

Birr 20:20 vision clg welcomes the opportunity to comment on the County Offaly Draft Development Plan 2021 - 2027 and applauds the thoroughness with which the common theme of care for the natural, the human and the built environments is woven into all the sections of the draft Report in ways which demonstrate the inter-dependence of each and all component parts.

**Maximum Flexibility** Birr 20:20 recognises that the preparation for the drafting of this report was undertaken in 2019 before the Coronavirus was experienced. By autumn 2020 it has become significantly clear that the virus is not simply a passing phenomenon. It has also become clear that the economic and social, the personal and the community, the physical and mental consequences of the virus and the efforts to minimise its impact will be far-reaching and are not as yet predictable with any accuracy or certainty. In these circumstances Birr 20:20 would forcefully recommend that before final decisions are taken about the plan it should be 'cold-read' in order to ensure that maximum flexibility is a central characteristic of the ordering of objectives, policies and implementation programmes so that the Council and its Officers, community development organisations, public and private companies, corporate and private bodies and individuals can responding with the maximum possibility of being successful whenever opportunity arises (see: Offaly County Council Draft Development Plan 2021/27 Chapter 12 Land Use Zoning Objectives in general and 12.7 in particular).

**Traveller Specific Accommodation** Birr 20:20 recognises that the provision of Traveller Specific Accommodation is one of the significantly more difficult objectives that every Council has to achieve. At the same time Birr 20:20 recognises that with funding being available nationally specifically for Traveller Specific Accommodation there should be a clear incentive to avail of that funding in order to reduce the demand for homes in favour of the Settled Community. In that circumstance Birr 20:20 recommends that the Draft County Development Plan be used as an opportunity to make provision formally for Traveller Specific Accommodation within each Municipal District (see: Offaly County Council Draft Development Plan 2021/27 Housing Strategy and HND Section 2.3).

**Biodiversity** Birr 20:20 welcomes the recognition in the Draft County Development Plan of the need to promote biodiversity as a feature of Environmental Sustainability. As a supporting partner of Birr Tidy Towns Birr 20:20 recommends most strongly that the Draft Development Plan should commit to evolving a weed control plan for the County that eliminates the use of toxic chemicals for weed control as soon as possible and most certainly within the lifetime of the Plan. As a companion recommendation Birr 20:20 proposes that a more restrictive definition of what and where is a weed so that the job of weed control becomes a positive contributor to the exercise of pursuing biodiversity.