



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

13th August 2026

The Forward Planning Unit,
Planning Department,
1 Dublin Street,
Monaghan Town,
H18 X982.

**Re: Proposed Material Alterations to Proposed Variation No. 2 of the
Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031**

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work in preparing the Material Alterations (material alterations) to the proposed Variation No. 2 (proposed Variation) to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 (Development Plan).

As Monaghan County Council (Planning Authority) is aware, a key function of the Office of the Planning Regulator (Office) is to evaluate and assess statutory plans to ensure consistency with legislative requirements and national and regional planning policy. The Office has evaluation and assessment pursuant to Part 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Act) and its functions under section 546, and this submission sets out the outcome.

In this context, submissions may include recommendations and observations. Recommendations arise where the Office identifies clear inconsistencies with legislative provisions or policy frameworks and are intended to be addressed to ensure compliance. Observations highlight areas where further clarification, justification, or refinement would strengthen the plan. The submission may also include advice to support the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Following adoption of the Variation, the Office will carry out a further assessment under section 63 of the Act.

1. Response to the Office's submission on the proposed Variation

The Office welcomes and commends the significant work undertaken by the Planning Authority to date and the material alterations in particular, in addressing the recommendations of the Office as expressed in its submission at draft stage.

In response to Recommendation 1, the Office welcomes the reintroduction of the provisions relating to social housing as this will ensure that there is a plan-led approach to development that aligns with the key priorities for compact growth in villages as set out in the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024).

In relation to flood risk management (Recommendation 3), the Office welcomes the precautionary approach being adopted in relation to Site MT948 within Monaghan Town given the flood risk concern. The Office acknowledges that the Planning Authority is proposing a new Water Protection Objective WPO 10 in relation to OPW Arterial Drainage Schemes which will ensure that a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment of an appropriate stage will be provided for any proposed development within Arterial Drainage Scheme Benefitting Lands.

The Office also acknowledges that the Planning Authority intends to incorporate the key policies, objectives and measures of the finalised Local Transport Plan into the Development Plan later in the year through a further variation, which is welcomed (Recommendation 4). This will ensure the integration of land use and sustainable transportation to aid the delivery of the regional policy commitment to have compact growth.

Notwithstanding this progress, the Office notes that the Planning Authority has not accepted its recommendation that peripherally located lands, located well outside the built-up area of Castleblayney, should not be zoned for residential development (Recommendation 2, Site CY1012).

As acknowledged by the Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) prepared as part of the proposed Variation, development of the site would not support compact and sequential growth. In addition, the site is not served by a public footpath or lighting, and it has not been demonstrated that the lands can be adequately serviced in terms of wastewater and water supply infrastructure.

Should the Planning Authority decide to retain this zoning objective, it is required to provide a statement outlining the reasons for its decision not to comply with the Office's recommendation. The Office will carry out an assessment of this matter following the adoption of the Variation.

A further recommendation was made by the Office regarding the potential impact of the proposed zoning of Site CS1011 in Clones on the strategic function of the N54 (Recommendation 5). Noting the response to this recommendation in the Chief Executive's Report, the Planning Authority is reminded that the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) (National Roads Guidelines) state that exceptional circumstances to provide for new entrances onto national roads must be considered through the development plan process, in consultation with Transport Infrastructure Ireland. Furthermore, exceptional circumstances relate to identified stretches of national road having regard to their particular characteristics and the need to protect the safety, capacity and strategic function of the national road network. The National Roads Guidelines are clear; therefore, this matter should be resolved at the plan-making stage, rather than through a masterplan or planning application.

Given that the provisions of the National Roads Guidelines for exceptional circumstances have not been applied through the variation process, the Office remains of the view therefore that the proposed Variation should clearly state that any future development of these lands shall not be accessed directly from the N54.

Should the Planning Authority decide not to incorporate this provision, it will be required to provide a statement outlining the reasons for its decision not to comply with the Office's recommendation. The Office will assess this matter in full following the adoption of the Variation.

2. Overview of submission on proposed material alterations

The Office welcomes the Planning Authority's commitment to meet the housing growth requirements, including the 50% additional provision, set out in the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (2025) (Housing Growth Guidelines). It also commends that it has proactively sought to identify lands which will realistically come forward for development.

Notwithstanding the above, the Office recommends that the Planning Authority address the Office's concern in relation to the compact and sequential growth of Carrickmacross in light of the proposal to rezone Site CM1006 from Industry/Enterprise/Employment to Proposed Residential A.

The recommendation set out below is intended to support the Planning Authority in finalising the proposed Variation and ensuring its effective implementation:

Subject	Recommendation	Observation
Residential re-zoning in Carrickmacross	MA Recommendation 1	-

3. Residential re-zoning in Carrickmacross

The sustainable growth of County Monaghan's towns and villages is recognised as a top priority of the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025) (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly. Sequential and coordinated development supports not only compact and sustainable growth but facilitates the efficient provision of infrastructure and services, encourages greater use of public transport and active travel, and contributes to lower energy demand and consumption.

Site CM1006 is currently zoned for Industry/Enterprise/Employment within the Development Plan. This c.4.3 ha site is now proposed to be rezoned for Residential A (MA 3). The quantum of residential land already zoned in the Development Plan for Carrickmacross is 22.38 ha, which has an anticipated yield of 671 units. From the information provided by the Planning Authority, only 4.56 ha has extant planning permission with an anticipated yield of 43 units. The proposed Variation proposes an additional 24.49 ha of residential land for the town, which would generate an additional 736 units. It is noted that other proposed residential sites subject to representation were discounted by the Planning Authority as there is already sufficient land within the proposed settlement envelope to accommodate the revised housing growth requirement, support long-term compact growth and to accommodate potential development beyond this plan period. Therefore, given that there is more than sufficient land to accommodate the town's housing growth

requirement for 1237 units, additional residential land is not required within Carrickmacross at this juncture.

Located on the periphery of the settlement, approximately 1.3 km away from Main Street, there are also numerous sequentially more centrally located residential lands within Carrickmacross. The development of this site for residential purposes has not been included within the Planning Authority's SCA, which is to inform its land use strategy and application of the tiered approach to zoning as required by section 10 of the NPF, section 2.4 of the Housing Growth Guidelines, as well as section 4.5.2 of Development Plans, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022). It is likely that the access to serve the development would be via the Drumconrath Road within the 60 km/h speed limit. The Office notes that in May 2026 the adjacent c.2 ha residential site (Map CM 735) was refused planning permission on appeal for 51 residential units due to road safety concerns and the inadequacy of pedestrian infrastructure.

The Office therefore considers that rezoning the proposed land is not required to achieve the housing growth requirements of Carrickmacross nor would it be conducive to promoting the principles of compact and sequential growth. It is therefore recommended that Site CM1006 retain its Industry/Enterprise/Employment zoning.

MA Recommendation 1 - Residential re-zoning in Carrickmacross

Having regard to the compact and sequential growth of Carrickmacross and having considered:

- NPO 9 of the NPF to deliver at least 30% of all new homes in settlements within their existing built-up footprints and ensure compact and sequential patterns of growth;
- NPO 43 of the NPF to prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development;
- RPO 9.1 of the RSES to accommodate growth and delivering housing through compact growth;
- section 10 of the NPF;

- the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (2025); and
- the policy and objective for a sequential approach to development under the Development Plans, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022),

it is recommended that the Planning Authority makes the Variation without MA 3 at Carrickmacross.

4. Summary

The Office requests that the Planning Authority addresses the recommendation set out above.

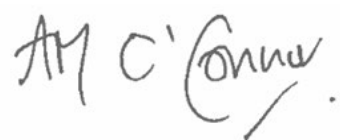
As part of this process, the Chief Executive's report to the elected members, prepared under section 58(15) of the Act should summarise the Office's recommendations and outline how it is proposed to address them.

Following adoption of the Variation, the Planning Authority is required to:

- provide the Office with a copy of the adopted Variation, together with any submissions received from the Minister, regional assemblies, and the National Transport Authority during the plan preparation process within **one week** of adoption;
- inform the Office, **as soon as practicable**, where it decides not to comply with a recommendation, including the reasons for this decision; and
- publish notice of the Variation within **one week** of adoption, confirming that the Development Plan as varied will be available for inspection (online and at a specified location) no later than **five weeks** after adoption.

The Office looks forward to continued constructive engagement with the Planning Authority. If further clarification or discussion would be helpful, the Office would be pleased to assist and can be contacted at plans@opr.ie.

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'AM O'Connor'.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Regulator and Director of Planning Policy Implementation

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015
