

Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Heritage Department,  
Planning and Integrated Development Directorate,  
Cork City Council,  
City Hall,  
Anglesea Street,  
Cork City,  
T12 T997.

12<sup>th</sup> May, 2026

**Re: Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 Proposed Variation No.3 NPF Implementation**

To whom it may concern,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 Proposed Variation No.3 NPF Implementation.

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. As the voice of business in Cork, Cork Chamber is committed to representing and progressing our members' interests and priorities.

Recent years have seen Cork transform into an independent economic engine and the driver of the economy in Munster. A city region that was, for a long time, viewed as a counterbalance to the capital has evolved through significant investment, unparalleled talent and an ambitious local ecosystem, driven by a vision of a thriving and prosperous region.

Ongoing growth and investment demonstrate the capacity of Cork businesses to be agile and resilient. Across all stakeholders, the ambition for Cork is evident. We share a vision for a progressive Cork region, characterised by a high quality of life, world-class educational and cultural institutions, seamless transport and active travel, and support for innovation that enables firms to grow and compete on a global scale, while also attracting and retaining talent and foreign direct investment.

At Cork Chamber, our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the UN SDGs, five of which have been identified as priority areas by the Chambers Ireland network. Cork Chamber has also recently been appointed an SDG Ambassador by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

Our advocacy is shaped by the views and priorities of our partners, and is informed by our continuous engagement with members, our Board, and key stakeholders in Cork city and county.

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the variation to the Cork City Development Plan. We strongly support strategic planning that both enables sustainable growth

and delivers environmental protection and regulatory compliance. A plan-led approach that acknowledges and responds to projected population growth in the coming decades is welcome as Cork has a pivotal opportunity for economic growth and we cannot risk undermining this growth through infrastructure deficiencies or shortfalls in appropriately zoned and serviced land.

This variation to the Development Plan must clearly and demonstrably align with the objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan (NDP). As outlined in Cork Chamber's previous submissions to both the NPF and NDP reviews, Cork is uniquely positioned to deliver compact, sustainable growth at scale. However, this potential will only be realised where national ambition is matched by local delivery.

Our **key asks** include:

- **Transport-oriented development:** Aligning the re-zoning of new lands with those areas around proposed new transport corridors, including the expanded Cork Commuter Rail network, the proposed Bus Connects corridors, the planned Luas Cork route, and the proposed new Cork Northern Distributor Multi-Modal Route. This would include lands west, east and north of the city with the potential for tens of thousands of new homes, all supported by high-quality transport infrastructure.
- **Prioritising serviced lands:** Lands which are already serviced or can be easily serviced with water, wastewater, transport and energy infrastructure will enable much quicker delivery of housing on the scale needed.
- **Aligning with service providers:** Work closely with Uisce Éireann, ESB Networks, EirGrid, TII and NTA to ensure that input from all key stakeholders is incorporated into strategies for the city and wider region to accelerate housing and economic growth.
- **Protect strategic lands:** In addition to a growing housing need, national strategies identify further economic development in Cork as a core priority and it is vital that we protect lands that will be needed to deliver this industry on a large scale. This includes a potential IDA Ireland Strategic Land Bank but also needs to take heed of future transport corridors, such as expansions on the Luas Cork route to new population centres or Cork Airport, and potential new roads or lands needed to widen existing corridors. A holistic approach to the growth of the region must be at the heart of all planning.
- **Social infrastructure:** Climate-adaptation infrastructure, including flood defences, and essential amenities in health, education and childcare all need to be delivered in conjunction with housing to ensure our city remains an attractive place to live and work.

Achieving these goals requires the delivery of housing at scale and the rezoning of 270ha of land for residential purposes will facilitate such development at scale. In Cork Chamber's quarterly economic trends surveys among our members, the lack of available housing is regularly identified as an issue in business growth and staff attraction. In our most recent trends, almost one-in-five businesses said housing is a barrier in their efforts to fill vacant positions, while the lack of available housing is also regularly identified as one of the top three threats to business growth.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Cork Chamber; Economic Trends](#)

Residential development must be accelerated and aligned with national growth targets, with a clear focus on delivery in locations that support compact growth and sustainable mobility. In this regard, the Chamber emphasises the importance of aligning population growth with the delivery of the Cork Area Commuter Rail Programme. The expansion and enhancement of the rail network is a critical enabler of transport-oriented development, and the Development Plan must prioritise the zoning and servicing of lands in proximity to existing and proposed rail stations to fully leverage this investment.

Similar steps must be taken with regards to future planned routes for Bus Connects and Luas Cork, and to ensure land that may be required to improve access to Cork Airport, the Port of Cork and key amenities such as hospitals and educational facilities is not over-developed, which could pose an issue for the expansion of these institutions in the future.

However, housing delivery cannot be considered in isolation. Infrastructure deficits continue to constrain growth and undermine confidence. There is an urgent need to ensure that critical enabling infrastructure is planned, funded, and delivered in parallel with or before development. This includes strategic investment in water and wastewater capacity, where existing limitations are already impacting development viability across key growth areas.

Cork Chamber recommends greater alignment of plans between Cork City Council and the delivery bodies behind this key infrastructure, including Uisce Éireann, EirGrid, and ESB Networks, as well as the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). Ensuring that delivery plans are fully aligned with the updated City Development Plan would minimise potential future challenges that could emerge in the coming decades.

The delivery of Luas Cork and its interaction with the suburban rail network, Bus Connects Cork and our active travel infrastructure will be critical in enabling the delivery of transport-oriented development in areas throughout and around the city, including areas like Blackpool, Mahon, Stoneview, and lands along the N40 on the south of the city.

The lands situated between Ballincollig and Cork city represent a significant opportunity and so, too, does the land located along the proposed route for the Northern Distributor Road. These lands need to be invested in and developed as part of the variation of the current Development Plan and in future plans too.

It is noted that the revised City Development Plan identifies strategic development lands in the west of the city. These lands are described as being “unlikely to be serviced during the lifetime of this development plan, but are identified as being strategic land, required beyond this Plan period to fulfil the City’s ambitions in achieving the growth targets for 2040”.

Identifying and zoning these lands now is a positive step in strengthening the pipeline for long-term development and future growth. We would also encourage the local authority to engage with the relevant agencies to accelerate servicing as these particular lands represent more than 40ha of well-located land that could return a substantial volume of residential development if these services were put in place. We would advocate engaging with the newly formed Housing Activation Office to identify and clear any potential roadblocks that could see these lands brought to more immediate use.

In addition to identifying new lands for expanding the city footprint and delivering new housing on a large scale, we must also not lose sight of the importance of our core city centre and the opportunities for brownfield development and in-fill housing in the existing urban centre. The long-term development of areas such as the docklands present a unique and exciting opportunity to expand Cork, but we must also use this as a chance to reinvigorate areas of our existing city that have not seen new developments in recent years.

The benefits of having a larger population living in the city will be felt by all stakeholders, supporting our retail and hospitality businesses and providing a form of passive-policing by those living in the city. Cork Chamber shares Cork City Council's goals for further urban development and evolution in this regard and we hope to see it remain as a core part of this and future strategies. We simply cannot focus entirely on the development of new urban hubs at the expense of our existing historic city core.

In parallel with the implementation of this City Development Plan variation, the strategic road network requires targeted and sustained investment and we would encourage Cork City Council to engage closely with all relevant stakeholders, including NTA and TII, in preparing a strategy to ensure the needs of a growing population are catered for. While the Chamber strongly supports the transition towards sustainable transport, road infrastructure will continue to play a vital role in supporting regional connectivity and economic activity. Improved access from West Cork, East Cork and North Cork to Cork City is essential to support labour market accessibility, reduce congestion, and enable balanced regional development. Failure to address these constraints will limit the effectiveness of other infrastructure investments and inhibit growth.

This could include reserving land for potential future rail and light rail development or the development of a range of park and ride services, including segregated bus lanes, to commercial hubs in and around the city and metropolitan area. Without these essential services, a large volume of the existing and new population will remain reliant on cars, undermining our climate goals and resulting in persistent and worsening congestion on our road network.

Cork Chamber continues to emphasise the importance of integrated land use and infrastructure planning. The sequencing of development must be aligned with infrastructure capacity, with a clear focus on ensuring that zoned and serviced land is available and development ready.

Sustainability remains a core principle underpinning the Chamber's policy position. As an SDG Ambassador, Cork Chamber supports the integration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals across all aspects of planning policy. Compact growth, investment in public transport, renewable energy deployment, and the protection of environmental assets must remain central to the Development Plan. However, sustainability objectives must be matched by delivery mechanisms that enable, rather than delay, critical infrastructure and housing provision.

Key social infrastructure, including healthcare and education facilities, sports facilities and climate-adaptation schemes, such as flood defences, must be delivered in a timely manner to cater to the growing population to ensure our towns and villages are viable places for people to live and work.

Additionally, it is vital to ring-fence land for future commercial and infrastructural development to sustain the economic growth of the entire region, as mapped out in national policy. Housing is

a pressing need but any comprehensive policy for the City – and entire southern region – must also recognise the need for future delivery in terms of strategic landbanks for industry, green energy and other commercial developments in coordination with IDA Ireland, and securing land for future transport projects.

National policy, including the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan, identifies Cork as a complementary location to Dublin for economic growth. With a population growth of 50% expected in the metropolitan area by 2040, it is essential that the FDI base in the region continues to expand to retain and attract this population.

A holistic approach to planning for current and future developments is vital to ensure Cork can reach the population and commercial objectives established in national policy and become an economic driver as envisioned.

Cork is now powering the Munster economy and, as consistently highlighted in Cork Chamber's budget submissions and national policy engagements, Cork's ability to fulfil its role as a counterbalance to Dublin and a driver of national growth is contingent on the pace of delivery. The policy framework is well established; the challenge now is implementation and it is vital that all stakeholders collaborate to ensure this happens.

In this context, Cork Chamber stresses that the success of this Development Plan variation will ultimately be measured not by policy intent, but by outcomes. There is a clear and immediate need to accelerate the delivery of housing and enabling infrastructure. This requires stronger alignment between national and local investment, streamlined processes, and a sustained focus on execution.

Without a step change in delivery, the objectives of the NPF and NDP will not be realised in Cork. With it, Cork can deliver compact, sustainable growth at scale, strengthening regional resilience and contributing meaningfully to national economic performance.

Cork Chamber urges that this review of the Development Plan places delivery at its core, ensuring that ambition is matched by action. With the launch of the new County and City Development Plan variations in the coming months, both councils should work together with key stakeholders, including TII, the NTA, and the Cork Development Forum, to update the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS).

We look forward to continued engagement with Cork City Council and other stakeholders on the variation of the City Development Plan and welcome the opportunity to engage in further collaboration with the council and other relevant stakeholders to ensure the key aims of this strategy are achieved in a timely manner.

Yours sincerely,



Conor Healy

CEO