



Cork City Development Plan 2022 – 2028

Cork Chamber Submission

April 2022

Introduction

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 100,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to be a world-leading Chamber of Commerce, delivering on a progressive economic, social and sustainability agenda at the heart of a vibrant business community.

As such, we are determined to ensure that our 202-year-old Chamber continues to create a positive legacy. Our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals five of which have been identified by the Chambers Ireland network.



I wish to offer a series of comments and observations that I hope will act as either pause for thought, or validation as the vast and immensely important task of creating the City Development Plan is brought to a close.

Strategic Objectives 1&2

Compact Liveable Growth & Delivering Homes and Communities

The availability of housing continues to be a top concern to our members. Regarding density targets, in our previous submission Cork Chamber called for marginally lower targets per hectare outside the city centre, which have now increased. Concerns remain here in ensuring viable and adequate provision of housing suitable for families. These increased targets alongside the decrease in housing supply targets from 17,118 to 16,236 raise further concerns as the areas available to build upon have now decreased. With a housing crisis in our midst, it is vital that sufficient housing be provided particularly close to the city centre to allow for compact growth.

Apartment viability remains an on-going concern. We urge Cork City Council to take every discretionary step available at a local level, to provide an environment that facilitates apartment living. It is important that mechanisms such as development levies are not a barrier to viability and that the Council takes a progressive view to ensure delivery

While the change in targets for the provision of 67% market homes and 33% below-market priced homes is beneficial to those on schemes which allow them to avail of affordable housing, care must be taken to ensure those falling outside of these schemes are not forgotten. We advise a blend of private, social and affordable housing be included in all new and regenerative communities, guaranteeing that all housing tenures are provided and integrated.

Strategic Objective 4: Transport and Mobility

The implementation of the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS) must be robustly supported and delivered with urgency in the lifetime of this plan. The anticipated modal shifts associated with the delivery of CMATS will deliver long-term benefits for the city. Delivery of CMATS should be considered a minimum viable indicative template and every opportunity should be sought in every corner of the city to apply the ethos of CMATS in the most proactive manner.

It is welcome to see plans for an increase in cycling modal share from 4% to 10%. Cork Chamber advises that facilitating this modal share shift requires well-connected and segregated cycling infrastructure. We are also fully supportive of reducing speed limits across the city centre to 30kph. It is further imperative that consideration be given to the strategic placement of Park and Ride facilities at each point of access to the city that are also connected to multi-transport options including walking, cycling, rail and bus. We are also cognizant that infrastructural changes alone will not be sufficient to support this modal shift. Behavioural change campaigns will be essential to encouraging this shift.

The BusConnects plans, including the most recent announcement of the sustainable travel corridors which consider active travel, are most welcome. We advise that support be given to ensure delivery timelines are met. In tandem, Cork Chamber would like to reiterate the importance of progressing Light Rail System proposals contained within CMATS that would service the route from Ballingcollig to Mahon. We advise that this route be dedicated to bus as an interim step.

The suburban rail services contained within CMATS, including the six new train stations at Monard, Blackpool, Tivoli, Carrigtwohill West, Waterrock and Ballynoe along the existing Cork-Mallow and Cork-Midleton rail lines, must be delivered to encourage those living in suburban areas to choose public transport over private cars.

It is positive to see support for sustainable mobility innovations that encourage active travel, including the expansion of the existing bike scheme, electric bikes, and car rental schemes such as those operated by Go-Car. To further facilitate and actively encourage a sustainable mobility shift, we urge the incorporation of electric charge points throughout the City, and in residential, community and commercial settings. The integration and rollout of hydrogen and biomethane into the mobility fuel mix must also be facilitated.

Finally, we would like to restate the importance of Cork Airport as a key driver of Cork's economic recovery and regional economic significance. It must be prioritised from a local connectivity perspective relative to CMATS. Cork Chamber further advise for it to be protected from a planning perspective to enable future traffic growth. It is not appropriate to have residential development in the vicinity of Cork Airport.

Strategic Objective 5: Climate and Environment

The urgency we face as a city region to combat climate change has become even more prevalent with the publication of the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹. The 2022 report paints a stark picture, finding that we are set to pass the 1.5°C threshold by 2040 unless drastic cuts in emissions, including methane levels, are proven. It is positive to see the Draft City Development Plan taking account of the gravity of this crisis in its support for the implementation of international policy and national legislation on climate change. Taking a proactive approach in climate adaptation and mitigation measures is vital to our reputation and to our future generations.

Over the years Cork City, its residents and businesses have witnessed greater and increased recurring flooding events. Measures such as the Lower Lee Flood Relief Scheme must be supported and progressed with haste.

Cork Chamber welcomes the inclusion and recognition of wind power, both large scale offshore and on-site micro-wind energy projects, as the most significant resource Cork can supply for renewable electricity generation. Support for implementation of Cork's wind power generation is critical to meeting climate targets and securing energy supply. The supply of significant office space for the service sector that is built up around wind energy requires support for this industry to be developed with haste.

Strategic Objectives 6: Green & Blue Infrastructure, Open Space and Biodiversity

Cork Chamber is pleased that biodiversity implementation throughout the city and its neighbourhoods will be supported in a credible manner within existing, emerging and future GBI route networks. This amendment is not only important from an environmental perspective, but also in regard to placemaking and differentiating our city region.

The Chamber welcomes the delivery of a medium-term city-wide tree planting and management strategy. We urge that best practice programmes be consulted in this process, including the Civilian Conservation Corps in the US, who planted 3.5 billion trees, and created and landscaped 711 state parks from 1933 to 1942.

It is further positive to see support for improving the accessibility of our waterways and our waterborne mobility in the plan through the development of a multi-use maritime activities and recreation hub in the Marina along the River Lee. We advise that the feasibility of a water taxi that would ferry passengers from the city to areas such as Cobh, Haulbowline and Ringaskiddy should also be considered as another transport and tourism offering.

¹ IPCC, 2022. Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/#:~:text=the%20report%20Authors-Report,55th%20Session%20of%20the%20IPCC>.

Strategic Objectives 7: Economy and Employment

It is positive to see the increase in overall jobs target from 31,000 to 35,000 by 2028.

Notwithstanding, concerns remain over available locations for facilitating employment and reaching these targets, as the available zoned, undeveloped employment lands and strategic employment locations have decreased. Further concerns remain in facilitating employment, as skills availability remains a top concern to business growth, found in our most recent Q1 2022 Economic Trends survey².

Cork Chamber promotes office development first and foremost in the City centre to enable sustainable mobility, compact growth, and regeneration. We advise that the City centre cater to all types of office provision from large floorplate newbuilds to small floorplate interventions.

Cork Chamber welcomes the City Development Plan's support for the Innovation and Business Education corridor, with the inclusion of the North Mall Campus and Cork University Business School along with the development and implementation of the Learning Region Action Plan for Cork City, Limerick and Waterford. Enabling these resources will strengthen the relationship between city centre businesses and the education sector, bringing numerous benefits including talent attraction, international students, and a welcoming accessible and visible education sector. This continued support will lead to greater economic and employment benefits for the city region. Cork Chamber advises that the development of this Innovation and Business Education corridor does not preclude other uses such as residential.

We welcome the support for Circular Economy integration within the light and manufacturing industries, and social enterprise developments. Transitioning to a circular economy is vital to combatting climate change and promoting sustainable economic growth, thus attracting investment and building economic resilience.

It is positive to see support for the growth of key health and education institutions. However, we advise that support be given to healthcare infrastructure such as the proposed elective hospital. This essential asset to be built in Sarsfield Court must be delivered.

Strategic Objectives 8: Heritage, Arts and Culture

Cork Chamber would like to take this moment to reiterate our support for street art initiatives such as the 'Ardú Murals' which have greatly enhanced key locations across the city that were otherwise lacking colour and character. It is important that this momentum is maintained throughout the lifetime of this plan, and this type of creativity continues to be encouraged. In parallel the evolution of longstanding institutions such as the Crawford must continue to be endorsed.

To ensure the Events Centre is a success, infrastructure must enable and facilitate the level of activity this venue has the potential to bring. With a 6,000-person capacity, the widening of footpaths, reliable and frequent public transport, and accommodation options must all be in place in advance of the delivery of this highly anticipated site.

² <https://www.corkchamber.ie/quarterly-economic-trends/>

Cork's tourism industry is vital to the success of the city and to a strong economy going forwards. In our previous submission, Cork Chamber urged Cork City Council to include supports within the plan that will accentuate and develop the city's tourist attractions. We reiterate the need for support for initiatives, such as plans for Páirc Uí Chaoimh visitor experience and the maritime museum at the Port of Cork sites, and others of similar ambition in order to place Cork on that map as a destination of choice for tourists.

Strategic Objectives 9: Environmental Infrastructure

Home to Ireland's Energy Hub, Cork is in a unique position to maximise the potential of the region in relation to energy provision. We welcome collaboration between Cork City and County councils to support and facilitate offshore windfarms. Cork Chamber fully supports Cork City and County Councils collaboration in supporting and facilitating offshore windfarms through the development of the new Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (ORED II). Deploying Cork's maritime resources and offshore renewable energy potential is critical to meeting the targets set out on the Climate Action Plan 2021 and ensuring security of energy supply.

This matter has become even more urgent as we have been experiencing the impacts of the Russian invasion and war in Ukraine, highlighted in our Q1 2022 Economic Trends survey where 29% of respondents reported that energy price increases are affecting business profitability and growth while 50% of business respondents expect an increase to employee numbers in the next 12 months³. This paired with projected population increases from Project Ireland 2040 require significant growth in renewables and energy efficiency measures to support growth while managing demand. Current and future investment in these measures will be a driving force in securing Cork's future and ensuring the region is attractive for FDI.

We once again advise that flood protection measures such as the Lower Lee Floor Relief Scheme come to fruition. Cork chamber also fully supports various other flood protection schemes in the city that must be progressed with urgency including schemes in Blackpool, Glanmire/Glashaboy, and Douglas/Togher.

Strategic Objectives 11: Placemaking and Managing Development

Cork Chamber welcomes the plan's objectives to deliver sustainable residential development through mixed-land use and enablement of the 15-minute city concept. The delivery of CMATS and connected multi-modal transport options that allow citizens to have real choice in how they move in our city region is essential to achieving this.

Concerns remain over vacancy and dereliction, an issue faced by all urban areas. Cork Chamber would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the need to cast a greater focus on above-shop living. With vacant space above shops prevalent along with a worsening housing crisis, every step must be taken to repurpose the already built urban fabric we have in Cork. We advise that measures are taken to encourage the owners of these buildings to convert these spaces. Consideration should be given to a vacancy levy to incentivise the conversion of upper floor apartments. It is essential that

³ <https://www.corkchamber.ie/quarterly-economic-trends/>



every step be taken to minimise dereliction and vacancy, thus increasing the attractiveness of the city as a place to live and work.

Conclusion

Cork City Council can do much good over the lifetime of this plan, for current and future residents of all ages, for the economy and for the environment. In this final review, Cork Chamber encourages action that is truly in the spirit of sustainable development.

Cork Chamber looks forward to working with Cork City Council to deliver a successful outcome for Cork, and are available at all times for consultation, discussion and support.