



29th January 2026

Senior Executive Officer,
Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department,
Fingal County Council,
County Hall,
Main St.,
Swords,
Co. Dublin,
K67X8Y2.

Re: Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work in preparing the Proposed Variation No. 1 (proposed Variation) to the Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029 (County Development Plan).

As Fingal County Council (Planning Authority) is aware, a key function of the Office of the Planning Regulator (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 Variation under the provisions of sections 31AM(1) and 31AM(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (Act) and this submission has been prepared accordingly¹.

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, planning authorities are

¹ Chapter 5 of Part 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2024, which relates to the preparation of development plans and variations by planning authorities and the assessment by the Office, was commenced on 31st December 2025. However, section 69(2) provides that the variation of a development plan under section 13 of the Act of 2000 shall continue under that Act after the repeal of section 13 of the Act of 2000.

requested to implement or address any 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 on issues that are required to ensure alignment with policy and legislative provisions. Planning authorities are advised by the Office to action an observation.

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

On adoption of the Variation, the Office will consider whether the plan has been made in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the Office and whether the Variation sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area concerned.

Overview

The proposed Variation includes a number of changes to the County Development Plan with regard to the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (2025) (Housing Growth Guidelines) including:

- amendments to the core strategy to reflect the revised Housing Growth Guidelines;
- policy amendments to support a further acceleration in the pace and scale of housing delivery reflecting the Housing Growth Guidelines;
- proposed rezoning of lands at Clonsilla, Balgriffin, Malahide, Kinsealy, Lusk, Skerries and Balrothery to facilitate additional residential development; and
- the inclusion of zoning and related objectives to provide for the preparation of a plan at Dunsink.

The Office welcomes the integration of the revised housing growth requirements into the County Development Plan and core strategy, including additional residential zonings within existing established areas that will deliver additional housing supply across the county.

The Office also supports the proposed rezoning and release of lands at Dunsink as a strategic initiative to address housing need, subject to the establishment of a robust planning framework to ensure coordinated infrastructure delivery, sustainable development, and high-quality integration with the existing urban area. While the intention to prepare a Dunsink plan is welcomed, greater clarity regarding its statutory basis and delivery timelines would assist in facilitating early development. In addition, the realistically anticipated level of near-term housing delivery off these lands over the remaining lifetime of the County Development Plan needs to be a consideration of the Planning Authority in terms of the scope to release other serviced or serviceable lands more deliverable in the present or near term context, such as strategic reserve lands in the vicinity of Swords and other key locations in the context of Transport Orientated Development (TOD).

In addition, the Office highlights the importance of identifying Long-Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites or Opportunity Areas beyond the current plan period as set out in the Housing Growth Guidelines. Clear signalling of future planning intentions for such lands, particularly those with potential for additional TOD linked to major public transport investment, would support long-term infrastructure-led growth, provide certainty, and ensure a coordinated and sustainable development pipeline.

The submission also identifies matters relating to flood risk management that will be important for the Planning Authority to address prior to the adoption of the proposed Variation.

The submission below has been prepared to provide a strategic level input to your authority in finalising the proposed Variation. It is within the above context that the submission sets out one (1) recommendation and one (1) observation under the following key themes:

Key theme	Recommendation	Observation
<u>Implementation of the Housing Growth Requirements</u>	-	<u>Observation 1</u>
<u>Flood Risk Management</u>	<u>Recommendation 1</u>	-

1. Implementation of the Housing Growth Requirements

The Office welcomes the incorporation of the revised housing growth requirements into the County Development Plan and the revised core strategy, and the additional residential land zonings which increase the capacity of zoned land in the county to provide for housing from 35,001 to 39,575.

The Office also supports the proposed rezoning of land for residential development and the release of lands at Dunsink as a strategic measure to facilitate the delivery of much needed housing within Fingal. The establishment of a robust planning framework will be essential to ensuring that the delivery of approximately 2,500 new homes is accompanied by appropriate social and physical infrastructure, promotes sustainable patterns of development, and achieves high-quality integration with the existing urban environment. This approach will be fundamental to creating a well-connected, resilient community that meets the needs of both current and future residents.

In this respect, the Office welcomes the stated intention to prepare a Dunsink 'plan'. However, greater clarity and certainty could be beneficial in respect of the plan's statutory status, i.e. whether it is intended to be an urban area plan or priority area plan under the Planning and Development Act 2024, or alternatively delivered through a further variation to the County Development Plan, as well and the timelines, so as to facilitate the early development of the lands.

The strategic intention to deliver a new urban development area at scale in the vicinity of Dunsink at scale is supported from the perspective of starting the process of infrastructural planning and investment. At the same time, the Planning Authority should also consider what level of near-term housing delivery off these lands are realistically anticipated over the remaining lifetime of the County Development Plan and to explore the scope for the release of other serviced or serviceable lands more deliverable in the present or near-term context. Such considerations may extend to lands currently indicated as strategic reserve lands in the vicinity of Swords and other key transit-oriented locations.

In addition to the encouragement of rezoning lands for residential development as outlined above, the Housing Growth Guidelines also support the identification of Long Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites or Opportunity Areas that meet the objectives

of the Housing Growth Guidelines but are not expected to be brought forward within the current plan period.

Notwithstanding the complexities affecting the delivery of much of these lands in Fingal which may mitigate against including the lands in this proposed Variation, it is important to provide clear signalling regarding the future intention of the Planning Authority in areas where the lands present a significant opportunity to provide TOD and to fully leverage substantial public investment in high-quality public transport infrastructure, including the Metrolink and DART West projects. In this context, it would be beneficial for the Planning Authority to clearly articulate how the potential of these lands, and the associated delivery timelines, will be addressed through the forward planning process. Such an approach would provide essential clarity and certainty, support the establishment of a robust long-term development pipeline, and ensure that growth is coordinated, infrastructure-led, and delivered in a planned and sustainable manner.

Observation 1 – Dunsink and Long Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites / Opportunity Areas

Having regard to the need to provide clear strategic direction for future development locations for Long Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites / Opportunity Areas, and to ensure clarity and certainty regarding the development of the strategic lands at Dunsink, and in particular to:

- Part 3, Chapter 6 of the recently enacted Planning and Development Act 2024 with respect to Urban Area Plans and Priority Area Plans; and
- National Planning Framework (NPF) Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines (2025) (Housing Growth Guidelines),

the Planning Authority is advised to:

- (i) clarify the intended timeframe for the preparation of either the Urban Area Plan, Priority Area Plan or Development Plan Variation for Dunsink; the intended timeframe for the release of Phase 1 lands and the level of housing deliverable off same by the end of the plan period;

- (ii) consider the scope to release further serviced and or serviceable lands where there deliverability of the Dunsink lands takes time to build momentum; and
- (iii) provide clear signalling regarding the future intention of the Planning Authority in areas where strategically located lands present an opportunity to provide Transport Orientated Development along existing and planned high quality public transport corridors, including the Metrolink and DART West.

2. Flood Risk Management

The Office notes and welcomes the preparation of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the proposed Variation. It is noted that the Office of Public Works has identified unmapped watercourses at site 13.1 West of Barnhill and site 13.3 Dunsink. The Planning Authority should review whether a stage 3 assessment is appropriate to inform the rezoning of these lands. In addition, although not located within Flood Zone A/B, the proposed rezoning at Clonsilla has a record of a flood event. The Planning Authority should confirm whether the issues impacting this flood event have been resolved.

Recommendation 1 – Flood Risk Management

Having regard to:

- NPO 78 of the NPF in relation to flood risk management,
- RPO 7.12 of the RSES (seek to avoid inappropriate land use zonings and development in areas at risk of flooding in accordance with the requirements of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) (Flood Guidelines); and
- the Flood Guidelines,

the Planning Authority is recommended to review the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and to:

- (i) determine if stage 3 flood risk assessments are required for lands along either side of unmapped watercourses which have no flood risk extents illustrated on the flood zone mapping and carry out stage 3 flood risk assessments if required,

Where flood risks cannot be mitigated, the lands should be re-zoned for an appropriate use in accordance with the Flood Guidelines; and

- (ii) identify flood risks from all sources of flooding including detail available from past flood events to further inform the SFRA, particularly lands at Clonsilla, and if necessary re-zone lands for an appropriate use in accordance with the Flood Guidelines.

Any zoning objective for highly vulnerable development (Flood Zone A or B) or less vulnerable development (Flood Zone A) that does not pass the Justification Test in accordance with the Flood Guidelines should be omitted or a determination provided on whether specified mitigation measures can effectively reduce the risks to an acceptable level while not exacerbating flood risk elsewhere.

The Planning Authority should liaise with the Office of Public Works to address this recommendation.

Summary

The Office requests that your authority addresses the recommendations outlined above. As you are aware, the report of the Chief Executive of your authority, prepared for the elected members under section 13 of the Act must summarise any recommendations and the manner in which they will be addressed.

At the end of the process, your authority is required to notify this Office within **five working days** of the decision of the Planning Authority in relation to the proposed Variation. Where your authority decides not to comply with the recommendations of the Office, or otherwise makes the plan in such a manner as to be inconsistent with the recommendations made by this Office, then the Chief Executive shall inform the Office and give reasons for this decision.

Please feel free to contact the staff of the Office 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,

AM O'Connor.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluation

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015
