

Minutes of Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Chamber, Mtek Building, Monaghan, on Monday 26th May 2025 at 10.00 a.m.

Chair: Cllr P. Gibbons, Cathaoirleach

Present: Cllrs Aughey, Campbell, Clerkin, S. Conlon, Flynn, Gilliland, Keelan, McAree, McCooey, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor

Mr. R. Burns, Chief Executive, Mr. C. Flynn, Ms. C O'Hare, Ms. P. Monahan, Ms. O. McConnon, Directors of Services, Mr. G. McMahon, A/Director of Services, Adrian Hughes, Senior Planner, Toirleach Gourley, Senior Executive Planner, Helen McCourt, Executive Planner, Ms. M. McGarvey, Meetings Administrator, Ms. M. McMahon, Staff Officer

MS Teams: Cllrs Carthy, P. Conlon, Coyle, McAree and Truell

Apology: Cllr A. Johnston

1. To consider the Chief Executive's Report on the County Development Plan 2025-2031 Material Alterations Submissions

The Cathaoirleach introduced the Chief Executive's Report on the County Development Plan 2025-2031 Material Alterations Submissions. He referred to the Code of Conduct for Councillors and stated that key decisions on planning matters such as making the development plan are vested in the elected Council as representatives of the local community, acting in the interest of the common good and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. He stated that it was all the more important therefore that consideration of planning matters is carried out in a transparent fashion, that it follows due process, and that it is based on what is relevant, while ignoring that which is irrelevant within the requirements of the statutory planning framework.

The Cathaoirleach proceeded to read out the Disclosure of Conflict of Interest (Section 177 (1) of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended) prior to the commencement of the discussion of items listed on the agenda:

'Where at a meeting of a local authority, a resolution, motion, question or other matter is proposed or otherwise arises, and a member of the authority has actual knowledge that they or a connected person has a pecuniary or other beneficial interest in, or which is material to, the matter they shall:-

1. Disclose the nature of their interest, or the fact of a connected person's interest at the meeting, before discussion or consideration of the matter commences
2. Withdraw from the meeting for so long as the matter is being discussed or considered, and

3. Take no part in the discussion or consideration of the matter and shall refrain from voting in relation to it.'

Mr. A. Hughes, Senior Planner gave a presentation to the members. He provided members with a brief overview of the stages involved in the preparation of the Plan to date and advised that this final meeting would see the conclusion of the 2-year process and the formal making of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031, which would take effect 6 weeks from being made. He noted that the Plan is a substantial document in volume, consisting of approximately 1,300 – 1,400 pages and that it had been produced following extensive engagement with the public, elected representatives, local authority staff, as well as statutory and non-statutory bodies. He highlighted the importance of the Plan and how it would act as a road map for the spatial planning and development of the County for the next six years.

Mr. Hughes thanked the elected members for their time, input and participation which not only made the preparation process easier but resulted in the making of a Plan that better reflects the needs of the county and the aspirations of its people. He also thanked the public for their participation and the local authority staff for the work undertaken in preparing the County Development Plan 2025-2031.

In terms of next steps, Mr. Hughes stated that the function of the Council, at this meeting, was to consider the Chief Executive's Report on the submissions received in respect of the proposed material alterations. He stated that, in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) 'The members of the authority shall, by resolution, having considered the Chief Executive's report, make the plan with or without the proposed amendment that would, if made, be a material alteration, except where they decide to accept the amendment they may do so subject to any modifications to the amendment as they consider appropriate'. He advised the members that further modifications to the alterations: –

- (i) May only be made where it is minor in nature and not likely to have significant effects on the environment or affect the integrity of a European site,
- (ii) Shall not be made where it relates to;
 - (I) An increase in the area of land zoned for any purpose, or
 - (II) An addition to or deletion from the Record of Protected Structures

Mr. Hughes stated that, in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), 'In making the development plan the Members shall be restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which the development plan relates, the statutory obligations of any local authority in the area and any relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or any Minister of Government'. In addition, he referred to the Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) processes and outlined to the members that the proposed amendments had been previously assessed in accordance with the necessary requirements and thus the motions passed by the members had been sufficiently assessed as part of the material amendments.

The Cathaoirleach then proceeded with the consideration of the Chief Executive's Report and Resolutions.

Proposed Amendments:

MA-MCDP- Resolution 01 – Clones Town – Lands at Teehill (CDP1 No. 7) and Clonkeen (Cole) (CDP1 No.8)

Cllr P. Treanor proposed, Cllr R. Truell seconded:

Having considered the contents of the Chief Executive's Report and contrary to the recommendation contained within it, it is proposed to make the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 with the proposed Map Alterations: CDP1 No.7 Clones and Map Alteration Reference: CDP1 No.8 Clones.

The material alteration will:

- 1. Change the draft Plan zoning objective from 'Landscape Protection/Conservation' to 'Proposed Residential B' (CDP1 No.7 Clones).*
- 2. Change the draft Plan zoning objective from 'Proposed Residential A and Proposed Residential B' to 'Strategic Residential Reserve'. (CDP1 No.8 Clones).*

Map Alteration Ref:	Area in Hectares	Location (Proposed Material Alterations Volume 3 Map Booklet)
<i>CDP1 No.7</i>	0.6097ha	Lands at Teehill, Clones (Page 53)
<i>CDP1 No.8</i>	Area to be rezoned to SRR 0.7025ha (0.5210ha (PRB) and 0.1815ha (PRA)	Clonkeen (Cole), Clones (Page 54)

The reasons for proposing this amendment contrary to the recommendation of the Chief Executive were outlined as follows: -

- The proposal will not result in an increase in the quantity of lands zoned for Residential A or B from that proposed in the amended Core Strategy as set out in the Chief Executive's Report.*
- The proposal will provide a balanced distribution of residential sites within Clones Town and these lands are closer to the town centre core than the lands at Clonkeen (Cole).*
- The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment does not indicate that these lands are subject to a Flood Zone.*
- The CSO boundary does not accurately reflect the settlement boundary of Clones, or the spatial distribution of developed lands from the urban core.*
- The lands at Clonkeen (Cole) have been zoned Residential A and B in the last 3 Development Plans and have not yet come to the market or delivered housing. The Development Plan Guidelines state, 'It is also best practice that in cases where land is zoned and has remained undeveloped and un-serviced through one or more development plan cycles, with no prospect of being serviced within the six-year life of the development plan that is under preparation, alternative approaches must be considered: - (i) alternative zoning objectives or (ii) discontinuing the objective. As such it is proposed to rezone the existing lands identified as Clonkeen (Cole) from Residential A and B to Strategic Residential Reserve.*

Mr. Hughes, in response to the proposal, outlined that the same resolution had been passed by the elected members at the March Council meeting when submissions to the draft Plan had been considered. He advised that the OPR submission to Material Alterations of 10 April 2025 recommended that the Planning Authority make the County Development Plan without Map Ref: CDP1 No7 (Clones) and the reasons given included:

- The amendment would be inconsistent with national and regional objectives for compact and sustainable growth and the co-ordination of land use zoning, infrastructure and services; and that it was
- contrary to Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022), including that part relating to the sequential approach to zoning.

He stated that the Chief Executive's Report (May 2025) concurred with the OPR submission for the stated reasons and recommended that the Plan be made without Map Ref: CDP 1 No7 (Clones), and that it should revert back to the draft Plan zoning (Landscape Protection / Conservation).

Mr. Hughes recommended that the Elected Members did not pass the resolution as proposed for the reasons given in the OPR submission of 10 April 2025, and the Chief Executive's Report of May 2025.

The Cathaoirleach put Cllr Treanor's proposal to the meeting and it was unanimously agreed.

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal carried.

Cllr R. Aughey declared an interest in relation to MA-MCDP-Resolution 02 – Monaghan Retail Park and MA-MCDP-Resolution 03– Coolshannagh (Sam's Bridge) and therefore withdrew from the meeting room.

MA-MCDP- Resolution 02 – Monaghan Retail Park

Cllr S. Conlon proposed, Cllr PJ O'Hanlon seconded:

*Having considered the contents of the Chief Executive's Report and contrary to the recommendation contained within it, it is proposed to make the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 with the proposed Material Alteration, at Chapter 9, No.2, which is to amend Table 9.3, Land Use Zoning Matrix, within Section 9.2 and include the * and footnote as follows:*

Development Type	TC	ER	PR	SR	IE	EC	CS	RA	LPC
Retail (Convenience)	√	O	O	O	X	O*	X	X	X
Retail (Comparison)	√	X	X	X	X	O*	X	X	X

**Retail (Convenience) and Retail Comparison) are acceptable in principle at the Monaghan Retail Park.*

In addition, it is proposed to modify the proposed Material Alteration at Chapter 10 No. 03 and add the following text below, in Section 10.6 Retailing:

- *“The current retail park has a 45% vacancy and at present there are 5 unoccupied and vacant units in the Retail Park. This has been a consistent long-term problem since it opened 20 years ago.*
- *Job Creation and Vacancy are not mutually exclusive. Addressing vacancy in Monaghan town in general, will create jobs. Monaghan Retail Park has a majority of units in vacancy and a list of retailers that want to lease space in the centre.*
- *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.*

Map Alteration Ref:	Area in Hectares	Location (Proposed Material Alterations Volume 3 Map Booklet)
<i>Chapter 9, No.2 (Table 9.3) Chapter 10, No. 3 Submission: MN-C29-MCDP-36</i>	N/A	Monaghan Retail Park (Pages 33 and 36)

The reasons for proposing this amendment contrary to the recommendation of the Chief Executive were outlined as follows: -

- *The Northern Western & Regional Assembly (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 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 to reach the target set by the National Planning Framework (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.*
- *The changes to the retail Matrix will provide much needed support and choice to an existing retail enterprise in Monaghan Town.*

In support of his proposal, Cllr S. Conlon referred to the negative impact by way of an almost static growth in population in Monaghan Town as indicated in the census statistics 2016-2022

and a deficit in rates intake which highlighted the necessity to take every opportunity to attract large scale retailers to the Monaghan Retail Park.

In support of the proposal Cllr PJ O'Hanlon stated that Monaghan Town had five of the largest retailers i.e. Dunnes Stores, SuperValu, Tesco, Lidl and soon Aldi. He stated that he supports the proposal if it meant other parts of the retail sector coming to town.

Cllr S. Treanor stated that out-of-town shopping had always been rejected in the time of Monaghan Town Council. Cllr. S. Treanor advised that in other towns in the region which had out-of-town shopping, that town centre dereliction could be seen.

In support of the proposal Cllr B. McAree stated that she concurred with the comments from Cllr. S. Conlon in relation to how Monaghan Town had been negatively impacted by way of an almost static growth in population as indicated by census statistics 2016-2022. She stated that the proposed change to the retail matrix would provide much needed support and choice to an existing retail enterprise in Monaghan Town, and this could only have a positive impact.

Cllr A. Campbell queried that if the resolution was successful and a planning application was submitted, how that would align to national policy.

In response, Mr. Hughes stated that a similar resolution was passed by the elected members at the March Council meeting when submissions to the draft Plan were considered, however, the resolution now included additional supporting text. For clarity he outlined that the resolution relates to the footnote which states “*Retail (Convenience) and Retail Comparison) are acceptable in principle at the Monaghan Retail Park.” which may facilitate the sale of comparison/convenience goods 1.5 km from the town centre. He referred to the national Retail Planning Guidelines, which he stated did not generally permit the sale of retail items such as groceries or clothing in out-of-town centre locations. He highlighted that regardless of the passing of an amendment to the land use zoning matrix in respect of the retail park in Monaghan Town, that the national planning guidelines would still be applied to future planning applications.

Mr. Hughes, in response to the proposal, outlined the OPR submission of 10 April 2025 to Material Alterations which recommended the omission of the footnote inserted at table 9.3 (Land Use Zoning Matrix) in relation to Monaghan Retail Park. Reasons given included:

- The need to prioritise retail provision within the town core, to adopt a sequential approach to development, as well as the need to preserve the capacity of the national road networks;
- They referenced relevant parts of the NPF, RSES, and the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) with which the footnote conflicted

He stated that the Chief Executive's Report (May 2025) concurred with the OPR recommendation.

Mr. Hughes recommended that the Elected Members did not pass the resolution as proposed for the reasons given, in the OPR submission of 10 April 2025, in the Chief Executive's Report of May 2025 and at the March Council meeting.

The Cathaoirleach put Cllr Conlon's proposal to a vote by show of hands which resulted as follows:

For: 9

Against: 6

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal carried.

MA-MCDP- Resolution 03 – Coolshannagh (Sam’s Bridge), Monaghan Town

Cllr S. Coyle proposed, Cllr B. McAree seconded:

Having considered the contents of the Chief Executive’s Report and contrary to the recommendation contained within it, it is proposed to make the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 with the proposed Material Alteration, Map Alteration Reference: MTDP1 No. 15 (Monaghan Town).

It is proposed that the Material Alteration will change the draft Plan zoning objective from ‘Landscape Protection/Conservation’ and ‘Existing Commercial’ to ‘Industry, Enterprise and Employment’.

Map Alteration Ref:	Area in Hectares	Location (Proposed Material Alterations Volume 3 Map Booklet)
MTDP1 No.15	Total area of subject lands 1.16ha	Coolshannagh (Sam’s Bridge)

The reasons for proposing this amendment contrary to the recommendation of the Chief Executive were outlined 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 for 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 these 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.*
- 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.*

In support of the proposal, Cllr. S. Conlon stated that he believed that the OPR set fine parameters in relation to areas that are deemed at flood-risk, and he stated that he believed with the appropriate engineering solutions any potential flood risk issues could be alleviated in this area.

Cllr. S. Gilliland asked if the amendment to the land use zoning would present a 'red-line issue' with government policy and national planning guidelines if passed.

Mr. Hughes, in response to the proposal, outlined that the same resolution had been passed by the elected members at the March Council meeting when submissions to the draft Plan were considered. He outlined the OPR submission to Material Alterations of 10 April 2025 which recommended that the Planning Authority make the County Development Plan without Map MA Ref: MTDP1 No 15 (Monaghan Town). The OPR in their submission stated that these lands were vulnerable to flooding, and that a justification test had not been passed.

Mr. Hughes advised that the Chief Executive's Report (May 2025) concurred with the OPR submission and also stated;

- The lands are at flood risk. Confirmed by the Planning Authority Hydrological experts as well as the applicant's representatives
- This opinion is based on OPW CFRAM data and as such has the highest degree of confidence of any flood data used
- The zoning of the flood risk lands for industry/enterprise/employment would be contrary to The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)

Mr. Hughes recommended that the Elected Members did not pass the resolution as proposed for the reasons given in the OPR submission of 10 April 2025, in the CE Report of May 2025 and at the March Council meeting - and that the lands revert to the Draft Plan zonings (Landscape Protection / Conservation).

In response to Cllr. S. Gilliland's query, Mr. A. Hughes advised that the OPR had raised this issue in both of their submissions. Furthermore, planning officials had met with the OPR following the publication of the Draft Plan whereby they indicated that proposals to zone lands, which were at flood risk, for unsuitable uses was a serious matter.

The Cathaoirleach put Cllr Coyle's proposal to a vote by show of hands which resulted as follows:

For: 8

Against: 6

Abstention: 1

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal carried.

MA-MCDP- Resolution 04 – Dr. McKenna Terrace, Tirkeenan

Cllr N. McCooey proposed, Cllr R. Aughey seconded:

Having considered the contents of the Chief Executive's Report and contrary to the recommendation contained within it, it is proposed to make the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 with the proposed Material Alteration, to the Monaghan Town Settlement Map with the exception of the lands identified in submission MN-CDP-MCDP-31 and on Map Alteration Reference: MTDP1 No.3, which reverts to the Draft Plan Zoning of Strategic Residential Reserve (SRR).

Map Alteration Ref:	Area in Hectares	Location (Proposed Material Alterations Volume 3 Map Booklet)
MTDP1 No.3 Submission: MN-C29-MCDP-31	0.3422ha (lands to which the submission relates)	Dr. McKenna Terrace, Tirkeenan (Page 6)

The reasons for proposing this amendment contrary to the recommendation of the Chief Executive are as follows: -

- *To retain the potential for further residential lands close to the town centre core.*
- *The sites' central location supports compact growth, reduces urban sprawl, and promotes efficient land use.*
- *The lands are located within the centre of Monaghan Town and thus support sequential development.*
- *They are currently fully serviced and are confirmed as a Tier 1 site.*
- *There is no flood risk associated with the site (as confirmed on the relevant maps and Flood Risk Assessment for Monaghan).*

Mr. Hughes, in response to the proposal, stated that these lands were zoned as Strategic Residential Reserve in the Draft Development Plan. The OPR in their submission of 14 Nov 2024, in response to the publication of the draft Plan, asked that zoning for these (and other lands) be reviewed and that they be rezoned for an appropriate use where they did not support the long term compact growth of the town and / or did not follow the sequential approach to the zoning of lands. In response to that, the lands were reviewed and zoned as Community Services / Facilities at the material alterations stage to facilitate the expansion of nearby allotments.

- The zoning of the lands as Strategic Residential Reserve would be contrary to the recommendation of the OPR in their submission of 14 Nov 2024 and would not support the compact growth of the town.
- In addition, it would not result in the delivery of housing during the lifetime of the Plan

Mr. Hughes recommended that the Elected Members did not pass the resolution as proposed for the reasons detailed in the OPR submission of 14 Nov 2024, and in the CE Report of May 2025.

The Cathaoirleach put Cllr McCooey's proposal to a vote by show of hands which resulted as follows:

For: 11

Abstentions: 5

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal carried.

2. To consider making the County Development Plan 2025-2031

Cllr R. Aughey declared an interest in the adoption of the County Development Plan 2025-2031 and therefore withdrew from the meeting room.

Mr. A. Hughes outlined the requirement for the members to decide to make the County Development Plan 2025-2031 by resolution, in accordance with the draft Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031, except as amended by the material alterations, the accepted recommendations contained in the Chief Executive's Report on submissions regarding the material alterations, and any resolutions passed today.

Cllr P. Treanor proposed, Cllr PJ O'Hanlon seconded,

It is proposed to make the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 in accordance with the draft Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031, except as amended by the material alterations, the accepted recommendations contained in the Chief Executive's Report on submissions regarding the material alterations, and the resolutions passed at the Special Council Meeting on 26th May 2025.

The Cathaoirleach put Cllr Treanor's proposal to the elected members and it was unanimously agreed.

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal carried.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the members and officials for the work undertaken in preparing the County Development Plan 2025-2031.

The Chief Executive concurred with the comments of the Cathaoirleach.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Signed: _____
Meetings
Administrator

Date: _____
