Ashbourne Chamber Comments on the Draft Ireland 2040 Our Plan Document.
31st October 2017

Planning in the decades ahead

We compete for business enterprises and investment in a global market, where our competitor countries there is certainty about time frames for planning and decision making. Our competitors also actively support collaborate across the spectrum of statutory and advocacy agencies. Ireland's current local planning and associated governance arrangements need to deliver more cost efficient evidence based decision making, in very much shorter time frames, than at present. Adding further layers of bureaucracy is definitely not the answer. Simplifying processes and setting time parameters for decision makers and bringing them into line with our competitors is essential.

Integrating the planning of the Metropolitan area of Dublin with the new Dublin Metropolitan suburb of South East Meath will add serious value from an environmental, economic and social perspective. Many will argue that what is unfolding is a new City of South Meath with a growing population now 63,000 with 60,000 hectares available for intensive commercial and residential development. Dunboyne will grow in the next 5-10 years to a population projected at 28,000, Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin and Ratoath will in all probability double their populations size by 2025- 2030. Planners need to make provision for a serious and expansion of the education service including the provision of a third and fourth level facility for County Meath.

Radical changes are required in our Planning System to make it more cost-effective and efficient minimising interference by those not acting in the public interest. Best practice should be a national goal if we are to remain competitive.

A map showing the extension of Metro North through South East Meath to Navan.

The Dublin Metropolitan Area and its immediate hinterland

The Dublin Metropolitan area and surrounding areas like other international competitors will continue to be very attractive to major and medium enterprises that seek rapid and immediate access to growing markets in a global world. Dublin Airport will become a major international hub for transcontinental air traffic for both cargo and passengers. Maximising the development of the area immediately adjacent to Dublin Airport makes sense in a 21st Century Global Digital World.

The report does not deal adequately with areas, directly interlinked to and dependent on the Dublin Metropolitan area and major international vitally important assets such as Dublin Airport and Dublin Port. The challenges facing the new suburb of Dublin, South East Meath must be addressed if we are to continue to have competitive growing, viable, vibrant and sustainable 21st century enterprises in the catchment of Dublin Airport, Dublin Port and important tertiary and quaternary education and research facilities.

While population projections including employment projections indicate huge organic growth there is very little in the 2040 document about the serious deficits in urban planning and physical infrastructure in areas such as South East Meath. Public Transport and Road infrastructure is very poor and connectivity for a growing population is problematic. Serious and urgent investment is required in water and waste infrastructure, in primary, secondary and tertiary education infrastructure and public health infrastructure.

The construction of a new road connecting Dublin Airport to the M2 Cherry hound interchange and on through the Dublin Enterprise Zone to the M3, and the upgrading of the N 2 from Cherry hound to Ashbourne and to the north of Ashbourne are essential pieces of physical infrastructure development.

The extension of the Metro North to the South-East Meath suburb must be included and provide at least initially for an integrated service with the Bus operators.

Dublin Airport its extension and development is the key economic and social driver for the next 30 years.

We need to build an innovative and sustainable physical environment with modern business parks, high quality residential and support infrastructures, and an attractive modern road network that is compatible with Dublin Airports International Hub Status. Otherwise we run the risk of losing major investors to Ireland's competitors, who will only invest within or near major metropolitan centres such as Dublin. Tara Hill and surrounding land offers a wonderful opportunity to develop a Public Park to provide a world class amenity to serve North Dublin and South Meath. Investment will be required to provide facilities including interpretive capability. This is an ideal development to commemorate the foundation of the state in 1922. It could be open in 2022.

A 21st Century Robust Smart Economy

There is scant reference to Smart City and Town Deployment Strategies in the 2040 Document.

- Digital technologies need to be further embedded across all the public and private sector.
- We need to drive economic growth, optimise the cost effectiveness of service provision in both the public and private sector utilising smart technology.
- Quality focused data analysis will optimise service provision and economic activity.

Ireland needs to have urban and suburban areas around the metropolitan areas of our major cities, that create sustainable viable economic development and a high quality of life by excelling in multiple key areas;

- Economy, mobility, environment, people living and government. High performance in these area is only possible through strong human capital, social capital and a world's class ICT infrastructure.
- Creating a Smart Strategy for all of Ireland requires we seek to maximize value and benefit for all private and public investment.
- Ireland needs to be clear about the critical policy issues, risk factors, data storage and analysis and make informed strategic choices about the application of Networks or Cloud Technologies.
- Existing platforms exist in Wi-Fi, Developing Water/Waste/Electric Networks and Traffic Control and Security Networks. Ireland needs to bring vendors together with Research Institutions, Universities and Institutes of Technology and a smart second level education system. We need to fully embrace the digital environment and lead in its development. Policy guidelines must be in place to maximise cross-fertilisation and maximise economic and social benefits including high performing public services.