

Draft Westmeath County **Development Plan** **2021 - 2027**

Appendix II SEA
Non Technical Summary

SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

APPENDIX II – NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

FOR

RELEVANT PROPOSED MATERIAL ALTERATIONS

TO THE

DRAFT WESTMEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

for: Westmeath County Council

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Section 1

Introduction and Terms of Reference

This is the Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report for relevant Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (hereafter referred to as 'the Plan'). The purpose of the Environmental Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the Proposed Material Alterations. The Environmental Report has been prepared as part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process for the Proposed Material Alterations.

The Proposed Material Alterations were screened for the need to undertake SEA. Certain Proposed Material Alterations were determined as requiring full SEA. The SEA Screening Determination accompanies the SEA Environmental Report and the Proposed Material Alterations document. Appendix III to the SEA Environmental Report comprises the SEA Screening Report that was prepared to inform the SEA Screening Determination.

This SEA Environmental Report provides the findings of the assessment and will be placed on public display alongside the Proposed Material Alterations. The Elected Members will be required to take account of this document, the Proposed Material Alterations and any submissions received on these after public display.

The SEA is being undertaken in order to comply with Section 12 of the Planning and Development Act, as amended.

What is SEA?

SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a proposed plan, or other strategic action, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic, social and other considerations.

Why is SEA needed? The Benefits

The SEA for the Draft Plan provided the planning authority's and the public's guide to what are generally the best areas for development in the County.

The SEA enables the planning authority to direct development towards robust, well-serviced and connected areas in the County – thereby facilitating the general avoidance of incompatible areas in the most sensitive, least well-serviced and least well-connected areas.

SEA provides greater to the public and to developers. Plans are more likely to be adopted without delays or challenges and planning applications are more likely to be granted permission. Environmental mitigation is more likely to cost less.

An overlay of environmental sensitivities in County Westmeath are shown on Figure 1.1. Sensitivities include designated ecological sites, the status of rivers and lakes, flood risk, cultural heritage and high amenity areas. The Plan generally directs development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on compact development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development.

Difficulties Encountered during the SEA process

No significant difficulties have been encountered during the undertaking of the assessment to date. There was limited water services information available for some settlements within the County however objectives requiring the provision of appropriate levels of water services alongside new development have been integrated into the Draft Plan.

What happens at the end of the process?

The SEA Environmental Report prepared for the Draft Plan will be finalised in advance of adoption of the Plan taking into account, among other things, the content of the SEA Environmental Report for the Proposed

Material Alterations to which this Non-Technical Summary relates. An SEA Statement will also be prepared that summarises, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan.

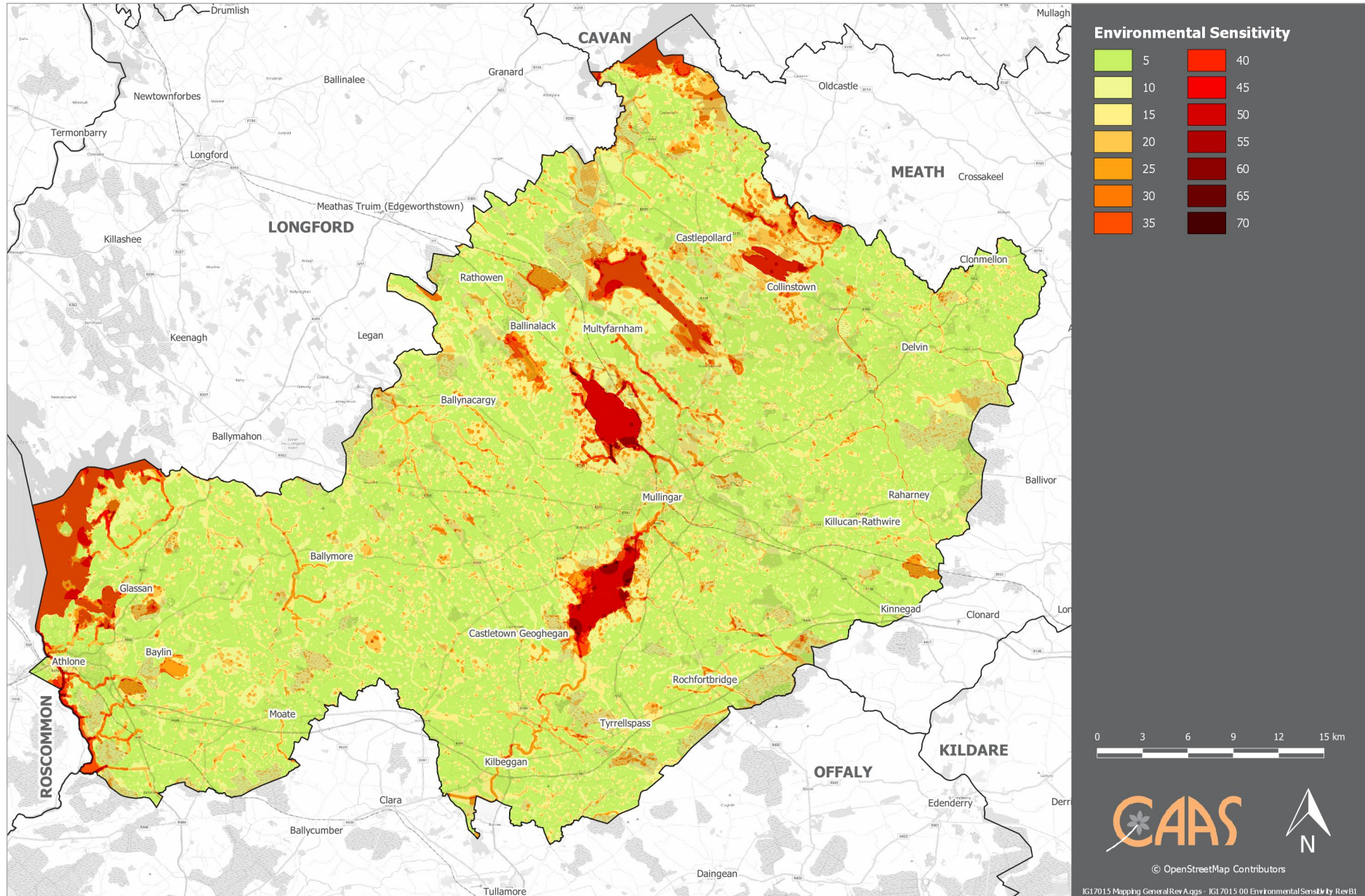


Figure 1.1 Overlay of Environmental Sensitivities in County Westmeath

Section 2 **The Draft Plan and associated Proposed Material Alterations**

2.1 Introduction

The Westmeath Draft County Development Plan provides an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Westmeath for six years. It sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and development of County Westmeath in terms of social, cultural, economic and physical development.

2.2 Content of the Draft Plan

The Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the Council's proposed policies and objectives for the development of the County over the Plan period. The Development Plan seeks to develop and improve, in a sustainable manner, the social, economic, environmental and cultural assets of the County.

The Draft Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). This Plan, once adopted, replaces the Westmeath Development Plan 2014 – 2020 and consists of a Written Statement including specific policy objectives supported with Maps and Appendices.

The Written Statement is divided into 16 separate chapters setting out the vision, strategic context, aims, goals and the settlement and core strategies for the County. The format of the plan is as follows:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Core Strategy
- Chapter 3 Housing Strategy
- Chapter 4 Sustainable Communities
- Chapter 5 Economy & Employment
- Chapter 6 Tourism
- Chapter 7 Urban Centres & Place-making
- Chapter 8 Settlement Plans
- Chapter 9 Rural Westmeath
- Chapter 10 Transport, Infrastructure & Energy
- Chapter 11 Climate Action
- Chapter 12 Natural Heritage & Green Infrastructure
- Chapter 13 Landscape & Lake Amenities
- Chapter 14 Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 15 Land Use Objectives
- Chapter 16 Development Management Standards

The Appendices include the Council's Housing Strategy, a statement detailing implementation of Ministerial Guidelines, County Westmeath Retail Strategy, List of Protected Views, List of Public Rights of Way, Trees & Woodland subject to Tree Preservation Orders, and Map Based Local Objectives (to be read in conjunction with the Development Plan Maps).

2.3 Draft Plan Strategic Vision and Aims

The Draft Plan's Strategic Vision is:

To create and facilitate sustainable competitive growth throughout the County that supports the health and wellbeing of the people of Westmeath, providing an attractive destination, as a place in which to live, work, invest, do business and visit, offering high quality employment and educational opportunities within sustainable communities whilst safeguarding the environmental, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of the County.

The Draft Plan's Strategic Aims are:

- **Sustainable Communities:** To develop and support vibrant sustainable communities in Westmeath where people can live, work and enjoy access to a wide range of community, health and educational facilities and amenities, suitable for all ages and needs, in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy.
- **Economic Development and Employment:** To promote and assist in Westmeath's economic development and encourage increased resilience in the County's enterprise, underpinned by talent and innovation, thereby ensuring that Westmeath is best placed to excel in the long-term delivery of sustainable jobs and an enhanced standard of living for all.
- **Tourism:** To provide for the continued expansion of the tourism sector, with a focus on creating strong visitor destination towns and sufficient high-quality visitor services and the continued development and enhancement of visitor attractions and activities to provide memorable, immersive visitor experiences, capitalising on our natural and cultural heritage assets, whilst safeguarding these resources for future generations.
- **Urban Centres & Placemaking:** To protect and enhance the unique identity and character of Westmeath's towns and villages and improve quality of life and wellbeing through the application of Healthy Placemaking, underpinned by good urban design, with the creation of attractive public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate positive social interaction.
- **Settlements:** To create a network of attractive, liveable towns and villages in the County with increased levels of population, employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity which support a high quality of life and well-being.
- **Rural:** To support the role of rural areas and the countryside in sustaining the rural economy and improved connectivity, broadband and rural economic development opportunities through the development of the agricultural and agri-food sector, agricultural related developments and enterprises, including diversification of the rural economy, forestry, energy production, tourism, recreation, mineral extraction and/other new and emerging rural based enterprises, all within the context of the sustainable management of land and resources, thereby increasing the competitiveness of the rural economy, which will sustain and strengthen rural communities.
- **Transport, Infrastructure and Energy:** To achieve a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with excellent connectivity within and to Westmeath by enhancing existing strategic transportation infrastructure in the County. To provide, improve and extend water, wastewater, surface water and flood alleviation services throughout the County and to prioritise the provision of water services infrastructure, to achieve improved environmental protection and to protect public health. To provide for the development of indigenous energy resources, with an emphasis on renewable energy supplies.
- **Climate Action:** To transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County, with an emphasis on reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change.
- **Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure:** Continue to protect and enhance the County's natural heritage and biodiversity and ensure that networks of green infrastructure are identified, created, protected and enhanced to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.
- **Landscape and Lake Amenities:** To improve the knowledge and understanding of the County's landscape and lakelands, and enhance the overall characteristics, qualities and diversity of landscape character, its sense of place and local distinctiveness in recognition of the amenity potential of the County.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Westmeath County Council recognises the importance of identifying, valuing and safeguarding our archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage for future generations and aims to do so by means of proper management, sensitive enhancement and/or appropriate development of this resource.

2.4 Preparation of the Draft Plan and Members' Amendments

The preparation of a pre-Draft Plan, for the consideration of Members in advance of public display was informed by the SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes.

Advice relating to Members' Motions to amend the pre-Draft Plan was provided to the Members for their consideration in advance of agreeing amendments.

Taking into account, inter alia, the advice on Motions and the SEA, AA and SFRA documentation for the Draft Plan, the Members agreed to amend the pre-Draft Plan by resolution.

An earlier version of this SEA Environmental Report was updated to take account of these amendments.

Information on Motions that were advised against, subsequently agreed upon as amendments to the pre-Draft Plan and which would be likely to have significant negative environmental effects is provided in the main SEA Environmental Report.

2.5 Proposed Material Alterations

The Proposed Material Alterations are outlined in detail in the accompanying Proposed Material Alteration document. The "Alteration References" provided in this report can be used to locate this detail in the accompanying Proposed Material Alteration document.

Alterations proposed include those relating to:

- Flood Risk Management provisions;
- Land Use Zoning;
- Alignment with Ministerial Guidelines;
- Development Management Standards;
- Preparation of lower-tier plans, including an Area Based Transport Plan;
- Housing provisions;
- Wind energy provisions;
- Terminology;
- Amenity Areas; and
- Context setting text for Plan provisions.

The Proposed Material Alterations were screened for the need to undertake SEA and certain Alterations were determined as requiring full SEA. The SEA Screening Determination accompanies this SEA Environmental Report and the Proposed Material Alterations document. Appendix III to this SEA Environmental Report comprises the SEA Screening Report that was prepared to inform the Determination. Proposed Material Alterations requiring SEA and consideration in this SEA Environmental Report¹ are as follows:

- Proposed Amendment CH 9.1
- Proposed Amendment CH 9.5
- Proposed Amendment CH 9.6
- Proposed Amendment BOM 1
- Proposed Amendment BOM 2
- Proposed Amendment BOM 3
- Proposed Amendment BOM 8
- Proposed Amendment BOM 13
- Proposed Amendment BOM 14
- Proposed Amendment BOM 16
- Proposed Amendment BOM 17
- Proposed Amendment BOM 23
- Proposed Amendment BOM 29
- Proposed Amendment BOM 30
- Proposed Amendment BOM 31
- Proposed Amendment BOM 34
- Proposed Amendment BOM 35
- Proposed Amendment BOM 36

2.6 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development

Far in advance of both the submission of the pre-Draft Plan to the Elected Members for approval and the placing of the Draft Plan (and associated environmental assessment documents) on public display, Westmeath County Council undertook various works in order to inform the preparation of the Plan. The findings of this strategic work have been integrated into the Plan and will contribute towards both environmental protection and management and sustainable development within the County.

Strategic work undertaken by the Council includes background work in relation to Plan Strategies and other provisions for a variety of sectors including:

- SEA;
- AA²;
- SFRA³;
- Protected Views;

¹ For detail on please refer to Proposed Material Alterations document.

² Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) is being undertaken alongside the preparation of the Draft Plan. The requirement for AA is provided under the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 1992/43/EEC). The AA assesses the effects of the Plan on European Sites designated for certain habitats and species. The emerging conclusion of the AA is that the Plan will not affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

³ Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is being undertaken alongside the preparation of the Draft Plan. SFRA is required by 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. The recommendations from the SFRA have generally been integrated into the Draft Plan.

- Housing;
- Core Strategy;
- Housing Strategy;
- Geological Audit; and
- Wetlands Survey.

The undertaking of this SEA process and associated AA and SFRA processes were part of this strategic work and contributed towards the integration of environmental considerations into individual Plan provisions as summarised in Section 6 of this report.

2.7 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

It is acknowledged that many of the major issues affecting the County's development are contingent on national policy and government funding.

The Draft Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate, sits within a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use planning, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management. The Plan must comply with relevant higher-level strategic actions and will, in turn, guide lower level strategic actions. These documents include plans and programmes such as those described under Section 3, Section 4 and Section 6 of this summary. These documents have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out Ireland's planning policy direction for the next 22 years. The NPF is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The RSES for the Eastern & Midlands Region sets out objectives for land use planning, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been subject to environmental assessment and must be implemented through the County Development Plan. As required by the Planning and Development Act, the Draft County Development Plan is consistent with and conforms with national and regional policies, plans and programmes, including the NPF and the RSES for the Eastern & Midlands Region. The County Development Plan may, in turn, guide lower level strategic actions, such as the Athlone and Mullingar Local Area Plans that will be subject to lower-tier environmental assessments.

In order to be realised, projects included in the County Development Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier AA, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

Section 3

The Environmental Baseline

3.1 Introduction

The summary of the environmental baseline of the area to which the Plan relates is described in this section. This baseline together with the Strategic Environmental Objectives, which are identified in Section 3.11, is used in order to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Draft Plan and in order to determine appropriate monitoring measures.

3.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Draft Plan and Proposed Material Alterations

In the absence of a new Plan it is uncertain how permission for new development would be applied for and considered.

The 2014-2020 Plan has contributed towards environmental protection within County Westmeath. If the 2014-2020 Plan was to expire and not be replaced by the 2021-2027 Plan, this would result in a deterioration of the County's planning and environmental protection framework. Although higher level environmental protection objectives – such as those of various EU Directives and transposing Irish Regulations – would still apply, the deterioration of this framework would mean that new development would be less coordinated and controlled. Such development could result in an increase in the occurrence of adverse effects on all environmental components, especially those arising cumulatively. Cumulative effects occur as a result of the addition of many small impacts to create one larger, more significant, impact.

Such adverse effects could include:

- Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:
 - Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;
 - Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and
 - Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.
- Potential adverse effects on human health arising from flood events.
- Potential interactions on human health if effects arising from environmental vectors.
- Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands.
- Potential for riverbank erosion.
- Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology.
- Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.
- Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Increases in waste levels.
- Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.
- Interactions between agricultural waste and soil, water, biodiversity and human health – including as a result of emissions of ammonia from agricultural activities (e.g. manure handling, storage and spreading) and the production of secondary inorganic particulate matter.
- Potential conflict between development under the Plan and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives.
- Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality.
- Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors.
- Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.
- Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.
- Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.

3.3 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

Ecologically rich areas in Westmeath include peatlands, lakes, canals, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, eskers and hedgerows. These habitats support a variety of species and ecosystems that contribute to the unique biodiversity of Westmeath.

Designated sites within the Plan area include Special Areas of Conservation⁴ (SACs) and Special Protection Areas⁵ (SPAs). These are mapped on **Figure 3.1**. There are number of SACs designated within and adjacent to the Plan area including: River Shannon Callows SAC, Lough Ree SAC, White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC, River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs SAC. There are number of SPAs designated within and adjacent to the Plan area including: Glen Lough SPA, Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA, Lough Sheelin SPA, Garriskil Bog SPA and Lough Owel SPA.

Other ecological designations occur within and adjacent to the Plan area and these are detailed in the main SEA Environmental Report.

CORINE⁶ land cover mapping for the Plan area is shown on Figure 3.2. The most dominant land cover types are pastures and peat bogs. Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas likely to contain Annex I habitats, in the area to which the Plan relates, include: peat bogs; natural grassland; water bodies; mixed forests; coniferous forest; broad-leaved forests; intertidal flats; inland marshes; stream courses; water bodies; transitional woodland and scrub; and land principally occupied by agriculture with areas of natural vegetation.

Existing Problems

Ireland's Article 17 report on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (DCHG, 2019) identifies various Irish, EU-protected habitats and species to be of unfavourable status and many to be still declining, although it also identifies that a range of positive actions are underway. Categories for pressures and threats on Ireland's habitats and species identified by the report comprise:

- Agriculture;
- Forestry;
- Extraction of resources (minerals, peat, non-renewable energy resources);
- Energy production processes and related infrastructure development;
- Development and operation of transport systems;
- Development, construction and use of residential, commercial, industrial and recreational infrastructure and areas;
- Extraction and cultivation of biological living resources (other than agriculture and forestry);
- Military action, public safety measures, and other human intrusions;
- Alien and problematic species;
- Mixed source pollution;
- Human-induced changes in water regimes;
- Natural processes (excluding catastrophes and processes induced by human activity or climate change);
- Geological events, natural catastrophes;
- Climate change; and
- Unknown pressures, no pressures and pressures from outside the Member State.

⁴ SACs have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The Habitats Directive seeks to establish Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the EU. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SACs to protect habitats and species, which, together with the SPAs designated under the 1979 Birds Directive, form Natura 2000. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010. The Regulations have been prepared to address several judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) against Ireland, notably cases C-418/04 and C-183/05, in respect of failure to transpose elements of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive into Irish law.

⁵ SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the EU.

⁶ The CORINE (Coordinated Information on the Environment) land cover data series was devised as a means of compiling geo-spatial environmental information in a standardised and comparable manner. CORINE has become a key data source for informing environmental and planning policy on a national and European level. The main land cover type in Ireland is agricultural land including forestry, which accounts for two-thirds of the national landmass. Most of this is permanent grassland pastures. Peatlands and wetlands are the second most widespread land cover type, covering almost one-fifth of the country. While forested areas cover about one-tenth of the country. Despite rapid development in the past two decades, Ireland's landscape is predominantly rural and agricultural.

The Plan includes measures to contribute towards the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna and associated ecosystem services.

Previous changes in land uses arising from human development have resulted in a loss of biodiversity and flora and fauna however, legislative objectives governing biodiversity and fauna were not identified as being conflicted with.

3.4 Population and Human Health

The Census 2016 results show that Westmeath's population has grown by 2,606 persons, or by 3%, since Census 2011, to 88,770 persons (Central Statistics Office, 2017).

The new population provided for in the Draft Plan will interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Increase in demand for waste water treatment at the municipal level;
- Increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction from Lough Owel, Lough Lene and Lough Bane;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality.

Human health has the potential to be impacted upon by environmental vectors (i.e. environmental components such as air, water or soil through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings). Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise as a result of exposure to these vectors arising from incompatible adjacent land uses for example. These factors have been considered with regard to the description of: the baseline of each environmental component; and the identification and evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan.

Existing Problems

There is historic and predictive evidence of flooding in various locations across the County.

The greatest health risk from radiation in Ireland is caused by radon. The presence of radon gas, a naturally occurring radioactive gas that originates from the decay of uranium in rocks and soils, occurs across the country. The number of homes within the County with radon levels above the reference level is within the normal range experienced in other locations across the country.

3.5 Soil

Luvisols⁷ and peat soils are the two most dominant soil types across the Plan area. Other soil types identified include:

- Alluvial soils⁸ (in the flood plains of the rivers and streams);
- Groundwater and Surface Water Gleys⁹ (in depressions in the upper reaches of river valleys in both uplands and lowlands); and
- Brown earths¹⁰ (in the south, south-west and north of the Plan area).

Peatlands are a very characteristic habitat in County Westmeath, with groundwater and rain fed peat soils being a prominent and typical feature in the landscape. They presently account for about 9% of the total area of the County¹¹ and they are significant sinks of carbon.

An audit of County Geological Sites in County Westmeath was completed in 2019. There are 28 County Geological Sites across the Plan area.¹²

⁷ Luvisol soils are generally fertile, widely used for agriculture and associated with significant accumulation of clay.

⁸ These are associated with alluvial (clay, silt or sand) river deposits.

⁹ Surface Water Gleys are wetland soils with slowly permeable horizons resulting in seasonal waterlogging.

¹⁰ Brown earths are well drained mineral soils, associated with high levels of natural fertility.

¹¹ *Westmeath Peatlands Study* (November 2005)

¹² Individual audited site reports for County Westmeath is available from the GSI (www.gsi.ie).

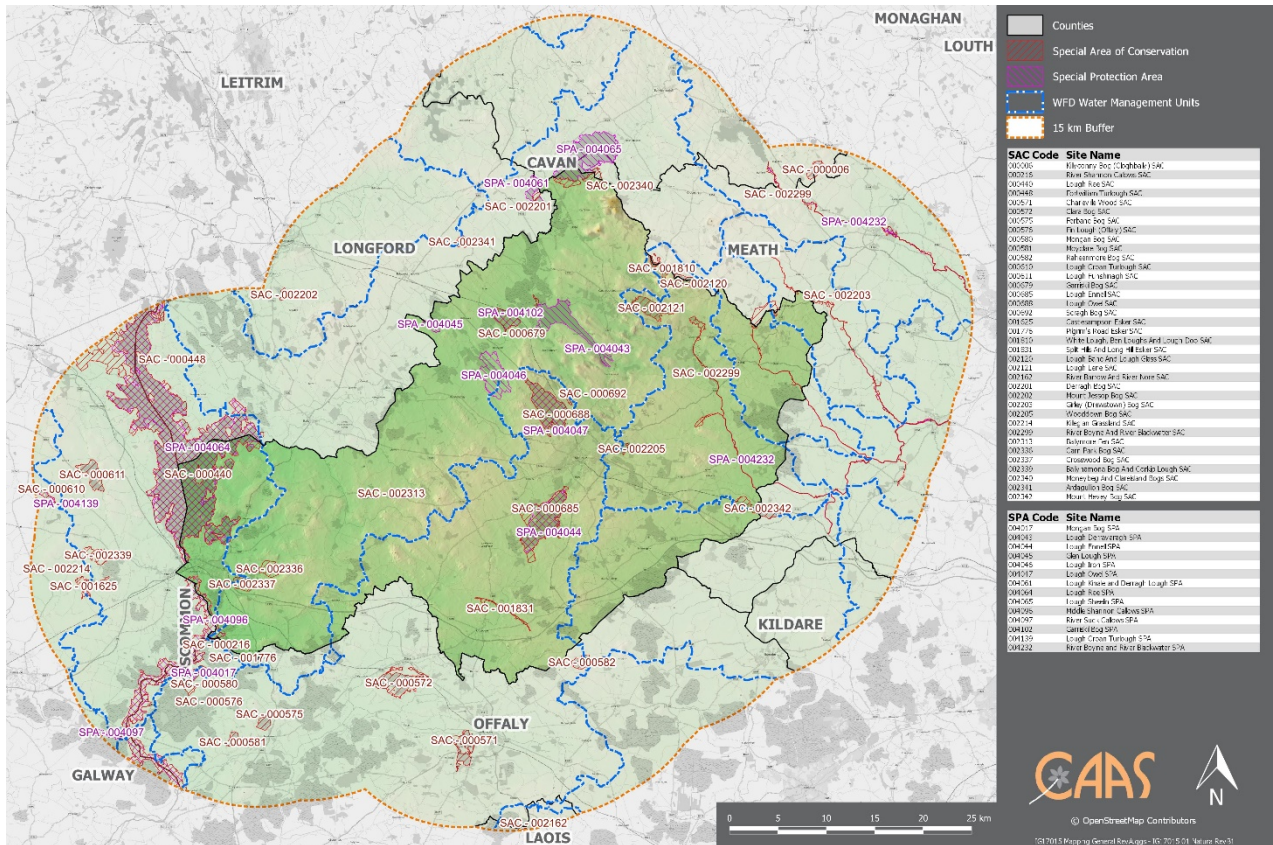


Figure 3.1 European Sites within and adjacent to the area to which the Plan relates

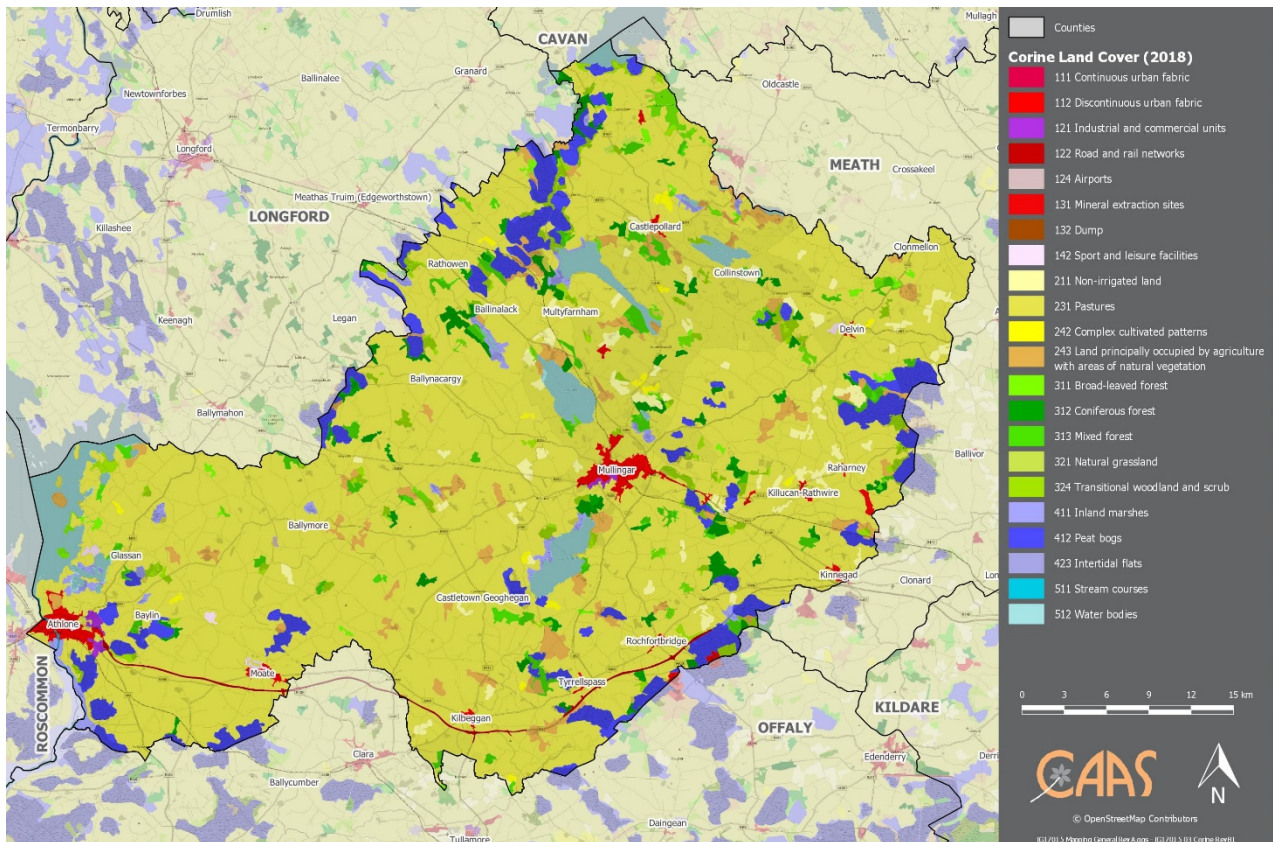


Figure 3.2 CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018

3.6 Water

Surface and Ground Water Status

Lakes, rivers and their tributaries in the area to which the Plan relates range in status from *high* and *good*, to *moderate* and *poor*. *Moderate* and *poor* status water bodies have the potential to fail the requirement of *good* status set out by the Water Framework Directive. In addition, there are a number of unassigned rivers and lakes across the area to which the Plan relates.

Lakes, rivers and their tributaries in the Plan area range in status from *high* (Lough Killinure) to *good* (including Rivers Inny, Boor, Gageborough and Mullenmeehan Stream; and Loughs Ree, Ennell, Owel, Derravaragh, Sheelin, Bane Noggin Hill and Annagh White) to *moderate* (including Rivers Stonyford, Breensford, Riverstown, Rath and Lough Lene-Adeel Stream; and Loughs Lene and Kinale) and *poor* (including Rivers, Shannon Upper, Gaine, Glore, Dungolman and Rochforbridge Stream). Status of the River Brosna varies from *good* (in the downstream sections of the river) to *moderate* and *poor* (in the upstream sections of the river). The WFD surface water status (2013-2018) of rivers and lakes within and surrounding the area to which the Plan relates is shown on Figure 3.3.

The WFD status (2013-2018) of most of groundwater underlying the area to which the Plan relates is identified as being of *good* status, meeting the objectives of the WFD. There is an area in the north-east of the County, underlying an industrial facility, identified as being of poor groundwater status.

Aquifer Vulnerability and Productivity

The aquifers underlying most the area to which the Plan relates are generally classified as being of *high vulnerability* and *extreme vulnerability* and *rock at or near surface or Karst*.

Flooding

Historical flooding is documented at various locations across the Plan area, including the settlements of Mullingar and Athlone. Predictive flood risk mapping is available from the Office of Public Works for rivers across the Plan area.

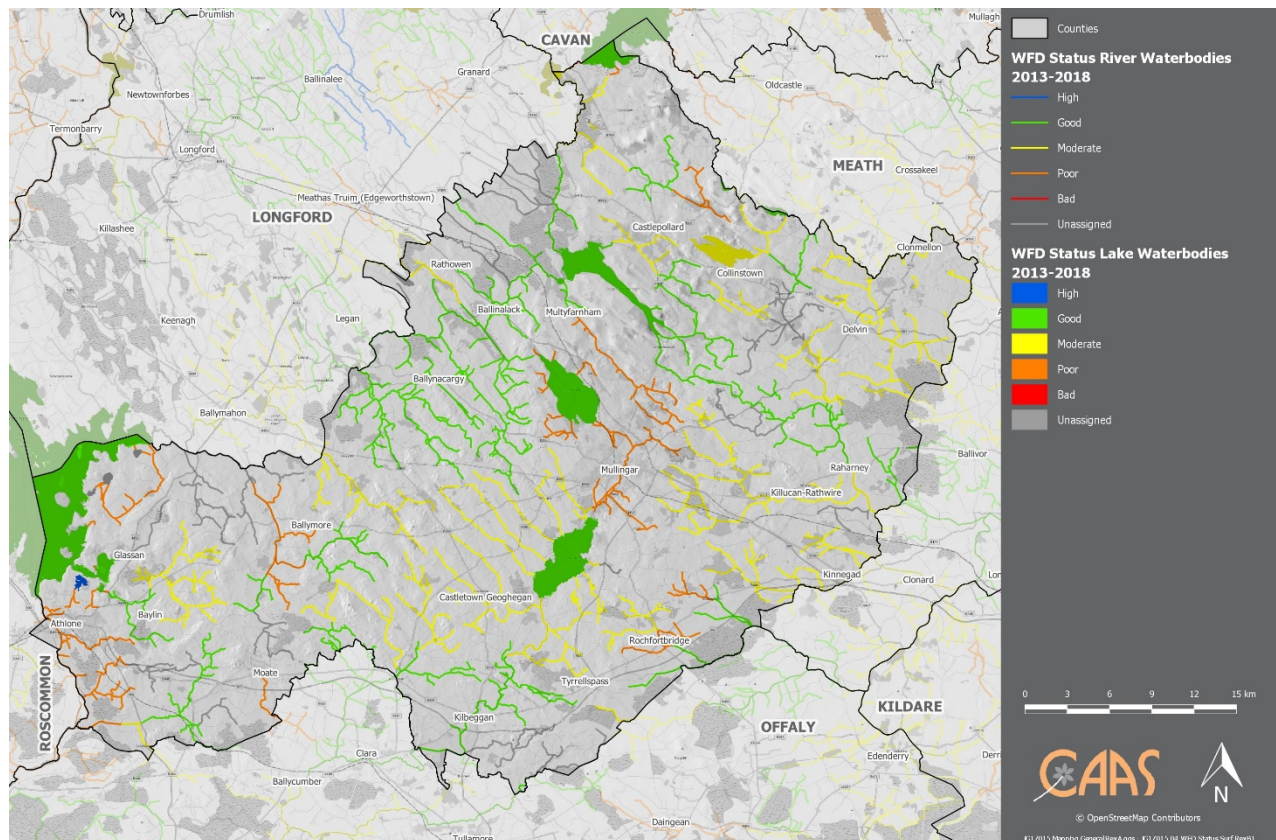


Figure 3.3 Surface Water Status (2013-2018)

3.7

Air and Climatic Factors

Total emissions of greenhouse gases by humans come from various sectors including transport, agriculture, energy industries, manufacturing combustion, industrial processes, residential developments, commercial services developments, waste management processes and fluorinated gases equipment (such as refrigeration and fire protection systems). Ireland's National Policy position is to reduce CO₂ emissions in 2050 by 80% on 1990 levels across the Energy Generation, Built Environment and Transport sectors, with a goal of Climate neutrality in the Agriculture and Land-Use sector. For 2017, total national greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to be 0.9% lower than emissions in 2016.

The National Mitigation Plan (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, 2017), represents an initial step to set Ireland on a pathway to achieve the level of decarbonisation required. It is a whole-of-Government Plan, reflecting in particular the central roles of the key Ministers responsible for the sectors covered by the Plan – Electricity Generation, the Built Environment, Transport and Agriculture, as well as drawing on the perspectives and responsibilities of a range of other Government Departments. The National Adaptation Framework (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, 2018), sets out the national strategy to reduce the vulnerability of the country to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of positive impacts. The National Adaptation Framework outlines a whole of government and society approach to climate adaptation. Under the Framework, a number of Government Departments will be required to prepare sectoral adaptation plans in relation to a priority area that they are responsible for.

The National Climate Action Plan 2019 is an all of Government plan to tackle climate change and bring about a step change in Ireland's climate ambition over the coming years. The plan sets out an ambitious course of action over the coming years to address the diverse and wide-ranging impacts climate disruption is having on Ireland's environment, society, economic and natural resources. The Climate Action Plan sets out clear 2030 targets for each sector with the ultimate objective of achieving a transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient, and environmentally sustainable society and economy by 2050.

The Climate Change Advisory Council's Annual Review 2019 identifies that the most recent projections demonstrate that, under different assumptions, Ireland will not meet its emissions reduction targets, even with the additional policies and measures included in the National Development Plan. The projections also show that progress on reducing emissions is sensitive to the future path of fuel prices. A significant and sustained rate of emissions reduction of approximately -2.5% per year is required to meet our objectives for 2050. However, it must be noted that additional measures within the recent Climate Action Plan are not included in the analysis to date.

The EPA's (2020) *Air Quality in Ireland 2019* identifies that:

- Air quality in Ireland is generally good however there are localised issues;
- Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) from transport emissions is polluting urban areas; and
- Ireland was above World Health Organization air quality guideline value levels at 33 monitoring sites – mostly due to the burning of solid fuel within settlements across the country.

In order to apply with European Directives relating to air quality, the EPA manages the National Ambient Air Quality Network and measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants at locations across the country. The current¹³ air quality in the Leinster Air Quality Region is identified by the EPA as being *good*.

3.8 Material Assets

Other material assets, in addition to those referred to below, covered by the SEA include archaeological and architectural heritage (see Section 3.9) natural resources of economic value, such as water and air (see Sections 3.6 and 3.7).

Public Assets and Infrastructure

Public assets and infrastructure that have the potential to be impacted upon by the Plan, if unmitigated, include; settlements; resources such as public open spaces, parks and recreational areas; public buildings and services; transport and utility infrastructure (electricity, gas, telecommunications, water supply, waste water infrastructure etc.); forestry; and natural resources that are covered under other topics such as water and soil.

¹³ 11/12/2020 (<http://www.epa.ie/air/quality/>)
CAAS for Westmeath County Council

Wastewater

There are three urban areas in County Westmeath, listed currently as Priority Areas¹⁴ where improvements are required to resolve urgent environmental issues with respect to waste water treatment:

- Athlone (inadequate collection systems) - Westmeath County Council are seeking up to date information on the Athlone Main Drainage Scheme;
- Ballymore (waste water discharges are sole significant pressure on the upstream section of the River Dungolman) - Westmeath County Council have identified that a new storm tank to prevent these discharges was installed during 2019 and completed in June 2019;
- Multyfarnham (waste water discharges causing sole significant pressure on the upstream section of the River Gaine) - Westmeath County Council have identified that the treatment processes within the plant are adequate to provide appropriate treatment and there is adequate spare capacity within the plant; and

Irish Water, working in partnership with Westmeath County Council, is making investments to undertake essential upgrade works to wastewater treatment plants in towns and villages across the County. Capacity and performance improvements will help to support new development in these areas.

Information provided by Irish Water in 2019 identifies headroom as being available in the settlements of Athlone, Mullingar, Kinnegad, Moate, Rochfortbridge, Killucan, Kilbeggan, Castlepollard, Delvin, Clonmellon, Tyrrellspass, Ballymore, Multyfarnham, Collinstown and Ballynacarrigh but not in the settlement of Ballymore.

Water Supply

Over 60% of the public drinking water supply in Westmeath is sourced from Lough Owel and Lough Lene, with many private homes in the County relying on individual wells for drinking water supply.¹⁵ There are currently no water supplies in County Westmeath listed on the latest RAL (Q3 of 2020).

Waste Management

Waste management across the area to which the plan relates is guided by the Eastern and Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021.

Transport

Road and rail infrastructure in the County has the potential to support reductions in energy demand from the transport sector, including through electrification of modes.

Existing Problems

There are a number of challenges with respect to the provision of transport and water services infrastructure, some of which are summarised above.

Recent restrictions on water supply have been enforced in Athlone and surrounding areas including Mount Temple and Baylin.

Irish Water is currently preparing a National Water Resources Plan to address issues with the supply and demand for drinking water in Ireland over the short, medium and long term.

The provisions of the new County Development Plan will contribute towards protection of the environment with regard to impacts arising from material assets.

3.9 Cultural Heritage

Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological heritage is protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), Natural Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning Acts. The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is an inventory, put on a statutory basis by amendment to the National Monuments Act 1994, of sites and areas of archaeological significance, numbered and mapped. Clusters of monuments are indicated within already developed urban and suburban areas and in other locations.

County Westmeath archaeological monuments include the royal site of Uisneach, prehistoric barrow burials, wooden trackways, such as the Bronze Age road way at Mayne, earthworks, crannógs and ringforts. There are many fine examples of mottes (and baileys), tower houses, and several deserted medieval settlements.

¹⁴ In the EPA's 2020 report 'Urban Waste Water Treatment in 2019'

¹⁵ Draft Westmeath CDP 2021-2027

The ecclesiastical heritage includes church and abbey ruins, graveyards, high crosses and holy wells, including those in Fore.

Architectural Heritage

Records of Protected Structures are legislated for under Section 12 and Section 51 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. Protected structures are defined in the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended as structures, or parts of structures that are of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. The general spatial spread of archaeological heritage, clusters of architectural heritage are indicated within already developed villages, urban and suburban areas.

In addition to Protected Structures, the Planning and Development Act, 2000 provides the legislative basis for the protection of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The ACA designation requires that planning permission must be obtained before significant works can be carried out to the exterior of a structure in the ACA that might alter the character of the structure or the ACA. There are number of ACAs designated within settlements including Athlone, Mullingar, Tyrrellspass, Ballynacarrigy, Castlepollard, Clonmellon, Kilbeggan, Multyfarnham, Rochfortbridge, Moate and Glasson.

Existing Problems

The context of archaeological and architectural heritage has changed over time within County Westmeath, however no existing conflicts with legislative objectives governing archaeological and architectural heritage have been identified.

3.10 Landscape

County Westmeath Landscape Character Assessment identified the following 11 Landscape Character Areas (as shown on Figure 3.4): Northern Hills and Lakes; Inny River Lowlands; River Deel Lowlands; Central Hills and Lakes; Royal Canal Corridor; Lough Ree/Shannon Corridor; Western Lowlands; South Central Hills; Hill of Uisneach; Lough Ennell and SE Corridor; and South Westmeath Esker.

Westmeath is rich with varying landscape and recreational amenities. The areas which are highly regarded for their landscape are protected through designation as Areas of High Amenity. These include the following lakes: Lough Ree Area; Lough Lene Area; Lough Owel Area; Lough Ennell Area; and Lough Derravaragh Area.

Existing Protected Views and Vistas are mapped on Figure 3.4.

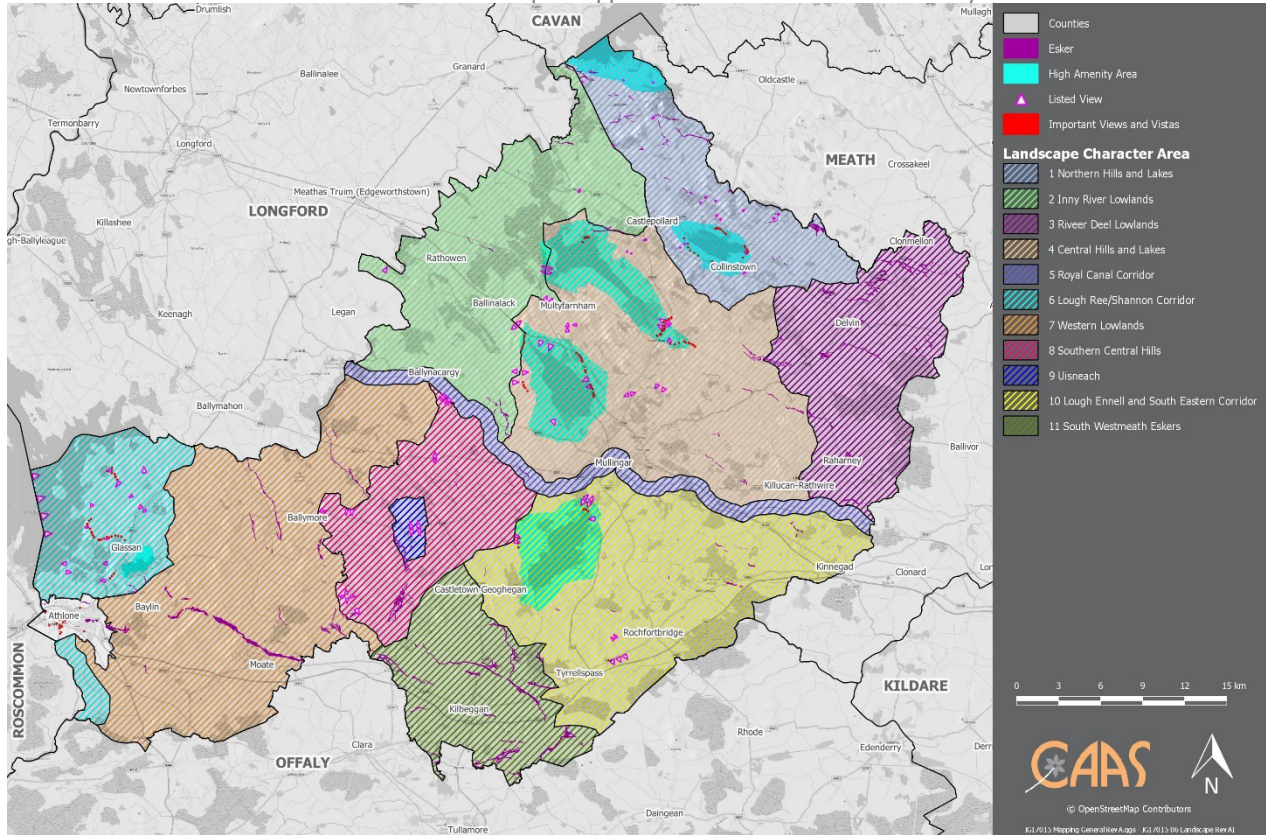


Figure 3.4 Landscape Designations

3.11 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies that generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives that have been transposed into Irish law and that are required to be implemented. The SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Draft Plan, the alternatives and the Proposed Material Alterations are evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects - unmitigated.

Table 3.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	BFF	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To preserve, protect, maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function Safeguard national, regional and local designated sites and supporting features which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets To protect, maintain and conserve the County's natural capital
Population and Human Health	PHH	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management Ensure that existing population and planned growth is matched with the required public infrastructure and the required services Safeguard the County's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being
Soil (and Land)	S	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield within the County Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites

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Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Water	W	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive • Ensure that economic growth of the marine resource and its ecosystems are managed sustainably • Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and wastewater capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments • Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion • Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals
Material Assets	MA	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals in the County • Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all which encourages a broad energy generation mix to ensure security of supply – wind, wave solar, tidal, biomass, energy from waste and traditional fossil fuels • Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies • Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development • Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of road and rail transport modes • Encourage the transition to a zero-carbon economy by facilitating the development of a grid infrastructure to support renewables and international connectivity. Reduce the average energy consumption per capita including promoting energy efficient buildings, retrofitting, smart- buildings, cities and grids
Air	A	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole resulting from emissions to air from all sectors with particular reference to emissions from transport, residential heating, industry and agriculture. • Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency. • Promote continuing improvement in air quality. • Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution • Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health – Air Quality Directive • Significantly decrease noise pollution by 2020 and move closer to WHO recommended levels.
Climatic Factors	C	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To minimise emissions of greenhouse gasses. • Integrate sustainable design solutions into the County's infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). • Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets. • Promote development resilient to the effects of climate change • Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport
Cultural Heritage	CH	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage
Landscape	L	Protect and enhance the landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To implement the Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention

Section 4

Alternatives

The Proposed Material Alterations – whether adopted with the Draft Plan or not – will generally not affect the consideration of reasonable alternatives for the Draft Plan.

If Proposed Material Alteration BOM 14 is accepted then the alternative selected for the Plan for Kilucan /Rathwire under Tier 5 Land Use Zoning will change from:

- B. Strategy to keep the built development envelope of both settlements separate
to
- A. Strategy to join the built development envelope of both settlements

The description and assessment of alternatives summarised below is as provided in the Non-Technical Summary of the SEA Environmental Report on the Draft Plan (February 2020).

4.1 Population Projection Scenarios

Population Projection Scenario 1: Non-Intervention Scenario

Description

This scenario does not assume a policy-based interaction on the modelled trajectory of population growth across Westmeath. This scenario assumes a continuation of the prevailing trends in mortality, fertility and migration (with respect to the Central Statistics Office’s highest migration assumption). This scenario reflects what might happen should growth continue to develop as assumed. It does not account for settlement capacity or non-demographic factors (beyond the inherent motivation of why people migrate). Athlone is not projected to reach its RSES target of 30,000 by 2031 (coming to 28,055 instead) under this scenario.

Evaluation

Scenario 1 “Non-Intervention Scenario” would result in higher levels of potential environmental conflicts and lower levels of environmental improvements as:

- It does not take into account settlement capacity; and
- There would be higher levels of development in rural areas, in comparison to the other scenarios.

Athlone (the largest settlement in the County which is well served by infrastructure and settlements) would not meet the RSES target.

More resources would be required to service development with appropriate levels of water services under this scenario. This scenario would present the highest levels of potential non-conformances with the Habitats and Water Framework Directives. This scenario would present the highest levels of commuting, potentially conflicting with greenhouse gas emission reduction targets the most.

Population Projection Scenario 2: Proportional Intervention Scenario A

Description

Under this proportional intervention scenario, Athlone’s population will increase to achieve the 30,000 [Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)] target by 2031. It further intervenes by assuming proportional levels of growth elsewhere. All settlements increase in population in line with their demographic trajectory, with Mullingar and Athlone increasing in proportion to the latter’s target. The county targets [National Planning Framework (NPF) high] for 2026 and 2031 are reached (approximately) with 98,518 people in 2026 (compared to 98,500 NPF high) and 102,501 people in 2031 (compared to 102,500 NPF high). However, the rural remainder of the county declines. This scenario, while meeting county targets and the target in relation to Athlone, damaged rural viability and as such is contrary to the objectives of the NPF.

Evaluation

In comparison with Scenario 1 "Non-Intervention Scenario", Scenario 2 "Proportional Intervention Scenario A" would generally result in lower levels of potential environmental conflicts and higher levels of environmental improvements as:

- Athlone (the largest settlement in the County which is well served by infrastructure and services) would meet the RSES target, with proportional levels of growth in other settlements; and
- There would be lower levels of development in rural areas.

A decline/failure to arrest decline in the rural population under this scenario would not be consistent with the NPF and could potentially conflict with sustaining existing rural management practices that ensure the continuation of long-established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain.

Provisions integrated into a Plan under this scenario would ensure that development was serviced by appropriate levels of water services and that the Habitats and Water Framework Directives were complied with. This scenario would contribute towards the achievement of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Population Projection Scenario 3: Proportional Intervention B*Description*

This proportional intervention scenario intervenes by assuming Athlone's RSES target of 30,000 by 2031 is achieved, and that all settlements will grow in proportion to Athlone's overall growth rate, i.e. its percentage increase between 2016 and 2031. Under this scenario, all settlements increase in population in line with a proportion of Athlone's overall growth rate. The county targets (NPF high) for 2026 and 2031 are reached (approximately) with 98,555 people in 2026 (vs. 98,500 NPF high) and 102,558 people in 2031 (vs. 102,500 NPF high). Similarly, this scenario does not achieve the stated NPF objective of supporting the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades.

Evaluation

In comparison with Scenario 1 "Non-Intervention Scenario", Scenario 3 "Proportional Intervention Scenario B" would generally result in lower levels of potential environmental conflicts and higher levels of environmental improvements as:

- Athlone (the largest settlement in the County which is well served by infrastructure and services) would meet the RSES target, with proportional levels of growth in other settlements; and
- There would be lower levels of development in rural areas.

A decline/failure to arrest decline in the rural population under this scenario would not be consistent with the NPF and could potentially conflict with sustaining existing rural management practices that ensure the continuation of long-established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain.

Provisions integrated into a Plan under this scenario would ensure that development was serviced by appropriate levels of water services and that the Habitats and Water Framework Directives were complied with. This scenario would contribute towards the achievement of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Population Projection Scenario 4: Proportional Intervention C*Description*

This proportional intervention scenario utilises an interpolated forecast¹⁶ of population. This scenario ensures that Athlone's RSES target of 30,000 by 2031 is achieved and envisages growth rates that are proportional to each tier of the settlement hierarchy. This aligns with the approach to settlement typologies detailed in the NPF and considers the scale and location of settlements and accordingly the requisite nature and scale of development appropriate at these locations. Within this scenario, Westmeath's NPF county targets are exceeded by 5.8% in 2026 and 8.3% in 2031. This scenario also ensures the achievement of the NPF's objectives around supporting the sustainable development of

¹⁶ A forecast is based upon assumptions reflecting conditions expected to exist, i.e. the impact of policy, whereas a projection is prepared to present one or more hypothetical courses which might develop, should the trajectory of growth align with the key assumptions used.

rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades. These targets envisage a 10% growth rate in the rural remainder of the county between 2016 and 2027 and a 12% growth rate in serviced rural areas.

Evaluation

In comparison with Scenario 1 "Non-Intervention Scenario", Scenario 4 "Proportional Intervention Scenario C" would generally result in lower levels of potential environmental conflicts and higher levels of environmental improvements as:

- Athlone (the largest settlement in the County which is well served by infrastructure and services) would meet the RSES target, with proportional levels of growth in other settlements; and
- The rural remainder of the County would increase in line with planning objectives.

Provisions integrated into a Plan under this scenario would ensure that development was serviced by appropriate levels of water services and that the Habitats and Water Framework Directives were complied with. This scenario would contribute towards the achievement of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Population Projection Scenarios are assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Section 3.11) on Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Assessment¹⁷ of Population Projection Scenarios against Strategic Environmental Objectives

Alternative Scenario	Likely to Improve status of SEOs		Potential Conflict with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated	
	to a Greater degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Greater degree
Scenario 1: Non-Intervention Scenario		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L
Scenario 2: Proportional Intervention Scenario A	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	
Scenario 3: Proportional Intervention B	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	
Scenario 4: Proportional Intervention C	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

4.2 Alternatives for Consideration of Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure

Description

These two alternatives both provide for urban and rural growth in the County, however they have different approaches to managing development in areas surrounding urban settlements that are under strong urban pressure:

- One includes a "Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure" policy that restricts development in areas surrounding urban settlements; and
- The other does not include a "Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure" policy that restricts development in these areas.

Evaluation

Alternative A. Restricting development in rural areas that are under strong urban influence would positively impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The restrictions would help to both reduce levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and encourage brownfield development within existing centres.

Rural development would be directed towards appropriate rural areas and urban development would be directed towards established settlements. This alternative would prevent low density urban sprawl

¹⁷ The alternatives are evaluated using compatibility criteria in order to determine how they would be likely to affect the status of the existing environment and the SEOs. The SEOs and the alternatives are arrayed against each other to demonstrate which interactions would cause effects on specific components of the environment. Where the appraisal identifies an interaction with the status of an SEO the relevant SEO code is entered into the relevant column.

and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

Alternative B. The other does not include a “Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure” policy that restricts development in these areas.

Not restricting development in rural areas that are under strong urban influence would adversely impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The absence of restrictions would result in increased levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and less demand for brownfield development within existing centres.

Urban generated development would occur within rural areas outside of established settlements. This alternative would result in low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

Alternatives for Consideration of Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure are assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Section 3.11) on Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Assessment of Alternatives for Consideration of Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure against Strategic Environmental Objectives

Alternative	Likely to Improve status of SEOs		Potential Conflict with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated	
	to a Greater degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Greater degree
A. Include a Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	
B. Do not include a Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L

4.3 Available Land Use Zoning Alternatives

Land use zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES.

The Council have identified realistic alternatives for certain settlements, where these are available taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES. These realistic alternatives are described for each of the settlements on the table below.

Available Land Use Zoning Alternatives are assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Section 3.11) on Table 4.2.

Table 4.3 Assessment of Land Use Zoning Alternatives against Strategic Environmental Objectives

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Likely to Improve status of SEOs			Potential Conflict with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated			Comments
		to a Greater degree	to a Moderate degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Moderate degree	to a Greater degree	
Castlepollard	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. North of town	BFF PHH S MA A C CH L			PHH MA A C L	BFF S W CH		Lands adjacent to both Alternative A and B lands are already developed for similar uses and zoning these would allow for consolidation and efficient use of infrastructure. Existing access is already available at Alternative A and B lands. Alternative A and B lands are adjacent to the Castlepollard's existing built envelope. Alternative C lands are removed from the town's existing built envelope, not already developed in part for similar uses, would not allow for consolidation. Alternative C lands would conflict with emission reduction targets, air quality and human health.
	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: B. East of town			BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	PHH MA A C L	BFF S W CH		
	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: C. South West of town					BFF S W CH	PHH MA A C L	
Moate (Set 1)	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town		BFF PHH S A C CH	MA L		BFF PHH S A C CH	MA L	Alternative B lands are already developed in part for similar uses and zoning these would allow for consolidation. Alternative A lands are not already developed in part for similar uses and zoning these would not allow for consolidation.
	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: B. East of town	MA L	BFF PHH S A C CH		MA L	BFF PHH S A C CH		
Moate (Set 2)	A. Include Provision for future Educational Uses				PHH A C MA		BFF S CH L	Development of lands for educational uses would potentially conflict with various environmental components however facilitating meeting future educational needs of the population would benefit the sustainable development of the town and would contribute towards sustainable mobility and efficient use of infrastructure in the future.
	B. Do not include: Provision for future Educational Uses				BFF S CH L		PHH A C MA	
Kinnegad (Set 1)	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town to north of M4	W PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L		W PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L		These alternatives seek to provide for Enterprise and Employment zoning needs. Alternative A lands are better connected to proximate strategic roads infrastructure than Alternative B lands. Alternative A lands would not have to be accessed through residential areas. Alternative B lands are adjacent to a waste water treatment plant. Alternative B lands are close to the river and may be at elevated levels of flood risk.
	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: B. East of town, adjacent to River Side		BFF S CH L	W PHH MA A C		BFF S CH L	W PHH MA A C	
Kinnegad (Set 2)	A. Include: Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space	PHH MA A C		BFF S CH L	PHH MA A C		BFF S CH L	Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space would benefit emission reduction targets, air quality and human health. Development of lands adjacent to the M4 for Commercial uses would involve land-take, loss of non-designated biodiversity. The lands adjacent to the M4 are close to the river and may be at elevated levels of flood risk.
	B. Do not include: Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space	BFF S CH L		PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L		PHH MA A C	
Rochfortbridge	A. Include Additional Enterprise and Employment zoning to south of town between R446 and R400			BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L			BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	Development of the identified lands for Enterprise and Employment uses would potentially conflict with various environmental components. The lands would provide an excess of zoned land in the settlement would result in land-take and loss of non-designated biodiversity. The southern portion of these lands are close to the river and may be at elevated levels of flood risk.
	B. Do not include: Additional Enterprise and Employment zoning to south of town between R446 and R400	BFF PHH S MA A C CH L			BFF PHH S MA A C CH L			

If Proposed Material Alteration BOM 14 is accepted then the alternative selected for the Plan for Kilucan /Rathwire under Tier 5 Land Use Zoning will change from:

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Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Likely to Improve status of SEOs			Potential Conflict with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated			Comments
		to a Greater degree	to a Moderate degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Moderate degree	to a Greater degree	
B. Strategy to keep the built development envelope of both settlements separate to A. Strategy to join the built development envelope of both settlements								
Kilucan /Rathwire	A. Strategy to join the built development envelope of both settlements		PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L		PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L	Recent developments in both Kilucan and Rathwire have been identified as resulting in a blurring of the once distinctive boundaries of these two villages. There are a number of mature trees and hedgerows in the surrounding area. Merging of the two centres would be likely to change the distinct forms of these settlements and would have the potential to impact upon landscape character and cultural heritage designations.
	B. Strategy to keep the built development envelope of both settlements separate	BFF S CH L	PHH MA A C		BFF S CH L	PHH MA A C		

4.4 Selected Alternative for the Plan

Selected alternatives for the Plan from each of the three tiers of alternatives that emerged from the planning/SEA process are indicated on Table 4.4 below.

These alternatives have been selected and developed by the Planning Team and placed on public display by the Council having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects which were identified by the SEA and are detailed above; and
2. Planning – including social and economic – effects that also were considered by the Council.

Table 4.4 Selected Alternatives for the Draft Plan

Tier	Alternatives Considered	Selected Alternative
Population Projection Scenarios	Scenario 1: Non-Intervention Scenario, Scenario 2: Proportional Intervention Scenario A, Scenario 3: Proportional Intervention B or Scenario 4: Proportional Intervention C	Scenario 4: Proportional Intervention C
Tier 3: Consideration of Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure	A. Include a "Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure" policy that restricts development in areas surrounding urban settlements or B. Do not include a "Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure" policy that restricts development in these areas	A. Include a "Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure" policy that restricts development in areas surrounding urban settlements
Tier 5: Land Use Zoning	<u>Castlepollard</u> Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. North of town and/or B. East of town and/or C. South West of town	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. North of town and B. East of town
	<u>Moate – Alternatives Set 1</u> Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town or B. East of town	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: B. East of town
	<u>Moate – Alternatives Set 2</u> A. Include or B. Do not include: Provision for future Educational Uses	A. Include: Provision for future Educational Uses
	<u>Kinnegad – Alternatives Set 1</u> Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town to north of M4 or B. East of town, adjacent to River Side	A. West of town to north of M4
	<u>Kinnegad – Alternatives Set 2</u> A. Include or B. Do not include: Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space	A. Include: Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space
	<u>Rochfortbridge</u> A. Include or B. Do not include: Additional Enterprise and Employment zoning to south of town between R446 and R400	B. Do not include: Additional Enterprise and Employment zoning to south of town between R446 and R400
	<u>Kilucan /Rathwire</u> A. Strategy to join the built development envelope of both settlements or B. Strategy to keep the built development envelope of both settlements separate	If Proposed Material Alteration BOM 14 is accepted then the alternative selected for the Plan for Kilucan /Rathwire under Tier 5 Land Use Zoning will change from: B. Strategy to keep the built development envelope of both settlements separate to A. Strategy to join the built development envelope of both settlements

Section 5 Summary of Effects arising from Proposed Material Alterations

Table 5.1 summarises the overall environmental effects arising from Proposed Material Alteration provisions.

Table 5.1 Summary of Assessment

Alteration Reference	Alteration Detail	Assessment Commentary	
BOM 36	Designate Area 7 as Low wind energy capacity – Area 7 identified is orange and classified as medium capacity.	The inclusion of additional lands as part of Lough Lene High Amenity Area would increase the protection of the overall landscape and help to secure the long-term integrity of this important asset. Indirectly this Alteration would further contribute towards the protection of all environmental components represented by the SEOs.	
BOM 34 & BOM 35	Revise the area designated as high amenity areas in the vicinity of Lough Lene and Lough Derravaragh to its original form as set out under the current Westmeath County Development Plan, Map No. 42.		
BOM 30	In relation to Map No. 25 amend the zoning of the subject plot to the north of Glasson, from mixed use to open space.	This alteration is one of a number of alterations that would alone and in combination improve flood risk management and result in significant positive effects on the protection of the environment, including human health and material assets.	
BOM 17	In relation to Map No. 12, amend the zoning of the plot zoned Proposed Residential to the southeast of Rochfortbridge to open space		
BOM 31	In relation to Map No. 26, amend the extent of the site zoned proposed residential to the west of the Milltownpass which is subject to flood risk to open space		
Rochfortbridge BOM 17	Amend "Proposed Residential" and "Enterprise and Employment" zoning to "Open Space" as indicated on Map 12a.		
Milltownpass BOM 31	Amend "Proposed Residential" zoning to "Open Space" as indicated on Map 26a.		
Glasson BOM 30	Amend "Mixed Use" zoning to "Open Space" in association with lands affected by the PFRA 1% and 0.1% AEP flood outline, as indicated on Map 25a.		
BOM 1 & BOM 2	Change zoning from unzoned to "Proposed Residential" Change zoning from unzoned to "Consolidation Site"		None of these Proposed Material Alterations would align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with each other, additional adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecology and ecological connectivity (none of the zoning is within designated sites). Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces. Increased loadings on water bodies. Difficulty in providing adequate and appropriate waste water treatment as a result of zoning outside of established built development envelopes of settlements. Adverse impacts upon the economic viability of providing for public assets and infrastructure. Adverse impacts upon carbon emission reduction targets in line with local, national and European environmental objectives. Conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality. Conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors. Conflict with efforts to maximise sustainable compact growth and sustainable mobility. Occurrence of adverse visual impacts as a result of development occurring outside of established built development envelopes of settlements. Potential effects on human health as a result of potential interactions with environmental vectors. Proposed Material Alterations BOM 1 and BOM 2 are to zone for development greenfield sites in Castlepollard, removed from the established settlement boundary, and is not in the interests of proper planning. As identified in the Chief Executive's Report, it is considered that there is no evidence-based need or planning rationale for the proposed zoning changes having regard to the quantum of land zoned for residential in Castlepollard, opportunities for infill development inside the current development boundary, its position in the county settlement hierarchy, its projected growth to 2027. It is considered that there is no justification for rezoning the subject lands in Castlepollard "Proposed Residential" under Proposed Material Alteration BOM 3 as it would impact on the residential amenity of existing properties in the vicinity. Proposed Material Alteration BOM 13 is to zone for development a greenfield site in Killucan-Rathwire, removed from the established settlement boundary, and is premature and not in the interests of proper planning. As identified in the Chief Executive's Report, it is
BOM 3	Change zoning from unzoned to "Proposed residential"		
BOM 13	Change zoning from unzoned to "Proposed residential"		
BOM 14	Change zoning from "Open Space" to "Proposed residential"		
BOM 99	Change zoning from unzoned to "Proposed residential"		
BOM 23	Change zoning from unzoned to "Proposed residential".		
CH 8.11	Insert new map based CPO after CPO 8.103 as follows; CPO KG 2 To allow the appropriate consideration of provision of a nursing home with an activity facility and meeting room as a central area for a small cluster of housing that would support an elderly population in accessing services they require locally within a sustainable development (See Map 7).		
BOM 29	Change zoning from unzoned to "Proposed Residential"		

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Alteration Reference	Alteration Detail	Assessment Commentary
		<p>considered that there is no evidence-based need or planning rationale for the proposed additional residential zoning to be included as part of the Plan at this time.</p> <p>Proposed Material Alteration BOM 14 is to zone for development a greenfield site between the settlements of Killucan and Rathwire, removed from the established built settlement boundary, on lands zoned "Open Space", as part of a larger area of tree planted open landscape providing an important visual break between Killucan and Rathwire, and is not in the interests of proper planning. These lands provide an attractive landscape feature that adds character to this self-sustaining town. Policy objective CPO 8.164 supports the maintenance of this "Open Space" as seeks to "Ensure that the landscape setting between Killucan and Rathwire is maintained in order to protect the distinct identity, character and form of both settlements". As such, it is considered important to retain the Open Space zoning on these lands. As identified in the Chief Executive's Report, it is considered that there is no evidence-based need or planning rationale for the proposed additional residential zoning to be included as part of the Plan at this time.</p> <p>Proposed Material Alteration BOM 16 is to zone for development a greenfield site, removed from the established built settlement boundary of Rochfortbridge, is premature and is not in the interests of proper planning. As identified in the Chief Executive's Report, it is considered that there is no evidence-based need or planning rationale for the proposed additional residential zoning to be included as part of the Plan at this time.</p> <p>Proposed Material Alteration BOM 23 is to zone for development an additional greenfield site in Ballymore and is not in the interests of proper planning. As identified in the Chief Executive's Report, Ballymore is a picturesque elongated settlement that extends to 1.7km in length. The village is characterised by a number of visual breaks in the streetscape primarily located to the north of the Main Street. The site in question comprises a greenfield plot and as such constitutes a break in the streetscape. In addition, the land is located within an Archaeological Zone of Potential.</p> <p>Proposed Material Alteration CH 8.11 is to provide a nursing home, removed from the established settlement boundary, and is not in the interests of proper planning. Such a development would be premature and would not align with objectives relating to sustainable development.</p> <p>Proposed Material Alteration BOM 29 is to zone for development a greenfield site removed from the established settlement boundary of Glasson, is premature and is not in the interests of proper planning. Glasson is a quaint rural village occupying a picturesque setting near Lough Ree. The Draft Plan promotes the consolidation of the village and protection of its architectural heritage, including form and character. This alteration would constitute a piecemeal extension to the settlement and accordingly would detract from its attractive form and setting, thereby undermining the unique character of the village.</p>

Section 6

Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

6.1 Mitigation

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Draft Plan. These measures also apply to Proposed Material Alterations.

Mitigation was achieved through the:

- Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development¹⁸;
- Considering reasonable alternatives to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate¹⁹;
- Integration of environmental considerations into zoning provisions of the Draft Plan to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate²⁰; and
- Integration of individual SEA, AA and SFRA provisions into the text of the Draft Plan to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate.

6.2 Monitoring

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. Monitoring is based around indicators that allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives identified at Table 3.1 and used in the evaluation. Monitoring indicators, targets, sources and remedial action is provided at Table 6.1 overleaf.

¹⁸ Far in advance of both the submission of the pre-Draft Plan to the Elected Members for approval and the placing of the Draft Plan (and associated environmental assessment documents) on public display, Westmeath County Council undertook various works in order to inform the preparation of the Plan. The findings of this strategic work have been integrated into the Plan and will contribute towards both environmental protection and management and sustainable development within the County. Strategic work undertaken by the Council includes background work in relation to Plan Strategies and other provisions for a variety of topics including:

- SEA;
- AA;
- SFRA;
- Protected Views;
- Housing;
- Core Strategy;
- Housing Strategy;
- Geological Audit; and
- Wetlands Survey.

¹⁹ Although strategic alternatives in relation to the content of the Plan were significantly limited for the Plan (see Section 4), as part of the Plan preparation/SEA process, the Council considered a number of alternatives for the Draft Plan to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate. These alternatives were assessed by the SEA process and the findings of this assessment informed the selection of preferred alternatives, facilitating an informed choice with respect to the type of Plan that was prepared and placed on public display.

²⁰ Environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan's zoning through an interdisciplinary approach. Zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES. The detailed Plan preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department combined with specialist input from the SFRA process facilitated zoning that avoids inappropriate development being permitted in areas of high flood risk. Various provisions have been inserted into the Plan which provide for flood risk management at project level. Also taken into account were environmental sensitivities relating to ecology, cultural heritage, landscape and water, as well as the overlay mapping of environmental sensitivities.

Table 6.1 Indicators, Targets, Sources and Remedial Action

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	BFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition of European sites Number of spatial plans that have included ecosystem services content, mapping and policy to protect ecosystem services when their relevant plans are either revised or drafted SEA and AA as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc. Status of water quality in the County's water bodies Compliance of planning permissions with Plan measures providing for the protection of Biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 12 "Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions in their land use plans and as a minimum, to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species Implement and review, as relevant, the County Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan For planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that they comply with all Plan measures providing for the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 12 "Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years). Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs' National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every 3 years) Internal monitoring of preparation of local land use plans Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant). Consultations with the NPWS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where condition of European sites is found to be deteriorating this will be investigated with the Regional Assembly and the DACG (and the DHPLG for water) to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance. Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHPLG Water Section, the Regional Assembly, the EPA Catchment Unit and, as relevant, Irish Water to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.
Population and Human Health	PHH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 5 "Economy and Employment" Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors resulting from development permitted under the Plan Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures Number of spatial plans that include specific green infrastructure mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 5 "Economy and Employment" No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures. Implementation of Green Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives Consultations with the Health Service Executive and EPA CSO data Internal monitoring of preparation of local land use plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where planning applications in key growth towns are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the wastewater treatment plant or failure of the wastewater treatment plant to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will contribute towards a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Irish Water to achieve the necessary capacity. Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHPLG, DCCAE and NTA to develop a tailored response.
Soil (and Land)	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of population growth occurring on infill and brownfield lands compared to greenfield Volume of contaminated material generated from brownfield and infill Number of AA determinations and environmental assessments undertaken to support applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4%. Achieve the 40% target for growth on infill as per NPF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Geoportal Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the proportion of growth on infill and brownfield sites is not keeping pace with the targets set in the NPF and the RSES, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and coordinate actions to address constraints to doing so.
Water	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status of water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the WFD Number of incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status' Implementation of the objectives of the second cycle of the River Basin Management Plan by 2021 (and subsequent objectives as relevant) Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPA Monitoring Programme for WFD compliance Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHPLG Water Section, the EPA Catchment Unit, the Regional Assembly and, as relevant, Irish Water to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance. Where marine water bodies are failing to meet good ecological status, this will be interrogated with the Marine Institute and the DHPLG to establish if the pressures are related to RSES activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with the MI and DHPLG in such a circumstance. Where planning applications in key growth towns are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the

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Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
					<p>Wastewater treatment Plant (WwTP) or failure of the WwTP to meet Emission Limit Values (ELV), EMRA will coordinate a response between the relevant LA, EPA and Irish Water to achieve the necessary capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where planning applications in key growth towns are being permitted on flood zones, EMRA will work with OPW to educate and inform the relevant local / planning authority on the negative effects of the practice.
Material Assets	MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programmed delivery of Irish Water infrastructure for all key growth towns in line with Irish Water Investment Plan and prioritisation programme to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan Proportion of population within who report regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To map brownfield and infill land parcels across the County. All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan Where septic tanks are proposed, for planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that the outfall from the septic tank will not – in- combination with other septic tanks– contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive Increased budget spends on water and wastewater infrastructure By 2020 all citizens will have access to speeds of 30Mbps, and that 50% of citizens will be subscribing to speeds of 100Mbps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) CSO data Consultations with the Irish Water Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in conjunction with Local Authorities Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where planning applications in key growth towns are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the wastewater treatment plant or failure of the wastewater treatment plant to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will coordinate a response between the Regional Assembly, EPA and Irish Water to achieve the necessary capacity. Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHPLG and NTA to develop a tailored response.
Air	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 National Travel Survey levels of 74% NO_x, SO_x, PM10 and PM2.5 as part of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 National Travel Survey levels. Improvement in Air Quality trends, particularly in relation to transport related emissions of NO_x and particulate matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSO data Data from the National Travel Survey EPA Air Quality Monitoring Consultations with Department of Transport Tourism and Sport, Transport Trends and Department of Communication Climate Action and Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHPLG, DCCAE and NTA to develop a tailored response. See also entry under Population and human health above
Climatic Factors²¹	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Plan measures relating to climate reduction targets as provided for by Plan provisions including those provided for and referenced in Chapter 11 "Climate Change and Energy" Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 levels Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures climate reduction targets as provided for by Plan provisions including those provided for and referenced in Chapter 11 "Climate Change and Energy" Increase in the proportion of people resident in the County reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures Decrease in the proportion of journeys made by residents of the County using private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 levels Contribute towards transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 Contribute towards the target of the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC), for all Member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPA Annual National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory reporting Climate Action Regional Office Consultations with Department of Communication Climate Action and Environment CSO data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where trends toward carbon reduction are not recorded, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and develop solutions. Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHPLG and NTA to develop a tailored response

²¹ Please also refer to relevant legislation and requirements under Section 4.10, Section 8.8.11 and Appendix I of the main SEA Environmental Report.

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Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
			<p>States to reach a 10% share of renewable energy in transport by 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute towards the target of aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors To promote reduced energy consumption and support the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating 		
Cultural Heritage	CH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, protected from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context of these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) Consultation with Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where monitoring reveals visitor pressure is causing negative effects on key tourist features along these routes, the Council will work with Regional Assembly, Fáilte Ireland and other stakeholders to address the pressures through additional mitigation tailored to the plans.
Landscape	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan To seek to align with the National Landscape Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where monitoring reveals developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, the Council will re-examine Plan provisions and the effectiveness of their implementation



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