



**Subject: Representation regarding Market Square redevelopment – Ss. Peter and Paul’s Church**

To the Members of the Westmeath County Council,

I am writing to you today in my capacity as Parish Priest of Ss. Peter and Paul’s Church here in Athlone.

First and foremost, I wish to affirm my support for the ongoing efforts to revitalize and upgrade the streetscape of our town. Like many residents, I am eager to see Athlone reach its full potential as a vibrant, welcoming hub for both our local community and the many visitors who come to experience the history and spirit of our town. Development is the lifeblood of progress, and I welcome the vision behind these improvements.

However, a town is more than just a streetscape; it is a living, breathing ecosystem of people, traditions, and essential daily functions. It is with this in mind that I must express my deep concern regarding the proposed upgrades to the Market Square.

To date, there has been a notable absence of dialogue or invitation for the parish to share its perspective on these plans. The Church stands not only as an architectural landmark but as a focal point for the lives of our parishioners. From the increased footfall during weekend Masses to the deeply personal requirements of weddings and funerals, the Square serves as a necessary gateway for our community.

As it stands, the existing car parks on the west side of the river are consistently at capacity. Any plan that overlooks the practical necessity of accessible parking threatens to impede the very residents who rely on the Church for its spiritual and pastoral services. We must find a balance that beautifies our public spaces without rendering them inaccessible to those who need them most—the elderly, families attending baptisms, and those grieving at funerals.

I am not asking for development to stop; I am asking for an invitation to the table. By including those of us who live, work, and worship in the heart of the town in these discussions, I am confident we can move forward with a plan that is both aesthetically ambitious and functionally prudent.

True development happens when a town grows *with* its citizens, not around them. I invite you to open a line of communication with the parish, so that we may work together to ensure that the new Market Square is a space that serves the needs of everyone in Athlone, both now and for generations to come.

I look forward to hearing from you and to the possibility of a constructive dialogue.

Sincerely,

*Fr. John Deignan PP*

**Fr. John Deignan**  
Parish Priest, Ss. Peter and Paul’s Church, Athlone