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From: Cllr Alan Tobin (MCC Ashbourne MD) <[REDACTED]>
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Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy.

Submission Councillor Alan Tobin

County Meath Councillor representing the Ashbourne Municipal District & Chairperson of the Planning, Economic Development and Enterprise SPC

Overall I welcome the draft document which looks at putting order and synergy across the regions. This current generation is charged with transforming this country into a low carbon economy and that transition must take place rapidly in a well thought out and effective way that doesn't jeopardise our economy now or in the future. We need to make sure that we have clean and safe supplies of water, energy, food and public transport. It is critical that our rivers and seas are returned to a pristine status and discharges of waste water, agri and industrial pollution must end. Renewable energy in particular solar, wind and tidal need to be prioritised and changes like selling excess energy by private home owners back to the grid or of set their energy bills should be allowed, as well as more grant aid to encourage changes of behaviour at a faster rate than we have currently.

Planning guidelines are the single most important piece of this document and the strength of these guidelines are key to ensuring that across the country everyone is treated the same with nationwide rules and regulations, the same work - life balance, the same educational and employment prospects as the country develops with specific regional hubs in strategic locations.

MASP

South Meath has experienced rapid expansion since the 1990's. These areas took pressure off Dublin and allowed families move to Meath to experience country living, green fields and and a more relaxed way of life. Housing was reasonably priced and homes were affordable. However over the boom years the towns and villages of Ratoath, Dunshaughlin, Stamullen and Ashbourne mushroomed overnight. This has led to some problems in particular with funding of services in the county. The population of Meath is now almost 200,00 a significant proportion of that in Ratoath and Ashbourne districts

83% of working people leave Ashbourne on a daily basis to work, over 70% of these to Dublin paying ridiculous prices for public transport if they chose that particular mode. Most sitting in traffic for many hours whilst making a significant contribution to our economy through various types of taxation, many loosing out on proper quality family time and to top all of this they are paying way over the odds for childcare and rentals on over priced properties.

Future planning for this region must be applied to the RSES. South Meath has the largest young population in the state. Access to 3rd level education is key to to future prospect of these young people. The draft does not have these young people in mind as they leave our area out of the metropolitan area.

The draft makes me fearful that Ashbourne's ability to lower its carbon footprint can now not happen. Although previous plans that I submitted ideas and personal feelings on, they appear to not be taken into account. I proposed light rail extensions from the Airport, through Poppintree, to Finglas and out Ashbourne through the Thornton Hall

site. This is now a more viable option as the Land Management Agency earmarked for up to 3,000 houses making it another new large population centre.

In previous plans it was stated that Ashbourne was transitioning to metropolitan status - why has this changed?

I would urge those looking at the viability of Ashbourne's location to include the following;

Untolled motorway M2

Extension of M2 to Slane/Collon

M2/Airport Economic corridor

Lands zoned commercial/industrial in Fingal and Meath in Ashbourne earmarked for joint development plan
Ashbourne designated as a transport hub with park and ride along with NTA plan 3rd level education campus to include college of further education Introduction of Dublin bus or zonal fair structures to encourage more people to use public transport Acquisition of lands for public parks Multi use public pitches Introduction of natural wetlands to avert flood risk in low lying areas Upgrading regional roads in South Meath to alleviate traffic delays, reduce travel times and put an end to choking up small country villages and lanes as motorists try to dodge queuing at morning and evening peak times

Swords, Navan and Drogheda will be key towns, links to all 3 need upgrading and investment. Ashbourne would be better suited than Oldtown as a sister hub rather than destroying Oldtown, a small rural village with no adequate infrastructure for future expansion.

Meath County Council has put together a significant submission which I fully support. I would ask the team looking at submissions, to please look at Meath with an open mind. We are an enthusiastic, progressive county with great economic development plans and public realm plans. When our County development plan is issued, we all look forward to the future development of our county with our citizens and their futures in mind. The future expansion of the South of the County must happen, increased economic activity will mean a greater rates base. This will allow us to develop our public realm plans and make Meath an even more attractive place to live, raise a family and grow old in.

Drogheda Environs

Meath Councillors put forward a substantial plan for the future of South Drogheda, the draft does include joint planning but doesn't specifically mention Meath. The IDA industrial zone in South Drogheda must also be a part of the M1 economic corridor and receive grant aid if possible to make it viable.

Ireland's Ancient East, Blueways & Greenways

Navan-Kingscourt, Drogheda - Navan and Blueways on the Boyne and Royal Canal all have great potential and will revitalise rural communities. These wonderful amenities are year round attractions. Tayto park and the 750,000 visitors it brings to Ashbourne must be tapped into.

Industry

A Dundrum style shopping experience is lacking on the North side of Dublin. Large open sites that suit large foreign companies like Facebook which we already have, demand not only these serviced sites but green energy, decent housing in the immediate proximity of their chosen location as well as proper community facilities. Cary, N.C USA does this and has become a major industrial hub because of it

Thanks and regards

Councillor Alan Tobin Fine Gael

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Peace Commissioner

Elected member of the Ashbourne Municipal District 2014-2019 Leas-Cathaoirleach Joint Policing Committee
Cathaoirleach Special Policy Committee Planning, Economic Development & Enterprise Director of Meath Tourism
t/a Boyne Valley Tourism Director of Irish Men's Sheds Association

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