



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

5th March 2026

Planning Section,
Sligo County Council,
City Hall,
Quay Street,
Sligo,
F91 PP44.

Re: Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work in preparing the Proposed Variation No. 1 (proposed Variation) to the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030 (County Development Plan).

As Sligo 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 pursuant to Part 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Act) and its functions under section 546 and this submission has been prepared accordingly.

Recommendations issued by the Office further to section 58(9) of the Act relate to clear breaches of the relevant legislative provisions, of the national or regional policy framework and/or of the policy of Government. As such, planning authorities are requested to implement or address recommendation(s) made by the Office in order to ensure consistency with the relevant policy and legislative provisions.

Observations issued by the Office pursuant to section 546 of the Act may take the form of a request for further information or justification on a particular matter, or clarification regarding particular provisions of a plan on issues that are considered necessary to ensure alignment with policy and legislative provisions. Planning authorities are requested 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 assess it in accordance with the statutory framework in section 63 of the Act.

Overview

County Sligo performs an important function in the overall delivery of housing for the northwestern region noting the number of planning permissions granted, units under construction and housing completions. The proposed Variation seeks to further increase the housing supply in the county specifically in relation to the policies relating to lands zoned Strategic Land Reserve.

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) observation under the following key theme:

Key theme	Recommendation	Observation
Implementation of the housing growth requirements	-	Observation 1

Implementation of the housing growth requirements

In relation to housing growth requirements, any provisions for growth in the County Development Plan is required to take due account of the relevant section 28 guidelines including in particular:

- NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (2025) (Housing Growth Guidelines);
- Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024);
- Development Plans, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022); and
- EU Directives on Strategic Environmental Assessment, Floods, Birds and Habitats.

The Housing Growth Requirement for Sligo is 672 units per annum (3,360 units to the end of the plan period in 2030). Taking due account of Policy and Objective 2 of the Housing Growth Guidelines, where additional provision of up to 50% is reflected, there is a need to ensure that sufficient lands are zoned to accommodate 5,040 units (to 2030) when applying the full 50%.

The Office notes that there is currently a 'stay' on 55.03 ha of lands arising from the Draft Ministerial Direction (decision pending). Therefore, a total of 4,304 units could be provided on 150 ha of lands zoned Residential and Mixed Use in the County Development Plan on lands that are not subject to a Ministerial Direction.

In response to the Housing Growth Guidelines, the proposed Variation proposes to amend the Strategic Land Reserve policy framework in plan, allowing 218 ha of lands currently zoned Strategic Land Reserve to be brought forward for consideration through the development management process during the lifetime of the County Development Plan, where the lands are serviced and deliverable. This would provide capacity for an additional 6,783 homes.

Taking account of the housing capacity of lands currently zoned Residential and Mixed Use, together with the full extent of the Strategic Land Reserve lands now proposed to be brought forward, the County Development Plan would provide sufficient zoned land to facilitate the delivery of 11,087 units over its lifetime to 2030.

Furthermore, the Strategic Land Reserve zoned lands were relatively recently assessed by the Office as part of the County Development Plan, particularly with regard to compact growth and sequential development. The Office is satisfied that this assessment remains relevant in the context of current national and regional policy.

Accordingly, having regard to the above considerations, the Office is satisfied with the proposed Variation.

The Office does however advise the Planning Authority to update the narrative in the County Development Plan relating to the Housing Growth Guidelines.

Observation 1 - Housing Growth Requirements

Having regard to the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (2025) (Housing Growth Guidelines) the Planning Authority is advised to amend the text of section 3.1.3 of the proposed Variation as follows:

- (i) amend the second paragraph so that it reflects that the figure of 672 relates to the per annum Housing Growth Requirement for Sligo for each year up to and including 2030 (i.e. 5 full years); and
- (ii) amend the third paragraph so that it reads that sufficient lands are zoned to provide for up to 50% additional housing units over and above the Housing Growth Requirements.

Summary

The Office requests that your authority addresses the observation outlined above. As you are aware, the report of the Chief Executive of your authority prepared for the elected members under section 58(11) of the Act must summarise these recommendations and how the Chief Executive proposes they should be dealt with.

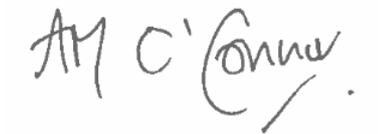
Where the Planning Authority makes a variation, it is required to notify the Office **within one week** of the decision to adopt the Variation. Where your authority decides not to comply with the recommendations of the Office, then it shall inform the Office as soon as practicable and provide reasons for the decision not to so comply.

Your authority is also required to send the Office a copy of the Variation and any submissions made by the Minister, the relevant regional assembly and the National Transport Authority during the Variation preparation process.

Please be advised that planning authorities are also required to publish notice of the Variation within a week of the adoption, stating that a copy of the County Development Plan as varied will be available for inspection on a website and at a place specified in the notice no later than five weeks after the date of adoption.

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.

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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 Evaluation

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015