

Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

Louth County Council
Town Hall
Dundalk
Co. Louth

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We wish to make a submission regarding the lands zoned for General Employment uses in the village of Collon.



(1)

- Map 4.3 of the Draft County Development plan marks areas A, B and C for general employment uses but it does not include area D (Collon Business Park, established approx 2006) which serves Collon well for employment uses.

Area A is situated on the Kells Road and (if planning is granted on the current application), when combined with the size of Area D, approx 10.5 hectares of land will have industrial/warehouse type buildings on the western outskirts of Collon, with a further 3.5 hectares (approx) available for similar development on the eastern portion of area A. This is entirely disproportionate not only to a level 4

settlement, but to **one road** within a level 4 settlement. We think the above map shows the huge scale of areas A and D compared to the size of the village and the proximate residential dwellings.. Both Areas A and B are greenfield sites and it is not certain if they are serviceable in relation to water services.

By retaining Area A as land zoned for general employment it would not satisfy the following objective.

2.11.4 Small Towns and Villages Policy Objective CS 14 To ensure localised sustainable growth within the small towns and villages identified in the Settlement Strategy, is proportionate to the size of the settlement, prioritised on infill/brownfield sites and that economic related development is supported.

(2)

- Area A has been zoned as such for the past eighteen years with no development happening in this time (even though planning had been granted some years back). Area B has never been developed. Area C was partially developed, but the units built were never sold/ let so no employment has been generated by this, (provision of employment is not a given even when a site is developed). This demonstrates that the lands zoned for employment uses are surplus to Collon's business development requirements and have had no interest from prospective employers.

8.10.2. Economy and Employment

Policy Objective COL 4 To ensure that the village centre is the priority location for new commercial, retail and mixed used developments thereby creating opportunities to live, work and shop within the village and reduce the need to travel by private car.

Policy Objective COL 5 To encourage the return of vacant buildings in the village centre to uses which complement the existing scale and character of the settlement.

Policy Objective COL 6 To promote and facilitate the provision of a range of employment opportunities on lands zoned for General Employment. – Area D is more than sufficient for this purpose on the Kells Rd. Area C is partially developed and lying vacant.

In the Collon Village Health check 2018, priorities for development within the village of Collon and its environs were identified as part of the public consultation process. A key project for economic development was to; "Attract businesses into vacant industrial units"
Developing Areas A or B was not listed as a strategy for economic development of the village.

(3)

- The Kells Road and Starinagh Road are not suitable to service Areas A and B respectively, they are both narrow, local roads.

The HGV traffic on the Kells Rd has increased significantly since the development of Collon Business Park (Area D). Having entrances/exits from two or more industrial parks (if planning is granted for Area A) within a 100 metre stretch will make the already treacherous Kells Rd even more dangerous. The main point of access to the Kells Rd and on to Area A, is the notorious junction of the Kells Rd/N2, where many serious accidents have occurred.

Retaining Area A's current zoning would not help achieve the following;

8.2. Opportunities

- *To reduce the dominance of the heavily trafficked N2 by continuing to support investments in the public realm.*

And

8.6. Movement

The high volume of traffic passing through the village, much of which includes HGVs, has resulted in conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. Speed platforms, guardrails and traffic bollards have been installed on School Lane and the Drogheda Road, in addition to footpath improvements. To promote the social and economic well-being of the village, increased priority should be given to pedestrians and cyclists rather than to vehicles.

NOTE: There are **no** continuous paths or cycle lanes on the Kells Rd linking Area A or D to the village.

(4)

– 8.7. Natural and Built Heritage Collon is located within a designated Area of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ). Within the village, there is a strong connection to the landscape. To the north, the rows of estate trees are dominant while to the south, uninterrupted views across the countryside are available. The streets are wide and open and within the village, the countryside is clearly visible. It is important that the village form is defined so that this settlement retains its individuality and that the rural views of the countryside from the village remain unimpeded. A tributary to the Mattock River traverses the west of the village.

Area A lies in the Mattock Valley, it falls away from the Kells road to the lower ground bordering the river on the southern side. Because there is higher land surrounding Area A, any development would be clearly visible in the rural countryside from the eastern and southern approaches to the village, even with planting buffer zones in place. Area D is quite visible and Area A is even closer to the village. Retaining zoning of Area A for general employment and subsequent development would not satisfy the following objective;

8.10.5. Built and Natural Heritage

Policy Objective COL 19 To protect and enhance the unique characteristics and setting of Collon including its Area of High Scenic Quality, Zone of Archaeological Potential, archaeological features, Architectural Conservation Area and built and natural heritage elements.

And in the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy- Eastern and Midland Region
Regional Policy Objectives include

3.5 Identification of suitable employment and residential lands and suitable sites for infrastructure should be supported by a quality site selection process that addresses environmental concerns such as landscape, cultural heritage, ensuring the protection of water quality, flood risks and biodiversity as a minimum.

Is Area A suitable for general employment uses? ;

- It is in an Area of High Scenic Quality. Collon is a designated Architectural Conservation Area and Zone of Archaeological Potential, and Area A visible from the village and main approaches to the village.

– The Mattock river which runs along the southern border of Area A is a tributary of the Boyne and an important fish nursery.

– There is a flood plain on the southern border of Area A.

Dezoning of Area A for general employment uses would help fulfil the objectives list below as in the Draft plan;

Strategic Objective SO 7 Protect and enhance the built, cultural and natural heritage assets of Louth, the intrinsic value of which helps to define the character of both urban and rural areas, contributes to the attractiveness, vibrancy and sense of place for residents, tourists and visitors, including improved access to the countryside through the development of greenways, walking trails and blueways in support of and advancing sustainable communities.

We feel that retaining Area A as zoned for general employment uses is unnecessary, (especially when Area D is already fulfilling this objective), and if developed, would not be beneficial to traffic safety, visual amenity, wildlife habitat or the residents of the western outskirts of Collon.

Yours sincerely,

Gerard and Nicola Devine