

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Development Plan](#)
Subject: Submission to Variation No.1 to the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029
Date: Tuesday 7 April 2026 16:50:41
Attachments: [20260407 Submission to Variation 1.pdf](#)

Hi,

Please find attached the Department of Education Youth's submission to Variation No 1.
Please acknowledge receipt of this submission.

Regards
Mairead

Mairead Garry

Statutory Plans
Forward Planning & Site Acquisition Section

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co Offaly R35 Y2N5

[REDACTED]



Planning Department,
Clare County Council,
New Road,
Ennis,
Co Clare

07 April 2026

Proposed Variation No. 1 to Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029

Dear Sir/Madam

I refer to the above. The Department of Education and Youth wish to make the following submission to proposed Variation 1 to Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029. The department has considered the above document and notes that the purpose of the proposed variation is to align the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 with the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirement and to incorporate 'Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy' and 'Ennis Local Transport Plan' into the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

In the context of future population trends and their potential impact on school place requirements, the department notes that this Variation refers to the population growth identified for County Clare in the recent Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029. The department notes that the population scenario envisaged in Clare overall is the NPF target of 137,000 by 2031. The department made its submissions to the CDP on the basis of the potential population growth within the county between 2023 and 2031.

In terms of future population growth in County Clare as identified in this variation, the department notes that Table 3.6 Core Strategy has been amended to include Newly identified Residential Land of 104.10 ha and Newly identified Long Term Strategic and Sustainable Development Sites of 106.30 ha. The table also includes a new Housing Unit Target from Q1 2026 to end Q1 2029 of 4,805 units and a Housing Unit Target for the post CDP period up to end of 2034 of 8,496 units.

Allowing for the Census 2022 average of 2.67 persons per household in County Clare, these proposed 13,301 units between 2026 and 2034 could see a population growth of over 35,500 people within the county. When this figure is added to the Census 2022 population figure of 127,938, the projected population of County Clare could exceed 160,000 by the end of 2034.

The department notes Table 3.2 NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements, for Clare County Council which states the New Annual Housing Growth Requirement to 2034 is 985 units per annum. Allowing for the Census 2022 average of 2.67 persons per household in County Clare, this proposed annual target of 985 units between 2026 and 2034 could see a population increase of over 26,000 people within the county if that development was to materialize.



The population increase identified in both scenarios above will have an impact on the demand for school places and if the projected population growth materialises, it will result in substantial additional requirements for school place provision in County Clare and could place significant pressure on existing schools to cater for the extra school place requirement.

In terms of future school place provision, the department notes the following settlements identified in Table 3.6 Core Strategy of the Variation and would like to make the following observations on them. The department's preference would be to expand existing facilities (if possible) should there be a requirement for additional school places resulting from planned population increases. Therefore, the department requests the Planning Authority to examine the potential of protecting a land buffer around each school to enable them expand further if required.

Ennis

There are 13 schools (seven primary, four post-primary and two special education schools) located in Ennis.

The department notes that as per Table 3.6 Core Strategy there is a target of an additional 5,426 residential units between 2026 and 2034.

In respect of primary provision, the projected growth figures could see a significant increase in primary school place demand and at least one, possibly two additional primary schools may be required. The projected growth figures could see an increase in post-primary school place demand but it is currently expected that this extra requirement could be accommodated by the planned expansion of existing facilities.

The department will engage further with the Council in relation to future school place requirements for this settlement area arising from this variation.

Shannon

There are 8 schools (six primary and two post-primary schools) located in Shannon.

The department notes that as per Table 3.6 Core Strategy there is a target of an additional 1,567 residential units between 2026 and 2034.

These projected figures could see a substantial increase in primary school place demand, which may require site reservations for school facilities and/or potentially could be met by the possible expansion of the existing facilities, if required. These figures could see an increase in post-primary school place demand which potentially could be met by the possible expansion of the existing facilities, if required.

The department will engage further with the Council in relation to future school place requirements for this settlement area.



Sixmilebridge

There is one primary located in Sixmilebridge.

The department notes that as per Table 3.6 Core Strategy there is a target of an additional 630 residential units between 2026 and 2034.

In respect of primary provision, the projected growth figures could see a potential projected increase in school place requirements which could be met by expansion of the existing facilities, if required.

Kilrush/Cappa

There are 3 schools (two primary and one post-primary school) located in Kilrush.

The department notes that as per Table 3.6 Core Strategy there is a target of an additional 701 residential units between 2026 and 2034

In respect of primary provision, the projected growth figures could see a potential projected increase in school place requirements which could be met by expansion of the existing facilities, if required.

These figures could see an increase in post-primary school place demand which potentially could be met by the possible expansion of the existing facilities, if required.

Lisdoonvarna

There are 2 schools (one primary and one post-primary school) located in Lisdoonvarna.

The department notes that as per Table 3.6 Core Strategy there is a target of an additional 180 residential units. between 2026 and 2034

In respect of primary provision, the projected growth figures could see a potential projected increase in school place requirements which could be met by expansion of the existing facilities, if required.

These figures could see an increase in post-primary school place demand which potentially could be met by the possible expansion of the existing facilities, if required.

The department notes that West Clare Municipal District Settlement Plans Lisdoonvarna map contains a site that is zoned Community (C5). This is the site for the new school. There is limited access to this site and the department requests that an Objective is included to allow alternative access to this site.

In terms of the identification of future school place requirements that necessitates the need for the reservation and acquisitions of sites for future new schools or the requirement of new sites to facilitate the relocation of existing schools, the department would like to highlight the following points.



It is generally considered that schools are enabling infrastructure for housing and as such, schools should be positioned in the heart of new and expanding sustainable communities, allowing for the maximum benefit to the community inside and outside school hours. Further to this, other community facilities and amenities should also be positioned close to school facilities to allow for all community facilities be complimentary to each other for the benefit of the whole community. It is the department's request that the site identified fits the criteria above and would be grateful if the Council could confirm if this is the case.

Further to this, all enabling infrastructure required to develop and operate school facilities should be provided in advance of the need for such schools. This infrastructure includes road, electricity, water infrastructure, sustainable transport links, active travel networks, road safety measures and safe routes to school facilities. It should be noted that it is not within the remit of the Department of Education and Youth to develop or fund this enabling infrastructure.

In relation to other aspects of the plan, the department notes that the Ennis Local Transport Plan has a number of Active Travel Schemes for Safe Routes to Schools. The department supports the development of sustainable travel links between schools and residential areas.

The department also anticipates that additional Special Education Needs (SEN) provision at both Primary and Post Primary level will be required in the future throughout the country and this may result in schools requiring additional accommodation or space to meet this growing need. On a point of information, the Department of Education and Youth engages closely with the National Council for Special Education in relation to the forward planning of new special classes and additional special school places. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE). This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

The department and the NCSE are working with schools and patrons to make increased provision for children with special education needs, both in special classes at mainstream schools and in special schools. At post primary level, all schools have been advised to plan for an average of 4 special classes per school. At primary level, the focus is on ensuring appropriate provision at all medium to large primary schools (8 mainstream classes or more) in the first instance. Most special classes are established in existing accommodation and where there is a further requirement within that accommodation, additional capacity can be catered for through the provision of extension facilities.

In recent years, the department has seen an increase in SEN school place requirement. Since 2019, 11 new special schools have been established, with five more due to be established for the 2025/26 school year. The continuing need for additional provision across the country, including in County Clare, is kept under constant review. In this



regard, the department will consult with the Council if and when additional special education needs accommodation or sites for future special schools are required within specific locations. In the context of this variation and being mindful of a substantial population growth that may arise from the various future planned housing developments within its environs, the department would welcome explicit support within the plan for the provision of school accommodation for children and young people with special educational needs.

In terms of assessing current and future capacity, the Department of Education and Youth has to be mindful of potential unforeseen circumstances such as the Ukrainian crisis, which have the ability to put undue pressure on school place provision and could necessitate reassessments of school place provision from time to time. The department will engage with the Council where the findings of an assessment require a review of existing or future school site provision within a specific location.

Finally, the department welcomes the continued engagement with the Council regarding the development of both new and existing schools, as appropriate, and emphasizes the critical importance of the ongoing work of the Council in ensuring sufficient land is zoned for this purpose. It would be beneficial for the department to have further engagement with the Council in relation to the potential new school sites that may be required as a result of this variation.

Yours sincerely,

Mairead Garry

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