



Northern & Western Regional Assembly  
The Square  
Ballaghaderreen  
Co. Roscommon  
9<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Planning Offices  
Monaghan County Council  
1 Dublin Street  
Monaghan  
H18 X982

**RE: Proposed Variation No. 2 of the Monaghan County Development Plan  
2019-2025**

A Chara,

I refer to the notification received from Monaghan County Council that it is proposed to make a variation to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025 and that the proposed variations were to be on public display until 5pm on 9th October 2020. The Northern and Western Regional Assembly welcome the opportunity to consider the proposed variation and to make observations on it.

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly wish to commend Monaghan County Council on the publication of the Draft Variation to the County Development Plan. The initiation of this Variation to the County Development Plan represents an opportunity to think regionally and operate locally as it gives effect to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. It will shape the short / medium-term future of the county and it is also important to areas that lie beyond the county area at both sub-regional and regional level. The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, requires that the Planning Authority ensure, when varying the County Development Plan, that it is consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the area of the plan and the National Planning Framework, thus enabling full alignment between local, regional and national planning policy.

This submission is made in accordance with Section 27C of the Planning and Development Acts. It is a requirement of Section 27C that the Regional Assembly make a submission on this Variation and to state whether, in the opinion of the Assembly, the draft variation of the development plan and in particular, its core strategy, are consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Where it is not consistent then the Assembly must make recommendations as to what amendments are required, in order to ensure that the proposed variation is consistent with the RSES.

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The Northern and Western Regional Assembly adopted the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2020 – 2032 (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region in January 2020. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Monaghan County Council for their collaborative input to this strategy. The Strategy is available on our website [www.nwra.ie/rses](http://www.nwra.ie/rses). It identifies regional development objectives and coordinating initiatives that support the delivery and implementation of national planning and economic policy that are bespoke to the region and which implement and amplify the National Policy Objectives and National Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework (NPF).

The Regional Assembly acknowledge Monaghan County Council's Plan process was somewhat distinct from other Local Authorities across the Region, as the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 – 2025 was adopted at a juncture following the publication of the National Planning Framework and subsequent to the publication of the Draft RSES. As a result, the MCDP already incorporates a number of key elements which are central pillars of the RSES, including:

- Population growth projections for County Monaghan in accordance with the figures set down for the Mid Border Region (Cavan / Monaghan) in the NPF Implementation Roadmap (June 2018).
- The expansion of Monaghan Town by approximately 30% over the lifetime of the RSES.(Sec. 3.8)
- The recognition of Carrickmacross as a place of Regional potential, given its proximity to the Dublin – Belfast economic corridor and the Regional Growth Centre's of Drogheda & Dundalk. (Sec. 3.9)
- Renew & Regenerate smaller towns, and village centre's. (Sec. 3.5, and 4.4).
- Promoting a programme of serviced sites for smaller towns & villages. (RPO 3.7)
- The clear prioritisation of key infrastructure projects, including the N-2 upgrade (Clontibret – Border, and Ardee – Castleblaney) as well as the development of the Ulster Canal. (RPOs 5.20 & 6.7)

Notwithstanding the above, there are a number of areas which could potentially be slightly modified to achieve even greater consistency with the RSES, thus enhancing and leading on the coherence of the overall message across the Planning Policy hierarchy.

## CORE STRATEGY:

1. **Zoning & Population Projections:** The Core Strategy within the current County Development Plan sets out details in respect of population projections for the county and identifies the quantum of land necessary to deliver same, including provisions for the regeneration of existing lands. These are detailed in Tables 2.3 (County Monaghan Population Projections to 2025) and Tables 2.4 & 2.5 Core Strategy Tables 1 & 2 respectively. Table 2.4 and 2.5 provide a target for 20% of housing units over the lifetime of the Development Plan to be provided on brownfield/infill land within the footprint of named settlements.

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The National Planning Framework includes a National Planning Objective for 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, to be within their existing built-up footprints (NPO 3c refers) and the RSES reflects this within RPO 3.3. The provisions of the County Development Plan would benefit from a review to ensure consistency is achieved and Tables 2.4 & 2.5 may merit consideration of further clarification in this regard.

Furthermore, the RSES includes as a Regional Policy Objective that 20% of housing in rural areas be on brownfield sites (RPO 3.3 refers). It is noted that Sec. 15.17.1. of the Development Plan sets out steps in relation to the re-use of buildings, encouraging the re-use of brownfield sites with a relaxation of normal standards in certain circumstances, (Policies RHP 2, RHP 5 & BHP 7 refers). However, it does not appear to identify any specific target and the incorporation of same would bring further consistency with the RSES. The proposed variation represents an opportunity to express a target for development on brownfield sites within rural areas.

### **Observation 1:**

The proposed variation would benefit from a review of Table 2.4 and 2.5 to provide additional clarity that the quantum of development envisaged within brownfield/infill lands is consistent with NPO 3c of the NPF and RPO 3.3 of the RSES.

### **Observation 2:**

Consideration should be given to providing additional clarity on the quantum of rural housing that will be targeted for brownfield sites within rural areas so that it delivers on RPO 3.3 of the RSES.

- 2. Terminology - Monaghan and Carrickmacross:** The Monaghan CDP at Sec. 2.33 of Chapter 2 and elsewhere refers to Monaghan Town as a 'Principal Town' and Carrickmacross is identified as a strategic town (eg. see Section 2.34). However, the RSES identifies Monaghan Town as a 'Key Town' within the northern and western region and Carrickmacross is identified as a 'Place of Strategic Potential'. There is scope to improve alignment between the Development Plan and the RSES through the use of the same terminology. This replication of language from Regional, to County to Local Area Plan will lend itself to coherence and consistency of messaging across the Planning hierarchy.

### **Observation 3:**

Consideration should be given to improve alignment between this plan and the RSES through the use of terminology that describes Monaghan Town as a 'Key Town' within the region and which confirms that Carrickmacross is a 'Place of Regional Significance'.



## OTHER MATTERS:

- 1. Serviced Sites within smaller Villages & Towns:** The Assembly recognise that Monaghan County Council were at the forefront of raising the issue of providing an alternative to a one off rural house, via Serviced Site provision within settlements and this model has proven successful within County Monaghan and has informed the RSES. This policy is set out in Sec. 3.2.2 of Chapter 3 and within Chapter 15 (Sec. 15.7.7 & Sec. 15.7.9). Since adoption of the CDP the programme for Government has identified that Local Authorities will take a role in enabling the provision of serviced sites and a dedicated DHPLG funding stream is to be provided to ensure policy delivery. This presents an opportunity for Monaghan to further develop this provision and identify that the Local Authority will lead out on such a scheme, particularly given that the current County Development Plan will run until 2025 and funding opportunities may arise to realise same.

### Observation 4:

Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a commitment, within the narrative of the plan, that the Local Authority will lead out on the provision of serviced sites within settlements should funding become available, perhaps on a pilot basis.

- 2. Tourism & Irelands Ancient East:** The Monaghan CDP (Sec. 4.7) includes provisions that shall deliver on the tourism potential of the county, including a suite of tourism policies. Since the adoption of the plan the RSES has been made and it identifies Monaghan Town as a Destination Town and includes a suite of objectives in respect of the development of tourism in the Ancient East. RPOs 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 of the RSES relating directly to Irelands Ancient East outline a number of key priorities for Monaghan and the wider region from a Tourist perspective, including expanding accommodation (bed-night capacity), as well as attractions of scale and Discovery Points for the Region.

Fáilte Irelands ambition is to grow tourism across the West and Border Regions over the lifetime of the RSES. Whilst Covid-19 has recently reduced overall numbers of tourists into the country, the medium-term outlook will hopefully see a return to steady growth numbers.

The Draft variation presents an opportunity to confirm Monaghan Town as a Destination Town within the context of Irelands Ancient East, reflecting Section 4.4 of the RSES, including the delivery of supporting infrastructural investment. The Table of Tourism Policies within the Monaghan CDP (Sec. 4.7.2) include policies that builds upon the 'Ancient East' tourism brand. It may be appropriate to consider whether there is potential for these policies to bring greater clarity, and specificity to these ambitions - thus reflecting the ambition of Fáilte Ireland and other stakeholders, including Monaghan County Council, to develop an attraction for visitors which is of scale over the medium term. This may further assist in positioning Monaghan Town in future funding opportunities.

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## Observation 5:

The variation may benefit from considering further opportunities to reflect in the narrative/policy provisions that Monaghan Town is a Destination Town and to confirm support for delivery of infrastructural investment.

- Local Transport Plans:** Section 6.27 of the RSES requires the incorporation of Local Transport Plans (LTPs) for key settlements, which includes Monaghan Town. It should be noted that Monaghan County Council has already carried out a Land Use and Transportation Study of Monaghan Town in advance of the adoption of their CDP. It may be appropriate that the study would benefit from a review to ensure it is updated within the context of emerging best practice within Local Transport Plans and this could be considered in consultation with the National Transport Agency (NTA).

## Observation 6:

Consideration should be given to including a commitment within section 7.31 (or elsewhere within the plan) that the Council will review the Land Use and Transportation Study of Monaghan Town to ensure it is updated as necessary to reflect the objectives for Local Transport Plans.

- The Bio-Economy, Renewable Energy & Climate Action:** The Assembly acknowledge the Monaghan CDP already contains a suite of measures in relation to Wind energy, and other renewables such as Solar energy within Chapter 8. In the time since the Monaghan County Plan was adopted, Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO), in conjunction with Local Authorities have been tasked with delivering Local Climate Strategies, (Refers: RPO 5.1 of the RSES). The Assembly commend Monaghan County Council on the adoption of their Strategy, which was adopted in Quarter 3 of 2019 and includes Local adaptation measures. The variation of the Monaghan CDP would benefit from a reflection of this change in circumstance, and text which gives expedience to some of these measures, some of which are emphasised already, including Charging Infrastructure for EVs (Sec. 7.6), and to encourage renewable energy proposals (Sec. 15.20).

## Observation 7:

Consideration could be given to reflect the Monaghan County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and to integrate additional measures on Climate Adaptation into Sec. 8.33



## Conclusion:

It is considered that, in the round, the Monaghan County Development Plan will be consistent with the RSES upon adoption of the Variation. There are however a number of areas that the Council should give further consideration to in finalising the variation and these are identified within the abovementioned seven observations.

It is hoped that the above observations are of assistance in ensuring that the Monaghan County Development Plan is consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the region in a manner that shall be of benefit to our communities. The Assembly look forward to further engagement with Monaghan County Council and if you have any queries in respect of the above observations, then do not hesitate to revert.

Is mise le meas,

David Minton

Director

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