

25th January 2024

The Central Planning Unit,
Donegal County Council,
County House,
Lifford,
F93 Y622.

Re: Adopted Letterkenny Local Area Plan and Local Transport Plan 2023-2029

A chara,

The Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) acknowledges the adoption of the Letterkenny Local Area Plan and Local Transport Plan 2023-2029 (the LAP) by the members of Donegal County Council on the 13th November 2023.

The Office also acknowledges receipt of your letter of 20th November 2023, further to section 31AO (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 31AO of the Act, and notes the decision of the planning authority not to comply, in whole or in part, with a number of the recommendations included in its submissions on the draft LAP and on the proposed material alterations.

Where the recommendations of the Office were not complied with, the Office gave careful consideration to the reasons of elected members and, with the exception of certain specific matters, accepted that these reasons addressed the matters raised by the Office.

However, in relation to recommendations of the Office concerning:

- Residential land use zoning - Recommendation 3(ii) and Recommendation 4 and MA Recommendation 1;
- Community and Education land use zoning - MA Recommendation 2; and
- Flood risk management - MA Recommendation 4,

the Office has made a recommendation to the Minister in respect of a proposed draft Direction in accordance with the legislative requirements set out in section 31AO (7) of the Act.

The Office's recommendation to the Minister of a proposed draft Direction and notice letter pursuant to section 31AO, has been made available on the [Office's website](#), together with this letter.

The direction process will now proceed under the relevant statutory provisions of the Act.

With the exception of the specific matters raised in the 31AO (7) notice, the Office welcomes the making of an LAP that provides a reasonably well-balanced strategy for future population and economic growth for the designated Regional Growth Centre of Letterkenny.

In particular, the LAP provides a positive framework for the regeneration of the centre of the town. This has the potential to create a virtuous circle for the town, stimulating further investment in economic and residential development in the core of the settlement.

In addition, the Office welcomes the work carried out by the planning authority in preparing a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the town. The preparation of an LTP is a positive development in providing an integrated approach to planning for land use, transport and accessibility. Together with the LAP, the LTP should result in a more sustainable pattern of development, which responds to the need to address climate change and to protect the high environmental quality of the town. The Office encourages the planning authority to continue to liaise with the National Transport Authority and Transport Infrastructure Ireland in order to maximise use of active and sustainable transport.

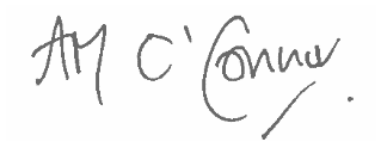
The Office is satisfied that, apart from the zoning of land for General Employment and Commercial within Flood Risk Zone A, at Bunnagee, the LAP provides for the management of flood risk in accordance with *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2009). In particular, the Office notes and welcomes the making of the LAP with the updates recommended by the Office under parts (b) and (c) of MA Recommendation 4 of its submission on the material alterations to the draft LAP.

Finally, the Office also acknowledges and welcomes the proposed Variation of the County Donegal Development Plan, which addresses concerns raised by the Office in Recommendation 1 of its submission on the draft LAP about inconsistent specific policies and objectives for Letterkenny in the extant Development Plan.

With the exception of the specific issues detailed in the section 31AO (7) notice, the Office is generally satisfied with the manner in which its recommendations and observations have been addressed during the plan preparation process.

In conclusion, the Office welcomes the adoption of the Letterkenny Local Area Plan and Local Transport Plan 2023-2029 and looks forward to continued engagement with Donegal County Council into the future.

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "AM O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Planning Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluations
