**Carlow County Council**

**Preliminary Report for the inCarlow Enterprise Campus, O’Brien Road, Carlow**

**Part 8 Process**

**Date: 06/09/2023**

**Proposing Department: Local Enterprise Office**

**Circulated Departments: Transportation/Roads/Carlow Municipal District Office**

 **Environment/Water Services**

 **Fire Department/Building Control**

 **Community/Amenity Department**

 **Planning**

As part of its Economic Development remit, Carlow County Council’s Local Enterprise Office intends to build on the recently CPO’d ground at the back of Enterprise House on O’Brien Road, Carlow. This new development will comprise a mixed use development of warehouse and office units, and combined with Enterprise House will create an ‘Enterprise Campus’ in this area, for start-up and developing companies, and particularly for start-up companies which are moving to their next stage of development and wish to scale up to a larger unit/premises.

The development will comprise of:

* a 2-storey building for light Industry use with ancillary office space comprising 1,151 sq. m
* a 2-storey building for office use with single storey plant area comprising 1,267 sq. m
* a single storey store comprising 15 sq. m
* a 2.5 m wide bicycle path connection to O’Brien Road
* and associated services including external refuse store, signage, cycle bays, landscaping, sculpture and boundary treatment

According to the 2018 RIKON Study for County Carlow, there is a dearth of scale-up spaces available in Carlow Town to allow companies develop from start-up to the next stage of development and this will create an inCarlow International Enterprise Campus on the site which will fill that need.

The 2018 RIKON study states that there is a:

* Gap in enterprise supports in Carlow for organisations that can no longer be classified as start-ups nor are sufficiently large in size to no longer require assistance.
* Significant opportunity for supporting high potential growth firms (HPGFs), or those in stage 3 of their lifecycle, through the establishment of an enterprise development facility aligned to their expansion requirements
* Limited availability of turnkey kitted-out commercial property
* Gap in the support ecosystem in Carlow for HPGFs in the later stages of their lifecycle with regard to both physical space and enterprise assistance
* Lack of modern, turnkey office spaces in Carlow’s property market and H.E.I.S (Hubble Enterprise and Innovation Space) has the potential to address this gap by making space available to HPGFs
* H.E.I.S. will specifically target high potential growth organisations as HPGFs typically have up to 15 employees and the capacity to grow employee numbers and/or turnover by approximately 20% per annum
* Because the proposed hub’s services will be directed exclusively to organisations of this type, it will complement, rather than compete with other physical enterprise development centres in Carlow and the South East region.
* H.E.I.S. will be an attractive proposition for both HPGFs indigenous to Carlow and those currently based in Dublin for whom growth is constrained by the cost of additional space. Carlow can offer this cohort commercial rents that are on average 75% more affordable and a tangible improvement in their employees’ work/life balance.
* The primary objective of H.E.I.S. is to ensure the continued growth of HPGFs in Carlow with the backing of a fully aligned support ecosystem. It is anticipated that this will have a significant impact on employment in Carlow, attract new skills and upgrade the county’s talent pool, and will contribute to the overall economic prosperity of Carlow and the South East region
* Viable opportunity for Carlow to establish a new enterprise support hub for HPGFs

This project will:

* Contribute towards ameliorating an evident lack of modern turnkey office space in Carlow
* Provide support for HPGFs at stage 3 of their maturity lifecycle
* Stimulate the integration and alignment of the county’s business network and support ecosystem
* Develop Carlow into the first-choice location for HPGFs based on the proposed hub’s capability for assisting these organisations in reaching the sustainable scaling stage of their lifecycle

The Enterprise Campus has the potential to be a unique enterprise support facility in the South East region, catering exclusively to the continued growth of High Potential Growth Firms. Critically, it will complement and not compete with the existing supports available to HPGFs. Once operational, it could constitute a component of the most comprehensive, integrated enterprise support ecosystem in the region, an offering that will be difficult to replicate by other counties. The Enterprise Campus has the capacity to make a significant impact on employment in Carlow, attract new skills and upgrade the county’s talent pool, and make a significant contribution to the overall economic prosperity of Carlow and the South East region

Carlow County Council have engaged a team to finalise a Project Brief in respect of the site on O’Brien Road, Carlow in respect of Scheme Design, Preparation of Draft Part 8 application for consideration by Elected Officials & incorporation of changes as instructed; and preparation of Part 8 Application for Public Display for the inCarlow Enterprise Campus.

John Brennan & Associates have been appointed as project lead for the design team and services will include Project Management, Architectural, and Civil / Structural Engineering Services. John Brennan & Associates will liaise with Conor Moriarty, Senior Executive Architect with Carlow County Council regarding the project. Concept drawings/maps of the area have been completed and are included as part of this report.

This revised Part VIII is to allow for realignment of buildings and minor revisions of facades and signage.

Please respond to the Proposing Department outlining any issues, by email to kcomerford@carlowcoco.ie by Tuesday, 20th September, 2023. Where no issues arise a report to this effect must be sent to the Proposing Department. The Proposing Department will then amend this Preliminary Report to include all responses which will be forwarded to the Planning Department for review before commencement of the formal Part 8 process.

**Kieran Comerford**

**Head of Economic Development & Enterprise**

**Local Enterprise Office, Carlow County Council**