

18<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Planning Department,  
City Hall,  
College Road,  
Galway,  
H91 X4K8.

**Re: Adopted Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029**

A chara,

The Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) acknowledges the adoption of the Galway City Development Plan, 2023-2029, (the Development Plan) by the members of Galway City Council on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

The Office also acknowledges receipt of your notice letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, further to section 31(AM)(6) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended (the Act).

The Office has reviewed the adopted Development Plan, and notes the decision of the planning authority not to comply, in whole or in part, with some of the recommendations included in its submissions.

Where the recommendations of the Office were not complied with, the Office carefully considered elected members' reasons and, with the exception of certain specific matters, accepted that these reasons addressed the matters raised by the Office.

You will be aware that the Office made a recommendation to the Minister regarding a proposed draft Direction in accordance with section 31(AM) of the Act in relation to the following recommendations of the Office:

- Recommendation 5 Low Density Residential Zoning;
- MA Recommendation 2 Residential Land Use Zoning;
- MA Recommendation 3 Low Density Residential Zoning;

- MA Recommendation 4 Employment Land Zoning Objective; and
- MA Recommendation 5 Flood Risk Management.

The Office's recommendation to the Minister of a proposed draft Direction and notice letter pursuant to section 31(AM), and the Minister's draft Direction are available on the Office's website. This correspondence will also be published on the Office's website in the coming days.

With the exception of the specific matters raised in the 31AM(8) notice, the Office welcomes the making of the Development Plan.

The Office acknowledges the challenges faced by the planning authority in formulating a six-year plan for the planning authority area located within the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and the requirements to meet ambitious population and housing supply targets for the City while addressing key challenges including housing choice and affordability, transport / mobility and urban quality, especially outside the core-city centre area.

The Development Plan sets out a strategy for the growth of the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (GMASP) to enable Galway to achieve the critical mass in terms of housing, employment, services and amenities needed to develop as a city region. However, co-ordination with Galway County Council in relation to key future growth enablers for the GMASP will be paramount in achieving the ambitious housing and population targets and addressing strategic challenges.

The Office welcomes the Development Plan's policies and objectives to promote compact growth and urban regeneration which will facilitate the redevelopment of infill and brownfield sites consistent with national planning objectives including compact growth, sustainable transport and climate mitigation. The extensive range of Regeneration and Opportunity Sites identified in the Development Plan also demonstrates a plan-led approach to sustainable development within Galway city and suburbs, and the planning authority's commitment to consolidation within the city.

Activation of these sites will be critical for the growth of Galway in a sustainable manner, and to provide homes for people in areas well-serviced by existing and planned social and physical infrastructure.

In this respect, active land management and enabling partnerships with State-supported institutions with financial expertise to unlock strategic regeneration sites will be essential for the Development Plan to achieve national planning objectives including compact growth, sustainable transport and climate mitigation.

Further, the Office welcomes the *Galway Urban Density and Building Height Study, 2021*, which sets out a framework that will support the compact and sustainable development for the identified Opportunity and Regeneration Sites and ensures that the adopted Development Plan categorised areas where increased building activity will be pursued. The Office welcomes the amendments, on foot of Recommendation 6 of the Office's submission to the draft Plan, as this demonstrates the planning authority's clear commitment to deliver on Specific Planning Policy Requirement 1 of the section 28 guidelines, *Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2018).

In addition the Office welcomes the coherent strategy for the sustainable neighbourhoods presented in the Development Plan which sets out a framework and vision for appropriate housing densities in a compact urban form, in the suburbs, inner residential areas and city centre residential areas. The strategy supports the coordination of housing with essential services, amenities and community facilities. This approach reflects national and regional policies supporting increased city living and compact forms of development, encouraging sustainable travel, thus contributing to reductions in carbon footprint.

The approach and strategy for Traveller Accommodation in the adopted Development Plan is also commended. In particular the Office commends your authority for the inclusion of both specific locations on land use zoning maps of existing and proposed Traveller accommodation consistent with Recommendation 9 of the Office's submission to the draft Plan, and with the legislative provisions of the Act.

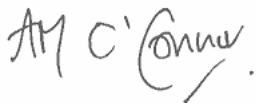
The Office also commends the planning authority for the preparation of a comprehensive transport strategy which will reduce congestion and car dependency through increased capacity of reliable and sustainable public transport and the promotion and facilitation of cycling and walking. Achieving these sustainable transport objectives will represent a significant challenge for Galway City given the current modal share of the car as the dominant mode of transport. As such the implementation of the Development Plan,

together with the delivery of a high quality public transport system and improved options for walking and cycling consistent with the Development Plan and the Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS), will be critical in reducing carbon emissions from transport in line with the *Climate Action Plan 2023*.

In conclusion, the Office generally welcomes the adoption of the Galway City Development Plan, 2023-2029, and looks forward to continued positive engagement with the planning authority into the future.

Is mise le meas,

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A handwritten signature in blue 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 Evaluations