

OPR Ref: DP-023-22

9<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Planning Offices of Monaghan County Council, 1 Dublin Street, Monaghan H18 X982.

# Proposed Variations No. 3 and No. 4 to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 - 2025

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work in preparing Variations no. 3 and no. 4 of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 – 2025 (the Plan).

The Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) strongly commends the pro-active approach of your authority to the regeneration of Monaghan town as evidenced by the preparation of the proposed variations.

Both the draft Dublin Street North Regeneration Plan and the draft Roosky lands Master Plan provide a strong basis for a plan-led approach to the redevelopment of these strategically located sites in a manner which supports the vibrancy and vitality of the existing town centre.

As your authority is aware, a key function of the Office is the assessment of statutory plans to ensure consistency with legislative and policy requirements relating to planning. The Office has evaluated and assessed the proposed variations, under the provisions of sections 31AM (1) and (2) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended (the Act) and this submission has been prepared accordingly.

Recommendations issued by the Office relate to clear breaches of the relevant legislative provisions, of the national or regional policy framework and/or of the policy of Government, as set out in the Ministerial guidelines under section 28.

As such, the planning authority is required to implement or address recommendation(s) made by the Office in order to ensure consistency with the relevant policy and legislative provisions.

Observations take the form of a request for further information, justification on a particular matter, or clarification regarding particular provisions of a plan or variation on issues that are required to ensure alignment with policy and legislative provisions. The planning authority is requested by the Office to action an observation.

A submission also can include advice on matters that the Office considers would contribute positively to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The planning authority is requested by the Office to give full consideration to the advice contained in a submission.

The submission below has been prepared to provide a strategic level input to your authority in finalising the proposed variations. No recommendations or observations are considered necessary in respect of the proposed variations.

## **Consistency with the National Planning Framework**

The Office is satisfied that the proposed variations for these strategically located town centre sites are strongly aligned with the National Planning Framework (NPF). This includes urban regeneration (NPO 6), improving quality of life and the attractiveness of our key towns as places to live and work (NPO 4), compact growth (NPO 3) and making better use of underutilised land (NPO11).

Furthermore, and having regard to the *Climate Action Plan 2021* and to the objectives of the NPF to support the transition to a low carbon economy (NPO 53 and 54), the Office welcomes and acknowledges that the town centre regeneration will make a positive contribution to sustainable travel patterns by facilitating modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport.

### **Consistency with the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy**

The Office notes that the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) has designated Monaghan as a 'Key Town'. The 'key future priorities' for the development of the town include achieving 20% of projected growth through the regeneration and renewal of the town centre, and delivering compact growth within Monaghan town by providing for a mix

of housing densities. The proposed variations to the Plan are consistent with these priorities and as such are welcomed by the Office.

The proposed variations also provide a framework to support a sustainable pattern of development through the location of housing and employment where people can choose to use sustainable transport options, thus reducing car dependency. The Office welcomes this approach as it provides a framework consistent with RSES (RPO 5.1 and RPO 6.33).

The focus on town centre uses also provides for enhanced economic development opportunities, especially within the context of the Ulster Canal Greenway and tourism development generally, consistent with RPO 5.20 and RPO 6.24.

### Consistency with Monaghan County Development Plan, 2019 – 2025

The Office notes that the county settlement hierarchy within the Plan has designated Monaghan town as Tier 1 – Principle Town (SHO 1 of Monaghan County Development Plan, 2019 – 2025). The proposed variations facilitate the future development of the town consistent with its position at the top of the settlement hierarchy.

#### **Section 28 Guidelines**

A key emphasis of the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2012) is to protect and enhance the historic core and to make improvements to the town centre public realm as this will contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre and reinforce the positive image of the town as a place to live, work and visit.

In this respect, the Office welcomes the recognition of the importance of linkages between the regeneration sites and the established town centre which encourage permeability and connectivity within the town to the benefit of the existing town centre.

The proposed variations also provide a framework to bring vitality to underutilised areas and will facilitate a broadening of the range of facilities and services on offer in the town centre which in turn will act as a focus for the wider region.

Finally, the Office strongly welcomes the design-led approach to redevelopment followed by your authority. This will contribute to a sense of place and identity, making the urban area more pleasant for people to work in, to live in, to shop in, or pass through, consistent with the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2012).

### Summary

Arising from the foregoing evaluation and assessment of the proposed variations, the Office concludes that no recommendations are warranted since the proposed variations are generally consistent with national and regional planning policies and the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 – 2025.

Your authority is required to notify this Office within 5 working days of the making of the variation and send a copy of the written statement and any maps as made. Please feel free to contact the staff of the OPR in the context of your authority's responses to the above, which we would be happy to facilitate. Contact can be initiated through plans@opr.ie.

Is mise le meas,

**Anne Marie O'Connor** 

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Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluations