

5<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Forward Planning,  
Planning, Environment and Place-Making Directorate,  
Limerick City and County Council,  
Merchants Quay,  
Limerick,  
V94 EH90.

**Re: Adopted Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2023 - 2029**

A chara,

The Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) acknowledges the adoption of the Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2023-2029 (the LAP) by the members of Limerick City and County Council on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

The Office also acknowledges receipt of your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023, further to section 31(AO)(5) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended (the Act).

The Office would like to state at the outset that the LAP generally provides a robust evidence-based planning framework with a high level of consistency with national and regional planning policies and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 (the Development Plan). In particular, the LAP provides a strong planning framework for the regeneration of the town centre, including the identification of nine Opportunity Sites and clear measures to support their development which is welcomed.

Having reviewed the adopted LAP in accordance with the legislative requirements set out in the Act, the Office is satisfied with the manner in which the vast majority of its recommendations and observations made at draft LAP stage were addressed.

However, the Office's submission at the material alterations stage raised a number of concerns, in particular regarding the extent of land zoned at Rathaneane, and the inclusion of an indicative route for a Southern Distributor Road on the zoning map.

With regard to the lands at Rathaneane, the Office expressed concern that there was sufficient land zoned within the town to accommodate the projected housing requirements, and that this additional extensive land zoning was not consistent with the core strategy of the Development Plan and would not contribute to the achievement of compact growth.

Notwithstanding this, the Office notes that the lands are sequentially appropriate and are serviced. The lands were zoned Residential Development Area Phase 1 and Phase 2 and Residential Serviced Sites Phase 1 and 2 in the preceding Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2014-2020. The Office also notes the considerable progress made by Limerick City and County Council in ensuring the greater alignment between the extent of land zoned under the LAP and the core strategy set out in the Development Plan.

In relation to the Southern Distributor Road, the Office continues to have reservations about the need for this road. Under the previous Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2014-2020, this road was proposed to serve the extensive lands previously zoned to the south of the town. There was a specific objective that the phasing of zoned lands along the indicative road would be concurrent with the construction of the road.

Under the current LAP however, the outer development boundary to the south is separated from the route, and this lack of connectivity between development lands and the Southern Distributor Road would undermine its function and sustainable development of the town.

The submission from the National Transport Authority (NTA) also did not support the road and concluded that the focus should be on sustainable transport measures to serve a more compact form of development in the town.

The Office notes however, that the proposed Southern Distributor Road is an indicative route only. Any further consideration of the matter should involve discussions with the NTA to determine the future requirement for the distributor road, and to ensure if implemented, that it supports modal shift initiatives for cyclists and pedestrians.

In conclusion, the Office welcomes the adoption of the Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2023-2029, and looks forward to continued engagement with Limerick City and County Council in the implementation of national and regional policy at the local level.

Is mise le meas,

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "AM O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a diagonal slash at the end.

**Anne Marie O'Connor**

Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluations

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