

Paul Madden,



To whom it concerns,

First to give a bit about my background. I have been living in Athlone area for 25 years having originally joined Ericsson and subsequently heading up Neueda Technologies in Athlone. During that time and more particularly in the last 10 years, I have been an active volunteer and supporter in the wider community. In particular I have

- Been on the AIT board of governors
- Am currently on the board of management of Athlone Community College
- Enterprise Champion on Midlands Action Plan for Jobs
- Taskforce member for National Broadband plan
- Established Industry Group to support Athlone's ambitions to secure City status as part of the National Planning Framework
- Spoke at the official launch of the NPF in Feb 2017 with the Minister, advocating a midlands region growth centre
- Active member of Destination Athlone
- Active member of the Athlone Chamber

I also support the IDA when they are showcasing Athlone to FDI companies who are considering opening a new office in Ireland. This activity in particular gives me an insight into what Athlone needs in order to develop further as a city and what actions government can take to help enable economic growth in Athlone and the wider region.

There are two points I would like you to consider

1. When attracting talent from outside the region to relocate to Athlone, quality of life of the destination will always be a key consideration. Being able to attract that talent is very important for many companies based in Athlone. But in particular, being able to attract senior experienced talent is critical to these companies. Having a quality of life proposition for this small number of senior people is usually the key aspect that will determine whether they will relocate or not. These more senior people are usually older (mid thirties and over) and are likely to be relocating with a family. As a result, the key part of the quality of life argument that carries most weight is accommodation, ie. Where will they live with their family, will it be a nice big house in "suburbia"? And while that might sound a little trite, it has a very real impact on sustainability and growth potential in the midlands region.
2. When companies are considering establishing a new office in Ireland, one of their considerations is that they will need to send some senior executives to the new location with a requirement that they spend 2 or 3 years living there. Companies will evaluate how easy it will be for them to convince 2-3 senior executives to relocate to Athlone for 2-3 years. Again a key element here will be, is there appropriate accommodation available.

To meet these needs, Athlone needs to be able to offer housing on the higher end of the market in the villages within a short commute. I believe more land should be zoned residential in some of the smaller villages outside Athlone. In particular, I would support any proposal to increase the amount of land being zoned around Glasson village.

Glasson is a well serviced village, with shop (mini-supermarket), pubs and restaurants all in the village, golf course, pitches and lake right on the doorstep. It is a very short commute to Athlone and I believe offers all that is needed in terms of being an appropriate residential location for foreign direct investment companies as well as for senior people that established companies are attempting to attract to the area. The only obstacle is that currently, the plan is to extend the village by a tiny amount and really doesn't give the village the opportunity to support the economic growth of the county. I fully support any decision to expand the amount of zoned land in the village, particularly on that Athlone side with footpath access to the centre of the village.

Best Regards,

Paul Madden.