

16th August 2023

Forward Planning Section,
Offaly County Council,
Áras an Chontae,
Charleville Road,
Tullamore,
County Offaly

Re: Adopted Birr Local Area Plan 2023-2029

A chara,

The Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) acknowledges the adoption of the Birr Local Area Plan 2023-2029 (the LAP) by the members of Offaly County Council on 15th May 2023. The Office also acknowledges receipt of your letter dated 16th May 2023, further to section 31(AO)(5) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended (the Act). The Office has reviewed the adopted LAP in accordance with the legislative requirements set out in section 31(AO) of the Act.

The Office welcomes the adopted LAP for Birr. In particular, the Office commends the approach taken to addressing climate change including policies and objectives for compact growth, green infrastructure and sustainable transport.

The Office also commends the strong policies to promote the regeneration and rejuvenation of the town, including the inclusion of an ambitious target to reduce vacancy by 20%, and the innovative objectives to support homes in the town centre.

Having considered the rationale provided in the Chief Executive's Report (CE's Report) in relation to Recommendation 1 of the Office's submission to the draft LAP, the Office is generally satisfied that the justification provided addresses the concerns raised on the basis that the zoning objectives: correct ambiguities identified in the Development Plan; reflect the existing uses on the ground; and have been accounted for in the Development Plan core strategy.

In relation to consistency with the Development Plan objectives (Recommendation 2), the CE's Report has committed to progressing a variation to the Development Plan to address the inconsistencies between the LAP and Development Plan zonings.

However, until this variation is completed there will be statutory land use zonings maps with conflicting objectives in the LAP and the Development Plan, which is contrary to sections 19(2) and 20(5) of the Act.

As proposed by the chief executive, this variation to the Development Plan will need to be resolved in a timely manner to avoid practical and legal uncertainties regarding the relevant policy framework for the area.

In conclusion, the Office welcomes the adoption of the Birr Local Area Plan 2023-2029 and looks forward to continued engagement with Offaly County Council in the implementation of national and regional policy at the local level.

Is mise le meas,

Handwritten signature of Anne Marie O'Connor in blue ink.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Planning Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluations
