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Forward Planning,
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20th January, 2021

**RE: Proposed Material Amendments to the Draft Westmeath CDP 2021-2027
(DWMCDP)**

A Chara,

I refer to your letter of notification dated 15th December 2020, inviting submissions to the proposed Material Amendments to the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027. The Northern and Western Regional Assembly appreciate the opportunity given to make observations on the proposed Material Amendments to the Draft Development Plan.

There are over 170 material amendments proposed and the majority of these are relatively minor and/or have little significant direct impact to this region. The submission follows in sequence the proposed amendments as identified in the published documentation, identifying only those on which we have particular comments. The remainder are supported in principle and require no further comment or clarification.

PMA CH 2.1: The NWRA request that in, light of the national importance of Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre, reference is made to the importance of the N61 as a strategically important part of the national road network linking the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone and Sligo (this formed part of NWRA submission at Draft Stage).

PMA CH 2.4: The NWRA consider this to accord with it's submission to the Draft Plan and its inclusion is welcome.

PMA CH 2.9: The NWRA suggests that as part of the process a prioritised schedule of deliverables would result and that the time frame for delivery would be included in the interests of monitoring and implementation.

PMA CH 2.10: The NWRA requests that Athlone, as a Regional Growth Centre, be treated in a more holistic manner and that population figures pertaining to the whole of this settlement be given, maybe as a separate row in the table 2.17. We would also ask that relevant figures in the RSES, for the western part of Athlone, be referenced in the document in order to better inform stakeholders and to facilitate collaboration. The NWRA is concerned that Athlone may lose opportunity to benefit from its status as a regional growth centre due to the uncertainty surrounding the timeframes for the delivery of a joint UAP and the governance structures pertaining to it.

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PMA CH 3.2: The NWRA supports the proposal and in the interests of clarity suggests the data on other types of residential development be recorded in a manner similar to rural housing.

PMA CH 3.3: The NWRA fully supports this provision and suggest that in the interests of clarity guidance be given to stakeholders on how this requirement will apply to apartment blocks in terms of unit distribution.

PMA CH 4.3: The NWRA would encourage retention of the CPO contained in the Draft in order to foster sustainable development and inclusivity.

PMA CH 5.4: The NWRA supports the proposal to zone land, it requests that it be clarified in an amended CPO in the interest of fairness and transparency that no advantage will be bestowed on particular landowners.

PMA CH 7.4: The NWRA supports the practice of monitoring generally, the proposal above to propose monitoring of rural housing in the urban regeneration section of the plan is unusual and clarification could be given as to why this section is chosen. The comparative could also be given to all types of development not just housing. It would also be informative if targets were set for levels of development. The monitoring proposal should equally apply to development in urban areas unless there is a good reason for not doing so. In the definition of brownfield sites reference is made to 'other operations'. It would be informative if further elaboration and clarification was given on what those are.

PMA CH 9.1: The NWRA supports the proposal and suggests that criteria be added in the interests of transparency to describe what constitutes extraordinary and exceptional circumstances and how these accord with proper planning.

PMA CH 9.7: The NWRA supports this proposal and suggests that it would be useful for stakeholders if information is given on how it is proposed to implement this CPO in terms of resources and targets.

PMA CH9.9: The NWRA support this proposal and its RSES contains a regional policy objective to establish a regional forum to set out a framework for sustainable afforestation.

PMA CH 10.8: The NWRA would support such a proposal and suggests that a prioritisation and time schedule for delivery be included in the CDP.

PMA CH 10.12: The NWRA supports this proposed amendment and suggests that information/clarity be given on the extent and density of charging points being proposed.

PMA CH 10.38: The NWRA supports the proposal and suggests that clarity be give on whether the separation distances are measured from the turbine stanchion or from the tips of the blade.

PMA CH 10.42: The NWRA suggests that further locational information be given in relation to this proposal.



PMA CH 10.44: The NWRA supports the proposed amendment and suggests that clarification be given on which watercourses are included in terms of size, flow and location in order to better inform all stakeholders.

PMA CH 11.4: The NWRA supports the proposed amendment and suggests that clarification and information be included in the CDP to identify the policies and alternatives that will be examined and the timeframes for these surveys.

PMA CH 12.4: The NWRA supports the proposed amendment and a suggests that clarity be given in the CDP on what are special circumstances and details of the indemnification and who is to be indemnified.

PMA CH 13.4: The NWRA supports the proposed amendment and suggest that a schedule showing the marginal lands be included with the CDP and it may be of benefit to confirm that support for community projects will not be withheld should they not be located on marginal lands.

I hope that the above observations are of assistance in the consideration of the proposed Material Amendments and finalisation of the new County Development Plan in a manner that shall be of benefit to our communities. The Assembly look forward to further engagement with Westmeath County Council and if you have any queries in respect of the above observations then do not hesitate to revert.

Yours Sincerely

David Minton
Director

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