



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

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### **Proposed Variation No. 5 of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021**

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly notes the publication of Proposed Variation No. 5 to the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 and sets out hereunder submissions and observations on behalf of the Assembly. This submission has been prepared by the executive and approved by the members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly at the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

#### **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 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019. The RSES, prepared in accordance with the National Planning Framework, sets the context for each local authority within our Region to develop their county and city development plans in a manner that will ensure national, regional and local plans align. The RSES identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. At this strategic level it provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development throughout the Region.

In line with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the Planning Authority shall ensure, when making or varying the County Development Plan, that it is consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region, thus ensuring full alignment between local, regional and national planning policy.

#### **Legislative Context**

Under Section 27C of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as inserted by Section 18 of the Planning and Development Act, 2010) 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 in particular its core strategy are consistent with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. If, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly the proposed variation of the Development Plan, and its core strategy are 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 they are consistent.

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

### **Proposed Variation**

The stated purpose of the proposed variation is “to incorporate provision for the wider application of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (Vacant Sites Levy) to towns in the Longford County Area where public infrastructure and facilities are provided to facilitate development. This will promote the activation of strategic sites in these areas and regeneration of town cores.”

The proposed variation seeks to amend variation No. 2 of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021, which facilitated the application of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (vacant Sites Levy) within Longford Town.

### **Submission**

Regional Strategic Objective (RSO) No. 2 of the RSES focuses on compact growth and urban regeneration through promoting the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region’s citizens. This is supported throughout the RSES through the inclusion of related regeneration Growth Enablers identified for the Gateway Region (of which Longford forms part), and, numerous regeneration regional policy objectives (RPOs) including those specifically relevant to Longford Town at Chapter 4 and other general RPOs documented at Chapters 4, 6 and 9 of the RSES. In this regard the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly welcome the proposed variation of the Longford County Development Plan.

In accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the Local Authority are asked to ensure that the proposed variation is in keeping with the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan and the requirements of RPO 3.3. of the RSES, which states that “*Local authorities shall, in their core strategies, identify regeneration areas within existing urban settlements and set out specific objectives relating to the delivery of development on urban infill and brownfield regeneration sites in line with the Guiding Principles set out in the RSES...*”. Reference is also made to the provisions of Circular PL 7/2016 of 1 July 2016, in which the Department outlines that the planning authorities should provide for development of vacant sites in designated areas, as explicit objectives in development plans that support their core strategies.

In pursuing this variation, the Planning Authority should be cognisant of the requirements of Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, relevant regional policy contained within the RSES and the aforementioned circular, and should demonstrate how the proposed variation is in compliance with the Core Strategy.

In addition to the above, it is noted that the Draft Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 is currently on public display (27<sup>th</sup> October- 18<sup>th</sup> January). Having regard to this, in advance of finalising this variation, the Local Authority are asked to ensure appropriate future proofing and a consistent approach across planning documents.

### **SEA and AA**

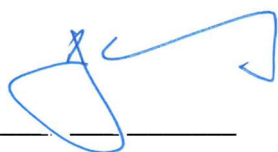
It is noted that the proposed variation underwent a screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) and it was concluded that the proposed variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects or will not give rise to any effect on the ecological integrity of any European Site, alone or in combination with any other plans, programmes, and projects.

### **Conclusion**

Subject to compliance with the aforementioned points, it is considered that the proposed variation to the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021, is consistent with the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The Assembly welcomes further opportunities to engage in the statutory process of the proposed variation of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 and it should be noted that the officials of the Regional Assembly are available to discuss the matters raised above if required.

Regards,



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Jim Conway

Director

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

16<sup>th</sup> November 2020