



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

26th March 2026

Planning Department,
Laois County Council,
Aras an Chontae,
JFL Avenue,
Portlaoise,
Co Laois.

Re: Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work preparing the Proposed Variation No. 1 (proposed Variation) to the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 (County Development Plan).

As Laois 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 any 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

The Office welcomes proposed Variation to incorporate the land use zoning map and associated maps (Maps 1-5) of the Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031 into the County Development Plan and supports the proposed rezonings for residential use in line with the implementation of the housing growth requirements as set out in the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (2025) (Housing Growth Guidelines).

The Office also welcomes the proposed rezoning of brownfield infill lands at LS-PN-003 and LS-PN-002 from Open Space & Amenity and Enterprise & Employment to Residential 2 - New Residential. These lands are well located in relation to existing local services and infrastructure and are considered appropriate and sustainable locations for infill residential development.

In relation to the proposed rezoning of unzoned lands to Residential 2 - New Residential, the Office is satisfied that both LS-PN-001 and LS-PN-004 lie within the existing built-up area of the settlement and represent natural extensions to established residential neighbourhoods, including areas recently completed and those currently under construction. The Office is further satisfied that the supporting infrastructure required to service these lands, such as extensions to pedestrian and cycle networks, can be readily delivered to ensure the sites are appropriately serviced and integrated into the wider urban structure.

A recurring flood event is noted adjacent to site LS-PN-004. While outside the site boundary, the Planning Authority should ensure that all relevant, up to date information is

included in the assessment for identifying flood risk as part of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

With regard to LS-PN-005, the Office notes that the lands are situated outside the current built-up area and beyond the natural boundary of the settlement defined by the existing railway line. Notwithstanding this, the site is in close proximity to a range of local services, is located within an area of recent residential expansion and has the relevant services available to support housing development. In this context, the Office supports the proposed rezoning to support the identified housing growth requirements as set out in the Housing Growth Guidelines.

Overall, the Office is satisfied that the proposed Variation aligns with the principles of compact growth and the coordinated delivery of housing and supporting infrastructure. The proposed Variation represents a coherent and evidence-based response to Housing Growth Guidelines in Portarlington and will assist the Planning Authority in delivering the revised housing growth requirements for the county.

The Office therefore has no recommendations or observations to make in respect of the proposed Variation.

Summary

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 any recommendations and how the Chief Executive proposes to address them.

Where a planning authority makes a variation, it is required to notify the Office **within one week** of the decision to adopt the variation. Where an 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.

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 Evaluation

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

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