

8th April 2024

Forward Planning Section,
Galway County Council,
Prospect Hill,
Galway,
H91 H6KX.

Re: Adopted Athenry Local Area Plan 2024 – 2030

A chara,

The Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) acknowledges the adoption of the Athenry Local Area Plan 2024 – 2030 (the LAP) by the members of Galway County Council at their meeting on the 9th January 2024.

The Office also acknowledges receipt of your letter of 15th January 2024 further to section 31AO(5) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended (the Act).

The Office has reviewed the adopted LAP, 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(AO) of the Act in relation to the following recommendations of the Office:

- MA Recommendation 1 Land Use Zoning for Residential Use

The Office's recommendation to the Minister of a proposed draft Direction and notice letter pursuant to section 31(AO), and the Minister's draft Direction are available on the Office's website. Please be advised that 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 31AO(7) notice, the Office welcomes the making of the LAP.

With the exception of the material amendments which are the subject of the aforementioned draft Direction, the Office was generally satisfied that the land zoned for residential development was well located and consistent with the core strategy of the Galway Development Plan 2022-2028.

The Office also commends the LAP for providing a strong framework for town centre regeneration, including the identification of two *Opportunity Sites*, and for focussing on the need to make walking and cycling within the town more convenient and safer for the local community (which was assisted by the preparation of the Local Transport Plan).

In relation to lands zoned for Employment Uses in the draft LAP, the Office remains of the view that a strategic approach to employment-related development in Athenry is required to ensure that future development is well planned and does not undermine and detract from town centre revitalisation.

In relation to flood risk management, the Office strongly welcomes the general approach followed by the planning authority in the draft LAP in terms of avoiding zoning land for residential development in flood risk areas.

Finally, and in respect of climate adaptation, the Office notes your response in relation to Nature Based Solutions (NBS) and requests that in the future the planning authority also gives consideration to incorporating NBS at local level plans.

In conclusion, the Office welcomes the adoption of the Athenry Local Area Plan 2024 - 2030 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,



Anne Marie O'Connor
Deputy Planning Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluations