Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the Planning Regulator

6th November 2026

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

BY EMAIL

Re: Notice Pursuant to section 63(6) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 – Variation No. 2 to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031

A chara,

1. I am writing to you pursuant to section 63(6) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Act) in the context of Variation No. 2 (Variation No. 2) to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 (Development Plan), which was made by the elected members of Monaghan County Council (Planning Authority) on 5th October 2026.

2. Following the notice of the adoption, received by the Office of the Planning Regulator (Office) on 8th October 2026, the Office is carrying out an assessment of Variation No. 2 further to section 63(1)(b) of the Act. While the assessment is ongoing, the Office has formed a preliminary view that:

    - Site CY1012 zoning objective Residential B; and
    - the associated extension to the settlement envelope for Castleblayney to include site CY1012,

    should be suspended as it may be materially inconsistent with National Policy Objective 9 (NPO 9) and National Policy Objective 43 (NPO 43) of the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025) (Revised NPF) and Regional Policy Objective 3.2 (RPO 3.2) of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) Area.

3. Given that Variation No. 2 came into effect upon adoption, the above listed elements could be relied upon in the making or assessment of a planning application before the Office has completed its assessment under section 63.

4. The reasons for this conclusion are set out in the Preliminary Assessment Report which is enclosed with this notice.

Suspension of specified provisions of the Development Plan

5. Accordingly, this notice suspends the following, as contained in Variation No. 2, pending the completion of the Office's assessment:

    (i) Site CY1012 zoning objective Residential B

    (ii) the associated extension to the settlement envelope for Castleblayney to include site CY1012.

6. The suspension of the above listed elements has the effect of temporarily disapplying those provisions of Variation No. 2 pending the completion of the Office's assessment and the occurrence of one of the matters identified at paragraph 10 below. During the period of suspension, the above listed elements have no legal effect and cannot be relied upon in the consideration, assessment, or determination of planning applications.

7. In practical terms, the Planning Authority is precluded from granting permission for development that would rely on the suspended CY1012 zoning or the extension to the settlement envelope. Any planning application affecting the suspended land must be assessed as if this zoning provision was not in force, having regard instead to the remaining policies and objectives of the development plan, as varied, relevant national and regional planning policy, and proper planning and sustainable development.

8. The suspension does not affect other provisions of Variation No. 2 which continue to operate in full.

9. The suspension does not retrospectively affect planning permissions that have already been granted prior to the issue of the notice.

Duration of Suspension

10. The suspension of the specified zoning will remain in effect pending the completion of the Office's assessment, and

    (i) the issuance by the Office of a draft direction under section 64, in accordance with a direction of the Minister under section 63(14)(b), or

    (ii) the issuance by the Minister of a direction under section 63(15)(b) not to issue a draft direction, or

    (iii) where the Office, having completed the assessment, forms the opinion that none of the criteria under section 63(10) is met, the making of a recommendation to the Minister not to issue a draft direction and notice to the Planning Authority outlining the opinion of the Office and reasons for forming this opinion.

11. A copy of this notice will be issued to the Minister and An Coimisiún Pleanála, and will be published on the Office's website on the same day this notice is issued to you.

Next steps

12. Following this suspension, the Office will now continue its assessment of Variation No. 2 under section 63 of the Act in respect of site CY1012 zoning objective Residential B and the associated extension to the settlement envelope for Castleblayney to include site CY1012.

13. As part of this process, the Office may require the Planning Authority to provide, within such period as may be specified, any information considered necessary and may also consult with any other person it considers necessary.

14. Please do not hesitate to contact the Office should you have any queries in relation to the above. Contact can be initiated through the undersigned or at plans@opr.ie.

Yours sincerely,



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Niall Cussen

Planning Regulator

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the Planning Regulator

OPR Preliminary Assessment Report

Subject	Site CY1012 zoning objective Residential B, and the extension of the settlement envelope to include those lands.
Statutory provision under which substantive assessment is being carried out	Section 63(1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2024, as amended
Approved by	Anne Marie O'Connor, Deputy Regulator and Director of Planning Policy Implementation
Date	30th October 2026

Teach na Páirce, 191-193A An Cuarbhóthar Thuaidh, Baile Átha Cliath 7, D07 EWV4.
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Background

1. This report is prepared to inform the preliminary assessment under section 63(6) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Act) in the context of Variation No. 2 (Variation No. 2) to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 (Development Plan).

2. Following the notice of the adoption, received by the Office of the Planning Regulator (Office) on 8th October 2026, the Office commenced an assessment of Variation No. 2 further to section 63(1)(b) of the Act.

3. Variation No. 2 amends the Castleblayney Town Map CYDP1 in the Development Plan to zone previous unzoned lands at site CY1012 as Residential B. Variation No. 2 also included an associated extension to the 'settlement envelope' for Castleblayney to include site CY1012 within the settlement boundary.

Relevant Policy Context

4. The National Planning Framework First Revision (2025) (Revised NPF) requires the delivery of new housing in a manner that promotes compact, sequential and sustainable settlement growth. National Policy Objective 9 (NPO 9) of the Revised NPF requires that at least 30% of new homes in settlements other than the five cities are delivered within their existing built-up footprints and ensure compact and sequential patterns of growth.

5. The sequential approach to zoning for residential development is set out at section 6.2.3 of the Development Plans, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022) (Development Plans Guidelines) (now National Planning Statement). It is a policy and objective of the Development Plans Guidelines that planning authorities adopt a sequential approach when zoning lands for development, whereby the most spatially centrally located development sites in settlements are prioritised for new development first, with more spatially peripherally located development sites being zoned subsequently. Whilst the Development Plans Guidelines are relevant to the Office's assessment under section 63(1)(b) and subsequent opinion under section 63(10), they have not been relied upon for the

purposes of, or the conclusions reached in, this preliminary assessment report and are included for context only.

6. National Policy Objective 43 (NPO 43) of the Revised NPF also prioritises the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development. In this respect, the supporting text indicates that Ireland's future homes will be located in places that can support sustainable development – places which support compact growth, innovation and the efficient provision of infrastructure, are accessible to a range of local services and can encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling, and support the transition to a lower carbon society.

7. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area similarly includes Regional Policy Objective 3.2 (RPO 3.2) of the RSES which also requires that development plans deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the cities and suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints.

Preliminary Assessment

8. The CY1012 site is located outside Castleblayney and approximately 0.8km from the built-up area boundary as delineated by the 2022 Census (CSO boundary). It was located outside the previous Castleblayney settlement boundary identified in the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025. The Settlement Capacity Audit which accompanies Variation No. 2 identifies an anticipated yield of 32 residential units on the site and identifies that site CY1012 does not represent compact growth.

9. The CY1012 site is situated in an area characterised by ribbon development along the approaches to the town from the northwest. It is located along the L3440 Corracloghan Road, where an 80 km/h speed limit applies, and does not benefit from footpaths or street lighting. The site is located along a section of the road where there is no overtaking due to the proximity of the R183 road junction which pedestrians would have to negotiate when travelling into town. Furthermore, the Settlement Capacity Audit does not include information to

demonstrate that adequate wastewater or water supply infrastructure is available to serve the proposed development.

10. Given that the remaining zoned lands in Castleblayney have the potential to deliver approximately 676 units, there is already sufficient zoned residential land in more centrally located areas, closer to the town centre and within the CSO settlement boundary, to accommodate the revised housing growth requirement of 471 units. These sites reflect the principles of compact and sequential development. The CY1012 zoning objective is not therefore required to meet the housing growth requirement which has been met and exceeded.

11. The zoning and associated extension to the settlement envelope has therefore the potential to establish a significant new residential growth area outside the existing built-up area which may not support a sustainable pattern of growth and has the potential to result in a car-dependent pattern of development.

12. The Office is of the preliminary opinion that these factors demonstrate a material inconsistency with NPO 9 of the Revised NPF and RPO 3.2 of the RSES, insofar as those objectives seek to deliver homes within the existing built-up footprints of towns and to ensure compact and sequential patterns growth, and NPO 43 of the Revised NPF to prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development. Furthermore, these inconsistencies raise material concerns in terms of planning considerations for the reasons set out above.

13. For the purposes of this preliminary assessment, these considerations therefore raise a concern that the Residential B zoning objective in respect of site CY1012 may not support compact, sequential and sustainable settlement growth, and may therefore be materially inconsistent with NPO 9 and NPO 43 of the Revised NPF and RPO 3.2 of the RSES.

14. The elected members' reasons for making Variation No. 2 with site CY1012 zoning objective Residential B and the associated extension to the settlement envelope for Castleblayney have also been considered as part of this preliminary assessment. The Office remains of the view, however, that the zoning objective and associated extension to the settlement envelope may be materially

inconsistent with NPO 9 and NPO 43 of the Revised NPF and RPO 3.2 of the RSES for the reasons outlined above.

Conclusion

15. Having regard to the above, the Office has formed a preliminary view that, in respect of site CY1012 zoning objective Residential B and the extension to the settlement envelope for Castleblayney associated with Variation No. 2 to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031, this zoning objective and associated extension to the settlement envelope should be suspended as they may be materially inconsistent with NPO 9 and NPO 43 of the Revised NPF and RPO 3.2 of the RSES.

16. As Variation No. 2 came into immediate effect following adoption on 5th October 2026, the adopted CY1012 zoning objective and the associated extended settlement envelope could be relied upon in the making or assessment of a planning application before the Office has completed its assessment under section 63. Suspension is therefore considered necessary to ensure that provisions of the Development Plan, as varied, which the Office considers may be materially inconsistent with the NPF and RSES, cannot be relied upon, pending completion of the Office's assessment and the conclusion of the statutory process.

Recommendation

17. It is recommended therefore that a notice issue to the Planning Authority which **suspends** the following, as contained in Variation No. 2 to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031, as adopted on 5th October 2026 pending the completion of the Office's assessment:

    (i) Site CY1012 zoning objective Residential B; and

    (ii) the associated extension to the settlement envelope for Castleblayney to include site CY1012.

18. No additional information is considered necessary to assist the Office in carrying out its assessment at this stage.