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Strategic Objectives 6: Economy and Employment

Caibidil: Volume 1 - Written Statement» 7. Economy and
Employment

The Cork City Strategic Employment Locations Study[1] proposes the zoning of employment land to meet a jobs target of 47,000 of which 31,000 will be office based and light manufacturing including logistics over the period to 2028. The study also found that of the 650ha of employment zoned land in Cork City, 417ha is undeveloped. As a result, the plan seeks to reprioritise this with a review of undeveloped lands in Tivoli, Kilbarry, Ballincollig, Cork International Airport and the Cork Science and Innovation Park.

As such the Development Plan provides for approximately 243ha of zoned, undeveloped employment land. It is essential that this provision is an adequate allocation, and enough deliverable land is available for the multiple types of premises that may be required over the course of the plan.

Cork Chamber supports the four strategic employment sites identified in the plan (Cork Science and Innovation Park, Cork International Airport, Ballincollig and Tivoli) as areas that can be developed for economic and employment purposes. Additional areas identified as strategic employment sites must also be given due attention; Blarney Business Park, Clogheen Business Park, Land at Glanmire, South Link Industrial Estate, Fairhill and land at Holyhill.

The Chamber does also however, promote the City centre as the primary area for office development, as it can offer the best mobility options while also having a regenerative effect. It can and must cater to all types of office provision from large floorplate newbuilds to small floorplate interventions. In some respects, the City centre is in competition with the above listed locations, and it must not be disadvantaged. We note that parking levels are reduced relative to the last plan by between 50% and 60%. In the city core, this would create standards more onerous than those currently in Dublin City and eight times more stringent than those set for Cork County. While acknowledging the presumed intent of acting to reduce car dependency we have concerns as regards the short-term results of this measure. For example, if minimal car parking levels are imposed on a city development, it could see the investment fully displaced to another location, thus missing the bigger picture opportunity for City regeneration. Ultimately, while we await the implementation of CMATS, many employers will still seek a level of private parking. This must be robustly addressed by CMATS, but should not compromise City investment opportunities, that could go elsewhere in the short term.

It is welcome to see the development of community enterprise centres being provided for in this plan in a bid to encourage more employment opportunities in every neighbourhood in the city. This will have a direct impact on commuting requirements and the higher-than-average dependence on private cars in Cork city to get to and from

work. It will be an essential part of developing a compact city.

Cork Chamber would also encourage a vibrant mix of uses within the designated centres outlined in the development plan. To have people living in the city is fundamentally important to the economic vibrancy of the city centre, and it is therefore of utmost importance that there is a blend of retail, residential, services and hospitality in any one area.

Curraheen has potential for future development and with its proximity to Cork University Hospital, UCC and MTU it provides a logical location for further investment. The area will be serviced by a light rail option once the ambitions of CMATS are realised, and it is already served by the 208 bus and the 205, 220 and walkways nearby. The area is home to the Cork Science and Innovation Park where UCC are advancing plans for a new dental school and health innovation hub. The innovation hub can play a nationally significant role in a national innovation district strategy and is deserving of every support in the development plan. It can be a location for both third level and private sector investment and deepen the research and development partnerships which are so valuable to the tenacity of FDI investment.

The Cork University Business School (CUBS) expansion into the heart of the city is another step in the ever-evolving economy of the city centre that will help cement Cork as a City of Learning. The City Development Plan should support the evolution of this business education quarter as it will bring benefits for the city including talent, international students, a welcoming accessible and visible education sector, and a strong relationship between city centre businesses and the education sector. From a Cork University Business School (CUBS) perspective 4,500 students and 225 staff will be located in the city at this location. This footfall will boost the hospitality sector as well as increasing the vibrancy of the city. The proximity of CUBS to the Docklands, Lapps Quay, and Morrison's Island will provide a real and physical connection between business and education. CUBS currently has 14 key undergraduate programmes, 13 of which have mandatory work placements. This will enhance further the connection between businesses and potential graduates and will be of great economic and employment benefit to the city. Cork Chamber would also take this opportunity to advise that the business/education district does not preclude other uses such as residential.

There should at all times be flexibility in zoning for complementary uses. Of course, uses of stark contrast such as industrial and residential are best separated, and zoning must always be a key tool to shape our built environment, but the ideology of inflexible zoning is no longer applicable in all cases.

For example, to ensure vibrancy, it should be appropriate to facilitate residential, office or hospitality on St Patrick's Street. Of course, they should not be the dominant uses, but where appropriate development proposals which come forward that might enliven the area should be actively supported. It is equally important that large scale anchor retailer schemes are supported throughout the plan. We note for example, the immense value of the ongoing development of the Primark facility for inducing City centre footfall and other similar projects should be proactively encouraged and facilitated. Likewise, the resurgent Mc Curtain Street and Victorian Quarter should support a medley of uses as this is core to its appeal. The City Centre plays multiple roles, each of which are complementary, and the plan should reflect this with a contemporary approach to zoning. This thinking should not just be facilitated, but actively encouraged.

It is important that the plan supports the required healthcare infrastructure such as the proposed elective hospital and that steps are taken to secure a logical and deliverable location for this essential asset.

[1] <https://www.corkcity.ie/en/media-folder/cork-city-development-plan/cork-city-strategic-employment-locations-study.pdf>

Ceangaltáin:

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