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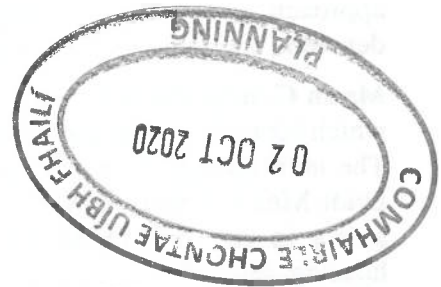
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Planning Department.
30th September 2020

Forward Planning Department,
Offaly County Council,
Aras an Chontae,
Charleville Road,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly



Re: Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for your recent consultation in relation to the Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. Meath County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan and associated Environmental Assessments. Please find hereunder the comments of Meath County Council in this regard.

By way of context, Meath County Council is currently preparing the Meath County Development Plan for the period 2021-2027. Noting that County Meath shares an administrative boundary with Offaly, the preparation of these plans simultaneously is an opportunity to apply policy alignment in cross-boundary areas, thereby achieving consistency and consensus in the application of Development Plan policies.

Meath County Council recognises and welcomes the broad range of issues which are outlined in the Draft Plan and is fully committed to contributing to the future sustainable development of the county, recognising the important role that Meath County Council and Offaly County Council play in the implementation of the National Planning Framework 2018 and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-31.

The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 sets out a framework to direct future growth of this region over the medium to long term and implement the strategic planning framework set out in the NPF.

As outlined in the Eastern and Midland RSES and the NPF, a distinction should be made between areas under urban influence and rural areas. MCC note the distinction made in the Draft Offaly CDP between 'Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence', Strong Rural Areas and 'Structurally Weak Rural Areas'. This approach is supported by Meath County Council

and is aligned with the Rural Development Pressure Map in the Draft Meath County Development Plan 2020-2026.

It is acknowledged that the rural housing needs policy proposed in the Draft Meath County Development Plan has incorporated additional individual requirements in order to fulfill the rural housing needs criteria. Given the proximity of County Meath to the Dublin region, this approach is necessary to respond to the pressures arising from urban generated housing demands and to protect the wider countryside.

Meath County Council also acknowledge the introduction of Rural Sráids into the Draft Plan which identifies small settlements as an alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside. The identification of Sráids is similar to the 'Rural Node' concept which is included in the Draft Meath County Development Plan. Meath County Council support the creation of this policy in the Draft Offaly CDP which establishes a generally consistent approach to rural housing demands.

Urban generated pressures and the decline of rural towns and villages are issues common to both counties. Meath County Council welcomes Offaly's focus on rural towns and villages to combat the decline of settlements and their rural hinterland.

In summation, we support the policies and objectives contained within the Draft Plan and we look forward to working with Offaly County Council and the other local authorities in the Midlands and Eastern Region to achieve the objectives and guiding principles set out in the RSES, including sustaining the economic growth and competitiveness of the Eastern Midlands region.

Cross Boundary Infrastructure Requirements

Since the establishment of a National Water Utility in 2014, local authorities engage with Irish Water in relation to cross boundary water and wastewater projects. Notwithstanding this, efficient and optimal outcomes can be best achieved through early engagement between local authorities regarding network capacities and issues. We request that Offaly County Council work collaboratively with Meath Co. Co. and Irish Water in exploring, planning and developing cross county boundary Water Services proposals.

Local Authority Collaboration

Recognising the importance of working collaboratively with adjoining Local Authorities, Meath County Council will be undertaking Joint Urban Area Plans (UAP), for the settlements of Drogheda and Maynooth with Louth and Kildare County Council's respectively. In this regard, we wish to emphasise our willingness to engage with Offaly County Council on cross boundary projects that hold potential to further the economic growth and competitiveness of the region.



Conclusion

Meath County Council respectfully requests that the points outlined above are considered in the finalisation of the Offaly County Development Plan. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require clarification or any further information on the issues raised in this submission.

Yours Sincerely,

Alan Russell

Alan Russell

A/Senior Executive Planner

Meath County Council



