the Town but also for trips to Cork City and the western suburbs.

The above highlights that Ballincollig is serviced by public transport and that investment has been made in cycling and walking facilities. However, the lack of integration and promotion of these facilities has led to poor return. In addition the improvement of the transport facilities is preventing progress on the X-01 Masterplan and could eventually constrain development in the Town. We note that the Douglas Land Use and Transportation Study was successful in highlighting improvements to the transport infrastructure and with successful implementation this could deliver significant benefits. Given Ballincollig's strategic

importance, its existing facilities and services and proximity to Cork City, transport deficiencies should not be allowed to constrain or prevent continued investment in the Town. In order to ensure progress is made on transport and mobility issues we request that text and objectives are incorporated into the Development Plan which would support the resolution of these issues in the short term. Such text and policy support would make it easier for the Planning Authority and all stakeholders to seek the support of agencies such as the NTA in investigating transport and mobility solutions for the Town. We would suggest the following text and objective be incorporated in Chapter 10 Transport & Mobility.

Ballincollig is the County's largest Town and it has been successful in attracting large multi-national companies in the IT sector to the town. The Town has an attractive setting and good amenities and is well positioned to fulfil the residential and employment targets set for it. However, the achievement of these targets could be constrained by deficiencies in the existing public transport and the lack of progress on the the Cork Area Transit Study line. The proximity of Ballincollig to Cork City, third level institutions and major employers represents an opportunity to encourage more sustainable travel patterns through the provision of walking and cycling facilities. To date Cork County Council has invested in the provision of a Green Route in Ballincollig and the Council will encourage and promote the increased use of this facility and its improvement and integration with existing and possible future walking and cycling facilities (Lee Fields to Ballincollig Regional Park link referred to Chapter 5). In order to resolve existing transport issues and take advantages of the opportunities for encouraging sustainable travel Cork County Council in conjunction with stakeholders will promote the development of an Integrated Transport & Mobility Study for Ballincollig. This Study will identify the potential Cork Area Transit Study line, potential improvement to existing public transport, the improvement and expansion of the existing Green Route including links to Cork City both through the Metropolitan Greenbelt and Lee Fields and measures to encourage a modal shift through the increased use of existing walking and cycling facilities.

County Development Plan Objective

TM X-X Ballincollig Integrated Transport & Mobility Study

The Council in conjunction with stakeholders will prepare a Transport & Mobility Study for Ballincollig which will aim to promote a modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport and plan for the future transport needs of the Town. The Study will seek to investigate and plan for potential improvements to public transport and existing cycling and walking facilities, both within the Town itself and between Ballincollig and Cork City.

Physical Infrastructure

As identified above Ballincollig is the largest town in Cork and it has performed well within the region in terms of meeting strategic targets and providing an attractive residential and employment location. The continued growth and development of Ballincollig is key to the continued performance of Metropolitan Cork. Given its proximity to Cork City, third level institutions and large employers Ballincollig not only has the ability to continue to perform strongly, but this development with minor changes to policy and some investment can be achieved sustainably. However, the continued growth of Ballincollig is dependent upon infrastructural investment.

We note that Table 15.2 of the Draft Cork County Development Plan provides a summary of the critical infrastructure required for each town and its proposed delivery. Ballincollig Business Association are concerned that the critical infrastructure improvement required to allow Ballincollig to build on its success as the County's largest town and deliver the strategic targets envisaged for it are listed as being medium or long term.

Of the 10 towns in Metropolitan Cork, Ballincollig given its location and record in delivering employment and residential growth has the greatest potential in the short term to make a significant contribution to the growth of Metropolitan Cork. We do not consider that this growth should be constrained by a lack of infrastructural investment as we consider that Ballincollig is best placed to facilitate and attract development in the short term and provide a return for the County on infrastructural investment. In order to reflect this we suggest the following changes to Table 15.2 of the Draft County Plan.

**Table 15.2: County Cork : Planned Development
Summary of Critical Infrastructure (Main Towns)**

	<i>Short Term</i>	<i>Medium/Long Term</i>
Cork Gateway County Metropolitan SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Supply (Midleton) • Local access roads/bridge (Midleton) • Lower harbour towns waste water • Local access roads/bridge (Dunkettle) • WWTP upgrade (Carrigtwohill) • R624 Upgrade • N28 Upgrade • Water upgrade (Ballincollig) • Local Roads/Public transport upgrade (Ballincollig) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N25 interchange improvements (Midleton/Carrigtwohill) • WWTP upgrade (Midleton) • Additional rail station (Waterrock/Midleton) • Water supply upgrade (Carrigaline) • Local Roads/Bridges (Carrigtwohill) • Public Transport Infrastructure (Dunkettle/Glanmire) • Water upgrade (Ballincollig) • Local Roads/Public transport upgrade (Ballincollig) • Local Roads/Public transport upgrade (Douglas) • Water & Waste water (Blarney) • Water & Waste water (Monard) • Water & Waste water (Ballyvolane) • Public Transport Infrastructure (Ballyvolane) • Cork Northern Ring Road

Town Centre & Retail

Ballincollig Business Association support the submission made by O'Flynn Construction in respect of retail development and Ballincollig Town Centre.

In terms of the retail hierarchy, Ballincollig is identified within table 7.1 as 'Sub-Regional / Large Metropolitan Town', with strong support for the provision of an appropriate range of retail and non-retail functions to serve the needs of the community and respective catchment area. Nonetheless the presentation of table 7.1 does not fully reflect the retail hierarchy priority outlined within the Metropolitan Cork – Joint Retail Study (Metro Cork JRS), nor does it reflect the significance of Ballincollig's existing retail provision. The Metro Cork JRS identifies large metropolitan towns as level 2 within the retail hierarchy, on a par with District Centres, which is entirely appropriate for Ballincollig, given the existing strength of the settlement and projected future growth.

However, the presentation of table 7.1 identifies Large Metropolitan towns as 'Sub Regional', listed 4th in the hierarchy, and with the same objective as Ring Towns and Large County Towns. The District Centres would appear to be given a higher priority rating in terms of retail hierarchy; despite the fact that many of the District Centres have a smaller population than Ballincollig and significantly smaller range of retail / retail services provision. Also the description of 'District Centres' provided within 'General Retail Function and Policy' would appear to provide a higher priority to Metropolitan Towns. The 'General Retail Function and Policy',

detailed in table 7.1, describes District Centres as being characterised by a large convenience / comparison anchor, with a range of lower order comparison outlets, while for Metropolitan Towns it is noted that they:

“Perform an important sub county retail role and generally include a good range of convenience provision and a modest provision of comparison offer.” (Emphasis added)

This statement is not consistent with the actual provision of comparison retail within Ballincollig, which provides the third highest level of comparison floor space outside Cork City, as noted in table 1. As well as providing the third highest level of existing comparison retail floor space outside Cork City, Ballincollig provides the second highest level of convenience shopping. Ballincollig is evidently one of the primary retail locations within Cork and it is inaccurate to describe its comparison retailing as ‘modest’.

Table 1: Existing Retail Floor Space

	Convenience	Comparison	Bulky
Mahon	2,969	16,808	13,384
Douglas	12,435	12,255	2,431
Ballincollig	9,728	11,445	2,784
Blackpool	4,001	11,198	3,408
Midleton	8,529	9,423	7,407
Wilton	4,022	7,272	0
Carrigaline	6,881	5,352	6,154
Cobh	5,408	3,248	1,533
Ballyvolane	4,001	2,011	924

Extracted from Table 6.8 of Metro Cork JRS

We submit that table 7.1 should be amended to clarify that in the context of the Retail Hierarchy; Large Metropolitan Towns are on the same level as District Centres, as listed within the Metro Cork JRS and to amend reference to ‘modest’ provision of comparison retailing within large Metropolitan Towns.

Specifically we submit that:

- An additional column should be added to the table identifying retail hierarchy levels, as provided in table 7.2.1 of the Metro Cork JRS. This should clearly depict that Metropolitan Towns and District Centres are within the same tier in terms of Retail Hierarchy.
- The General Retail Function and Policy description for Metropolitan Towns should be amended to delete reference to ‘modest’ comparison retailing.

These amendments would be consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines, which identify both important towns and District Centres as being at a Sub-regional level. While this is reflected within the text description for Table 7.1, the proposed amendments would clarify the hierarchy.

Vacancy & Potential for Comparison

Paragraph 7.7.6 of the draft CDP also notes that the large metropolitan towns of Midleton and Carrigaline in particular have been identified as having capacity for comparison floorspace; and that Ballincollig and Cobh also have potential, although the excessive vacancy levels in these centres needs to be dealt with proactively. We welcome the objectives in relation to vacancy which aims to reduce vacant floorspace within core retail areas by 50% and to promote the revitalisation of vacant properties in town centres. However, it is vital that a flexible approach is taken to the development of further comparison retailing within Ballincollig.

Ballincollig town is robust in terms of its retail offering. Part of the difficulties related to the relatively high vacancy rate are linked to initial planning limitations on retail unit size, with many of the units development too small to attract comparison retailers. Strengthening the wider retailing offering; combined with projected

population growth and flexible consideration of the use of vacant units will provide a supportive planning framework to tackling vacancy. This policy context would be strengthened by a minor amendment to paragraph 7.7.6, to read:

“...Ballincollig and Cobh also have potential for additional comparison retail. Addressing existing vacancy levels in these centres needs to be dealt with proactively, although regard will be given to the suitability of vacant units in terms of size, type and location for any proposed new development”

Social/Green Infrastructure

Chapter 5 of the Draft County Development Plan highlights the importance of recreational and amenity facilities and the contribution they make to the quality of life of the communities they serve. Ballincollig is well served by recreational facilities and Ballincollig Business Association acknowledge, welcome and support the continued investment the Council are making in Ballincollig Regional Park. However, the planned increase in population and employment will bring an increased demand for quality recreational and amenity facilities. In this regard Ballincollig Business Association welcome and support the Council's proposals to work to improve recreational and amenity facilities including the extension of the Lee Fields to the Ballincollig Regional Park, to create a park of *'real regional significance'*.

We consider the proposed extension of the Lee Fields to Ballincollig Regional Park also presents an opportunity to provide improved cycling and pedestrian facilities between the City and Ballincollig and that this would encourage a modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport. The importance of these improved links is highlighted in the section above and limited investment could lead to a modal shift. The proposed extension of the Lee Fields to Ballincollig Regional Park is of regional and strategic importance and it has the potential to offer an off road, attractive cycling and walking link between the City and Ballincollig. We consider that this should be identified as an objective of the Development Plan. We would suggest the following Objective be included in Chapter 5 of the County Development Plan

County Development Plan Objective

SC 5-X Extension of Lee Fields to Ballincollig Regional Park

The Council will support the extension of the Lee Fields to Ballincollig Regional Park to create a park of real regional significance and which will provide improved pedestrian and cycling facilities between Ballincollig and Cork City.

Ballincollig Business Association note and support the promotion of cycling and walking within the Draft Development Plan. As outlined above there are potential opportunities to expand and integrate the Ballincollig Green Route with existing and proposed routes and to provide safe and attractive routes to Cork City, which could offer a potential alternative to the private car. The potential linking of the Lee Fields and Ballincollig Regional Park offers one such possibility but the linking of Ballincollig to the City via the Metropolitan Greenbelt at Curraheen and as provided for by Objective U-02 of the Ballincollig Local Area Plan presents another opportunity. We understand the recreational and amenity proposals within the Greenbelt at Curraheen may provide a stepping stone or link to the western suburbs of the City and Curraheen Science and Innovation Park.

We consider that there 2 opportunities for improved cycling and walking facilities from Ballincollig to the west of the Cork City, one to the north of the Town via the Lee Fields and the other to the south of the Town via the Greenbelt and Curraheen. The delivery of both these routes could provide an important recreational and amenity resource, but also offer an attractive and safe alternative mode of transport to the private car. We request that the County Development Plan recognise the potential of both routes and suggest Section 8.7.9 of County Development Plan could be amended as follows

8.7.9 *There are other potential opportunities for walking routes and cycleways existing around the county such as along the disused Middleton to Youghal rail line and **Ballincollig to Cork City, both via the Lee Fields to Ballincollig Regional Park extension identified in Chapter 5 and through the Metropolitan Greenbelt at Curraheen.** The Council will work with local communities and encourage their development throughout the County.*

Thank you for your consideration of this submission and would welcome a meeting with you to discuss its contents and recommendations if possible.

Yours sincerely

Micheál Ó Cruaí

Chairman

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