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Cork County Council,  
Floor 13,  
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Cork.

April 2, 2026

**Re: Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 Proposed Variation No.1 NPF Implementation**

To whom it may concern,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 Proposed Variation No.1 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 our members' interests, priorities and challenges.

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 supports for innovation that enable firms to grow and compete on a global scale, while also attracting 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 County 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.

Achieving these goals requires the delivery of housing 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.

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 represents a critical enabler of transit-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.

To this end, the identification of areas like Midleton, Cobh, Carrigwohill, Little Island and Monard as key population growth areas is a logical one and we encourage further planning to ensure these communities are supported with the appropriate services required to support increased populations.

However, housing delivery cannot be considered in isolation. Persistent 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 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 County Council and the delivery bodies behind this key infrastructure, including Uisce Éireann, EirGrid, and ESB Networks. Ensuring that delivery plans are fully aligned with the updated County Development Plan would minimise potential future challenges that could emerge in the coming decades.

In parallel with the implementation of this County Development Plan variation, the strategic road network requires targeted and sustained investment and we would encourage Cork County 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.

Challenges already exist on the access roads to the west of the city, with large volumes of traffic causing congestion on roads daily. While Cork Chamber welcomes plans for improved and expanded rail infrastructure in the north and east of the county, it is noted that no such plans exist to support transport from the west of the county. It is essential that the land needed to facilitate projects such as the widening of the N27 and the development of the Inishannon bypass are secured for future development rather than attempting to workaroud these in a few years when the traffic volumes worsen with a larger population and minimal public transport options.

The delivery of rail infrastructure is not in the remit of Cork County Council and the All-Island Strategic Rail Review does not provide for future rail spurs to the likes of Kinsale or Bandon, but Cork Chamber would encourage the council to engage with all transport stakeholders, including Irish Rail, Bus Éireann, the National Transport Authority and Transport Infrastructure Ireland, to identify potential solutions to ensure the expanded populations of these towns are not wholly reliant on private car transport.

This could include reserving land for potential future 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 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 County – 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.

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.

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.

We look forward to continued engagement with Cork County Council and other stakeholders on the variation of the County 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CH', is positioned above the name 'Conor Healy'.

Conor Healy

CEO