

Adopted Amendment
to the
**Bantry Electoral Area
Local Area Plan 2011**

***Amendment No. 2:
Retail Development in Bantry Town
(Revised supporting text, DB-04
General Objective and T-02 Specific
Zoning Objective)***

14th December 2015

Introduction

This adopted amendment to Section 3 “Settlements and Other Locations” “Bantry” of the Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plan 2011 includes revised wording for the supporting text dealing with retail development in Bantry Town generally and revised wording for General Objective DB-04 and Town Centre Objective T-02.

The adopted amendment has been considered in the context of the Habitats Directive, and Cork County Council is satisfied that the adopted amendment does not have the potential to give rise or contribute to negative impacts on any European Site. Accordingly, it is determined that there is no requirement for the adopted amendment to be subject to Appropriate Assessment.

Equally, the adopted amendments do not give rise to any strategic environmental concerns and having consulted with the Environmental Authorities it is determined that there is no requirement for them to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment. A SEA Screening Report and a Habitats Directive Screening Report have been prepared on the adopted amendment and are available online for inspection and download from the County Council's website www.corkcoco.ie.

Text of the Adopted Amendment

Part 1: Supporting Text on retail development:

The Adopted Amendment includes changes to the following text in Section 3 “Settlements and Other Locations” “Bantry” of the Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plan 2011 both by including new text (in **Bold**) and also by deleting some text (presented as a ~~strikethrough~~).

Retail [Paragraphs 1.2.13 – 1.2.16 in the existing plan]

~~1.1.1. The Joint Cork Retail Study 2008 identified Bantry as a County Town that needs an expanded retail capacity to overcome potential isolation from higher order markets and a tendency towards retail spending “leakage” to other competitive centres. Bantry is defined as a small urban centre serving a large rural hinterland. The Study showed that Bantry Town had 2,810sqm of comparison floorspace and 1,105sqm of convenience floorspace and recorded a relatively low level of vacancy in the town with the overall strategy outlined for Bantry to provide for incremental growth in line with current and planned population levels.~~

~~1.1.2. The Joint Retail Study identified that there was only one main supermarket in the town but that there was significant interest in additional development from major stakeholders in the convenience retailing arena. A number of subsequent planning applications have confirmed this interest. Permission has recently been permitted for a 1,125sqm discount foodstore within the town centre.~~

~~1.1.3. It is clear that Bantry suffers a significant shortfall in convenience floorspace demand and that at least a doubling of existing convenience floorspace could easily be accommodated within the town. It is noted that there are a number of vacant or underused properties visible within the current town centre.~~

The Cork County Development Plan, 2014 identifies Bantry as a Large County Town which generally performs important sub county retailing functions and include some major retail chains, particularly convenience. The Plan supports the vitality and viability of such larger towns to ensure that such centres provide an appropriate range of retail and non retail functions to serve the needs of the community and surrounding catchment area.

During the preparation of the County Development Plan, a Non-Metropolitan Retail Background Retail Paper and Town Centre Study was undertaken for 12 of the Non-Metropolitan Towns in the County, including Bantry. The study concluded that Bantry town functions as an important market town providing commercial, retail and tourist facilities to an extensive coastal and inland catchment. It also notes that the contrast between the expanse of open space to the west (Bantry Bay), its setting and the close knit Georgian and Victorian streets to the east gives the town a special character and charm. The N71 National Route which passes through the settlement has a major impact on the town while the topography dictates that much of the commercial development has traditionally been retained and concentrated on the tight knit town centre.

The study notes that the existing Supervalu is the primary convenience supermarket offer in the town located on New Street within the town centre. The other convenience stores in the town centre are Centra and Mace. There is no other significant convenience retailing located in the town, although permission was granted for a supermarket of net floor space 2,082 m² retail development (comparison and convenience) on lands north of the town on the N71 Bantry-Glengarriff Road. In addition, permission was also granted in the town centre for a discount food store just off Bridge Street (next to the town library). To date, construction has not commenced on either site.

In terms of retail warehousing, a number of comparison retailers presently located in the town centre have expressed interest in relocating to larger premises. Such retail warehouses often require extensive areas of showroom space grouped around a common car park. By their nature, retail warehouses necessitate usage of the car and often town centre locations are unsuitable. The challenge for this plan is to identify areas where such uses can be appropriately located.

Town centre [Paragraphs 1.3.8 – 1.3.17 in the existing plan]

The vision for the town centre is to make it a more attractive location to live, recreate and carry on business. Potentially this could include substantial environmental improvements such as pedestrianisation, streetscape improvements and mechanisms to prioritise the movement of pedestrians/cyclists over traffic. Delivery of this is dependent on the delivery of the relief road and off street parking in and around the edge of the town centre.

Expanding the amount of pedestrian orientated urban space within the town can have substantial economic benefits for the town and the wider economy of the area. This can have an important social and economic function and contribute significantly to the attractiveness of the town. An overall traffic and transportation plan should be prepared which includes a movement strategy for the town centre which seeks to reduce traffic related impacts and enhance pedestrian priority. It is also proposed that such a plan should resolve issues in relation to parking and provide ample parking for the needs of the town. It should also be an objective to prioritise a relief road for the town.

Some of the development opportunities suggested through the consultation process include provision of a new street/indoor market, potential for the redevelopment of the historic laneways of the town and old cinema site. The redevelopment of the harbour area in particular will be an important catalyst for regeneration of the town.

Retail

It is clear that Bantry town has a significant convenience floorspace shortfall which has led to substantial retail leakage to other centres. The variety of smaller retail units within the existing town contributes significantly to the comparison floorspace level and this contributes to the vitality and viability of the existing town centre. **The Town Centre Study of Non-Metropolitan Towns (2012) noted that there was 2,140 m² of convenience gross floor space and 5,750 m² of comparison gross floorspace in Bantry Town. The Study also noted that the convenience floor space per head of population in the surrounding catchment was 0.2 m² which compares unfavourably with other similar sized towns in the County.**

Over the years, through the granting of planning permission the council has demonstrated its commitment to expanding retail within the town but decisions show that there is a challenge to plan more comprehensively to incorporate this form of development within the urban fabric of the town. The plan acknowledges lessons learned in recent decisions regarding the possible impact of retail development at the edge of the town on the future viability of its centre.

Realising the potential of the town centre, this plan has identified a core shopping area for the town within or adjoining which there are reasonable opportunities for new ~~small to medium sized~~ convenience and comparison retail development. The ~~recent~~ grant of permission for a discount food store **in the town centre** is a useful first step towards this and demonstrates that difficulties can be overcome and that the town centre remains an appropriate location for modern forms of new ~~small to medium sized~~ convenience and comparison retailing. ~~A number of submissions to the plan have confirmed that there is genuine interest in town centre sites.~~

The town centre and adjoining areas continue to remain the most appropriate location for future retail development and it is important that its vitality and viability is maintained. The expanded town centre area in this plan will support this role and continue to provide opportunities to meet some of the future convenience retail needs of the town. The rationale in the expansion of the

town centre zoning was that it included a choice of brownfield sites with the potential to accommodate new ~~small to medium-sized~~ retail development. The design and scale of proposed retail developments should have regard to the size of existing town centre and edge of centre sites.

The town centre has historically focussed on the area around the town square, the heart of Bantry, where much of the existing retailing still occurs. In looking for new directions to expand the town centre, constraints in relation to topography dictated that further expansion was inappropriate to the north and south of the square however lands to the west (**fronting onto the harbour**) ~~formed~~ **provide** a potential development opportunity site with the advantage of direct proximity to the Wolfe Tone Square, **and as the only generally level area of land within or adjoining the town centre it would be a logical place to facilitate the natural extension of the town centre.**

The Council will encourage the incremental development of these lands with a mix of uses on the overall site which could include on different parts of the site a mixed use development, a convenience retail development and an iconic building located at the seaward end of the overall site. In the event that a retail proposal came forward at this location it would need to demonstrate that the sequential test has been carried out.

It is important to note that the existing surface car park at this location continues to play an important role serving the town centre and will remain in its current use for the foreseeable future. Also the adjoining Council Depot is the site of the main foul sewerage pumping station serving Bantry Town. This significant piece of public infrastructure would be difficult to relocate without incurring significant costs. There have been preliminary discussions regarding the relocation of the oil depot and it is acknowledged by the stakeholders that the development of higher value uses within the T-02 site could expedite the relocation of this inappropriate use.

The other logical area to expand the town centre ~~was~~ **is** along the Glengarriff road, to include brownfield lands around the Boys Club. **It is acknowledged however that while these lands are closer to the core retail area of the town, it is currently in civic / institutional use and could have topographical, access and ownership issues which would firstly need to be resolved.**

~~However there is also a clear requirement within the town for at least one medium to large scale convenience retail outlet. If such a development does not take place within the lifetime of this plan retail leakage to other centres is likely to continue. Outside of the town centre there are a number of sites which could realistically facilitate such a medium to large scale retail development. These sites include Wolf Tone Park and adjoining lands to the east. The two sites have been the subject of previous planning applications for retail development. Although not in the town centre these sites could be considered suitable on the basis that they have suitable topography, are located in close proximity to established and planned residential areas and are of sufficient size to accommodate medium to large scale convenience retail developments. Wolfe Tone Park is presently used to provide GAA playing pitches, while the adjoining site is a mix of brownfield and greenfield uses. This Local Area Plan concludes that no sites within the town centre or edge of centre can readily satisfy the retail requirements of the town for medium to large scale convenience retailing. Therefore it is considered that subject to the sequential test the sites identified above could provide a suitable location for convenience retailing provision within the town of Bantry.~~

If additional convenience retail development does not take place within the lifetime of this plan retail leakage to other centres is likely to continue. ~~Medium to large scale~~ **If** convenience retail

development cannot be easily accommodated within the expanded town centre. **and** if it can be demonstrated that no town centre or edge of town centre sites are suitable, viable or available then consideration should be given to alternative out of centre sites. There are a number of out of centre sites which could realistically facilitate such retail development. These sites include the Wolfe Tone Park and adjoining lands to the east. The development boundary of the town has been expanded to allow for further consideration of these sites. ~~The Wolfe Tone Park site and the adjoining site have been the subject of previous planning applications for retail development.~~

Part 2: Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plan DB-04 General Objective

DB-04

It is an objective to support and promote the town centre as the primary location for the expansion of retail development in the town of Bantry. Consideration will be given to edge of town sites within the new development boundary of the town for ~~medium to large scale~~ convenience retail development where no suitable alternative town centre sites are shown to be available.

Part 3: Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plan T-02 Zoning Objective

Delete objective T-02 in its entirety from the Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plan 2011:

<i>Objective No.</i>	<u>Town Centre Objectives</u>	<i>Approx Area (Ha)</i>
T-02	<p>To facilitate mixed use development including marine and marine related activities, leisure tourism uses, offices, residential, specialist and small to medium sized retail development. Any development should avoid prejudicing existing marine related activities. The development of the lands shall provide for buildings of a high architectural standard which have regard to the setting of the town and the sites location overlooking Bantry Bay. Parts of this site are at risk of flooding. Any development proposals on this site will normally be accompanied by a flood risk assessment that complies with Chapter 5 of the Ministerial Guidelines 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management' as described in objectives FD 1-4, 1-5 and 1-6 in Section 1 of this plan.</p>	3.4

And replace with the following new T-02 objective:

<i>Objective No.</i>	<u>Town Centre Objectives</u>	<i>Approx Area (Ha)</i>
T-02	<p>To provide for the natural extension of Bantry town centre on this opportunity site including a mix of uses for the overall site such as convenience retail, specialist marine and marine related activities, leisure tourism uses, restaurants, offices, and residential development. The Council will encourage the incremental development of the site over time. Any development proposal should have regard to the existing and proposed marine related activities. The development of the lands shall provide for buildings of a high architectural standard which have regard to the setting of the town and the sites location overlooking Bantry Bay. Parts of this site are at risk of flooding. Any development proposals on this site will normally be accompanied by a flood risk assessment that complies with Chapter 5 of the Ministerial Guidelines ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management’ as described in objectives FD 1-4, 1-5 and 1-6 in Section 1 of this plan.</p>	3.4

It be noted that this adopted amendment does not propose any change to the land area extent of the T-02 site as outlined in the Bantry Town Zoning Maps in the current Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plan 2011.