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28th January, 2020

A Chara,

Proposed Variation No. 3 to the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012-2018 (incorporating the Carlow Town Development Plan 2012-2018)
SRA REF. NO. 19/009

Further to your correspondence received 18th December, 2019, the Southern Regional Assembly sets out below its observations on Proposed Variation No. 3 to the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012-2018 (incorporating the Carlow Town Development Plan 2012-2018), in accordance with Section 27(c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

1.0 Policy and legislative context for Observations of the Southern Regional Assembly

The proposed variation has been reviewed in relation to the South-East Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022 and relevant national policy.

The observations of the Regional Assembly are issued in accordance with the provisions of Section 27 (c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) on the role of a regional assembly in the variation of a development plan.

It should be noted that the Regional Planning Guidelines remain in force until 31st January 2020, which is the date when the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* for the Southern Region will become effective.

2.0 Purpose of Proposed Variation No. 3 to the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012-2018 (incorporating the Carlow Town Development Plan 2012-2018)

The proposed Variation consists of the following:-

- (a) Amend land use zoning of c.12ha of land on O'Brien Road from "industrial" to "enterprise and employment"
- (b) Incorporate provisions of the urban regeneration and Housing act 2015

(c) Amend policy ENVP 50 to reference recently adopted documents to address climate change adaptation and mitigation at a national and local level

In relation to part (a), the stated purpose of the proposed variation is to provide for the appropriate expansion of enterprise and employment lands providing a broader range of uses permissible on this strategic brownfield opportunity site within Carlow Town which is in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

In relation to part (b), the stated purpose of the proposed variation is to include a specific objective to support the provisions of the Vacant Site Levy and to clarify the land use zonings for the application of the Vacant Site Levy. This is in order to give full effect to the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 regarding the Vacant Site Levy and urban renewal and regeneration into the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area (JSP) incorporating the Carlow Town Development Plan 2012-2018 (as extended) by, inter alia, including new policies / objectives for the development and renewal of designated residential and regeneration lands for the purposes of the levy that will facilitate achieving a compact and sustainable urban settlement.

In relation to part (c), the stated purpose of the proposed variation is to reference recently adopted documents to address Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation at a National and Local Level.

3.0 Consistency with the SE RPGs 2010-2022 & National Policy

In relation to part (a), the proposed variation is consistent, as far as practicable, with the Guiding Principles set out at Section 4.1, and specifically for the development of Strategic Employment Locations in County Towns.

In relation to part (b), the proposed variation is consistent as far as practicable, with the Strategic Goal B5 at Section 3.2 for 'Promoting Strategies to prioritise urban regeneration in order to improve and revitalise cities, towns and neighbourhoods and support local economies' and Guiding Principles Section 4.1, in respect of the targeted urban regeneration of sites.

In relation to part (c), the proposed variation is consistent as far as practicable, with the Strategic Goal D14 at Section 3.2 – 'supporting implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy and regional and local climate change strategies

Proposed Variation No 3 in the Context of Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework (NPF)

The proposed variation, which will provide for a broader range of uses on a brownfield site and support the implementation of the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 is consistent with the implementation of the National Policy Objectives contained in the National Planning Framework including:-

- NPO 6 to 'Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area'.
- National Policy Objective 35 to 'Increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights'.

The proposed variation will also amend policy ENVP 50 to reference updated climate policy documents and will therefore be consistent with National Policy Objective 54 – ‘to reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions’.

RSES for the Southern Region

Although the RSES for the Southern Region does not become effective until 31st January, 2020, the Regional Assembly note that proposed Variation No 3 would be consistent, as far as practicable, with RSES Regional Planning Objective No.14 – to support the development of Carlow as a Key Town.

It is also considered that the proposed variation would be consistent, as far as practicable, with key RSES Regional Planning Objectives including:

- RPO 11 Key Towns
- RPO 34 Regeneration, Brownfield and Infill Development
- RPO 37 Active Land Management
- RPO 62 Locations for Employment Development
- RPO 87 Low Carbon Energy Future 2015 – 2030
- RPO 88 National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework

4.0 Environmental Assessments

Strategic Environmental Assessment

An SEA Screening carried out to assess the environmental implications of proposed variation has examined the proposed variation, including against relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A ‘Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment’ of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004), as amended by the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011).

The SEA Screening concluded that ‘Taking into account the measures that have already been integrated into the Plan that contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development, it is identified that all potential effects arising from proposed changes are either present already and would be further contributed towards (positive) or would be mitigated by measures that have been already integrated into the existing Plan so as not to be significant (residual adverse)’.

The SEA Screening Determination concludes that ‘Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required to be undertaken on the proposed variation’.

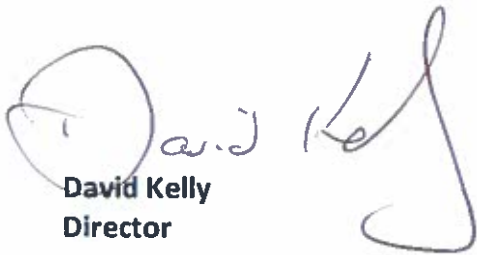
Habitats Directive Assessment

A Habitats Directive (Appropriate Assessment) Screening was undertaken in respect of the proposed variation. The Regional Assembly notes the conclusion of the Appropriate Assessment Screening that ‘It is concluded the proposed Variation 3 will not give rise to any effect on the ecological integrity of any European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, etc.... Consequently, a Stage 2 – AA is not required for the proposed variation.’

5.0 Conclusion

The Regional Assembly considers that Proposed Variation No. 3 to the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012-2018 (incorporating the Carlow Town Development Plan 2012-2018) will support the stated purposes for parts a, b and c to provide for opportunities for enterprise and employment development on brownfield land in the town, enable implementation of the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015* in relation to the Vacant Site Levy and provide for updated references to national climate policy and the adopted County Carlow Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024. The proposed variation would, therefore, be consistent, as far as is practicable, with the South-East Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022.

Mise le meas,



David Kelly
Director