



Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

3ú Urlár ó Thuaidh | Ionad Cathartha | An tSráid Mhór | Baile Munna | Baile Átha Cliath 9
3rd Floor North | Ballymun Civic Centre | Main Street | Ballymun | Dublin 9



Proposed Variation No. 1 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly notes the publication of proposed Variation No. 1 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 that is concurrently published along with Variation No. 2 of the Development Plan and sets out hereunder observations on behalf of the Assembly. The submission has been prepared by the executive and approved by the Cathaoirleach of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly.

1.0 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The Council will be aware of the finalisation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region which was made on 28th June 2019. In line with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the planning authority shall ensure, when making a variation to the development plan, that it is consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region, thus ensuring full alignment between local, regional and national planning policy. In this regard, the Regional Assembly welcomes the proposed variation to the Development Plan.

2.0 Legislative Context

Under Section 27C of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, is obliged to prepare submissions/ observations to be submitted to the relevant planning authority and copied to the Office of the Planning Regulator.

A submission shall contain a report which shall state whether, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly, the draft variation of the development plan, and its core strategy, is consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. If, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly the proposed draft variation of the development plan and its core strategy is not consistent with the RSES, the submission / observations and report shall include recommendations as to what amendments, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly, are required to ensure that it is consistent.

This report contains the opinion of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly in relation to the above matter along with recommendations as required under Section 27C of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

3.0 Proposed Variation No. 1

Meath County Council has published proposed Variation No. 1 seeking to vary the Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 which includes 3 no. amendments to the County Development Plan as follows:

(1) Proposed Amendment No. 1 – Chapter 1 – Introduction

The introduction of an objective to facilitate the replacement of the Written Statements for respective settlements in the Meath CDP 2021-2027 with a new Local Area Plan, Joint Local Area Plan or Joint Urban Area Plan upon their adoption by the Elected Members. The land use zoning objectives contained in Volume 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 will be retained.

When adopted, the Local Area Plan, Joint Local Area Plan or Joint Urban Area Plan will replace the respective Written Statement and update the relevant household allocation while retaining the land use zoning objectives contained in Volume 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. During the intervening period, the Written Statement contained in the Meath County Development Plan will continue to have effect.

(2) Proposed Amendment No. 2 – Chapter 2 ‘Core Strategy’ and Volume 2 Written Statements

To incorporate guidance from the ‘*Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022*’, into Chapter 2 ‘Core Strategy’ to ensure an adequate supply of housing can be delivered to meet demand in the county.

Draft Variation No.1 also proposes to consolidate repetitive objectives within Chapter 2 and Volume 2 – Written Statements, by removing the following to avoid unnecessary duplication;

SH OBJ 1, ASH OBJ 1, ATH OBJ 1, GHIB OBJ 1, BAL OBJ 1, BLMD 1, CAR OBJ 1, CARN OBJ 1, CLO OBJ 1, CRO OBJ 1, DON OBJ 1, NAV OBJ 1, DNS OBJ 1, KEL OBJ 1, TRM OBJ 1, DCE OBJ 1, RA OBJ 1, ENF OBJ 1, STA OBJ 1, KIL OBJ 1, DUL OBJ 1, OLD OBJ 1, OLD OBJ 1, DRUM OBJ 1, GOR OBJ 1, JUL OBJ 1, KEN OBJ 1, KILB OBJ 1, KILD OBJ 1, KILM OBJ 1, KLM OBJ 1, MOY OBJ 1, NOB OBJ 1, RATHC OBJ 1, RATH OBJ 1, SLN OBJ 1, SUM OBJ 1

The proposed variation states that these objectives are adequately conveyed through existing CS OBJ 1 and CS OBJ 3 of Chapter 2, Core Strategy in Volume 1, which state:

CS OBJ 1: To secure the implementation of the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy, in so far as practicable, by directing growth towards designated settlements, subject to the availability of infrastructure and services.

CS OBJ 3: To be guided by ensure the implementation the population, housing growth and household allocation set out in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy, in so far as practicable. Meath County Council will monitor the number of units that are permitted, under construction and delivered /built as part of the implementation of this objective, in compliance with the Development Plan Guidelines 2022.

(3) Proposed Amendment No. 3 – Reallocation of residential units

Noting guidance from Section 10.3 of the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022 requiring monitoring of the Core Strategy for the county on an annual basis, the Residential Tracking Monitoring system for County Meath has been drafted by Meath County Council and operational as the key quantitative data source used to analyse and report residential planning and construction activity. This internal dataset is supported by the CSO data on population, housing completions and employment figures.

A review of the Residential monitoring data that informed Table 2.12: Core Strategy Table, on Population and Household distribution to 2027 has identified an issue in the existing residential planning permissions in the County. While it was previously understood that the existing units not yet built in the county comprised 5,820 units, subsequent commencement and completion data as part of the Two-Year Review of the County Development Plan identified that 781 of these units were completed and/or expired in 2019 and therefore were outside of the household allocation period of 2020 -2027.

In Variation No. 1, it is now proposed to re-allocate these units to larger Settlements in Tier 1 – 5 in accordance with the CDP growth and settlement strategy and to ensure full utilisation of existing infrastructure and resources in the County. This data coupled with the fact that a number of settlements are reaching or have reached their targeted household allocation demonstrates the need for incorporating flexibility into the Core Strategy to ensure appropriate housing delivery against the backdrop of the current housing crisis and in line with the Government Housing Strategy, Housing for All (2021).

3.1 Detailed Amendments in Proposed Variation No. 1

Section 4.0 of the report published as part of the proposed variation sets out the proposed amendments to the text in Volume 1 (Written Statement) of the Meath CDP 2021-2027. There are a total of 3 no. amendments proposed in the variation which are set out below.

Proposed Amendment No. 01 - Chapter 1 Introduction

Proposed text update to Section 1.5.1 Existing Suite of Local Area Plans

~~A Local Area Plan is currently in place for the following settlement centres: Ashbourne, East Meath, Dunshaughlin, Dunboyne, Ratoath and the Southern Environs of Drogheda.~~

~~A Written Statement and Land Use Zoning objectives map to establish a framework for inter alia the future LAP's, to support economic development and to provide a basis for continued operation of the development management process pending the completion of the LAP's (in the case of Drogheda the UAP) has been included in Volume 2 for each Settlement. ~~enter.~~ These Written Statements will continue to have effect unless they are replaced and superceded by their respective Local Area Plan, Joint Local Area Plan or Joint Urban Area Plan.~~

INT OBJ 1

When adopted, the Local Area Plan, Joint Local Area Plan or Joint Urban Area Plan will replace the respective Written Statement and update the relevant household allocation while retaining the land use zoning objectives contained in Volume 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. During the intervening period, the Written Statement contained in the Meath County Development Plan will continue to have effect.

Proposed Amendment No. 02 - Chapter 2 'Core Strategy' and Volume 2 Written Statements

Proposed text update to Section 2.8.1 Guiding Principles for Core Strategies

2.8.1.1 Development Plan Guidelines for Local Authorities (2022)

The publication of the Development Plan Guidelines for Local Authorities (2022) provides clarity in respect to excess zoned residential lands stating that it is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that 'zoned housing land in an existing development plan, that is serviced and can be developed for housing within the life of the new development plan under preparation, should not be subject to de-zoning' but should instead take a phased approach. Alternative zoning uses and deletion of the zoning objective can also be considered when addressing excess.

The Guidelines outline that de-zoning should occur where the land zoned 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.

The guidelines also acknowledge that in providing housing sites for development within settlements, it may be necessary to zone more serviced land and sites for residential (or a mixture of residential and other uses), than would equate to meeting precisely the projected housing demand for that settlement. The approach outlined in Section 4.4.2 of the guidelines accepts that a degree of choice in development sites is desirable to avoid restricting the supply of new housing development through inactivity on a particular landholding or site.

The release of such lands can compensate for lands with live planning permissions that have no subsequent activity within the duration of their permission will ensure site options are not curtailed at the advanced stages of the County Development Plan period and will ensure that a steady supply of land for housing in the right locations are built into the system.

In identifying the residential land requirement for this Plan and addressing the issue of excess lands, a significant quantum of residential lands were de-zoned in accordance with the RSES guidance during the County Development Plan review. ~~consideration will be given to both options set out above. An~~ Having regard to the limited availability of remaining undeveloped residential zoned lands in some settlements, which was established following a detailed analysis at the Two Year Review of the Plan, a comprehensive evaluation of all undeveloped residential lands in each settlement by way of Settlement Capacity Audits (SCA) will inform future zoning and phasing of residential lands. The SCA will inform a future variation to the County Development Plan. ~~has been carried out.~~ The prioritisation/phasing of residential lands will only be utilised in the larger settlements where population growth is to be concentrated i.e. Regional Growth Centre, Key Town, or Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and only where there are fundamental reasons which support the requirement to phase such lands.

Proposed update to Section 2.9.3 Recent Activity in Residential Construction

Section 2.9.3 Recent Activity in Residential Construction

~~The continuation of the economic recovery, the associated increase in employment, and improved consumer confidence has resulted in increased activity in residential construction, particularly in the southern and eastern parts of the County.~~

~~This has been particularly evident from 2014, with year on year increases in the number of Commencement Notices received for multi-unit residential developments. These Commencement Notices are being translated into completed units. The CSO Report 'New Dwelling Completions' 2011-18 recorded that there were 1,512 residential units completed in Meath in 2018. This represents an increase of almost 40% on 2017 when 1,091 units were completed. In comparison to other parts of the~~

~~region Meath is one of the most active counties behind Fingal (2,140 units), Dublin City (1,843 units), and South Dublin (1,654 units).~~

Section 2.9.3 Monitoring of Population Growth and Housing Growth in the County

Section 10.3 of the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022 requires monitoring of the Core Strategy for the county. This monitoring must be carried out annually and include a breakdown of the following indicators:

Indicator	
Residential	
1.	New home completions (including through refurbishment/conversions)
2.	New home completions per NPO 3 (see below)
3.	Planning permissions granted for residential development with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) A breakdown of 1, 2, 3 and 4+ units permitted and (ii) A breakdown per Tier 1 and Tier 2 lands
4.	Breakdown by relevant rural area type of rural housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Planning Applications lodged (ii) Breakdown in decisions (iii) New home completions

To address this requirement, a Residential Tracking Monitoring System for County Meath was established as a key quantitative data source to analyse and report residential planning and construction activity. This internal dataset is informed by Central Statistic Office (CSO) data on population and employment figures, internal housing completions records and Building Control Management System data.

A review of internal planning permission data and 2022 census data indicates that market and infrastructural constraints has restricted the delivery of housing across the county. It is a target of the County Development Plan to deliver 1,880 Units per annum up to 2027. Notwithstanding this, 2022 census data for the county shows that the total housing stock grew from 70,649 to 78,759 between 2016-2022. This indicates an average increase of 1,352 units annually since 2016. While internal monitoring reflects an increase in construction in more recent years, this data also indicates a shortfall of an average of 528 residential units annually on the planned housing delivery for County Meath. Having regard to the recent 2022 census data and the unanticipated population growth in Meath, the Council are reviewing the causes of this shortfall with the intention of identifying and addressing obstacles to the delivery of housing within the county.

Consequently, careful monitoring must be carried out for both permissions granted, units delivered, infrastructural or other impediments to ensure the likelihood of housing delivery is considered in the context of the various obstacles. In accordance with the Development Plan Guidelines, the anticipated rate of housing delivery and the likelihood of expiring permissions commencing must also be factored into the various considerations that form part of the successful delivery of the Core Strategy. The proposed phasing of larger residential developments must also be considered.

Notwithstanding that the county has zoned a sufficient amount of land to accommodate the household allocation up to 2027, regard must be had to the historical trends for housing delivery and the significant complexities that exist in delivering housing including issues such as economic

viability, site assembly and site ownership, funding, timescales for delivering the necessary physical infrastructure and the nature of speculative land management that may render certain lands unavailable within the lifetime of the plan. Accordingly, where lands cannot be bought forward for development within the Core Strategy period, a degree of flexibility in the distribution of the housing and population targets, in line with national and regional policy, is required to facilitate an adequate supply of housing to meet demand in the county. This may include allowing ‘additional provision’ of lands to provide some degree of competition and choice in the residential development land market.

Where such flexibility is awarded, an evidence-based assessment will be carried out that will consider active and expiring planning permissions, units delivered, the function of the settlement and the existing and planned infrastructural, employment and community services available to the settlement (the Asset-Based Approach). The focus and target must however be based on housing delivery as opposed to meeting targets.

In recognition of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, self-sustaining settlements with existing or planned high quality transport services must also be recognised for their potential to contribute to national objectives to transition to a climate resilient and low carbon society. Recognition of high-quality transport settlements also accords with RPO 8.1 of the RSES which states “The integration of transport and land use planning in the region shall be consistent with the guiding principles expressed in the transport strategy of the RSES”.

Active Land Management measures undertaken by the Council such as the Residential Zoned Land Tax will also support the delivery of housing in the county and ensure compliance with National and Regional Planning Policy.

Proposed Text Changes to 2.14.1 Policies

It is the policy of the Council:

CS POL 1

To promote and facilitate the development of sustainable communities in the County by **monitoring** and managing the level of growth in each settlement to ensure future growth is **informed by** ~~accordance with~~ the Core Strategy and County Settlement Hierarchy in order to deliver compact urban areas and sustainable rural communities.

Proposed text changes to 2.14.2 Objectives

It is an objective of the Council:

CS OBJ 3

To **be guided by** ~~ensure the implementation of~~ the population, ~~and~~ housing growth **and** household allocation set out in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy, in so far as **practicable**. ~~Meath County Council will monitor the number of units that are permitted and~~ **delivered** ~~under construction/built~~ as part of the implementation of this objective, **in compliance with the Development Plan Guidelines 2022.**

Proposed removal of duplicate core strategy objectives from Volume 2 Settlement Written Statements

Draft Variation No.1 also proposes to consolidate repetitive objectives within Chapter 2 and Volume 2 – Written Statements, by removing the following to avoid unnecessary duplication;

SH OBJ 1, ASH OBJ 1, ATH OBJ 1, GHIB OBJ 1, BAL OBJ 1, BLMD 1,CAR OBJ 1, CARN OBJ 1, CLO OBJ 1, CRO OBJ 1, DON OBJ 1, NAV OBJ 1, DNS OBJ 1, KEL OBJ 1, TRM OBJ 1, DCE OBJ 1, RA OBJ 1, ENF OBJ 1, STA OBJ 1, KIL OBJ 1, DUL OBJ 1, OLD OBJ 1, OLD OBJ 1, DRUM OBJ 1, GOR OBJ 1, JUL OBJ 1, KEN OBJ 1, KILB OBJ 1, KILD OBJ 1, KILM OBJ 1, KLM OBJ 1, MOY OBJ 1, NOB OBJ 1, RATHC OBJ 1, RATH OBJ 1, SLN OBJ 1, SUM OBJ 1.

These objectives are adequately conveyed through existing CS OBJ 1 and CS OBJ 3 of Chapter 2, Core Strategy in Volume 1 of the County Plan.

Proposed Amendment No. 03 – Introduction of Text and Table under Table 2.12

A review of the Residential monitoring data that informed Table 2.12: Core Strategy Table, on Population and Household distribution to 2027 has identified an issue in the existing residential planning permissions in the County. While it was previously understood that the existing units not yet built in the county comprised 5,820 units, subsequent commencement and completion data as part of the Two-Year Review of the County Development Plan identified that 781 of these units were completed and/or expired in 2019 and therefore were outside of the household allocation period of 2020 -2027. This situation occurred as a result of delays in the preparation and adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 which was originally planned for adoption in 2019 but incurred significant delays pending the publication of the National Planning Framework in 2018, Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy in 2019 and the Covid pandemic in 2020.

In Variation No. 1, it is now proposed to re-allocate these units to larger Settlements in Tier 1 – 5 in accordance with the County Development Plan growth and settlement strategy and to ensure full utilisation of existing infrastructure and resources in the County. This data coupled with the fact that a number of settlements are reaching or have reached their targeted household allocation demonstrates the need for incorporating flexibility into the Core Strategy to ensure appropriate housing delivery against the backdrop of the current housing crisis and in line with the Government Housing Strategy, Housing for All (2021).

<i>Settlement</i>	<i>Additional Household Allocation 2020-2027</i>
<i>Settlement Tiers 1-5</i>	<i>781*</i>

** Units recorded as extant permissions that were completed or expired prior to 2020.*

Insert New Objective *CS OBJ 3A: The 781 residential units shall only be applied to Tier 1 to 5 Settlements where there is a demonstrated demand for housing and sufficient supporting services available. This will be implemented through the Development Management function and applicable until such time as the National Planning Framework Review is completed and adopted.*

4.0 Submission

The Regional Assembly acknowledges proposed Variation No. 1 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 which seeks to vary the Development Plan with 3 no. proposed amendments as set out above.

Proposed Amendment No. 1

In relation to Proposed Amendment No. 1, the Regional Assembly has no objection in principle with the introduction of an objective to facilitate the replacement of the Written Statements for respective settlements in the Meath CDP 2021-2027 with a new Local Area Plan, Joint Local Area Plan or Joint Urban Area Plan upon their adoption by the elected members of Meath County Council. The proposed variation confirms that such new plans when adopted will replace the respective written statements and update the relevant household allocation while retaining the land use zoning objectives contained in Volume 2 of the Meath CDP 2021-2027.

It is difficult for the Regional Assembly to determine, in line with section 27C of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, if this proposed draft variation of the development plan, and, in particular, the core strategy, is consistent with the regional spatial and economic strategy, owing to the fact that no further detail has been provided. Accordingly, in the preparation any future LAP, JLAP or JUAP it should be acknowledged that the contents of such plans **are required to be consistent with** the settlement strategy outlined in Section 4.2 of the EMRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 (RSES) for the region, in addition to Table 2.12 (Core Strategy Table, Population and Household Distribution to 2027) contained in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Proposed Amendment No. 2

Proposed Amendment No. 2 relates to the proposed text update to Section 2.8.1 of the Meath County Development Plan *'Guiding Principles for Core Strategies'* that includes a new subsection 2.8.1.1 *'Development Plan Guidelines for Local Authorities (2022)'*. In addition, Proposed Amendment No. 2 proposes to delete the wording of the previous Section 2.9.3 *'Recent Activity in Residential Construction'* and replace same with a new title heading *'Monitoring of Population Growth and Housing Growth in the County'*. This amendment updates this section of the County Development Plan referring to Section 10.3 of the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2022 relating to monitoring of the Development Plan Core Strategy and providing flexibility in the distribution of the housing and population targets in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate an adequate supply of housing to meet demand in the county. It is noted that this new section confirms that the Meath CDP 2021-2027 has zoned a sufficient amount of land to accommodate the household allocation up to 2027.

The wording of proposed amendments to Policy CS POL 1 is not considered consistent with current planning legislation and Development Plan guidelines whereby these state that development plan objectives, as far as practicable, are required **to be consistent with national and regional development objectives as set out in the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**. The Core Strategy of the Meath CDP 2021-2027 has previously been assessed by the Regional Assembly as being consistent with the RSES as part of the preparation and adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. The specific concern of the Regional Assembly relates to the proposed deletion of *'in accordance with the Core Strategy and County Settlement Hierarchy'* to be replaced by *'informed by the Core Strategy and County Settlement Hierarchy'*. In order to ensure

consistency with the RSES, the Regional Assembly recommends the current wording of this policy is not altered as proposed by this variation.

Similarly, the proposed amendment to the wording of objective CS OBJ 3 that proposes the deletion of 'ensure the implementation of' the population and housing growth household allocation set out in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy to be replaced by 'to be guided by' provides a wording that does not specifically ensure that the implementation of the housing allocation figures contained in the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan would be compliant with same. The Regional Assembly therefore considers that the draft variation is not consistent with the regional spatial and economic strategy and recommends no change to this part of the objective in order to ensure consistency with the RSES settlement strategy as it relates to County Meath.

In addition, in relation to the text updates to be included in Chapter 2 Core Strategy within Section 2.8.1 'Guiding Principles for Core Strategies', the Regional Assembly request the removal of the statement '*In identifying the residential land requirement for this Plan and addressing the issue of excess lands, a significant quantum of residential lands were de-zoned in accordance with the RSES guidance during the County Development Plan review*'. It should be clarified in the draft variation documents that the previous submission made by the Regional Assembly on the Draft Meath County Development Plan 2020-2026 did not specify lands to be de-zoned as part of the assembly recommendations.

Furthermore, there appears to be an anomaly/error in the sub-heading numbering in this proposed variation for the new sub-section 2.8.1.1 as the adopted Meath CDP 2021-2027 already has an existing sub-heading under Section 2.8.1.1 titled 'Joint Urban Area Plan for Drogheda.' The Assembly therefore recommends that the proposed new sub-section numbering proposed in this variation be amended to address this issue.

The Assembly also notes that the explanatory text on the last paragraph on Page 4 of the report prepared as part of the proposed variation includes reference to '*such development in brownfield or town centre locations should be considered Core Strategy neutral and therefore acceptable subject to all other normal planning considerations*'. Having regard to this statement, the Assembly requests the Council to clarify the intention for the 'core strategy neutral' statement and how this complies with the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2022) and also be consistent with the regional spatial and economic strategy, owing to the fact that no further detail has been provided.

In relation to the proposed removal of the duplicate core strategy objectives from Volume 2 Settlement Strategy Written Statements, the Regional Assembly has no objection to this proposed amendment.

Proposed Amendment No. 3

In respect to Proposed Amendment No. 03 regarding the Introduction of Text and Table under Table 2.12, the Regional Assembly notes the identified 781 units that were completed and/or expired in 2019 which were outside of the household allocation period of 2020-2027. These units are now proposed to be re-allocated to larger Settlements in Tier 1 – 5 in accordance with the County Development Plan

growth and settlement strategy. The Regional Assembly notes the reason and rationale behind the re-allocation of the 781 units that previously formed part of the extant planning permissions in the current core strategy. Meath County Council now intends to reallocate these units across Tier 1 to 5 settlements where there is a demonstrated demand for housing and sufficient support services available. In relation to the above, it is not clear to the Regional Assembly which settlements the re-allocation of the 781 units is proposed for. It is recommended that the draft variation and core strategy table (Table 2.12) should be amended so that the re-allocation of units is clearly identifiable to specific settlement centres in order to ensure that the Core Strategy remains consistent with the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region.

In summary, the Regional Assembly does not have any objection to proposed Variation No. 1 of the Meath CDP 2021-2027 as placed on public display subject to the recommendations outlined above in this submission in relation to CS POL 1 and CS OBJ 3 and also the core strategy table (Table 2.12). With the incorporation of the recommendations above, the Assembly would consider it to be consistent with the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031.

5.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The proposed variation underwent a screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and concluded that the proposal does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment as it would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects, taking account of the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

A screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) was also carried out and concluded that there is no possibility that the implementation of the draft variation could result in any likely significant effects on European sites on its own or in combination with other plans and programmes. This conclusion was reached without considering or taking into account mitigation measures or measures intended to avoid or reduce any impact on European sites. The AA screening therefore concluded that it is not considered necessary to undertake any further stages of the Appropriate Assessment process. The proposed variation does not therefore require an Appropriate Assessment or the preparation of a Natura Impact Report (NIR).

6.0 Conclusion

In line with Section 27C. of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, it is the opinion of the Regional Assembly that the proposed variation of the development plan is not consistent with the regional spatial and economic strategy, and recommends that alteration of wording is required as set out in Section 4.0 above, in order to ensure that the proposed variation to the development plan and its core strategy are so consistent.

Regards,



Clare Bannon
Acting Director
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
26th April 2024