

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023

Galway County Council,  
Áras an Chontate,  
Prospect Hill,  
Galway  
H91 H6KX.

**Re: Adopted Tuam Local Area Plan 2023–2029**

A chara,

The Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) acknowledges the adoption of the Tuam Local Area Plan 2023-2029 (the LAP) by the members of Galway County Council at their meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Receipt of your letter of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023 further to section 31(AO)(5) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended (the Act), is also acknowledged.

The Office welcomes the adoption of the LAP and considers that it provides a strong planning framework for the regeneration of the town centre, including the identification of four Opportunity Sites and measures to support their development. The Office also commends the inclusion of a range of measures to make walking and cycling within the town more convenient and safe for the local community (which was assisted by the preparation of the Local Transport Plan).

Having reviewed the adopted LAP in accordance with the legislative requirements set out in the Act, the Office is satisfied with the manner in which the vast majority of its recommendations and observations were addressed at draft LAP and Material Alterations stages.

While the Office's submission did include a recommendation regarding certain residential zoning objectives, the reasons given by elected members in deciding to make the LAP with Material Alterations MA32, MA38, and MA49 were fully considered, and the rationale provided for these zonings is accepted.

In general, the Office was satisfied with the approach in relation to residential development in the LAP, having regard to the general consistency with the core strategy of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. Notwithstanding this, the Office raised specific concerns in relation to Material Alterations that zoned additional land for residential use. Nonetheless, the Office accepts the rationale provided by the planning authority in accepting Material Alteration MA32 as this site would contribute to compact growth in accordance with NPO 3c, and furthermore the Office accepts the justification for the development of both Material Alterations MA38 and MA49, as both sites represent sequential development, are fully serviced, and were zoned Residential (Phase 2) in the preceding Tuam Local Area Plan 2018-2024.

The Office is therefore satisfied with the overall quantum and scale of residential land and the strategy for residential development during the life of the LAP, which is consistent with regional and national policy objectives aiming to achieve sustainable compact settlements consistent with section 10(2)(n) of the Act, NPO 3, NPO 72(a-c) of the NPF and RPO 3.2 of the RSES.

However, the decision of the planning authority to adopt the LAP without Material Alterations MA39, MA55 and MA56 to zone land in areas at risk of flooding is strongly commended and demonstrates the planning authority's commitment to avoid placing people and property at unnecessary risk from future flood events.

In relation to lands zoned for Employment Uses in the draft LAP, the Office's submission had raised a concern that the overall scale of the additional land zoned for Employment Uses introduced by material alterations had the potential to undermine the positive policies within the LAP in relation to town centre regeneration and *Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns* (2022). The Office therefore welcomes the planning authority's response by prioritising employment growth closer to the town centre in a sequential manner, thus contributing to town centre regeneration, compact and sustainable forms of development, and providing for active travel, such as walking and cycling.

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

Is mise le meas,

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "AM O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a diagonal slash at the end of the name.

**Anne Marie O'Connor**

Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluations

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