



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

OPR Ref: MA-034-23

7th February 2025

Forward Planning Department,
Planning Department,
Leitrim County Council,
Áras an Chontae,
Carrick-on-Shannon,
Co. Leitrim

And

Forward Planning,
Planning Department,
Roscommon County Council,
Áras an Chontae,
Roscommon,
Co. Roscommon.

**Re: Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Carrick-on-Shannon Joint Local
Area Plan 2025-2031**

A chara,

Thank you for your authorities' work in preparing the proposed Material Alterations to the draft Carrick-on-Shannon Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031 (material alterations).

As your authorities are aware, a core function of the Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) is the strategic evaluation and assessment of statutory plans to ensure consistency with legislative and policy requirements relating to planning. This includes a requirement to make submissions on statutory plans, including any observations or recommendations the Office considers necessary to ensure the effective co-ordination of national, regional and local planning requirements.

The Office has evaluated and assessed the proposed material alterations under the provisions of sections 31AO(1) and 31AO(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Act), and within the context of the Office's earlier recommendations and observations.

The Office's evaluation and assessment of the proposed material alterations has regard to the Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029 (the Leitrim County Development Plan), the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 (the Roscommon County Development Plan), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and relevant section 28 guidelines.

Overview

The Office acknowledges the very extensive work undertaken by Leitrim County Council and Roscommon County Council (the Planning Authorities) in responding to the issues raised by the Office in its recommendations and observations, which have been undertaken in a very positive and constructive manner.

As outlined in the Office's submission to the draft Carrick-On-Shannon Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031 (the draft Joint Local Area Plan), the Office's recommendations and observations largely focussed on supporting the delivery of the vision for Carrick-on-Shannon and building on the ambition of the RSES, the Leitrim County Development Plan and the Roscommon County Development Plan. The Office made six (6) recommendations and two (2) observations on the draft Joint Local Area Plan to enhance its alignment with the Leitrim County Development Plan and the Roscommon County Development Plan, the objectives of the RSES and section 28 guidelines in relation to zoning and housing delivery, residential density, land activation measures, land use and transport planning, national roads, flood risk management, climate action and monitoring and implementation of the draft Joint Local Area Plan.

There are a number of material alterations that the Office has noted and welcomes, including MA 5, MA 18 and MA 29. The Office has also noted MA 16, MA 30 and MA 31 with respect to the land reservation for the N4 and is satisfied with the Chief Executive's (CE) response and material alterations relating to same.

The submission below sets out two (2) recommendations and three (3) observations with respect to the material alterations under the following themes:

Key theme	Recommendations	Observations
<u>Density standards</u>	<u>MA Recommendation 1</u>	-
<u>Flood risk management</u>	<u>MA Recommendation 2</u>	<u>MA Observation 1</u>
<u>National roads</u>	-	<u>MA Observation 2</u>
<u>Active travel</u>	-	<u>MA Observation 3</u>

1. Density standards

MA 10 proposes to include a new Objective HC 7 in the Joint Local Area Plan to implement the density ranges for ‘centre and suburban areas’ as set out in the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024) (Compact Settlements Guidelines).

Policy and Objective 3.1 of the Compact Settlements Guidelines states that it is a policy and objective of the guidelines that the recommended residential density ranges set out in section 3.3 are applied within statutory development plans.

Carrick-on-Shannon is designated a Key Town in the RSES and acknowledged as such in the Roscommon County Development Plan and the Leitrim County Development Plan. In addition, core strategy Objective CS OBJ 8 of the Leitrim County Development Plan is to support the continued growth and development of the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon as an urban place of regional scale. As such, the appropriate residential density ranges under the Compact Settlements Guidelines are those for Key Towns (section 3.3.3).

While it may be that the policy objective intended to refer to the two area types for Key towns in section 3.3 table 3.5 of the Compact Settlements Guidelines, i.e. Centre and Urban Neighbourhood and Suburban / Urban Extension, the current wording does not refer to Key Towns or table 3.5 and may give rise to confusion.

As such, the proposed Objective HC 7 of the Joint Local Area Plan should be amended to clearly reference the densities standards for Key Towns as set out in the Compact Settlements Guidelines (table 3.5) instead of for ‘centre and suburban areas’.

MA Recommendation 1 – density standards

Having regard to the designation of Carrick-on-Shannon as a Key Town in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029 (the Leitrim County Development Plan) and the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 (the Roscommon County Development Plan), and in particular to:

- The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024) (Compact Settlements Guidelines), with respect to the density ranges for Key Towns and Policy and Objective 3.1 that recommends the density ranges as set out in section 3.3 are applied within statutory development plans;
- RPO 3.1 of the RSES to deliver significant compact growth in Key Towns;
- CS OBJ 8 of the Leitrim County Development Plan to support the continued growth and development of the Key Town of Carrick-on-Shannon; and
- DENSITY POL 3 of the Leitrim County Development Plan to apply densities as set out in the relevant section 28 Guidelines,

the Office recommends that the Planning Authorities amend the wording of the proposed Objective HC 7 (under MA 10) to implement the relevant density ranges for Key Towns in table 3.5 of the Compact Settlements Guidelines.

2. Flood risk management

The Office welcomes the proposed material alterations to amend the zonings on undeveloped lands at Bóthair Saileach/ Páirc Meala from Existing Residential to Open Space and Amenity to reflect the flood risk vulnerability of these lands (MA 33).

Similarly, the Office supports the material alteration MA 34 to amend the zoning on undeveloped lands east of the R280 / Leitrim Road from Social and Community to Open Space and Amenity. However, it is noted that there are undeveloped lands to the west of the existing community building, immediately south of the amended zoning and to the east of the R280 that are located within Flood Zones A and B that are proposed to be zoned Social and Community.

Notwithstanding the current use of the subject lands as a car park, this zoning objective facilitates a number of uses considered highly vulnerable and vulnerable in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) (Flood Guidelines), and no Plan Making Justification Test (Justification Test) has been undertaken as required under the Flood Guidelines.

The Office does, however, note the wider provisions of the draft Joint Local Area Plan in respect of flood risk management, where Objective CA 11 in the draft Joint Local Area Plan protects the flood zones identified in map 3 from inappropriate development. Map 3 indicates the areas within Carrick-on-Shannon that are at risk of flooding and map 4 Constrained Land Use Zoning Map indicates the extents of Flood Zones A and B, both of which apply to the subject lands. Furthermore, Objective CA 12 in the draft Joint Local Area Plan is to manage flood risk in Carrick-on-Shannon in conjunction with the Office of the Public Works (OPW).

In the interests of clarity, the Planning Authorities should ensure that this policy framework is clearly identified as relevant to the subject lands to ensure that vulnerable and highly vulnerable uses are not facilitated on lands at risk of flooding.

The Land Use Zoning Objectives Table (table 9.1) sets out the objective for Constrained Land Use which is 'to ensure the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk areas designated as Constrained Land Use. However, there is no reference to map 4 Constrained Land Use Zoning Map within table 9.1. Similarly, map 1 Land Use Zoning Map should be read in conjunction with map 4 as above. In accordance with the Flood Guidelines, highly vulnerable development, (including residential units which are 'open for consideration' on lands zoned Social and Community), would generally be considered inappropriate on lands zoned Flood Zones A and B.

In relation to MA 32, it is noted that a small part of the subject lands to the north east are located within Flood Zone B. No Justification Test has been undertaken with respect to these lands. The proposed Industrial and Enterprise zoning objective facilitates highly vulnerable uses including retail, commercial, light and heavy industry. The Flood Guidelines state that such uses would generally be inappropriate in Flood Zone B. The Office will, therefore, be recommending that a modification to MA 32 to omit the north eastern part of the subject lands that are located within Flood Zone B.

In relation to MA 36, where the proposal is to change the zoning from Open Space and Amenity to Agriculture, it is noted that single residential units would be 'open for consideration' on lands zoned Agriculture while they would not be acceptable on lands zoned Open Space and Amenity. The subject lands are located within Flood Zones A and B. In the case of Flood Zone A and in accordance with the Flood Guidelines, development should be avoided and/ or only considered in exceptional circumstances, such as in city and town centres, or in the case of essential infrastructure that cannot be located elsewhere. The subject lands could not be categorised as exceptional having regard to the above. It is, therefore, not considered appropriate to make the Joint Local Area Plan with MA 36 which facilitates highly vulnerable residential use in Flood Zone A.

MA Recommendation 2 – flood risk management

Having regard to flood risk management, and in particular to:

- RPO 3.10 of the RSES for the NWRA which requires the implementation of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) (Flood Guidelines), and Circular PL02/2014;
- Policy FRM POL 1 of the Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029 to avoid development in areas where flood risk has been identified; and
- the Flood Guidelines,

the Office recommends that the Planning Authorities:

- (i) make a minor modification to MA 34 to:
 - (a) include a reference to map 4 Constrained Land Use Zoning Map in table 9.1 Land Use Zoning Objectives as it relates to Constrained Land Use and
 - (b) include a note on map 1 Land Use Zoning Map to state that map 1 must be read in conjunction with map 4 Constrained Land Use Zoning Map;
- (ii) modify MA 32 to omit the north eastern part of the subject lands that are located within Flood Zone B; and
- (iii) make the Joint Local Area Plan without MA 36 which facilitates highly vulnerable residential use in Flood Zones A and B.

While the Office welcomes MA 14 which supports the OPW in delivering the Carrick-on-Shannon flood relief scheme, it is considered appropriate to include additional wording as part of the proposed Objective CA 15 in the Joint Local Area Plan to ensure that development proposals support and do not impede or prevent the progression of the scheme.

MA Observation 1 – flood risk management

Having regard to flood risk management, the Planning Authorities are advised to make a minor modification to MA 14 to add additional text to the proposed Objective CA 15 of the Joint Local Area Plan to read as follows:

‘...and ensure that development proposals support and do not impede or prevent the progression of this scheme’.

3. National roads

It is noted that the N4 project is currently at Phase 3 Design and Environmental Evaluation stage, the purpose of which is to develop the design of the Preferred Transport Solution and undertake an environmental evaluation of the design to a level sufficient to determine land take requirements and to progress the project through the statutory process.

The Office notes and welcomes the identification of key themes reflected in the Transport Vision for the N4 Corridor as set out in section 6.3 of the draft Joint Local Area Plan, including active travel and public transport. In the interests of clarity, and to ensure that these themes are fully recognised in the design and implementation of the N24, the Office advises that the themes should be clearly reflected in the text of Objective MT 4 in the Joint Local Area Plan. Reference should also be made to the proposed urban relief road that would connect the Leitrim Road to the Castlecarra Road.

MA Observation 2 – national roads

The Planning Authorities are advised to make minor modifications to MA 16 to:

- (i) include a reference to Objective MT 4 in the Carrick-On-Shannon Joint Local Area Plan 2025 – 2031 (the Joint Local Area Plan) against the

Proposed Route Corridor on both map 1 Land Use Zoning Map and map 4 Constrained Land Use Zoning Map; and

- (ii) amend the wording of Objective MT 4 in the Joint Local Area Plan to include the themes that are identified in the diagram in section 6.3 of the Joint Local Area Plan and to reference the new urban relief road that would connect the Leitrim Road to the Castlecarra Road.

4. Active travel

MA 19 proposes the inclusion of a new objective in relation to the provision of a Park and Ride facility specifically at the Carrick Campus Business Park. The subject lands are proposed to be zoned Open Space and Amenity where ‘infrastructure and utilities’ are open for consideration.

While the Office welcomes the consideration of Park and Ride facilities, detailed consideration should be given to the most appropriate site for such a facility including the vicinity of the rail station and connectivity to other sustainable and public transport facilities. As such, the Office advises that the Planning Authorities amend the wording of MA 19 to broaden the search area for a Park and Ride facility for Carrick-on-Shannon and to consult with Irish Rail and the National Transport Authority.

MA Observation 3 – Park and Ride facility

The Planning Authorities are advised to make a minor modification to MA 19 which would broaden the search area in order to determine the optimal location for a Park and Ride facility, in consultation with both the National Transport Authority and Irish Rail.

5. Other matters

The Planning Authorities are reminded to exclude the reference to the Land Use Objectives Map (MA 16 refers) and to instead include a reference to both map 1 Land Use Zoning Map and map 4 Constrained Land Use Zoning Map.

Summary

The Office requests that the Planning Authorities address the recommendations and observations outlined above. As you are aware, the report of the CE of your Planning Authorities prepared for the elected members under section 20 of the Act must summarise these recommendations and the manner in which they will be addressed.

At the end of the process, your Planning Authorities are required to notify this Office within **five working days** of the making of the Joint Local Area Plan under section 31AO(5) of the Act. Where your Planning Authorities decide not to comply with the recommendations of the Office, or otherwise make the Joint Local Area Plan in such a manner as to be inconsistent with the recommendations of the Office, the CE must, in the notice letter, inform the Office accordingly and state the reasons for the decision of the Planning Authorities.

The Office will then consider the response of the Planning Authorities in the Joint Local Area Plan, as made, to the recommendations made by the Office at draft and at material alterations stages, to determine whether a recommendation to the Minister is warranted.

Please feel free to contact the staff of the Office in the context of your Planning Authorities' responses to the above, which we would be happy to facilitate. Contact can be initiated through plans@opr.ie.

Is mise le meas,

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Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluations

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

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