



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

10th September 2025

John Cummins,
Minister of State,
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
Custom House,
Dublin 1,
D01 W6X0.

BY HAND AND BY EMAIL

**Re: Notice Pursuant to section 31AN(4) of the Planning and Development Act
2000 (as amended) – Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031**

A chara,

1. I am writing to you pursuant to section 31AN(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Act) in the context of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 (the County Development Plan). In particular, I write arising from consideration by the Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) of the following:
 - a. the Notice of Intent to issue a Direction issued to Monaghan County Council (the Planning Authority) by your office on 3rd July 2025; and
 - b. the report of the Chief Executive of the Council issued to the Office on 22nd August 2025 on the submissions and observations received by the Planning Authority (the CE's Report).
 - c. submissions made directly by elected members of the Planning Authority to this Office.
2. The Office has carefully considered the CE's Report, the submissions made therein, and the submissions made directly to this Office. Further details are provided at sections 2, 3 and 4 below.

3. Having regard to section 31AN(4)(a) of the Act, the Office recommends the exercise of your function under the relevant provisions of section 31 of the Act to issue the Direction as per the attached proposed final Direction.
4. This letter is laid out under the following headings:
 1. [Draft Direction](#)
 2. [Consultation on Draft Direction](#)
 3. [Chief Executive's Recommendation](#)
 4. [Consideration of Submissions](#)
 - 4.1 [Part 2\(a\)\(i\) MA: Chapter 9, No.2 Monaghan Retail Park](#)
 - 4.2 [Part 2\(a\)\(ii\) MA: MTDP1 No.15 subject lands within Flood Zone A](#)
 5. [Recommendation to the Minister](#)

1. Draft Direction

5. The draft Direction issued by the Minister (draft Direction) was as follows:

The Planning Authority is hereby directed to take the following steps with regard to the Development Plan:

(a) Delete the following Material Alterations from the adopted Development Plan:

*(i) **MA: Chapter 9, No.2** - i.e. the footnote at table 9.3 Land Use Zoning Matrix which states 'Retail (Convenience) and Retail (Comparison) are acceptable in principle at the Monaghan Retail Park'.*

*(ii) **MA: MTDP1 No.15** - i.e. that portion of the subject lands within Flood Zone A reverts to the zoning objective in the draft Plan i.e. from Industry / Enterprise / Employment to Landscape Protection / Conservation.*

(b) Apply all necessary consequential updates to the text of the plan consistent with the foregoing.

2. Consultation on Draft Direction

6. The public consultation on the draft Direction took place from 17th July 2025 to 31st July 2025 inclusive.

7. The CE's Report states that **three submissions** were received in relation to the draft Direction during the statutory public consultation period. The breakdown of views contained within the submissions is as follows¹:

Submissions to Planning Authority			
Draft Direction	Submission from / type	Support	Oppose
Part 2(a)(i) (MA: Chapter 9, No.2)	Councillor	-	Cllr. PJ O' Hanlon
	Prescribed authority	NTA	NWRA
	Public	-	-
Part 2(a)(ii) (MA: MTDP1 No.15)	Councillor	-	-
	Prescribed authority	-	NWRA
	Public	-	-

8. Section 31(10) of the Act allows elected members of the Planning Authority to make submissions directly to the Office during the consultation period. The Office received **one submission** directly from an elected member, Councillor Seán Conlon, which related to both parts of the draft Direction.

3. Chief Executive's Recommendation

9. The CE's Report states that the Chief Executive has considered each of the submissions made through the statutory public consultation. The Chief Executive's recommendation with regard to each of the individual parts of the draft Direction is as follows:

¹ Submissions may relate to multiple parts of a draft direction. Therefore, the total numbers in support of, or opposing, the draft direction may exceed the total number of submissions made.

Draft Direction	Chief Executive's Recommendation
Part 2(a)(i)	Recommendation consistent with the draft Direction
Part 2(a)(ii)	Recommendation consistent with the draft Direction

4. Consideration of Submissions

10. The matters raised in the CE's Report and submissions received directly from the elected members are given detailed consideration below.

4.1 Part 2(a)(i) MA: Chapter 9, No.2 Monaghan Retail Park

[1] Draft Direction

Part 2(a)(i) MA: Chapter 9, No.2 - i.e. the footnote at table 9.3 Land Use Zoning Matrix which states 'Retail (Convenience) and Retail (Comparison) are acceptable in principle at the Monaghan Retail Park'.

[2] Chief Executive's Recommendation

The Chief Executive recommends that the footnote and related asterisks at table 9.3 Land Use Zoning Matrix is omitted from the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 having regard to the need to prioritise retail provision in the town core, to comply with national policy provisions and guidelines, to support regeneration, compact growth, sustainable mobility and a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society.

The Chief Executive also recommends a consequential update to the text of the plan consistent with the foregoing, specifically the omission of the related text detailed within section 10.6 of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031.

[3] Prescribed Authorities

1. National Transport Authority (NTA)

The CE's Report summarises the submission made by the NTA in support of the draft Direction as follows:

- the NTA notes that the Monaghan Retail Park is removed (1.5km) from the core retail area of Monaghan Town;
- the NTA agrees with the draft Direction that pursuing MA: Chapter 9, No. 2 would 'not facilitate linked trips but rather, due to its location, will likely generate additional car-based rather than pedestrian or cycle trips for convenience and comparison retailing';
- the submission notes that this would be inconsistent with NPO 107 to support the delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework relating to compact growth, sustainable mobility and the transition to a carbon neutral and climate resilient society; and
- the NTA therefore supports draft Ministerial Direction 2(a)(i).

2. Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA)

The CE's Report summarises the submission made by the NWRA.

The submission clarifies that the report prepared by the Regional Assembly (Executive), included as an appendix to the submission, supported the Ministerial Direction as it aligns with the principles and Regional Planning Objectives (RPO) contained within the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region in pursuit of achieving compact and sustainable urban growth in Monaghan Town. In particular, the Executive Report references RPO 4.45 'to support retail in town and village centres through the sequential approach, as provided within the Retail Guidelines, and to encourage appropriate development formats within the town and village centres'.

The submission notes however that at their monthly meeting held on 18th July 2025, and following debate, the elected members of the NWRA decided not to endorse the Report of the Executive on the draft Ministerial Direction.

The assembly members rejected the report of the Executive for the following reasons:

- the distance from the Clones Road Retail Park to the commencement of a continuum of residential development leading into the Monaghan Town on both sides of the Clones Road, and road networks leading to high density housing is less than 150 metres;

- within 200 metres of Clones Road Retail Park, the Council have purchased an approximately 10-acre site whereby continued negotiations are ongoing with the Department that will realise a minimum of 70 houses built;
- the close proximity of the Clones Road Retail Park to current and proposed high-density residential development aligns with RETAIL 10.6 'Convenience and comparison retail should be a fundamental part of a wider Retail Hierarchy, which is Monaghan Town (the main county town) should include Neighbourhood level, convenience retail with appropriate attending services';
- the NWRA identifies Monaghan as a Key Town. As a Key Town, the population target for Monaghan Town is to grow by 2040 by 30% and to a population of at least 10,000. However, the census figures and growth rate up to 2022 do not reflect this trajectory;
- Monaghan Town has been negatively impacted by way of an almost static growth in population as indicated in the census statistics covering the 2016-2022 period. Over that timescale, there was only a 1% increase in population; an additional 101 people. Current and previous planning applications and Commencement Notices since 2022 indicate considerable population growth, which should be complemented by the provision of additional retail offering beyond the core town area, such as a neighbourhood retail centre;
- there is no availability of retail space available in the core area for any business seeking 3,600 square feet or more, to accommodate a medium to large scale retail offering. There is nothing about the town of a suitable size/fit for anything beyond a restaurant, boutique, menswear, salon etc.;
- for the population to increase, efforts to live in the Town to reach the target set by the NPF/NWRA should be supported;
- in order to align with the NPF and the NWRA, the correlation between the retail offering and that which is delivered at a neighbour level must be recognised. For this reason, we should support the expansion of retail opportunities that exist in the Town;

- the vacancy rate at Monaghan Retail Park is currently at 45% and declining. Failure to support this Retail Park and its need to provide neighbourhood services may result in a 100% vacant rate; and
- the changes to the retail Matrix will provide much needed support and choice to an existing retail enterprise in Monaghan Town.

[4] Elected Members' submissions to the OPR and to the Planning Authority

The Office received a direct submission from Councillor Seán Conlon opposing the draft Direction in respect of MA: Chapter 9, No.2. The Planning Authority received a submission from Councillor PJ O'Hanlon also opposing the draft Direction.

The CE's Report has summarised the submission made by Councillor PJ O'Hanlon as follows:

- Councillor O'Hanlon supports the retention of the footnote at table 9.3 Land Use Zoning Matrix to allow for the sale of retail convenience and retail comparison goods within existing units at the Monaghan Retail Park;
- the submission notes that the vacancy levels at the Monaghan Retail Park stand at approximately 40% and Councillor O'Hanlon has concerns that this level will continue to rise over the coming years and that Monaghan County Council will then be forced to use their powers under, for example, the Derelict Sites Act 1990 to address these future issues;
- the submission also notes that Tesco, Lidl, Supervalu and Dunnes Stores are all currently located within 2km of each other in Monaghan Town with construction works on an Aldi store ongoing. The submission notes therefore that allowing retail comparison and retail convenience at the retail park will afford for other parts of the retail sector to be provided for within Monaghan Town; and
- in summary, Councillor O'Hanlon supports the retention of the footnote at table 9.3 of the Development Plan to allow retail convenience and retail comparison within existing buildings only at Monaghan Retail Park.

The Office summarises the direct submission made by Councillor Seán Conlon as follows:

- the distance from the Clones Road Retail Park to the commencement of a continuum of residential development leading into the Monaghan Town on both

sides of the Clones Road, and road networks leading to high density housing is less than 150 metres;

- within 200 metres of Clones Road Retail Park, the Council have purchased an approximately 10-acre site whereby continued negotiations are ongoing with the Department that will realise a minimum of 70 houses built;
- the close proximity of the Clones Road Retail Park to current and proposed high-density residential development aligns with RETAIL 10.6 'Convenience and comparison retail should be a fundamental part of a wider Retail Hierarchy, which is Monaghan Town (the main county town) should include Neighbourhood level, convenience retail with appropriate attending services';
- Monaghan is identified as a Key Town with a population target to grown by at least 30% to a population of at least 10,000 by 2040, however the census growth rate does not reflect this trajectory with only 1% population growth over 2016-2022 period. However, planning applications and commencement notices since then indicate considerable population growth which should be complemented by the provision of additional retail services such as a neighbourhood retail centre;
- there is no availability for retail space within the town core for an offering over 3,600 sq. ft. to accommodate medium to large scale retail;
- effort should be made to support people to live in Monaghan town to reach NPF targets;
- the expansion of retail opportunities should be supported to recognise the correlation between the retail offering and that which is delivered at a neighbourhood level;
- Monaghan Retail Park currently experiencing high vacancy rates at 45% and declining; and
- the changes to the retail matrix will provide much needed support and choice to an existing retail enterprise in the town.

[5] Reasons for opposing the draft Direction

The reasons given for opposing the draft Direction can be summarised as follows:

- the Retail Park is located within 150/200m of to a continuum of residential development which aligns with the County Development Plan, section 10.6

‘Convenience and comparison retail should be a fundamental part of a wider Retail Hierarchy, which is Monaghan Town (the main county town) should include Neighbourhood level, convenience retail with appropriate attending services’;

- Monaghan is identified as a Key Town, and planning applications and commencement notices indicate considerable population growth which support the provision of additional retail services such as a neighbourhood retail centre;
- efforts to live in the Town to reach the target set by the NPF / NWRA RSES should be supported;
- there is no availability for retail space within the town core for an offering over 3,600 sq. ft. to accommodate medium to large scale retail;
- the expansion of retail opportunities should be supported to align with the NPF and the NWRA;
- the changes to the retail matrix will provide much needed support and choice to an existing retail enterprise in the town; and
- failure to support this Retail Park and its need to provide neighbourhood services may further increase the vacancy rate.

[6] Reasons for supporting the draft Direction

The reasons given for supporting the draft Direction can be summarised as follows:

- Monaghan Retail Park is removed (1.5km) from the core retail area of Monaghan Town;
- convenience and comparison retail at this location would increase car-based activity rather than active travel methods; and
- the provision of convenience and comparison at this location would be inconsistent with NPO 107 to support the delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF relating to compact growth, sustainable mobility and the transition to a carbon neutral and climate resilient society.

[7] Consideration of reasons

A number of the reasons given for opposing the draft Direction are similar to the reasons given by the elected members for the decision to not comply with the recommendation of

the Office when adopting the County Development Plan. These reasons were detailed in the notice under section 31AM(6) of the Act, received from the Planning Authority on 3rd June 2025 (31AM(6) notice letter) including:

- the NWRA identifies Monaghan as a Key Town. As a key Town the population target for Monaghan Town is to grow by 2040 by 30% and to a population of at least 10,000. However, the census figures and the current growth rate do not reflect this trajectory;
- Monaghan Town has been negatively impacted by way of an almost static growth in population as indicated in the census statistics covering the 2016-2022 period. Over that timescale there was only a 1% increase in population, an additional 101 people. Current and previous Planning applications since 2022 indicates considerable population growth, which should be complimented by the provision of additional retail offering beyond the core town area such as a neighbourhood retail centre;
- on that note, there is no availability of retail space available in said core area for any business seeking 5000 square feet or more to accommodate a medium to large scale retail offering. There is nothing about the town of a suitable size/fit for anything beyond a small restaurant, boutique, menswear, salon etc.;
- for the population to increase we should support efforts to live in the Town and to reach the target set by the NPF/NWRA;
- in order to align with the NPF and the NWRA the correlation between the retail offering and that which is delivered at a neighbour level must be recognised. For this reason, we should support the expansion of retail opportunities that exist in the Town;
- the vacancy rate at Monaghan Retail Park is currently at 45% and declining. Failure to support this Retail Park and its need to provide neighbourhood services may result in a 100% vacant rate; and
- the changes to the retail Matrix will provide much needed support and choice to an existing retail enterprise in Monaghan Town.

As set out in the letter that issued to your office on 20th June 2025, further to section 31AM(8) of the Act (31AM(8) notice letter), these reasons were carefully taken into

consideration by the Office in recommending the exercise of your function under the relevant provisions of section 31 of the Act, and the Office adopts the same rationale as set out in the 31AM(8) notice letter in response to those similar points raised again in submissions.

The Office has considered the additional or more detailed reason raised below:

- proximity to existing and planned high density residential development.

Councillor Seán Conlon in his submission to the Office, and the NWRA in its submission to the Planning Authority, justify the reason to retain the footnote at table 9.3 Land Use Zoning Matrix on the basis that neighbourhood retail facilities are needed to serve existing high density residential development located within 150m of the retail park, and that The Planning Authority is in negotiations for a 10 ha Residential site for c. 70 units within 200m of the retail park. This reason is stated to be in accordance with section 10.6 of the County Development Plan 'Convenience and comparison retail should be a fundamental part of a wider Retail Hierarchy, which is Monaghan Town (the main county town) should include Neighbourhood level, convenience retail with appropriate attending services'.

The closest residential area to the retail park is located at Killyconnigan, off the Cortolvin Road, c. 450m (as the crow flies) / c. 750m (walking distance) to the southeast. A further existing residential area is located to the northeast, c. 700m (as the crow flies) / 850m (walking distance) at Knockroe.

A parcel of undeveloped Proposed Residential A zoned lands is located c. 450m (as the crow flies) / 700m walking to the northeast of the retail park along the Clones Road. It is understood that the Planning Authority is preparing a Part 8 application for residential development on these lands, as stated in the submissions.

As set out in the 31AM(8) notice letter, the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) (Retail Planning Guidelines) defines a local centre or neighbourhood centre as typically comprising a newsagent, small supermarket / general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised catchment population.

Two existing neighbourhood centres are located within the vicinity of the retail park. One at the junction of Oriel Way and Cortolvin Road, containing a convenience retail (Daybreak

Mullaghmatt), a post office, comparison retail (The HUB Furniture @ Teach na nDaoine), a local park and children's playground. The second is located further east along the Clones Road, towards the town centre which includes a service station and convenience store (Applegreen Mullaghmonaghan), a leisure centre and a school. These neighbourhood centres are closer to the existing residential areas than the retail park.

The Office accepts that the Proposed Residential A zoned lands are located slightly closer to the retail park than the existing residential development, but would not be significantly closer to the retail park than the existing neighbourhood centres.

The Office therefore reiterates the point made in the 31AM(8) notice letter that the distance of the retail park to a small, localised catchment, which is already well served by convenience and comparison retail services in accordance with RPO 4.45² of the RSES, does not demonstrate that MA: Chapter 9, No.2 is required to meet local neighbourhood needs.

Furthermore, this material alteration did not limit convenience and comparison retailing to 'neighbourhood' scale, and must therefore be assessed as such against NPO 14 to regenerate and rejuvenate towns and NPO 107 for the delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF for compact growth, sustainable mobility and the transition to a carbon neutral and climate resilient society, RPO 4.45 of the RSES to support retail in town centres, and section 10(2)(n) of the Act for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies.

[8] Conclusion

The Office also notes that the Chief Executive's recommendation is consistent with the draft Direction to delete the footnote at table 9.3 Land Use Zoning Matrix which states 'Retail (Convenience) and Retail (Comparison) are acceptable in principle at the Monaghan Retail Park'.

² RPO 4.45: To support retail in town and village centres through the sequential approach, as provided within the Retail Planning Guidelines, and to encourage appropriate development formats within the town and village centres.

The Office also accepts the recommendation of the Chief Executive in respect of the consequential update to the text of the plan to omit the related text detailed within section 10.6 of the County Development Plan.

Following consideration of the CE's Report and submissions made, the Office is of the view that there is no planning or policy basis to amend the recommendation of this Office in respect of the draft Direction in relation to MA: Chapter 9, No.2 at Monaghan Retail Park.

4.2 Part 2(a)(ii) MA: MTDP1 No.15 subject lands within Flood Zone A

[1] Draft Direction

MA: MTDP1 No.15 - i.e. that portion of the subject lands within Flood Zone A reverts to the zoning objective in the draft Plan i.e. from Industry / Enterprise / Employment to Landscape Protection / Conservation.

[2] Chief Executive's Recommendation

The Chief Executive recommends that the draft Direction is implemented having regard to the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) and to NPO 57 of the NPF which requires the implementation of the above referenced guidelines.

[3] Prescribed Authorities

1. Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA)

The CE's Report summarises the submission made by the NWRA. The submission clarifies that the report prepared by the Regional Assembly (Executive) included as an appendix to the submission, supported the Ministerial Direction, as it aligns with the principles and Regional Planning Objectives (RPO) contained within the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region in pursuit of achieving compact and sustainable urban growth in Monaghan Town. In particular, the Executive Report references RPO 4.45 of the RSES 'to support retail in town and village centres through the sequential approach, as provided within the Retail Guidelines, and to encourage appropriate development formats within the town and village centres'.

The submission notes however that at their monthly meeting held on 18th July 2025, and following debate, the elected members of the NWRA decided not to endorse the Report of the Executive on the draft Ministerial Direction.

The assembly members rejected the report of the Executive for the following reasons:

- an Industrial Development Authority (IDA) Report highlighted a number of imbalances across the northwest region, specifically in relation to ready to go industrial/commercial properties. The zoning changes proposed in respect of these subject lands will enable additional industrial lands to be ready to be developed. This will provide much needed jobs in Monaghan Town and to the wider area, which in turn will grow our third level skill base such as apprenticeships;
- the subject lands are conveniently located adjacent to the existing public roads, offering direct access to the National Road network, which has adequate capacity for any traffic generated from commercial uses. It is a strategically well-located site;
- there are no landscape qualities or natural heritage features existing on these lands;
- a risk of flooding does not preclude the development of lands;
- a significant portion of the lands is not exposed to flood risk as the ground levels rise significantly above the river and flood plain levels; and
- the majority of the lands can be developed outside of a flood plain and for the portions of the site that remain within the flood plain, a design solution can be found.

[4] Elected Members' submissions to the OPR and to the Planning Authority

The Office received a direct submission from Councillor Seán Conlon in respect of MA: MTDP1 No.15. The Planning Authority did not receive any submissions from elected members on this point of the draft Direction.

The Office has summarised the matters raised in the submission as follows:

- an Industrial Development Authority (IDA) Report highlighted a number of imbalances across the northwest region specifically in relation to ready to go industrial/commercial properties. The zoning changes proposed in respect of these subject lands will enable additional industrial lands to be ready to be developed. This

will provide much needed jobs in Monaghan Town and to the wider area, which in turn will grow our third level skill base such as apprenticeships;

- the subject lands are conveniently located adjacent to the existing public roads, offering direct access to the National Road network which has adequate capacity for any traffic generated from commercial uses. It is a strategically well-located site;
- there are no landscape qualities or natural heritage features existing on these lands;
- a risk of flooding does not preclude the development of lands;
- a significant portion of the lands is not exposed to flood risk as the ground levels rise significantly above the river and flood plain levels; and
- the majority of the lands can be developed outside of a flood plain and for the portions of the site that remain within the flood plain a design solution can be found.

[6] Reasons for opposing the draft Direction

Councillor Seán Conlon's reasons for opposing the draft Direction reiterate the reasons given by the elected members in deciding to make the County Development Plan with this material alteration, and can be summarised as follows:

- need for industrial/commercial properties. which will provide much needed jobs in Monaghan Town and to the wider area, which in turn will grow our third level skill base such as apprenticeships;
- the subject lands are conveniently located adjacent to the existing public roads, offering direct access to the National Road network which has adequate capacity for any traffic generated from commercial uses. It is a strategically well-located site;
- there are no landscape qualities or natural heritage features existing on these lands;
- a risk of flooding does not preclude the development of lands;
- a significant portion of the lands is not exposed to flood risk as the ground levels rise significantly above the river and flood plain levels; and
- the majority of the lands can be developed outside of a flood plain and for the portion of the site that remain within the flood plain a design solution can be found.

[7] Consideration of reasons

The reasons given for opposing the draft Direction are the same as the reasons given by the elected members for the decision to not comply with the recommendation of the Office when adopting the County Development Plan, and were detailed in the 31AM(6) notice.

As set out in the 31AM(8) notice letter, these reasons were carefully taken into consideration by the Office in recommending the exercise of your function under the relevant provisions of section 31 of the Act, and the Office adopts the same rationale as set out in the 31AM(8) notice letter in response to those similar points raised again in submissions.

[8] Conclusion

The Office also notes that the Chief Executive's recommendation is consistent with the draft Direction, to revert the portion of the lands located within Flood Zone A to Landscape Protection/Conservation within the County Development Plan.

Following consideration of the CE's Report and submissions made, the Office is of the view that there is no planning or policy basis to amend the recommendation of this Office in respect of the draft Direction in relation to MA: Chapter 9, No.2 at Monaghan Retail Park.

5. Recommendation to the Minister

11. In light of the above and for the reasons given in our 31AM(8) notice letter, the Office remains of the view, as set out in this notice letter, that the County Development Plan has been made in a manner that is inconsistent with the recommendations of the Office, inconsistent with the objectives of the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and as a consequence the use by the Minister of his functions to issue a direction under section 31 would be merited in respect of MA: Chapter 9, No.2 and MA: MTDP1 No.15 to ensure that the County Development Plan sets out an overall strategy for proper planning and sustainable development.

12. Having regard to section 31AN(4)(a) of the Act, the Office recommends the exercise of your function under the relevant provisions of section 31 of the Act to issue the Direction as per the attached proposed final Direction.
13. 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,



Niall Cussen

Planning Regulator

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

DIRECTION IN THE MATTER OF SECTION 31
OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (as amended)

Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031

“Development Plan” means the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 (as made).

“Planning Authority” means Monaghan County Council.

“RSES” means the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region.

“NPF” means the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025).

The Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in exercise of the powers conferred on him by section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (No.30 of 2000) ("the Act") and the Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2025 (S.I. No. 364 of 2025), and consequent to a recommendation made to him by the Office of the Planning Regulator, hereby directs as follows:

- (1) This Direction may be cited as the Planning and Development (Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031) Direction 2025.
- (2) The Planning Authority is hereby directed to take the following steps with regard to the Development Plan:
 - (a) Delete the following Material Alterations from the adopted Development Plan:
 - (i) **MA: Chapter 9, No.2** - i.e. the footnote at table 9.3 Land Use Zoning Matrix which states ‘Retail (Convenience) and Retail (Comparison) are acceptable in principle at the Monaghan Retail Park’.
 - (ii) **MA: MTDP1 No.15** - i.e. that portion of the subject lands within Flood Zone A reverts to the zoning objective in the draft Plan i.e. from Industry / Enterprise / Employment to Landscape Protection / Conservation.

- (b) Apply all necessary consequential updates to the text of the plan consistent with the foregoing.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

- I. The Development Plan includes a material alteration to the draft County Development Plan to insert a footnote at table 9.3, Land Use Zoning Matrix which states 'Retail (Convenience) and Retail (Comparison) are acceptable in principle at the Monaghan Retail Park'. The location of the Monaghan Retail Park at a distance of approximately 1.5 km from the core retail area and outside the CSO boundary does not support the regeneration and rejuvenation of the town centre or the location of retail in town centres, and does not facilitate linked trips but rather, due to its location, will likely generate additional car-based rather than pedestrian or cycle trips for convenience and comparison retailing. The material alteration is therefore inconsistent with NPO 14 of the NPF to regenerate and rejuvenate towns, NPO 107 to support the delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF relating to compact growth, sustainable mobility and the transition to a carbon neutral and climate resilient society, RPO 4.45 of the RSES to support retail in town centres, and section 10(2)(n) of the Act which requires objectives (which the planning authority has a general duty to secure under section 15 of the Act) for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies, including the promotion of specific measures having regard to the location of development.
- II. The Development Plan includes a material alteration (MA: MTDP1 No.15) to the draft County Development Plan to amend the zoning objective of land located in Flood Zone A from Landscape Protection / Conservation to Industry / Enterprise / Employment in circumstances where the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) (Flood Guidelines), issued under section 28 of the Act, indicate that such uses are not appropriate unless a Justification Test is passed. As the Justification Test has not been passed, the material alteration is therefore inconsistent with NPO 78 of the NPF which requires the planning authority to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding that do not pass the Justification Test in accordance with the Flood Guidelines; and RPO 3.10 of the RSES to ensure

flood risk management informs development by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and to assess flood risk by implementing the recommendations of the Flood Guidelines.

- III. No or no adequate reasons relating to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area have been provided to explain why it was not practicable for the Planning Authority to implement the objectives of the NPF and the RSES, or how, notwithstanding this inconsistency with the NPF and RSES, the Development Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper and sustainable development of the area.
- IV. The Development Plan has not been made in a manner consistent with, and has failed to implement recommendations of the Office of the Planning Regulator made under section 31AM of the Act.
- V. The Minister is of the opinion that the Development Plan is not consistent with the above-mentioned objectives of the NPF and the RSES, and fails to set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- VI. The Development Plan is not in compliance with the requirements of the Act.

GIVEN under my Official Seal,

Minister of State for Local Government and Planning

Day of Month, Year.