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PART FIVE

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**NOTE:** THIS REPORT IS SUBMITTED TO COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION
1. Introduction

This section outlines the review process of the current County Development Plan 2014-2027; the statutory context and purpose of the Chief Executive’s report; and the legislative background for the preparation of the new County Development Plan 2021-2027. This section also includes an overview of the consultation process carried out for the Draft stage of the Development Plan process.

The County Development Plan is a land use plan which sets out a vision and an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County for a six-year period. The Draft Westmeath County Development Plan comprises six volumes (Volume I Written Statement, Volume 2 Book of Maps, Volume 3 SEA Environmental Report, Volume 4 Natura Impact Report, Volume 5 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Volume 6 Record of Protected Structures).

1.1 Review of the current County Development Plan 2014-2020

In accordance with Section 11 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) (the Act), Westmeath County Council gave notice on 16th February 2018 of its intention to commence the review of the existing County Development Plan and to prepare a new County Development Plan.

1.2 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the Chief Executive’s Report is to report on the outcome of the consultation process on the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan, set out the Chief Executive’s response to the issues raised in the submissions, and to make recommendations on changes to the Draft Plan. The report forms part of the statutory procedure for the preparation of a new Development Plan.

1.3 Statutory Context - Content of the Chief Executive’s Report

Planning Authorities are legally obliged to review their existing development plan and prepare a new development plan. The requirement to undertake this Chief Executive’s Report is part of the wider development plan making process as set out in the Act.

Under Section 12 (4) (a) of the Act the Chief Executive is required to prepare a report on any submissions and observations received and submit the report to the Members of the authority for their consideration. The Chief Executive’s Report is required to be published on the website of the planning authority as soon as practicable followings its preparation. The following requirements are also set out under Section 12 (4) (b) of the Act:

- List the persons or bodies who made submissions or observations, as well as any persons or bodies consulted by the planning authority;
• Summarise the recommendations, submissions and observations made by the Office of the Planning Regulator;
• Summarise the submissions and observations made by any other persons in relation to the draft development plan;
• Summarise the issues raised, and recommendations made by the relevant regional assembly and outline the recommendations of the Chief Executive in relation to the manner in which those issues and recommendations should be addressed in the draft development plan;
• Give the response of the Chief Executive on the issues raised taking account of any directions of the members of the authority or the committee under section 11(4), the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, the statutory obligations of any local authority in the area and any relevant policies or objectives of the Government or of any Minister of the Government and, if appropriate, any observations made by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands under subsection (3)(b)(iv);

Part One of this report sets out the structure of the report, the process and next steps in making the new Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027. An outline of the consultation undertaken for the Draft Plan is also set out (which resulted in 158 no. submissions during this statutory public consultation stage (Stage 2)). All submissions received have been considered in preparation of this Chief Executive’s Report.

Part Two covers the Written Statement/Appendices/Accompanying Documents and Maps respectively. There is an analysis of the submissions received relevant to each sheet and chapter, followed by the Chief Executive’s response to these issues and associated recommendations.

1.4 Legislative Background for the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended), requires planning authorities to make a Development Plan for its functional area every 6 years. The current Plan was adopted on 21 January 2014, coming into effect on 18 February 2014.

In accordance with Section 11 (1)(a) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), the review of the existing Development Plan and preparation of a new Development Plan is required to be strategic in nature for the purposes of developing:

   a) the objectives and policies to deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the Development Plan
   b) the core strategy, and
   c) shall take account of the statutory obligations of any local authority in the area and any relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or of any Minister of the Government.
The prescribed process for a County Development Plan is set out in the Act. It gives a ninety-nine-week period for adoption of the Plan. The Act sets out mandatory objectives which must be included in a Development Plan. These include, inter alia, objectives for; the zoning of land; the provision of infrastructure; the conservation and protection of the environment; and the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population. Other non-mandatory objectives are also referred to in the Act. There is also a requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the new Development Plan.

In accordance with Article 13A of the *Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004* (S.I. 436 of 2004), the Council must carry out an SEA before the Plan may be adopted. The SEA is an integral part in the development of the Plan.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was also undertaken for the plan area having regard to the ministerial planning guidelines on *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management*. Flood Risk Assessment has integrated into the SEA process. The SFRA has been published as a separate document in conjunction with the Draft Plan.

In accordance with European and National legislation, the Council carried out a SEA and an AA under the Habitats Directive, which informed the preparation of the Draft Plan. These assessments are undertaken so the impact of the proposed Draft Plan objectives on the environment can be evaluated and used to inform the direction of the Draft Plan to ensure that our built environment responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider national environment.

Ministerial Guidelines issued to Planning Authorities regarding their functions under the Act have been considered in the making of the Draft Plan and have been implemented in the various chapters, in accordance with Section 28 of the Act. Form and Contents of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The Draft Development Plan consists of a Written Statement, Appendices, Maps and Accompanying Documents.

The Written Statement is divided into 16 separate chapters, listed below, with Chapters 1 and 2 setting out the vision, strategic context, aims, goals and the settlement and core strategies for the County. Chapters 3 to 14 set out the policies, objectives and actions required under a range of topics including placemaking, urban and rural Westmeath, economic development, transport, infrastructure and energy, green infrastructure, and natural and cultural heritage and climate action. Chapters 15 and 16 set out the land use zoning policies and development management standards for the County. The accompanying documents comprise the book of maps, SEA, AA and SFRA.

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Core Strategy
- Chapter 3: Housing
- Chapter 4: Sustainable Communities
• Chapter 5: Economy and Employment
• Chapter 6: Tourism
• Chapter 7: Urban Centres and Place-making
• Chapter 8: Settlement Plans
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• Chapter 16: Development Management Standards
• Volume 2: Book of Maps
• Volume 3-5 Environment - (SEA, NIR & SFRA)
• Volume 6 – Record of Protected Structures
2. Overview of the Public Consultation undertaken

2.1 Preliminary Consultation Process: Pre-Draft Plan
The Pre-Draft consultation stage was undertaken from 16 February 2018 until 20 April 2018. Ninety-three submissions were received during the Pre-Draft consultation period. The opinions and views set out in the written submissions, and of those expressed and recorded at the public consultation events/stakeholder meetings, were considered and a Chief Executive Report dated 31 May 2018 set out the response of the Chief Executive to the issues raised together with recommendation for the preparation of the Draft Plan.

2.2 Current Consultation Process: Draft Plan and Next Stages
The Draft Plan consultation stage was originally advertised to take place from 28 February 2020 until 05 May 2020. This consultation period was, however, further extended up until 30 June 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. 158 submissions were received during this Draft Plan consultation period. Westmeath County Council wishes to express its appreciation to those who made submissions/observations and/or attended the information events. The extent and detail of the submissions and observations received highlights the significant level of public interest in the plan-making process. The consultation process comprised a number of elements:

a) Publicity

Notice advising of public consultation on the Draft Plan was placed in the Westmeath Exaaminer and Westmeath Independent on 28 February 2020. The notice provided details of where the Draft Plan was available for inspection and directed the public to a dedicated online Consultation Portal. Details of the duration of the formal consultation period was also set out. Details of consultations were also advertised on all Council social media platforms.

The Draft Plan was made available in all public libraries and on the dedicated Development Plan review webpage, and forwarded to all Elected Members, prescribed bodies, stakeholder groups and the Public Participation Network (PPN) groups (approx. 736 groups) within the County.

b) Public Information Sessions

A number of ‘Public Information Drop-In Sessions’ were held during the consultation period, to which all members of the public and other interested groups were invited, as follows:
Consultation material and presentation information was on display and available at each meeting. Copies of the Draft Plan and associated documentation was also made available for viewing at local libraries and at Council Offices. Plans were also available for purchase from the Planning Department.

c) Webinar

In response to requirement to restrict movements owing to the Covid-19 Pandemic, a live webinar event was held by Westmeath County Council on 16 June 2020 in relation to the Draft Plan. Presentations were provided on the content of the Plan, the associated SEA and AA processes undertaken and a demonstration was given on how to submit an observation to the Draft Plan by way of the Westmeath Public Consultation Portal. A question and answer session were also conducted as part of the webinar. Approximately 80 attendees joined the live event.

d) Online and Social Media

A dedicated webpage and a specific Public Consultation Portal was employed to keep members of the public up to date with the process of the preparation of the Development Plan. The majority of submissions received in relation to the Draft Plan were via the Consultation Portal, where all submissions were also published for public viewing.

Regular notifications relating to the Plan review were issued through the Council’s Facebook and Twitter feeds. During the consultation period there was a total reach of 68,669 people with 1,550 direct engagements through social media posts via Twitter and Facebook. During the consultation
period there was a total reach of 68,669 people with 1,550 engagements through social media posts via Twitter and Facebook. Westmeath County Council’s dedicated webpage for the Draft Plan had a total of 1,908 views during this consultation phase.

2.3 Next Stages

Not later than 22 weeks (Orders by the Government under section 251A(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provided that the period of 29 March 2020 to 23 May 2020, inclusive, could be dis-applied in the calculation of any appropriate period, specified period or other timeline in the Act or other related planning legislation) after the notice of the Draft going on display, the Chief Executive is required to produce a report which lists the submissions received, summarises the issues raises, and sets out a responses and recommendations accordingly.

Following consideration of the Draft Development Plan and Chief Executive’s Report, Members may accept the Draft Plan without material amendments and make the Development Plan. Should amendments be made which would constitute material alterations to the Draft Plan, there is a further public display period giving people an opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments only.

Where, following the consideration of the Draft Plan and the Chief Executive’s Report, it appears to the Members that the Draft Plan should be accepted or amended, they may, by resolution, accept or amend the Draft and make the Development Plan accordingly. Where a proposed amendment would, if made, be a material alteration of the Draft Plan, notice of the proposed amendment must be published in inviting submissions from the public.

This is followed by the preparation of a Chief Executive’s Report on any submissions or observations received on the proposed amendments. Members may then make the Development Plan with or without the proposed amendments or with modifications of a minor nature to the proposed amendments as they consider appropriate.

2.4 Consideration of Submissions

Following the initial recording of all 158 submissions, each submission was categorised in line with the appropriate chapter or zoning maps to of the Development Plan to which the submission relates. Some submissions received included issues not relevant to the Development Plan, and in some cases not relevant to planning generally or local authority operations and such points cannot be included in the Chief Executive’s Report.

The total numbers listed below exceeds the overall number of submissions, reflecting the high number of submissions that raised more than one issue or policies for one area. Submissions were received relating to the Written Statement or Accompanying Documents, relating to the following areas:
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3. Office of the Planning Regulator Submission

Submission Ref. No. WM-C1-120

3.1 Introduction

This section contains, under a series of headings (as set out in the submission received), a summary of both the observations and recommendations raised in the submission of the Office of Planning Regulator (OPR) to the Draft Plan together with the response and recommendations of the Chief Executive in relation to the issues raised.

The OPR acknowledges the considerable and evident work of the Council in preparing the Draft Plan and welcomes the approach taken to addressing the NPF and RSES in accordance with Section 12 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended).

3.2 Summary of Issues Raised and Response of the Chief Executive

The OPR’s submission is welcomed and the issues raised are acknowledged with consideration of each individual issue set out hereunder:

3.2.1 Climate Action

With the exception of the mandatory objective under section 10(2)(n) of the Planning Act, the OPR is satisfied that the Draft Plan includes objectives relating to all the subsections under section 10(2).

(OPR Observation 1)

The submission notes the importance attributed to climate action by Government and accordingly advises the planning authority to include an objective in relation to a variation of the development plan to ensure the Plan will be consistent with the approach to climate action recommended in any future Development Plan Guidelines.

(OPR Recommendation 1)

The planning authority is requested, in consultation with the NTA (and TII and DTaaS, if appropriate) to include:

(i) Appropriate existing baseline figures for modal share for travel to work, school etc. which may be provided at individual settlement level for the higher order settlements, and at aggregate level for rural villages and the open countryside, as identified in the Core Strategy.
(ii) Realistic targets for modal change against the baseline figures provided under (i), above, which may also include targets for infrastructure to support the use of electric vehicles to form a basis for an effective monitoring regime for the implementation of your Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

(iii) Maximum rather than minimum car parking standards as part of the development management standards contained in the draft development plan.

3.2.2 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Observation 1)

The importance of climate action is acknowledged. Climate action is one of the cross-cutting themes of the plan and accordingly has also been afforded a stand alone chapter in the Draft Plan. It is a stated aim of the plan 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. To this end, the Council is also committed to cooperation with agencies in the delivery and implementation of climate actions through engagement for example with the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office (CARO). In terms of carbon reduction, the Council is committed to engagement with and support for EPSON EU research project (QGasSP) to identify a robust methodology for quantifying the relative greenhouse gas impacts of alternative spatial planning policies.

The absence of revised Development Plan Guidelines to support the preparation of the Draft Plan should be noted and in this regard, it is considered appropriate that the outcomes of any future guidelines be reviewed by the Planning Authority over the lifetime of the plan and that any steps considered necessary to review the Plan be taken on foot of this.

(OPR Recommendation 1)

In response to the submission of the OPR in term of modal share within the County, the Planning Authority engaged with the NTA in terms of responding to the issues raised. The Council was advised that the baseline figures referred to in the submission are unavailable at this time save for that which may be available for some settlements on the CSO website.

The Council were advised by the NTA that a realistic target for modal change against the baseline figures would constitute a very small change based on the Settlement Hierarchy included in the Plan (Athlone and Mullingar to be considered under their respective plans) having regard to the existing public transport and cycling infrastructure within settlements. Notwithstanding this, the Council is committed to continued co-operation with the NTA for the purpose of developing further analysis in relation to modal shift across the county and in deriving a realistic modal change target for Westmeath and as such, a policy to this extent should be included as part of the Plan.
In relation to car parking, it should be noted that the Draft Plan supports a reduced car parking requirement in both Mullingar and Athlone town centres, in order to encourage the establishment and the expansion of small businesses in these towns. There is also a commitment allow for the reduction in car parking standards in suitable town centre locations in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking. In particular CPO 10.59, provides for the reduction in car parking standards in suitable town centre locations. As such, it is considered appropriate to update the Development Management Standards Table 16.2 to reflect ‘Maximum’ rather than ‘Minimum’ car parking standards.

3.2.3 Core Strategy

(OPR Observation 2)

The OPR commends the Planning Authority for its initiative in preparing a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) to inform the Housing Strategy and advises that a policy objective should be included in the plan committing to a review of any guidance on HNDA included in any future Development Plan Guidelines.

The submission seeks support for enhanced policy reflecting the provision of the “Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (2018) with reference to the inclusion of Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPRs) 1-4 contained in the guidelines. It is further requested that Section 4.9 of the written statement in relation to the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), should specifically mention SPPRs 1–9 associated with the guidelines.

(OPR Recommendation 2)

The OPR requests that the plan and housing strategy (as relevant) is amended to make reference to the specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) specified in the ‘Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (2018) and the ‘Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (2018).

The OPR requests that the Core Strategy identifies existing lands zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses, that are as yet undeveloped to include the number of units that can be accommodated on these lands.

It is further requested that the Plan demonstrates how that the extent of lands proposed to be zoned for residential use or for a mixture of residential and other uses accords with national and regional policy objectives.
3.2.4 Chief Executive Response  
(OPR Observation 2)

It should be noted that the Draft Plan has been prepared in the absence of the anticipated publication of revised Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities and the implications that any guidance therein might have for the associated Westmeath Housing Needs Demands Assessment. CP0 3.13 of the Draft Plan already provides for the review of the HNDA in conjunction with the DHPLG; however, it is considered that this objective could be amended by reference to the forthcoming Development Plan Guidelines and as such it is recommended that such amendment be made.

(OPR Recommendation 2)

Having considered the existing commitment in the Draft Plan to employing the guidance as set out under the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018) and the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), it was not considered necessary to reiterate individual Specific Planning Policy Requirements throughout the Plan; however, there is no objection to the suggestion of the OPR that such specific policy be included in the Plan at this stage.

3.2.5 NPF Implementation Roadmap (2018)

It is submitted by the OPR that the draft plan is generally consistent with the policies in the NPF and RSES for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area regarding compact growth, regeneration and the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone. However, in respect of the overall growth projections for the County to 2026 and the County Settlement Hierarchy, the OPR considers that the Core Strategy does not align sufficiently with the NPF and RSES respectively and that the population projections set out exceeds the NPF high figures by approximately 3,330 people.

(OPR Recommendation 3)

The NPF Implementation Roadmap provides transitional population projections, which are reflected in RSES Appendix B, and with which the Core Strategy should demonstrate consistency. It would appear that the Housing Strategy and Core Strategy exceed the population projections in the Roadmap, with resulting implications for the requirement for zoned land. The planning authority is required to amend its Housing Strategy and Core Strategy to align with the NPF Implementation Roadmap including the section on Implications and Safeguards and to amend the quantum of zoned land accordingly.

3.2.6 Chief Executive Response  
(OPR Recommendation 3)
In determining population projections for County Westmeath, it is important to note that in addition to the consideration of population targets prescribed by the NPF Implementation Roadmap (2018), Westmeath County Council included, in accordance with Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), a Core Strategy that is consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and with specific planning policy requirements specified in guidelines under subsection (1) of section 28.

Specifically, for County Westmeath, this includes ensuring consistency with:

- Athlone’s prescribed population target (30,000) as prescribed by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy – aligning with its role as a regional driver and to promote its sustainable and compact growth
- Delivering Mullingar’s role as a Key Town
- Delivering the role of the Self Sustaining Growth Towns and Self Sustaining Towns as envisaged under the NPF and RSES
- Supporting the sustainable development of rural areas, with a special focus on activating the potential for the renewal and development of smaller towns and villages in line with the objectives of the NPF including NPO 15 and 16.

In light of the aforementioned policy requirements, Westmeath County Council presented a Core Strategy that sought to address requirements as set out above, and present a Core Strategy that is consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy as outlined by Section 10 (1A) and having regard to the NPF (p25) which states that:

“In setting overall targets for future growth, it is a pattern of development that is being targeted, rather than precise numbers. From a long-term, national perspective, the targeted location, relative scale and proportionality of growth will assist in monitoring and assessing delivery and performance”

It should be noted that Westmeath County Council undertook a detailed analysis of a number of growth trajectories and population scenarios in order to comply with the previously stated policy requirements. These scenarios were developed further in response to this submission and are presented in more detail as an addendum at the end of this Section. As demonstrated, these scenarios provided the evidence base to indicate that simultaneous achievement of the stated Implementation Roadmap county targets and the aforementioned NPF and RSES core policy objectives and targets is not possible.

In particular, given the context in County Westmeath, it was not considered practicable to present a Core Strategy that would result in any of the following listed scenarios, simply to ensure strict compliance with the precise population numbers set out in the NPF Roadmap;

- The population target for Athlone as a Regional Centre (i.e. 30,000 by 2031) not being provided for;
• A reduction in Mullingar’s population target and thereby, a constraint in delivering its role as a Key Town;
• Effectively, no population growth outside Athlone and Mullingar
• All settlements grow at a nominal rate except smaller towns, villages, rural nodes and the open countryside, which remain stagnant.
• A decline in rural population.

In the context of the above, Westmeath County Council has developed a Core Strategy that is consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. This approach also takes account of population targets as required by Section 10(2A)(b) of the Planning and Development Act; satisfies the requirements of the RSES population target for Athlone; provides for Mullingar as a Key Town, Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns; and supports the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline. The adopted approach is also set out in a manner that promotes a pattern of development, at targeted locations, relative scale and proportionality of growth that is in line with the national perspective.

In seeking to determine a settlement strategy for Westmeath, with Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre and Mullingar as a Key Town, which achieves relevant NPF Roadmap and RSES population targets and aligns with national and regional objectives, various growth trajectories and population scenarios for the County were investigated to 2031 incorporating the most recent CSO data on migration (specifically). These scenarios, and the non-intervention scenario, were above the NPF Roadmap targeted trajectory for the county. An overview of these scenarios is set out at the end of this section at Overview of Explored Population Scenarios.

Westmeath is one of several identified counties within the NPF Implementation Roadmap (p4) where population growth is projected to be at or above the NPF/NDP national average baseline. The published NPF/NDP national average baseline is 10.75% over 2016 to 2026, 15.3% over 2016 to 2031 and 23% over 2016 to 2040. In County Westmeath, as demonstrated under Scenario 1, the non-intervention demographic projection of population anticipates an increase of 19.2% between 2016-2026. Between 2016-2031, the increase is anticipated to be 29.8%, substantially above the national average baseline.

The Roadmap further states that

*In all individual counties where population growth is projected to be at or above the NPF/NDP national average baseline, provision shall be made to enable planning for aggregate growth within that county up to that figure for each Census year and related intercensal period i.e. to 2026 and, subject to review, 2031* (NPF Implementation Roadmap, p5)

The demographic analysis undertaken in Scenario 1 assumes a continuation of the prevailing trends in mortality, fertility and migration with respect to the CSO’s highest migration assumption (and as estimated from 2016-2019 respectively). Under this scenario, the county population increases by 19.2% between 2016-2026 with the population reaching 105,785 in 2026. Between 2016-2031,
increase is anticipated to be 29.8%, with the county reaching a population of 115,219. Thus, in accordance with the Implementation Roadmap, provision shall be made for aggregate growth in County Westmeath up to 105,785 in 2026 and 115,219 to 2031, subject to review. These figures exceed the stated Roadmap county targets by 7.4% in 2026 and 12.4% in 2031.

Under Proportional Intervention Scenario C’ (Overview of Explored Population Scenarios - Scenario 6 below), as utilised within the Draft Development Plan, the county population grows to reach 104,213 in 2026 (5.4% above the Roadmap high target of 98,500) and 111,044 in 2031 (8.3% above the Roadmap high target of 102,500). These figures, while exceeding the stated Implementation Roadmap figures, are lower than those depicted as part of the demographic analysis undertaken as part of Scenario 1. As such, while in excess of the stated county targets, the scenario aligns with the provision contained within the Roadmap (p5) which allows for aggregate growth up to 105,785 in 2026 and indeed 115,219 to 2031 (subject to review).

Proportional intervention (Pi) ‘Scenario C’ (Overview of Explored Population Scenarios - Scenario 6 below) and the chosen growth scenario as set out under the Draft Plan targets a pattern of development which is aligned with the key principles set out in the NPF and RSES. While the overall county population exceeds the NPF Roadmap county targets, this scenario ensures that growth is appropriately channelled towards the urban centres of the county in a manner fully aligned with the settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy set out in the RSES while also safeguarding the sustainable development of the rural remainder of the county. Moreover, this is permissible under the explicit provision within the NPF Implementation Roadmap around individual counties where population growth is projected to be at or above the NPF/NDP national average baseline (as discussed above).

The population targets for Westmeath as set out under the NPF Implementation Roadmap have informed the making of the Draft Plan and commitments to monitor the implementation of the Plan in line with these indicated targets are set out. In this regard provisions have been included to ‘monitor ongoing developments … and review the operation and implementation of this Plan. This includes adjustments as needed to ensure the effectiveness of its alignment with National and Regional policy and objectives’. Specific supporting policy objectives are also set out at CPO 2.11 to “ensure that the future spatial development of Westmeath is in accordance with the National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF) including the population targets set out under the Implementation Roadmap, and the Regional, Spatial and the Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031” and CPO 2.28 which provides a commitment to “monitor development for compliance with the objectives of the Core Strategy and adjust, where necessary, the approach taken to the consideration of development proposals in order to ensure effective alignment with National and Regional policy and objectives”.

As such it is considered that the Core Strategy and the associated population targets set out for Westmeath are in accordance with the policy provision as set out at a national and regional level under the NPF and RSES and in accordance with the requirements of the NPF Implementation Roadmap including associated population targets.
The selected scenario (referred to as a proportional intervention (PI) ‘Scenario C’) envisages growth rates to 2031 which are proportional to each tier of the settlement hierarchy. This aligns with the approach to settlement typologies detailed in the NPF. The NPF states that the translation of policy responses to the various settlement typologies presented in the NPF should also consider the scale and location of settlements and accordingly, the requisite nature and scale of development appropriate at these locations.

While the Implementation Roadmap county targets for 2026 and 2031 are exceeded somewhat, the selected scenario ensures the simultaneous achievement of several critical policy objectives in a manner which would not be possible under the alternative scenarios:

• This scenario ensures that Athlone’s RSES target is achieved by 2031, comprising a growth rate of 40.5% from its 2016 population base (as reported by the most recent census). Between 2021 and 2027, it envisages that Athlone will grow by 14% or 3,460 people in total.

• Importantly, this scenario also ensures the achievement of the NPF’s objectives around supporting the sustainable development of rural settlements by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades. This scenario ensures a 5% growth rate in the rural remainder of the County between 2021 and 2027 and a 6% growth rate in serviced rural areas during the same period.

A key concern of Westmeath County Council is ensuring that the county grows in a manner where growth is proportionate to the role of settlements and their placement in the settlement hierarchy, while also protecting the vitality and viability of rural areas. Proportional Intervention Scenario C ensures the simultaneous achievement of these core policy objectives in a manner not possible under the alternative scenarios explored.

Having considered all of the above and the particular circumstances that apply to County Westmeath, it is not considered practicable to revise the Core Strategy, in a manner that satisfies each element of national and regional development objectives without adversely impacting on the balanced development of the County.

3.2.7 Settlement Hierarchy
(OPR Observation 3)

The OPR has requested that the position of Kilbeggan as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town be reconsidered.

3.2.8 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Observation 3)
In terms Kilbeggan’s identification as a Self Sustaining Growth Town in the Settlement Hierarchy, Self-Sustaining Growth Towns are defined as “towns that contain a reasonable level of jobs and services which adequately cater for the people of its service catchment. This may include sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links, which have capacity for continued commensurate growth”.

Self-sustaining towns have “high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted ‘catch up’ investment to become more self-sustaining”.

There are a significant number of large employers in Kilbeggan and the town has an established industrial base. Kilbeggan Distillery and Racecourse are important to the local economy, with the Distillery serving as the third major tourist attraction in the county. Dawn Meats to the south west of the town is one of the larger employers with in excess of 200 employees. Moreover, Kilbeggan serves as the retail centre for a larger rural catchment area and provides a range of services, social and community facilities etc. The town also benefits from direct access to the M6 and good public transport links. Having regard to the asset based approach used to determine the settlement hierarchy, it is considered that Kilbeggan’s designation as a Self Sustaining Town is justified as the town has the capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.

Whilst the absence of a train station in Kilbeggan is recognised, it should be noted that this was not a determining factor in the designation of Self Sustaining Growth towns in the County.

### 3.2.9 Athlone/Mullingar UAP/LAP (Local Transport Plans)

The OPR is satisfied that the policies in the draft plan regarding the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone and Key Town of Mullingar are generally consistent with the NPF and RSES.

(OPR Observations 4 and 5)

The OPR advises that the policy objectives regarding the preparation of a joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) for Athlone be strengthened to emphasise the incorporation of the wider town environs into one overall planning framework for the Regional Growth Centre, and that the preparation of the UAP will be informed by a local transport plan and prioritised in the planning authority’s work programme with a specified timeframe for delivery. The OPR considers that the policy objectives supporting the preparation of a local area plan for Mullingar should clarify that the local area plan will be informed by a local / area-based transport plan and that the LAP will be prioritised in the planning authority’s work programme.
3.2.10 Chief Executive Response
(OPR Observations 4 and 5)

With regard to the Urban Area Plan for Athlone, it is acknowledged that this plan will take account of the four local area plans contained within the Athlone Town Development Plan together with the Monksland Bellanamullia LAP. It is noted that CPO’s 2.3 and 10.8 makes provision for a Joint Transport Plan for Athlone to be undertaken in conjunction with Roscommon County Council and relevant stakeholders. The preparation of an Area Based Transport Plan for Athlone is currently underway. With regard to Mullingar, it is noted that CPO 10.9 provides for the preparation of an area based transport plan for the town. Recognition should be included as part of the plan that these plans will inform any land use framework plan for their respective towns.

3.2.11 Glasson
Reference is made to the zoning of land outside the development boundary of Glasson in the submission for which the OPR consider that there is no planning justification.

(OPR Recommendation 4)

The OPR considers that there is no justification for rezoning further land for residential purposes outside the current development boundary of Glasson and requests that the Planning Authority remove the Proposed Residential zoning on the southern approach road to Glasson.

3.2.12 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Recommendation 4)

Glasson is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site outside the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of Glasson, considering the existence of alternative suitable sites within the existing village envelope.

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 form and character. It is considered that the zoning in this instance constitutes a piecemeal extension to the settlement and as such it is recommended that the lands in question be removed from the zoning envelope.
3.2.13 Compact Growth and Regeneration

The OPR commends the Planning Authority in securing both URDF and RRDF funding and for the emphasis on compact growth, regeneration and policies supporting active land management in the plan.

(OPR Observation 6)

The Planning Authority is requested to provide details of how it proposes to balance the development of greenfield sites and rural housing in the open countryside with brownfield / infill and back land sites, to ensure that the development plan satisfies the requirements of the NPF in particular NPO 3. This should include mechanisms such as the preparation of site development briefs, use of compulsory acquisition and development incentives. Measures to monitor the development of greenfield land and rural housing in the open countryside versus brownfield / infill and back land development over the plan period should also be included.

(OPR Observation 7)

The planning authority is requested to provide further information to demonstrate that the draft development plan can achieve the national and regional policy objectives in respect of compact growth and the residential densities envisaged for Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns in particular.

Concern is raised regarding the number of sites zoned consolidation having regard to the availability of infill and backland sites for development.

(OPR Observation 8)

Justification is sought for increasing the quantum of land zoned Consolidation Site or extending same outside the current development envelope with regard to Kilbeggan and Castlepollard. Further justification is sought with regard to the zoning of additional land to Proposed Residential at the edge or outside current development boundaries in Castlepollard, Clonmellon, Collinstown, Delvin and Rochfortbridge.

3.2.14 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Observation 6)

In order to promote the development of brownfield / infill and back land sites, it is recommended that policy be included as part of the Plan which supports the implementation of mechanisms such as the preparation of site development briefs, use of compulsory acquisition of lands and development incentives. Further, policy to monitor the development of greenfield land and rural housing in the
open countryside versus brownfield / infill and back land development over the plan period should also be included.

Regeneration is the one of the cross-cutting themes of the Plan. Accordingly, considerable emphasis has been placed on the regeneration of underutilised infill and brownfield lands within settlements in order to achieve compact economic growth and to counteract unsustainable urban sprawl. In this regard, a number of key opportunity sites have been identified in Castlemartin, Kinnegad and Kilbeggan for comprehensive redevelopment over the lifetime of the plan. Objectives have been included in the plan to ensure that development proposals on such lands are accompanied by a site development brief/masterplan. Whilst reference is made in the plan to the availability of Rural Regeneration Development Funding, it is acknowledged that policy could be strengthened to reflect the existing regeneration programme.

(OPR Observation 7)

With regard to the application of appropriate densities in both the Self Sustaining Growth Towns and Self Sustaining Towns, the Planning Authority took cognisance of the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) in determining density assumptions. A density range of 20-30 houses per hectare has been prescribed for these settlements in line with said Guidelines and having consideration to the limited extent and configuration of lands zoned on the ground together having regard to the existing character of development in the area.

(OPR Observation 8)

The plan makes provision for a number of small scale, mainly incremental infill plots termed “consolidation sites” comprising of a mix of both brownfield and greenfield lands in a number of settlements. The Council will favour and promote the development of such sites for residential, community, and, if deemed appropriate, mixed use purposes or a combination thereof. Typically, consolidation sites constitute prime under-utilised/ brownfield lands located close to the town centre and accordingly have considerable development potential. Promotion of development on such sites is encouraged to achieve effective density, consolidation and compact growth and to target the reversal of rural decline in the core of small towns which are stated objectives of the NPF.

In the case of Kilbeggan, a single site is zoned Consolidation located close to the town centre. The site has been identified as an Opportunity Site in Section 8.3.2.10 of the Plan. It is stated in the plan that the site offers the potential for the delivery of a mixed-use scheme to strengthen the commercial base of the town, together with the provision of residential development, taking advantage of the site’s prime location in the town centre with potential pedestrian and vehicular connections to the Main Street and Mullingar Road. It is further noted that the Westmeath Retail Strategy 2019-2026 has identified this location as a significant backland development opportunity site which, with the provision of direct physical links to Main Street, provides the potential for consolidation of the retail offer of the town centre. Policy RP32 of the Westmeath Retail Strategy 2019-2026 refers.
With regard to Castlepollard, a tract of land adjoining the R395 was previously zoned consolidation site in the CDP 2014-2020. This zoning has been replicated in the Draft CDP 2021-2027 and has been further extended to reflect the situation on the ground in order to facilitate more comprehensive development at this location with provision for links to zoned backland areas off the R394, thus consolidating prime backlands close to the town core.

In terms of the quantum of proposed residential zoned in a number of settlements, the Core Strategy sets out the population targets and broad housing requirements to cater for Westmeath over the Plan period 2021-2027. In this regard, the housing strategy establishes a total housing target for the county of 4,983 units over the plan period 2021-2027, the equivalent of 712 units per annum. Provision must be included to provide for natural growth as a viable alternative to unplanned growth, including in open countryside. In addition, accommodating scenarios for specific housing requirements such as OPD’s must be provided. As set out in National Policy Objectives 6 and 7, the NPF seeks to strengthen and diversify rural towns to be a focus for local housing and employment growth. The inclusion of said lands within these priority settlements is therefore considered appropriate.

The Planning Authority is required to meet their statutory obligations by ensuring that sufficient and suitable land is zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, to meet the requirements of the housing strategy and to ensure that a scarcity of such land does not occur at any time during the period of the development plan. Such an approach will negate the need for unplanned material contravention scenarios as previously encountered due to the absence of available suitable lands for development.

With regard to Castlepollard, an area of land has been zoned “Proposed Residential” to the east of the town in order to facilitate the completion of the existing Kingscourt residential estate (permission in place) with provision of additional connectivity to lands fronting the L-57527. The limited lands zoned “Proposed Residential” along the R395-143 has been identified for self-build plots in accordance with RPO 4.78 of the EMRA RSES, which provides for the development of serviced sites to create ‘build your own home’ opportunities and thus provide a viable alternative to housing in the open countryside.

With regard to Clonmellon (only c.3ha zoned residential in total within the envelope), a limited extent land off the N52 has been zoned “Proposed Residential” which will facilitate the extension of adjoining residential estate to the east and consolidate the development of housing at this location close to the settlement core. The proposed zoning is be compatible with the mixed use zoning along Main St.

In the case of Collinstown, the residential zoning to the west of the settlement has been identified to facilitate the completion of an existing residential estate currently under construction at this location. The proposed residential zoning to the east of the L-173 will consolidate residential zoning on this infill site and will be compatible with adjoining residential uses.

With regard to Delvin (only c.5ha zoned residential in total within the envelope), the limited residential zoning to the south of the settlement will facilitate the expansion of adjoining residential scheme to the west and provide for compatible development on this infill site in the context of residential zoned lands east and west of the subject site.
In the case of Rochfortbridge (only c.5.4ha zoned residential in total within the envelope), the zoning within this settlement has been significantly reduced and consolidated under the Draft CDP. The residential zoning to the southwest of the settlement is considered infill with direct access to the Main St and thus will consolidate development at this location. The plot to the southeast is small scale and located within the established development envelope of the town. It is considered that the northern plot which is located adjacent to settlement core also provides for the consolidation of residential development at this location.

3.2.15 Tiered approach to zoning
The OPR suggests that the draft development plan and accompanying documents do not refer to the tiered approach to zoning (TAZ) as prescribed in the NPF. In addition, it is submitted that the plan is not accompanied by an infrastructural assessment report. Only lands which are fully serviceable within the life of the plan should be included.

(OPR Recommendation 5)

It is recommended that the planning authority provide an infrastructural assessment report and consult with the relevant infrastructure and services providers, including concerning infrastructural and capacity constraints for the key settlements and the availability of services on specific proposed zoned lands, or the realistic potential to provide (and cost of providing) services to specific proposed zoned lands, with a particular emphasis on wastewater and water services.

3.2.16 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Recommendation 5)

The Planning Authority engaged comprehensively with Irish Water (IW) in the preparation of the Draft Plan. In the absence of updated Development Plan Guidelines, the advice from both IW and the Council’s Water Services Department was used to inform zoning decisions.

The NPF standardised methodology that addresses the differentiation between zoned land that is available for development and zoned land that requires significant further investment in services for infrastructure for development to be realised was also considered in determining land use zonings.

In this regard, the Draft Plan indicates that lands have only been identified for development where they are able to connect to existing development services, i.e. road and footpath access including public lighting, foul sewer drainage, surface water drainage and water supply, for which there is service capacity available, and can therefore accommodate new development. These lands are also positioned within the existing built-up footprint of established settlements or contiguous to existing developed lands.
3.2.17 Wind Energy

It is acknowledged that the draft plan contains broad policy support for renewable energy use and generation. The OPR, however, considers policy objective CPO 10.132 to be contrary to government policy on wind energy development having regard to Ministerial guidance on wind farm development and in particular the inclusion of ‘onerous’ separation distances between wind turbines and residential dwellings.

(OPR Recommendation 6)

The planning authority is required to remove policy objective CPO 10.132 in its entirety from Chapter 10 of the draft development plan as the inclusion of such mandatory separation distances between wind turbines and residential dwellings would restrict the potential for wind farm development in the county, would undermine other policy objectives supporting wind farm development and be contrary to national policy and Ministerial guidance on wind farm development.

Concern is raised that the draft plan does not outline how the implementation of the plan will contribute to realising overall national targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource.

(OPR Recommendation 7)

The planning authority is required to indicate how the implementation of the development plan over its effective period will contribute to realising overall national targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource (in megawatts).

While the OPR supports the policy intent in CPO 10.135, it recommends that the definition included for industrial scale / large-scale energy production projects be deleted in the absence of national definition of such developments.

(OPR Recommendation 8)

The planning authority is required to amend policy objective CPO 10.135 to delete the definition for industrial scale / large-scale wind energy production projects.

3.2.18 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Recommendation 6)

In relation to the assessment of wind energy developments, it should be noted that there are a number of Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by Government Departments as per Section 28...
of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Planning Authorities are required to ensure consistency of development plans with any specific planning policy requirements specified in guidelines issued.

In this regard, Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines were issued, in December 2019, for public consultation. The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country for the treatment of planning applications for wind energy developments. The guidelines were also prepared within a wider national and EU energy policy context in line with binding EU and international obligations on Ireland to play its part in tackling both the causes and effects of climate change. As such, the Draft Plan also recognises the importance of wind energy, in addition to other renewable energy sources, in achieving national targets in relation to reducing fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions.

The following are included in the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines:

- A setback requirement for visual amenity purposes of 4 times the tip height to be applied between a wind turbine and the nearest point of the curtilage of any residential property in the vicinity of the proposed development, subject to a mandatory minimum setback of 500 metres.
- That assessments of noise are based on best international practice on wind turbine noise control including the Institute of Acoustics Good Practice Guides, WHO Guidelines and a procedure for the assessment of low frequency noise complaints.
- That a noise limit, referred to as a Relative Rated Noise Limit (RRNL) in the range of 35 – 43 dB(A), while not exceeding the background noise level by more than 5dB(A) with an upper limit of 43 dB(A). This is in line with the “preferred draft approach” announced by DHPCLG and DCCAE on 13th June 2017. The noise limits in the Draft Guidelines are more onerous that the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines and afford a higher level of protection to people who live in the vicinity of any future wind farm developments.
- Include a policy of zero shadow flicker and recommend planning authorities or An Bord Pleanála to impose condition(s) to ensure that no existing dwelling or other affected property will experience shadow flicker as a result of the wind energy development.
- Require a Community Report, which must set out how wind energy developers intend to provide an opportunity for local communities to benefit from proposed wind developments through community investment/ownership or through benefits and dividends. Models to support community participation will be implemented as part of the new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). The two main methods of community investment indicated have the potential to offer significant socio-economic benefits including employment, supply-chain, cheaper energy, new revenue streams, energy use reduction and carbon footprint reduction.

Having regard to the submission of the OPR it is acknowledged that the separation distances as set out under the Draft Plan are contrary to that set out under the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines, December 2019 (and the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines) and as such the inclusion of specific separation distances under the Draft Plan is considered premature pending the adoption of said Guidelines.
In term of the contribution of the Plan to realising targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation, the Plan is committed to reducing carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

The Draft Plan recognises the contribution that wind and solar energy make to meeting national renewable energy targets. In this regard, the plan strongly supports the development of renewable energy resources. Details are included setting out since the adoption of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020, that the Council has granted permission for a number of solar farms within the County. The total number of photovoltaic panels permitted to date, on a total site area of approximate 330 hectares, which when operational will generate renewable energy output of approximately 130 MW. It is further noted that consent has been granted for a windfarm of 13 turbines at Coole with potential to generate 50MW of renewable energy.

It is acknowledged in the plan that the Council is open to new and innovative renewable energy sources and technological solutions to addressing climate change. In this regard, the Council will seek to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to progress the transition to green energy.

Whilst the information requested is not available at this time, enhanced policy should be provided which commits to working with key stakeholders in the carrying out of an assessment of how the implementation of the Plan will contribute to realising overall national targets on renewable energy and climate change, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource.

3.2.19 Guidance Note on Core Strategies

Additional information is requested in terms of the quantum of land zoned for housing in the Draft Plan.

The OPR recommends that the planning authority provide the following information in table 2.8:
• The quantum in hectares of proposed zoned land for Mixed Use and Expanded Settlement Centre for each settlement and figures for the estimated housing yield that may arise from the redevelopment or infill of these areas.
• The quantity in hectares and the estimated housing yield in respect of further infill development on land zoned Established Residential.
• The quantum in hectares of land zoned in the previous development plan exclusively or primarily for housing. Refer to Appendix 2 on page 14 of the Guidance Note on Core Strategies.
• Figures for the anticipated housing requirement (using the relevant occupancy rates from the housing strategy) should be provided for each settlement over the plan period.
• Clarification that the figures in the column ‘Land for residential in this plan up to 2027 (Ha)’ relate to the zoning objective Proposed Residential.
• Clarification that the figures for infill and brownfield land within each settlement form part of the overall figures for ‘Land for residential in this plan up to 2027 (Ha)’ and do not provide supplementary land for residential development.

3.2.20 Chief Executive Response
(ORP Recommendation 9)

In relation the issues raised in the submission by the OPR, it should be noted that the Core Strategy has been guided by the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government ‘Guidance Note on Core Strategies’ (2010), taking into account relevant changes brought about through the publication of the NPF and RSES and in particular, the requirement to prepare a Housing Needs Demand Assessment. Whilst it is noted that the terminology associated with said Guidance Note and requirement to demonstrate consistency with national guidance are no longer relevant given the subsequent publication of the NPF and RSES, the intention of the Note is recognised and as such details should be provided in this regard. As such, details should be included in respect of the housing yields associated with zoned lands as part of the Core Strategy Table and clarification provided in relation to residential, brownfield and infill lands.

It is considered that a separate table be included alongside the Core Strategy Table which sets out, in respect of the area in the development plan already zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses; (i) the size of the area in hectares, and (ii) the proposed number of housing units to be included in the area, in accordance with the provisions of s.10 2(c) of the Act.

As demonstrated by the table below, it should be noted that the lands zoned for Mixed Use (c. 6 residential units permitted on mixed use lands/year outside Athlone and Mullingar), Expanded Settlement Centre and Existing Residential have, based on previous experience, the capacity to deliver only nominal levels of residential growth over the lifetime of the Plan. In this regard, such lands are expected to provide capacity for a housing yield of c.15 units per year over the 6-year lifetime of the Plan, as indicated by the table below.
Given the rural character of the towns involved and the limited plot sizes (owing to population allocations) - the applied densities will not be practical to achieve when considering all other requirements as set out under the sustainable residential development guidelines (save for Athlone and Mullingar which provide for the assembly of sites of a significant scale).

Furthermore, the consideration of these lands is balanced against lands which have been specifically identified for the provision of serviced sites to create ‘build your own home’ opportunities. These lands comprise of a cumulative area of 4.11 hectares and Table 8.2 of the Core Strategy applied a density of 25 residential units per hectare resulting in a housing yield of 103 housing units for these lands, whereas the actual capacity of such lands is c. 20 housing units having regard to the location of the sites, site configurations, pattern of development in the vicinity and nature of housing envisaged. Such scenarios balance against the limited housing (based on past trends) that is expected to be delivered on Mixed Use, Established Residential and Expanded Settlement Centre lands.
### Quantum & Housing Yield of Established Residential, Expanded Settlement Centre & Mixed Use Zoned Lands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Established Residential</th>
<th>Expanded Settlement Centre</th>
<th>Mixed Use</th>
<th>Housing Yield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self Sustaining Growth Towns</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha</td>
<td>Ha</td>
<td>Ha</td>
<td>Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlepollard</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moate</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinnegad</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilbeggan</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self Sustaining Towns</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochfortbridge</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killucan /Rathwire</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Towns &amp; Villages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clonmellon</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrrellspass</td>
<td>1.65</td>
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<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delvin</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.21 Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005)

With regard to rural nodes, the OPR supports the principle of not zoning land for specific uses in the unserviced rural settlements. However, it is submitted that development boundaries applied to unserviced rural settlements and nodes do not reflect the extent of the established settlement on the ground.

(OPR Observation 9)

It is submitted that development boundaries applied to un-serviced rural settlements and nodes should reflect the extent of the established settlement and avoid ribbon development consistent with the guidance in Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005). Further, the Office advises the planning authority to consider alternative ways to graphically represent the actual rural node and areas where rural consultation would be supported.

With regard to the rural housing policy the OPR considers that the inclusion of policy objectives CPO 9.1 – Areas Under Strong Urban Influence, CPO 9.21 – Water Catchment Areas and CPO 9.22 – Areas of High Amenity which support applications for rural housing for persons with family ties to the land are inconsistent with the findings from the Flemish Decree ECJ case and NPO 19 of the NPF.

(OPR Recommendation 10)

Having regard to the Flemish Decree ECJ case and NPO 19 it is requested to amend policy objectives CPO 9.1 – Areas Under Strong Urban Influence, CPO 9.21 – Water Catchment Areas and CPO 9.22 – Areas of High Amenity to remove the references to bloodline and family ties as policy support for applications for rural housing and to derive a policy framework that is instead broadly consistent with NPO 19.

(OPR Recommendation 11)

The planning authority is required to amend policy objectives CPO 9.1 - Areas Under Strong Urban Influence and CPO 9.2 – Structurally Weak Areas to ensure they are consistent with NPO 19 and the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005) and that the proposed changes to CPO 9.1 are consistent with the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area. Policy objectives CPO 9.1 and 9.2 should also include requirements in respect of appropriate design criteria for rural housing and the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

3.2.22 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Observation 9)

The comments of the OPR in respect of rural nodes are acknowledged and in this regard rural nodes comprise a defined network of small, generally unserviced settlements throughout the County which provide an alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside. They are designated for limited development at a sustainable scale through the development of clusters. A range of means was considered with regard to the depiction of the rural nodes. It is considered that the proposed nodes
are in accordance with the “Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines” (2005). Furthermore, a commitment has been set out under the Plan at CPO 9.5 to monitor and review the rural nodes across the lifetime of the Plan and it is recommended that this policy be expanded to provide for a reassessment of the extent and representation of the nodes involved.

(OPR Recommendations 10 and 11)

In terms of rural housing policy, it should be noted that the European Commission issued an infringement notice against Ireland in 2007 in relation to the “local needs criteria” in the 2005 Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities. This infringement notice was subsequently deferred pending the outcome of an infringement case taken against Belgium, now referred to as the Flemish Decree case and on which the European Court of Justice (ECJ) delivered its Judgement in 2013.

In its 2013 Judgement, the ECJ ruled that the Flemish Decree (requirement to demonstrate “a sufficient connection” to an area) constituted an unjustified restriction on fundamental freedoms under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (the EU Treaty), in particular that it breached article 43 of the EU Treaty on the freedom of movement of citizens. In order to avoid the up-scaling of the previous infringement notice against Ireland and referral of the matter to the ECJ for determination, the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government have indicated their intention to revise the 2005 Guidelines to ensure that rural housing policies and objectives contained in local authority development plans comply with article 43 of the EU Treaty on the freedom of movement of citizens.

In the interim, there is an obligation on planning authorities, in line with Circular Letter PL 2/2017 dated 31 May 2017, to ensure that existing 2005 Rural Housing Guidelines Policy specifically to the application of the “local housing needs residency criteria” remain in place pending the conclusion of the national policy review process and issue of advice otherwise by the Department.

Under Circular Letter PL 2/2017 Planning Authorities are required to “defers amending their rural housing policy/local housing need criteria in existing statutory development plans either by way of the cyclical review or variation procedures”. This is considered prudent in order to avoid planning authorities adopting different approaches on the matter in the interim”.

Accordingly, having regard to Circular Letter PL 2/2017, in advance of revised guidance on rural generated housing, and in the absence of a comprehensive assessment of the need to tailor a wider approach to rural housing policy having regard to the provisions of the National Planning Framework, it is considered that the policy as set out under the Draft Plan should be amended to reflect that as set out in the current Plan until such time as appropriate guidance is issued and that an objective be included to review rural housing policy in line with Development Plan or other Guidelines in the area having regard to NPO 19.
With regard to reference to siting and design criteria for rural housing referred to in NPO 19 in respect of policy objectives CPO 9.1 and 9.2, Section 9.5.1 of the Draft Plan provides guidance in relation to the siting and design of rural housing as follows:

**9.5.1 Rural Housing Siting and Design**

“Dwellings and structures in the countryside need to be sited and designed to impact minimally on their setting. The utilisation of existing features, natural and manmade, can assist in integrating new development into its established setting. All rural development will be expected to adhere to this basic principle. Design standards are outlined in Chapter 16 Development Management standards of the plan and supplementary planning guidance contained in the Westmeath Rural Design Guidelines (2005) or any revisions thereof. Furthermore, the Landscape Character Assessment prepared for the county assesses the sensitivity and capacity of the different character areas to absorb and facilitate rural residential development”.

“Where a number of houses are proposed in an area, (e.g. a number from the same family), it is preferable that these would be clustered, well set back from the public road and served by a single entrance rather than set out in a line along a roadside. However, these clusters must be of a small scale.”

The Plan also provides, at CPO 9.20, a commitment to undertake a review of the Westmeath Rural Housing Design Guidelines.

Such guidance is further supplemented by a list of criteria used to assess development proposals for rural housing outlined in CPO 16.3 of the plan.

Notwithstanding the above, any future review of rural housing policy will be carried out to reflect the specific requirements of the NPF as set out in the submission of the OPR.

**3.2.23 Landscape and Lake Amenities**

The OPR considers that there is insufficient justification to support the proposed changes to policy objective CPO 9.22 and the proposed deletion of areas designated as high amenity areas in the vicinity of Lough Lene, Lough Derravaragh, Castlepollard and Multyfarnham and recommends that the planning authority amend policy objective CPO 9.22 to ensure the overall policy intent for high amenity areas is not undermined and retain the current designations of high amenity areas and remove the proposed deletions from the draft development plan in light of the issues raised in the SEA Environmental Report.

(OPR Recommendation 12)
Amend policy objective CPO 9.22 to ensure the overall policy intent for high amenity areas to retain the current designations as per the 2014-2020 Development Plan and remove the proposed deletions from the draft development plan.

### 3.2.24 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Recommendation 12)

With regard to CPO 9.22, which concerns local housing need in Areas of High Amenity, the provisions of Circular Letter PL 2/2017 above also apply. With respect to the proposed deletion of areas designated as high amenity areas in the vicinity of Lough Lene, Lough Derravaragh, Castlepollard and Multyfarnham, the concerns of the OPR are recognised and it is acknowledged that these amendments dilute the level of protection afforded to High Amenity Areas in the County, with the potential to result in adverse effects upon the factors for which these areas of landscape have been designated. Furthermore, the piecemeal erosion of these important High Amenity designations will reduce the protection of the overall landscape and undermine the long-term integrity of these important assets (designated High Amenity Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Natural Heritage Areas, reflecting their significant environmental status). As such it is considered that the previous High Amenity land deletions be reinserted to the Plan.

### 3.2.25 Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018)

The OPR acknowledges that the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone and Key Town of Mullingar have the greatest potential for increased building heights and that both settlements will be subject to future local / urban area plans and notes the broad policy support for higher densities and increased building height contained in the draft development plan and that the settlements of Athlone and Mullingar will be subject to future local / urban area plans.

### 3.2.26 (OPR Observation 10)

Having regards to section 28 guidelines on apartment development and building height in particular, and Regional Policy Objective 3.3, the OPR considers that there is an opportunity to include a more explicit policy objective that locations for increased building height will be identified as part of the Urban Area Plan and Local Area Plan to be prepared for Athlone and Mullingar respectively.

### 3.2.27 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Observation 10)
It is noted that the optimum location for taller buildings is within Athlone and Mullingar, which will be subject to an Urban Area Plan and Local Area Plan respectively. In this regard, it is considered that CPO 7.28 should be supplemented to include that locations for increased building height will be identified as part of the UAP and LAP to be prepared for Athlone and Mullingar. This is particularly pertinent in the context of URDF funding which is available for these designated settlements.

3.2.28 The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)

The OPR considers that the planning authority should review the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) in Volume 5 of the draft development plan and the assumptions informing and conclusion comment and consequential zoning decisions for each settlement. In this regard, the consultants appear to have inappropriately relied on information from the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) and benefitting lands to inform the SFRA.

(OPR Recommendation 13)

The OPR requests that the planning authority determines if there is sufficient information to inform the land use zoning decisions in each settlement or if further detailed analysis is required. If any land area is to be zoned where there may be a risk of flooding, the justification test must be correctly applied and supplied within the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The Office of Public Works should be consulted in relation to the matters raised in this recommendation.

A site-specific flood risk assessment will be required for specific land and zonings in Castlepollard (e.g. undeveloped Enterprise & Employment lands to the east); Clonmellon (Enterprise & Employment lands to the south); Collinstown (Enterprise & Employment lands to the south); Kilbeggan (western drain); Milltownpass (Proposed Residential to the west); Glasson (extended Mixed Use lands); Killucan / Rathwire (Community, Educational & Institutional land to the southwest); Kinnegad (Proposed Residential land to the west); and, Rochfortbridge (e.g. land adjoining watercourse). It is noted that Moate (Community, Educational & Institutional land to the south) CPO 8.130 and CPO 8.186 have such policies included. The OPR suggests including reference to CPO 8.186 on Objective Map 13.

(OPR Observation 11 and 12)

The OPR advises the planning authority to review the policy objectives requiring a site-specific flood risk assessment in the written statement to ensure that all locations requiring site specific flood risk assessment are included as specific policy objectives consistent with what is recommended in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in Volume 5 of the draft plan.
The planning authority is requested to clarify whether any land proposed for rezoning for sensitive uses is affected by the 1:100 flood risk, for example land at the northern end of Glasson or the Proposed Residential zoning southeast of Rochfortbridge.

3.2.29 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Recommendation 13; Observation 11 and Observation 12)

Further to submission from both the OPR and the OPW, the Council has engaged with the OPW with respect to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). Reference was made to the type of flood mapping data used to inform the SFRA, in particular the use of PFRA mapping. The Council understands that a second generation PFRA mapping is being prepared by the OPW, however the OPW advised that this dataset will not be available until 2021. It is further noted that many of locations referenced relate to established town centre sites which are already developed.

Further to a review of the SFRA on foot of the submission, revisions have been recommended with regard to the zoning of a number of sites referenced, namely in Glasson, Rochfortbridge and Milltownpass, in order to reflect the risk of flooding.

In the case of Glasson, the zoning of the site identified in the submission to the north of the village should be amended from mixed use to open space.

In the case of Rochfortbridge, the zoning of the site zoned Proposed Residential to the southeast of Rochfortbridge should be amended to open space.

In the case of Milltownpass, the extent of the site zoned proposed residential to the west of the settlement which is subject to flood risk should be revised under the zoning and reverted to open space.

The further review of flooding associated with settlements is set out in response to the submission of the OPW and in Sections 23.15.12, 23.7.8 and 23.13.6.

3.2.30 Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)

The OPR considers that there is potential to strengthen and expand on the policy objectives for national roads to ensure that the draft development plan is consistent with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012).

(OPR Recommendation 14)

It is requested that the planning authority strengthen and expand on the policy objectives for national roads to ensure that the draft development plan is consistent with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012), and in particular the principles of protecting the
strategic function of national roads and the presumption against large out of town retail centres located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads/motorways, and the policies contained in section 2.5 – Required Development Plan Policy on Access to National Roads and section 2.6 – Exceptional Circumstances of the said guidelines. The planning authority is advised to consult with Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

3.2.31 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Recommendation 14)

It should be noted that the Draft Plan, at CPO 10.3, supports the implementation of Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012.

COP 10.42 further seeks to ‘maintain and protect the safety, capacity and efficiency of National Roads and associated junctions in accordance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG, (2012) and the Trans-European Networks (TEN-T) Regulations’ and CPO 10.43 seeks to ‘protect national roads from inappropriate access in order to protect the substantial investment in the national road network, to preserve the carrying capacity and safety of the National Road Network and to prevent the premature obsolescence of the network’.

In this regard, it should be noted that the plan and its associated retail strategy does not advocate for the delivery of large out-of-town retail centres located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads/motorways. In this regard the Council is committed to early engagement with TII in respect of Plans or projects that are located in proximity to such infrastructure.

3.2.32 Other Pertinent Matters

The OPR consider that there is no planning justification for the inclusion of policy objective CPO 8.103 (link road bypass in Kinnegad).

(OPR Recommendation 15)

It is requested to provide strategic justification for the inclusion of policy objective CPO 8.103 which supports the construction of a link road / bypass linking the Killucan Road with the R446 in Kinnegad which should also take account of the proposed increase in land zoned for Enterprise & Employment at this location. In this regard, the OPR notes that the SEA Environmental Report states that there is no planning justification for the link road.

The OPR notes the inclusion of zoned land to the west of Tyrrellspass in proximity to a NHA.

(OPR Observation 13)
The planning authority is requested to review the proposed land use zonings and development boundary on the western side of Tyrrellspass to ensure that it does not encroach on or have implications for the existing Natural Heritage Area to the west of the settlement. The planning authority should consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of this observation.

3.2.33 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Recommendation 15)

3.2.34 Kinnegad – policy for link road bypass

Section 8.6.7 of the Draft Plan encourages future developments to provide for greater permeability and connectivity within the town.

Kinnegad is served well by the existing road network with direct connectivity to the M6. From a traffic perspective, it is acknowledged that there is no justification to bypass the Main St and accordingly it is considered that the proposal is premature within the timeframe of the Plan and should be removed from the Plan.

(OPR Observation 13)

3.2.35 Tyrrellspass Natural Heritage Area

With regard to the proximity of zoned land in Tyrrellspass to Cloncrow Bog NHA, it is noted that NPWS in their submission to the Draft Plan advise that any proposed zoning of development near to the NHA should ensure that there are no negative impacts on the NHAI. It should be noted that the zoning in question does not encroach on the NHA.

3.2.36 Miscellaneous

All terminology used in the Plan should be consistent with national and regional policy.

(OPR Observation 14)

Remove the outdated terms and update the terminology in the retail strategy in line with national and regional policy.

(OPR Observation 15)
The planning authority is advised to consider overlaying the flood risk maps on the zoning maps for each settlement. The OPR considers that this would provide for greater transparency regarding flood risk and the need for site specific flood risk assessments outlined in the SFRA in Volume 5.

(OPR Observation 16)

It is suggested that the planning authority consider using alternative colours for the land use zoning objectives on the settlement plans that are more consistent with commonly accepted practice.

3.2.37 Chief Executive Response

(OPR Observation 14)

Where appropriate, terminology should be updated to reflect national and regional policy. It should be noted that the Westmeath Retail Strategy 2019-2026 was prepared at a time when this terminology was correct. Notwithstanding, Appendix 4 of the plan will be corrected in this regard together with the SEA and SFRA.

(OPR Observation 15)

It is acknowledged that the overlay of flooding risk maps over the zoning map for each settlement would provide greater clarity and transparency. Whilst the flooding datasets are available on the zoning maps in the SFRA, the Planning Authority is committed to ensuring the finalised maps in Volume 2 Book of Maps will include same.

(OPR Observation 16)

The Planning Authority notes comments made in relation to adopting alternative colours for land use zoning objectives. Consideration will be given to using alternative zoning colours in the preparation of the final Plan.
3.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE OPR 1.1

Insert new CPO after CPO 11.8 as follows:

To review the outcomes of the Development Plan Guidelines, as adopted, and take any steps considered necessary to align with the approach to climate action recommended in the guidelines over the lifetime of the Plan

(OPR Observation 1)

CE OPR 1.2

Insert new CPO as follows:

Work with the NTA to undertake analysis in relation to modal shift between settlements and derive a realistic modal change target for the county

(OPR Recommendation 1)

CE OPR 1.3

Update Development Management Standards in Table 16.2 to reflect ‘Maximum’ rather than ‘Minimum’ car parking standards in Table 16.2 of the Plan.

(OPR Recommendation 1)

CE OPR 1.4

Update CPO 3.13 as follows:

Support the ongoing monitoring and review of the HNDA, over the lifetime of the Plan, in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government having consideration to the outcomes of any revised Development Plan Guidelines, and where appropriate, take any steps considered necessary to align with the approach set out in these guidelines.

(OPR Observation 2)
CE OPR 1.5

Insert new CPO after 3.13:

To support the development of quality residential schemes with a range of housing options having regard to the standards, principles and any specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) set out in the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009); Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (2018) and the ‘Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (2018)

(OPR Recommendation 2)

CE OPR 1.6

Insert an amendment to Section 3.6 Chapter 3 as follows:

As with housing generally, the scale and extent of apartment development should increase in relation to proximity to core urban centres and other relevant factors in line with the standards, principles and any specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) set out in the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (2018) and the ‘Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (2018)

(OPR Recommendation 2)

CE OPR 1.7

Insert an amendment to Policy Objective CPO7.28 as follows:

Facilitate higher and increased building heights at suitable locations and in accordance with settlement hierarchy in line with Specific Planning Policy Requirement (SSPR) 1 of the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (2018)

CPO 7.28 to be referenced in both Section 2.9 and 2.10 of the plan.

Amend CPO 16.2 as follows:

Achieve the delivery of high-quality built environments ensuring that development is designed to a high standard in line with the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Best Practice Urban Design Manual (DoECLG 2009), the ‘Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (2018) and Specific Planning Policy
Requirements (SPPRs) 1 – 4 (inclusive), the core strategy for the county and other planning considerations.

Amend 16.19 as follows:

Proposals for new apartment schemes should be designed in line with design criteria as set out in the 2018 Ministerial Guidelines - Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (or any subsequent update) and Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPRs) 1 – 9 (inclusive)

(OPR Recommendation 2)

CE OPR 1.8

Insert text to clarify that the UAP will consider existing action/local area plans for inclusion as part of an overall planning framework for the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone.

Update Text at 2.9 Regional Growth Centre – Athlone as follows:

An Area Based Transport Plan prepared jointly by Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils and which includes strategic road links within and surrounding Athlone shall also be prepared in collaboration with the relevant transport agencies. This shall promote Athlone as a sustainable transport hub, of national and regional importance and will inform the UAP review.

(OPR Observation 4 and 5)

CE OPR 1.9

Amend Map No. 25 to remove the plot zoned “Proposed Residential” on the southern approach to Glasson Village.

(OPR Recommendation 4)
CE OPR 1.10

Insert new CPO after CPO 7.25:

_In order to promote the development of brownfield / infill and back land sites, the Council will consider, in appropriate circumstances, the implementation of mechanisms such as the preparation of site development briefs, use of compulsory acquisition of lands and development incentives._

Insert new CPO after CPO 7.25

_Monitor the development of greenfield land and rural housing in the open countryside versus brownfield / infill and back land development over the plan period._

_(OPR Observation 6)_

CE OPR 1.11

Remove CPO 10.132 from the Plan as follows:

_Provide the following separation distances between wind turbines and residential dwellings:_

- **500 metres**, where height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 25 metres but does not exceed 50 metres.

- **1000 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 50 metres but does not exceed 100 metres.

- **1500 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 100 metres but does not exceed 150 metres.

- **More than 2000 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 150 metres.

_(OPR Recommendation 6)_

CE OPR 1.12

Insert new CPO after CPO 11.8
Work with key stakeholders to carry out an assessment of how the implementation of the Plan will contribute to realising overall national targets on renewable energy and climate change, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource.

(OPR Recommendation 7)

CE OPR 1.13

Update terminology associated with ‘Industrial Scale Wind Turbines’ to ‘taller commercial wind turbines’.

(OPR Recommendation 8)

CE OPR 1.14

Insert at Section 2.17, table and associated text in relation to the area in the development plan already zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses; (i) the size of the area in hectares, and (ii) the proposed number of housing units to be included in the area, in accordance with the provisions of s.102(c) of the Act.

Provide clarification as part of the core Strategy Table of:

- Figures for the anticipated housing requirement for each settlement over the plan period.
- Clarification that the figures in the column ‘Land for residential in this plan up to 2027 (Ha)’ relate to the zoning objective Proposed Residential.
- Clarification that the figures for infill and brownfield land within each settlement form part of the overall figures for ‘Land for residential in this plan up to 2027 (Ha)’ and do not provide supplementary land for residential development.

(OPR Recommendation 9)

CE OPR 1.15

Amend CPO 9.5 as follows:

Continue to monitor and review rural nodes in the County, across the lifetime of the Plan, in order to ensure compatibility with environmental protection objectives. This shall include a review of the extent and representation of each individual node where appropriate.

(OPR Observation 9)
CE OPR 1.16
Amended rural housing policy to reflect that as set out in the current Plan CDP 2014 – 2020.

CE OPR 1.17
Insert CPO after CPO 9.1 as follows:

In line with Circular Letter PL 2/2017, review rural housing policy in line with Development Plan or other relevant Guidelines issued by the Minister in this area having regard to NPO 19.

(OPR Recommendations 10 and 11)

CE OPR 1.18
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

(OPR Recommendation 12)

CE OPR 1.19
Amend CPO 7.28 as follows:

Facilitate higher and increased building heights at suitable locations and in accordance with the settlement hierarchy. In this regard, the locations for increased building height will be informed by a buildings height study and identified as part of the UAP and LAP to be prepared for Athlone and Mullingar respectively.

(OPR Observation 10)

CE OPR 1.20
In relation to Map No. 25 amend the zoning of the subject plot to the north of Glasson, from mixed use to open space.
CE OPR 1.21

In relation to Map No. 12, amend the zoning of the plot zoned Proposed Residential to the southeast of Rochfortbridge to open space.

CE OPR 1.22

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.

CE OPR 1.23

Amend CPO 8.186 as follows:

“New enterprise development should be located within a landscape network and demonstrate high quality architectural built form that contributes to a positive sense of place and distinctiveness.

Development proposals on land identified as being at risk of flooding shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009.”

(OPR Recommendation 13; OPR Observation 11; OPR Observation 12)

CE OPR 1.24

Insert CPO after CPO 10.48 as follows.

Continue to engage, at an early stage, with TII in respect of any plans or projects that are located in proximity to national road infrastructure.

(OPR Recommendation 14)

CE OPR 1.25

Omit CPO 8.103 from the plan as follows:

Support the construction of a link road between the Killucan Road L1015 and the roundabout at the junction of the R446-2 and N4-1120, thereby creating a bypass of the Main Street, Kinnegad (See Map 7).
CE OPR 1.26

Omit reference to CPO 8.103 in Map 7 of Volume 2 Book of Maps.

*(OPR Recommendation 15)*

CE OPR 1.27

Insert new CPO after CPO 8.249 as follows:

*Any proposal for development at these lands shall be accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment that considers ecological sensitivities, including those relating to the nearby Cloncrow Bog NHA, and the proposed design of any development. The Ecological Impact Assessment shall demonstrate the compliance of the proposal with the provisions of the Plan relating to biodiversity and flora and fauna; and that the NHA will not be adversely affected by the proposed development.*

CE OPR 1.28

Insert reference to the above (CE OPR 1.27) map based CPO regarding lands zoned proposed residential and community, educational and institutional lands to the west of Tyrrellspass on Map No. 19

*(OPR Observation 13)*

CE OPR 1.29

Omit references to “Linked Gateway” in Volumes 1, 3 and 5 and update associated text accordingly.

*(OPR Observation 14)*

CE OPR 1.30

Insert as part of the final Volume 2 Book of Maps an overlay of the flood risk maps over the land use zoning map for each settlement.

*(OPR Observation 15)*
3.4 Addendum - Overview of Explored Population Scenarios

Scenario 1: Alignment with Demographic Trajectory (Non Intervention Scenario)

**Addendum: Overview of Explored Population Scenarios**

**Scenario 1:** Alignment with Demographic Trajectory (Non Intervention Scenario)

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<td>36,560</td>
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<td>1.8%</td>
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The NPF Implementation Roadmap (p5) states that

“Scope for headroom, not exceeding 25%, can be considered to 2026 in those counties where projected population growth is projected to be at or above the national average baseline (i.e. Cork (City and County), Dublin (all four local authorities), Galway (City and County), Kildare, Limerick, Louth, Meath, Sligo, Waterford, Westmeath, and Wicklow”).

The Roadmap (p4) indicates that the published NPF/NDP national average baseline is 10.75% over 2016 to 2026, 15.3% over 2016 to 2031 and 23% over 2016 to 2040. It further states that in all individual counties where population growth is projected to be at or above the NPF/NDP national average baseline, provision shall be made to enable planning for aggregate growth within that county up to that figure for each Census year and related intercensal period i.e. to 2026 and, subject to review, 2031.

Scenario 1 utilises a projection of population developed using the Cohort Component Method (CCM). It is referred to as a ‘Non-Intervention’ scenario as it 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 CSO's highest migration assumption). Under this demographic based scenario, the growth of the county exceeds the NPF Roadmap county targets; with the population projected to increase by 19.2% between 2016-2026 to reach a population of 105,785. Between 2016-2031, the increase is anticipated to be 29.8%, with the county reaching a population of 115,219. These 2026 and 2031 population projections exceed the Roadmap county targets by 7.4% in 2026 and 12.4% in 2031. However, the specific RSES target for Athlone (i.e. a population of 30,000 by 2030) is not achieved under this scenario.

Scenario 2: Alignment with NPF - Distribution: Decline in rural to facilitate rest (Proportional Intervention A)

This scenario utilises an interpolated forecast of population and is called an 'intervention' scenario because it assumes a particular level of policy-based interaction (in this case – ensuring growth rates which are proportional to each tier of the settlement hierarchy).

Under this proportional intervention scenario (referred to as Scenario A), Athlone’s population will increase to achieve the 30,000 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 (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 in order to facilitate the above. Between 2021 and 2027, this scenario would see the population decrease by 5%. As such, while meeting county targets and the target in relation to Athlone, this scenario damaged rural viability and as such is contrary to the objectives of the NPF.

Specifically, National Policy Objective (NPO) 15, seeks to:

Support 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 and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities (NPF; p71)

**Scenario 3: Alignment with NPF - Distribution: Adjusted Settlement Graduation to 2026, then Further to 2031**

**Alignment with NPF - Distribution: Adjusted Settlement Graduation to 2026, then Further to 2031**

<table>
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Within this scenario, the RSES Athlone target is achieved. The growth across other settlements and the rural remainder is based on graduated non-intervention growth. This scenario also achieves the NPF (high) county population target of 102,500 by 2031. The overall impact of this is a significant
Overall reduction in growth in the rural remainder by 2027 (-11.8%), with an even greater reduction by 2031 (-26.7%). It is proposed that such an impact on the population of Westmeath’s rural communities is again contrary to National Policy Objective (NPO) 15 which seeks to arrest decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades.

**Scenario 4: Alignment with NPF - Alternate Distribution: Effectively no growth outside Tiers I & II (Proportional Intervention A)**

Alignment with NPF - Alternate Distribution: Effectively no growth outside Tiers I & II (Proportional Intervention A)

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Note: Mullingar’s growth is based on 80% of Athlone’s targeted 2031 Growth in other settlements and rural based on 1.7% of the absolute growth observed under non-intervention (variances due to % applied). In order to align with NPF.

Within Scenario 4, the NPF county population target (high) is achieved as is the RSES population target for Athlone (ie. 30,000 by 2030). Growth across the other settlements (excluding Athlone and Mullingar) and the rural remainder is based on 1.7% of the absolute growth observed under non-intervention (variances due to % applied). This is the maximum possible growth to sustain the RSES target for Athlone whilst still meeting the Roadmap targets. The impact of Scenario 4 is stagnant growth across all tiers except tiers 1 and 2 (Athlone and Mullingar). This would result in a pattern of growth which does not align with the envisaged spatial strategy set out within the RSES. Indeed, the RSES states:

The optimum spatial strategy combines the growth of Dublin and regional centres with a selected number of large self-sustaining settlements that have the assets and capacity to grow in a sustainable manner while minimising impacts on the receiving environment. This option offers the best...
opportunity to align services with population and economic growth, promote compact growth in urban settlements and make the best use of infrastructure including public transport thereby reducing transport emissions and improve regional accessibility (RSES, p31).

Tiers 3 and 4 of the Westmeath settlement hierarchy (Self Sustaining Growth Towns and Self Sustaining Towns) reflect this intention. Stagnant or no growth across these tiers (as occurs under Scenario 4) is contrary to the RSES and does not allow for a balanced and self-sustaining pattern of development across the county.

Scenario 4b: Alignment with NPF - Alternate Distribution: 25% factored in - Settlements Grow except Rural (Proportional Intervention A)

Alignment with NPF - Alternate Distribution: 25% incl. Settlements Grow Except Rural (Proportional Intervention A)

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Athlone growing RSES target. Mullingar’s growth based on 80% of Athlone’s.
Growth in other settlements and rural is based on graduated of the non-intervention growth.

Different % than current draft in order align with NPF – including 25% to 2026. Different to 2031 as well.

Within Scenario 4b, the NPF county population target (high) is achieved as is the RSES population target for Athlone (ie. 30,000 by 2030). An additional 25% headroom is being considered to 2026. Growth across the settlements (excluding Athlone and Mullingar) and the rural remainder is based on 100% of the growth observed under the non-intervention scenario (except variances are due to the % rate being split between 2016-2026 and 2026-2031). The impact of Scenario 4b is that settlements across all tiers except Tier VIII (rural) grow in line with the non-intervention scenario (variances; as above). However, the rural tier grows by just over 1.1%
to 2026 and then by -9.9% to 2031 in order to align with roadmap targets. This would result in a pattern of growth which does not align with the envisaged spatial strategy set out within the RSES. It is also contrary to National Policy Objective (NPO) 15 of the NPF which seeks to arrest decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades.

**Scenario 5: Alignment with NPF (except Athlone) - Distribution: Adjusted Settlement Graduation to 2026, then Further to 2031**

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<th>Census</th>
<th>Adjusted Graduation</th>
<th>Further Graduation</th>
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<td>4,737</td>
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<td>Milltownpass**</td>
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<td>Ballinabrack**</td>
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<td><strong>Total (excl. Athlone &amp; Mullingar)</strong></td>
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<td>51,726</td>
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</table>

Athlone growing to non-intervention scenario level. Mullingar’s growth based on 80% of Athlone’s. Growth in other settlements and rural is based on graduated of the non-intervention growth. Different % than current draft in order align with NPF – including 25% to 2026, Different to 2031 as well.

Scenario 5 aligns with the NPF county population target (high) by 2031. However, the RSES population target for Athlone (ie. 30,000 by 2031) is not achieved and the town grows to a non-intervention scenario level. Growth across the other settlements and rural remainder is based on graduated non-intervention growth. Within this scenario, the rural remainder grows between 2016 and 2027, but declines over a longer period between 2016 and 2031. As such, this Scenario is contrary to the RSES objective for Athlone’s continued growth to 2031, as follows:

Key priorities are to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of Athlone as a regional driver, with a target population of 30,000 up to 2031 (RSES, p55)

It is also contrary to the NPF National Policy Objective (NPO) 15 which seeks to arrest decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades.
Scenario 6: Athlone Alignment with NPF: County Above NPF - Current Draft (Proportional Intervention C)

The selected scenario can be referred to as a proportional intervention (Pi) ‘Scenario C’. Specifically, the scenario envisages growth rates to 2031 which are proportional to each tier of the settlement hierarchy. This aligns with the approach to settlement typologies detailed in the NPF. The NPF states that the translation of policy responses to the various settlement typologies presented in the NPF should also consider the scale and location of settlements and accordingly, the requisite nature and scale of development appropriate at these locations.

It is acknowledged that the NPF county targets for 2026 and 2031 are exceeded under this scenario.

However, this scenario ensures the simultaneous achievement of several critical policy objectives in a manner which would not be possible under the alternative scenarios:

- This scenario ensures that Athlone’s RSES target is achieved by 2031, comprising a growth rate of 40.5% from its 2016 population base (as reported by the most recent census). Between 2021 and 2027, it envisages that Athlone will grow by 14% or 3,460 people in total.

- Importantly, this scenario also ensures the achievement of the NPF’s objectives around supporting the sustainable development of rural settlements by encouraging growth and arresting

Mullingar’s growth based on 80% of Athlone’s targeted 2031.

Growth in other settlements and rural is based on graduated scale from 100% to 50% of the non-intervention growth (excl. Athlone + Mullingar). Exceeds NPF.
decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades. This scenario ensures a 5% growth rate in the rural remainder of the County between 2021 and 2027 and a 6% growth rate in serviced rural areas during the same period.

Ensuring that the county grows in a manner where growth is proportionate to the role of settlements and their placement in the settlement hierarchy while also protecting the vitality and viability of rural areas is a key concern of Westmeath County Council. Proportional Intervention Scenario C ensures the simultaneous achievement of these core policy objectives in a manner not possible under the alternative scenarios explored.

As such it is not considered feasible, at this time, to revise the Core Strategy having consideration to the above.
4. Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Submission

Submission Ref. No. WM-C1-34

4.1 Introduction
This section contains, under a series of headings (as set out in the submission received), a summary of the observations raised by the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) to the Draft Plan together with the response and recommendations of the Chief Executive in relation to the issues raised.

4.2 Summary of Submission and Chief Executive Response
This section contains, under a series of headings (as set out in the submission received), a summary of the observations raised by the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) to the Draft Plan together with the response and recommendations of the Chief Executive in relation to the issues raised.

4.2.1 Chapter 1 Introduction
The Assembly acknowledge the extensive work that the Local Authority has carried out in order to prepare the Draft Plan and, in particular, that this work was completed during a period of considerable change, within a planning policy context, that included the publication of the National Planning Framework (NPF), the RSES and the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator. The overall approach and effort of Westmeath County Council to coordinate and incorporate policies and objectives, so that they are consistent with the NPF and RSES are also welcomed.

Suggested that reference be made to National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) of the NPF and Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) of the RSES which set the overarching national and regional policy framework for the County Development Plan under Section 1.5 of Chapter 1. Ability to demonstrate delivery of these outcomes may potentially be linked to future funding sources.

4.2.2 Chief Executive Response
The positive recognition by the Assembly that the Draft Plan including its Core Strategy is generally consistent with the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy RSES (EMRA RSES), ‘thus ensuring full alignment between local, regional and national planning policy’, is welcomed. The constructive sentiments regarding the plan content expressed in the submission are both acknowledged and welcome.
In terms of reference to national and regional policy objectives, it should be noted that Section 1.5 of the Draft Plan refers to the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF. Notwithstanding, in the interests of clarity, it is considered that a graphic of both the NSO’s in the NPF and the Regional Strategic Outcomes, in the RSES should be included as part of the Plan.

4.2.3 Chapter 2 Core Strategy

Reference is set out in relation to Core Strategy requirements in line with the provisions of Section 10 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended.

The submission advises that consideration should be given to strengthening the policy framework contained at Section 2.9 with regard to initiatives being undertaken to inform the Urban Area Plan for Athlone. In this regard, EMRA submit that reference should be made to the Joint Retail Strategy being undertaken and other place-making initiatives which are required to enable Athlone to realise its role as a Regional Centre.

A further recommendation is suggested regarding the inclusion of additional policy that strengthen the role of Mullingar as a Key Town, which is reflective of the Mullingar specific policy contained within the RSES at RPOs 4.64-4.67.

With regard to the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, it is stated that further clarity is required regarding the selection of the four settlements within this tier of the settlement hierarchy including a clear rationale outlining how each settlement is reflective of the tier. In this regard, the development of employment opportunity is requested. The Council is advised that consideration should be given to strengthening the policy framework contained at Section 2.11 of the Draft Plan through the inclusion of reference to Settlement Plans.

With regard to the selection of Self-Sustaining Towns - Rochfortbridge and Killucan/Rathwire- it is requested that clarification be included and/or reclassification if necessary, in relation to the selection of Rochfortbridge at this tier, given that the Draft Plan has indicated a decline in population experienced between 2011-2016.

Whilst EMRA notes that the Proportional Intervention Scenario C approach to population targets has used the additional 25% headroom and thus exceeds NPF targets, it considers this to be acceptable in principle. Reference is made to the consideration of this headroom up to 2026 in the NPF Implementation Roadmap but the Council is requested to provide further clarity with regard to the 2031 figure.

With respect to the Core Strategy Table, clarity is requested in relation to the ‘Total Area Zoned 2021-2027’ and its relationship with ‘Quantity of Land Area Required’. It is further stated that a clear indication that the quantum of lands zoned as part of the Draft Plan, are in keeping with the figures presented as part of the Core Strategy Table, would enhance transparency.

It is recommended that an additional column detailing greenfield capacity (if any) should be added to
provide clarity. The Council are also asked to provide clarification as to how mixed-use sites, that may accommodate residential development, have been accounted for in accordance with the provisions of Section 10 (2A) (c) and (d) of the Act.

In relation to Implementation and Monitoring the Assembly welcome the inclusion of Core Strategy Policy Objective 2.18 and the inclusion of information related to the ‘Ecosystem Services Approach’ used in the Draft Plan is welcome. It is suggested that additional information detailing how it has been applied to the Core Strategy section of the Draft Plan would be beneficial in this instance.

4.2.4 Chief Executive Response

The Core Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 10 (1) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government “Guidance Note on Core Strategies” 2010, taking into account relevant changes brought about through the publication of both the NPF and RSES.

In term of settlement classifications and the role of Athlone, there is considerable narrative and policy framework contained across a number of chapters of the plan which reflect Athlone’s status and support its growth to ensure that it to realises its role as a leading Regional Growth Centre. In this regard, Section 2.9 of the plan references the preparation of a Joint Urban Area for Athlone in conjunction with Roscommon County Council in order to enhance co-ordination of development in the regional centre. It is further stated that regeneration opportunities are to be identified as part of the Joint UAP, through an integrated master planning approach, to support associated funding proposals under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and associated funding mechanisms. In addition, CPO 7.17 provides for the preparation of a Place-making and Visual Appearance Strategy for Athlone, in order to support its role as a Regional Centre. It is considered that the Joint Retail Strategy for Athlone undertaken by both Councils will augment the development of Athlone as a regional shopping destination. Reference is also made to the preparation of an area-based transport plan for Athlone which will inform the UAP.

Westmeath and Roscommon County Council’s have jointly commissioned the preparation of a Joint Economic & Marketing Strategy for Athlone and work has commenced on same. Given the Economic & Marketing Strategy is an intrinsic initiative being undertaken to inform the UAP, it is considered appropriate that reference be made to same at Section 2.9.

Mullingar is designated as a Key Town under the Plan, recognising that the town provides a function at a much higher level than its resident population and provides key employment and services for its extensive hinterlands. As an economically active county town Mullingar provides employment for the surrounding areas and with its high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth driver the town has been identified to complement the designation of Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre. Notwithstanding existing policy to support the continued growth and sustainable development of Mullingar to act as a growth driver in the region and to fulfil its role as a Key Town, it is recommended that such policy be strengthened to reflect the role of Mullingar as set out under the RSES.
In terms of the positioning of other settlements in the Settlement Hierarchy, Section 2.11 of the Core Strategy provides narrative around the role of Self-Sustaining Growth Towns. In this regard an evidenced based “asset based” approach was applied in determining the role of each settlement in the Settlement Hierarchy. It is proposed that the narrative on such towns could be enhanced to include a statement which specifically references the settlement plans contained within Chapter 8. This should be supplemented by an additional CPO to reinforce the potential of these settlements as employment centres.

With regard to the designation of Rochfortbridge as a Self-Sustaining Town and whilst it is noted that the settlement had a marginal decrease in population since 2011 of 1.4%, coinciding with the economic downturn, it should be noted that, during the period 1996-2002, the population of the town grew by 90%. Moreover, the Census data from 2016 indicates that Rochfortbridge has a younger population than the county average, with 11.7% of the population over 65 compared to the county average of 19.7%. This younger population provides a broad indication of the growth potential of the settlement. The town also carries out an important role for its hinterland, particularly as an educational hub, with two large schools serving the wider area. Significant opportunity exists to develop the economic base of the town thus allowing the settlement to become more self-sustaining.

The classification of Rochfortbridge as a Self-Sustaining Town is, as such, is considered appropriate in this instance in line with the requirements of the RSES.

Comments in relation to the Core Strategy are noted. Regarding the request to set out a rational supporting residential zoned lands included as part of the Plan, it should be noted that the difference between ‘amount of land zoned’ and ‘amount of land required’ as indicated in the Core Strategy Table, relates to the inclusion of minor extents of additional lands (e.g. Moate c.0.2ha; Kinnegad 0.06ha; Castlepollard 1.4ha; Killucan-Rathwire 0.12ha; etc.) to accommodate zoning in line with natural site boundaries on the ground as opposed to ending zonings within lands which do not accord with any natural boundaries or features on the ground. This approach is applied to provide the potential to provide for innovative site-specific design solutions in association with many individual parcels of lands (numerous smaller parcels of lands are zoned owing to the scale of the settlements many of which are rural in nature). Further, in applying a sequential approach to the zoning of lands, in certain circumstances, due to the configuration of infill sites, some sites are not suitable to achieve the higher densities as envisaged under the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines.

A site analysis of land zoned indicate that despite long termzonings and their relationship to sequential development, it is considered that it is not realistic that the full of extents of these lands will be released over the Plan period having regard to the long-term historical uses associated with such lands, including agricultural practices. Whilst the Council is aware of alternative legislative requirements in order to optimise the release of residential zoned land, such an approach has been taken to ensure that there are sufficientzonings to meet the needs of each settlement in the county.

It should be noted that the release of zoned lands is also supported by COP 2.18, which sets out to ‘monitor development for compliance with the objectives of the Core Strategy and adjust, where
necessary, the approach taken to the consideration of development proposals in order to ensure effective alignment with National and Regional policy and objectives’.

EMRA in their submission, recommended that an additional column detailing greenfield capacity (if any) should be added to provide clarity, in line with the NPF Implementation Roadmap. Clarification as to how mixed-use sites, that may accommodate residential development, have been accounted for in accordance with the provisions of Section 10 (2A) (c) and (d) of the Act, is also sought.

In terms of the brownfield/infill and greenfield land capacity requirements as set out under the NPF Implementation Roadmap, the Roadmap requires Core Strategies to balance the requirement for different types of housing provision by location, ‘to include the zoning of land where applicable, from: i. Cities and their suburbs, to ii. large towns, iii. small towns, iv. settlements of 1,500 people or fewer, and v. the countryside generally. Where certain urban local authority areas include all of these five categories of housing location, at least three of these settlement types (i.e. i, ii and iii) must also include specific consideration of infill/brownfield and greenfield capacity’. In the case of Westmeath, all five categories of housing are not present however, acknowledging that most of the brownfield potential in the County exists in the top tier settlements of Athlone and Mullingar. It is considered that further details in association with zoned lands should be included as part of any future plans for their area. Notwithstanding this, 68% of lands as set out under the Core Strategy Table are identified as brownfield/infill lands as per the CSO 2016 SAP boundary, in line with NPF and RSES policy to support the regeneration of infill and brownfield sites. This is underpinned by Policy Objective 2.15, which seeks to ‘support the regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield/infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands to facilitate population growth and achieve sustainable compact growth targets of 30% of all new housing to be built within the existing urban footprint of targeted settlements in the County’.

With regard to the capacity of mixed-use sites to provide for residential development, it should be noted that since the adoption of the existing CDP in 2014, an average of only c.5 units per year were granted on lands zoned mixed use, outside of Athlone and Mullingar. Given the rural character of the settlements in question, mixed used zoning designations have been used to delineate the central core of a settlement. In reality, there is a negligible quantum of land zoned mixed use in the plan which is available for residential development.

Furthermore, the consideration of these lands is balanced against lands which have been specifically identified for the provision of serviced sites to create ‘build your own home’ opportunities. These lands comprise of a cumulative area of 4.11 hectares and Table 8.2 of the Core Strategy applied a density of 25 residential units per hectare resulting in a housing yield of 103 housing units for these lands, whereas the actual capacity of such lands is c. 20 housing units having regard to the location of the sites, site configurations, pattern of development in the vicinity and nature of housing envisaged. Such scenarios balance against the limited housing (based on past trends) that is expected to be delivered on Mixed Use lands.
It is considered that the lands identified for residential development are sufficient to meet the population targets set out in the Core Strategy Table and reflect each settlements role in the Settlement Hierarchy. The amount and location of zoned lands required in each settlement was determined using an evidence-based settlement typology and asset-based approach, as detailed in Section 2.7 of the Plan. Whilst population projections have been modelled up to 2031, the Plan only provides for this six year period and it is considered appropriate that future plans up to 2031, take account of NPF and RSES targets including any anticipated population reviews in line with NPF legislative provisions which provide for regular cycles of review and if necessary, updating, particularly during the post-2021 Census period.

Section 2.20 of the plan highlights how the Council in preparing the Draft Plan and developing policy objectives, have followed ecosystem services approach principles. This section should be further supplemented with regard to how the Core Strategy and associated CPO’s have been influenced by these principles.

4.2.5 Chapter 3 Housing

The Assembly consider that the transparency of both the Housing Section and the Core Strategy of the Draft Plan, could be enhanced through the inclusion of housing allocation figures displayed across the various tiers of the Settlement Hierarchy, and in this regard the Council should give consideration to this in addition to the requirements of Section 10 (2A) (2B) and (2C) of the Act. Likewise, Table 9 contained as part of the Housing Strategy, could be enhanced through the inclusion of columns to reflect the proportion of social and affordable housing required. It is further recommended that a clearly presented summary of the entire housing need in County Westmeath is provided to guide the successful delivery of the housing requirement for the County over the plan period.

Whilst the Assembly welcome the inclusion of details in relation to rural single housing requirement in Section 3.5.2 of the Draft Plan, it is advised that CPO 3.12 should be amended to include the monitoring of residential development permitted as single rural houses.

4.2.6 Chief Executive Response

Section 4.4 of the Housing Strategy presents analysis of tenure to assist with forecasting future change in the proportion of owner occupiers, private rental and other rental (which includes rental from local authorities, housing bodies and those in occupation free of rent). This also indicates that by 2027, almost 63% of all households will live-in owner-occupied dwellings in Westmeath compared to the 2016 figure of 69.2%. The plan period anticipates considerable growth in the rental sector, with approximately 25% of households in private rental and 12% in ‘other rental’ by 2027. It is considered that further detailed breakdown in the absence of HNDA guidance is premature at this time however it is considered that an analysis of this data in association with the future plans for Athlone and Mullingar would provide a useful insight in terms of future housing needs in these areas.
With regard to the stated request to amend CPO 3.13 to provide for monitoring of residential development permitted as single rural houses, a new CPO, (as recommended above in response to the submission of the OPR) is recommended for inclusion as part of the plan, which provides for the monitoring of the development of greenfield land and rural housing in the open countryside versus brownfield / infill and back land development over the plan period.

4.2.7 Chapter 4 Sustainable Communities
The submission sets out positive recognition of the provisions set out under the Draft Plan in supporting an enhanced quality of life in Westmeath.

4.2.8 Chief Executive Response
The positive recognition of the provisions set out under the Draft Plan in supporting an enhanced quality of life in Westmeath is welcomed.

4.2.9 Chapter 5 Economic Development and Employment
Concern is raised that Athlone and Mullingar are both classified as Tier 1 Settlements, contrary to the RSES. Further clarification should be provided in this regard and reclassification, to reinforce the roles of Athlone and Mullingar as outlined in the NPF and RSES, where necessary.

In terms of the availability of land and supporting Infrastructure, an Economic Briefing Paper currently being prepared by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, has found a shortage of appropriately sized land banks and FDI/IDA appropriate business premises throughout the Region, including in Athlone and Westmeath as a whole. In this regard, the Assembly ask that the Local Authority consider the inclusion of a complimentary CPO, as part of 5.13.10, to enable the delivery of same.

The Section on The Smart Economy is welcome and in keeping with Section 6.6 of the RSES ‘Smart Cities, Towns and Villages’. It is recommended however that the wording be revised to reflect the settlement hierarchy with respect to Athlone and Mullingar.

The dedicated section for retail development is considered a positive addition to the County Development Plan but attention is drawn to the use of outdated terminology in the Retail Strategy in Appendix 4 which is at odds with NPF and RSES policy and the Settlement Hierarchy proposed as part of the Draft CDP. In this regard, the Council are asked to update the Retail Strategy accordingly and to amend CPO 5.65 to ensure that retail development is reflective of the revised and updated Settlement Hierarchy of the CDP.

The Assembly welcomes the inclusion of chapters on Sustainable Communities (Chapter 4), Tourism (Chapter 6), and Urban Centres & Place-making (Chapter 7) and considers these chapters to be constructive additions to the Plan.
4.2.10 Chief Executive Response

The reference made to Mullingar as a Tier 1 settlement in Chapter 5 is noted and should be reflected accordingly as part of the Plan.

In terms of the future roles of Athlone and Mullingar, it is considered that supplementary policy should be included as part of the Plan which provides for the need for suitably scaled landbanks and business premises with regard to Athlone and Mullingar. With regard to the use of terminology in the Westmeath Retail Strategy (Appendix 4), it should be noted that the strategy was prepared in advance of the recently adopted RSES and in this regard, Appendix 4 should now be updated to reflect regional policy and the settlement hierarchy as set out under the Draft Plan.

4.2.11 Chapter 6 Tourism

EMRA endorse the approach taken to the provision of a standalone chapter and its associated approach to dealing with tourism.

4.2.12 Chief Executive Response

The endorsement of the approach taken to the provision of a standalone chapter and its associated approach to dealing with tourism under the Draft Plan is welcomed.

4.2.13 Chapter 7 Sustainable Communities

Positive recognition of the provisions set out under the Draft Plan in supporting Sustainable Communities is set out as part of the submission.

4.2.14 Chief Executive Response

The positive recognition of the provisions set out under the Draft Plan in supporting Healthy Placemaking in Westmeath is welcomed.

4.2.15 Chapter 8 Settlement Plans

EMRA positively recognise the approach taken in providing settlement plans for various settlements across the County.

With regard to the stated aim of Chapter 8, it is recommended that the term ‘increased levels of population’ be amended to state ‘appropriate levels of population’ or similar, thus ensuring that development in the towns and villages is commensurate with the existing character of the settlement
and aligns with the Settlement Hierarchy.

### 4.2.16 Chief Executive Response

The positive recognition of the approach taken in providing settlement plans for various settlements across the County is welcomed.

In this regard it is considered appropriate that the term ‘increased levels of population’ be amended to state ‘appropriate levels of population’ to provide clarity in terms of ensuring that development in the towns and villages is commensurate with the existing character of the settlement and aligns with the Settlement Hierarchy.

### 4.2.17 Chapter 9 Rural Westmeath

The inclusion of Chapter 9 Rural Westmeath is considered a welcome and needed component of the Draft Plan. The Assembly note the inclusion of Section 9.4 Rural Settlement Strategy and acknowledge the reiteration of RPO 4.80 within the text. In order to ensure consistency within the Chapter, it is recommended that the related rural housing need policy is aligned with RPOs 4.80 and 4.81, and NPO19 of the NPF.

### 4.2.18 Chief Executive Response

In terms of rural housing, Section 2.4 of the Core Strategy sets out the overall development strategy for the County including rural Westmeath. It is Council policy to support the sustainable development of rural areas in Westmeath by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.

The NPF prescribes national policy in relation to the development of rural housing and requires that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence and rural areas elsewhere. The RSES sets out regional policy that requires Local Authorities to ‘manage urban generated growth in Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence (i.e. the commuter catchment of Dublin, large towns and centres of employment) and Stronger Rural Areas by ensuring that in these areas the provision of single houses in the open countryside is based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area, and compliance with statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements’.
With regard to the requirement for rural housing need policy to be aligned with RPOs 4.80 and 4.81 and NPO 19, it should be noted that the European Commission issued an infringement notice against Ireland in 2007 in relation to the “local needs criteria” in the 2005 Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities. This infringement notice was subsequently deferred pending the outcome of an infringement case taken against Belgium, now referred to as the Flemish Decree case and on which the European Court of Justice (ECJ) delivered its Judgement in 2013.

In its 2013 Judgement, the ECJ ruled that the Flemish Decree (requirement to demonstrate “a sufficient connection” to an area) constituted an unjustified restriction on fundamental freedoms under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (the EU Treaty), in particular that it breached article 43 of the EU Treaty on the freedom of movement of citizens. In order to avoid the up-scaling of the previous infringement notice against Ireland and referral of the matter to the ECJ for determination, the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government have indicated their intention to revise the 2005 Guidelines to ensure that rural housing policies and objectives contained in local authority development plans comply with article 43 of the EU Treaty on the freedom of movement of citizens.

In the interim, there is an obligation on planning authorities, in line with Circular Letter PL 2/2017 dated 31 May 2017, to ensure that existing 2005 Rural Housing Guidelines Policy specifically to the application of the “local housing needs residency criteria” remain in place pending the conclusion of the national policy review process and issue of advice otherwise by the Department.

Under Circular Letter PL 2/2017 Planning Authorities are required to “defer amending their rural housing policy/ local housing need criteria in existing statutory development plans either by way of the cyclical review or variation procedures”. This is considered prudent in order to avoid planning authorities adopting different approaches on the matter in the interim”.

Accordingly, having regard to Circular Letter PL 2/2017, in advance of revised guidance on rural generated housing, and in the absence of a comprehensive assessment of the need to tailor a wider approach to rural housing policy having regard to the provisions of the National Planning Framework, it is considered that the policy as set out under the Draft Plan should be amended to reflect that as set out in the current Plan until such time as appropriate guidance is issued and that an objective be included to review rural housing policy in line with Development Plan or other Guidelines in the area having regard to NPO 19.

4.2.19 Chapter 10 Transport, Infrastructure and Energy
Reference is made to RPO 4.2 requiring infrastructure investment and priority alignment with the spatial planning strategy of the RSES whereby all residential and employment developments shall be planned on a phased basis in collaboration with infrastructure providers so as to ensure availability of adequate capacity for services (e.g. water supply, wastewater, transport, broadband) to match projected demand and so that the assimilative capacity of the receiving environment is not exceeded.
EMRA has requested that the Council consider RPO 7.43 which advises local authorities to consider the identification of Critical Infrastructure (CI) within their functional areas, and particularly of the interdependencies between different types of sectoral infrastructure, as a first step in ‘futureproofing’ services and to help to inform longer term adaptation planning and investment priorities.

EMRA advises that the Wind Energy is not reflective of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006, or of the Draft Revised Wind Energy Guidelines published in December 2019 and recommends that Council revise CDP policy to reflect same.

4.2.20 Chief Executive Response

In connection with the alignment of infrastructure with planned residential and employment development, it is noted there are numerous policies contained within Chapter 10 which support the provision of water, wastewater, roads and other infrastructure required to enable the delivery of development across the county in accordance with the Core Strategy. The Council will continue to collaborate with infrastructure providers in relation to the provision of same in a timely manner.

CPO 2.13 states that “In the assessment of development proposals, to take account of transport corridors, environmental carrying capacity, availability and/or capacity to provide waste water and water supply services, potential to conflict with Water Framework Directive objectives, potential to impact on the integrity of European sites and Annexed Habitats and species, features of biodiversity value including ecological networks, impact on landscape and visual characteristics, education and other socioeconomic objectives”

Such an approach will ensure that the assimilative capacity of the receiving environment is not exceeded.

The Council liaised with numerous infrastructure providers at the pre-draft stage of the plan with regard to infrastructural requirements and have made provision for same in the plan. Any further recommendations arising from the Draft Plan will be duly incorporated. It is noted that the plan provides for a number of key infrastructural elements as identified in Table 10.1, Table 10.3. Section 10.5.3 details Corridor and Route Selection Process for new infrastructure. Accordingly, it is considered that there is sufficient planning policy and flexibility contained therein to support the delivery of such infrastructure.

It is acknowledged that the draft plan contains broad policy support for renewable energy use and generation. In relation to the assessment of wind energy developments. It should be noted that there are a number of Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by Government Departments as per Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Planning Authorities are required to ensure consistency of development plans with any specific planning policy requirements specified in guidelines issued.
In this regard, Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines were issued, in December 2019, for public consultation. The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country for the treatment of planning applications for wind energy developments. The guidelines were also prepared within a wider national and EU energy policy context in line with binding EU and international obligations on Ireland to play its part in tackling both the causes and effects of climate change. As such, the Draft Plan also recognises the importance of wind energy, in addition to other renewable energy sources, in achieving national targets in relation to reducing fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions.

The following are included in the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines:

- A setback requirement for visual amenity purposes of 4 times the tip height to be applied between a wind turbine and the nearest point of the curtilage of any residential property in the vicinity of the proposed development, subject to a mandatory minimum setback of 500 metres.
- That assessments of noise are based on best international practice on wind turbine noise control including the Institute of Acoustics Good Practice Guides, WHO Guidelines and a procedure for the assessment of low frequency noise complaints.
- That a noise limit, referred to as a Relative Rated Noise Limit (RRNL) in the range of 35 – 43 dB(A), while not exceeding the background noise level by more than 5dB(A) with an upper limit of 43 dB(A). This is in line with the “preferred draft approach” announced by DHPCLG and DCCAE on 13th June 2017. The noise limits in the Draft Guidelines are more onerous that the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines and afford a higher level of protection to people who live in the vicinity of an any future wind farm developments.
- Include a policy of zero shadow flicker and recommend planning authorities or An Bord Pleanála to impose condition(s) to ensure that no existing dwelling or other affected property will experience shadow flicker as a result of the wind energy development.
- Require a Community Report, which must set out how wind energy developers intend to provide an opportunity for local communities to benefit from proposed wind developments through community investment/ownership or through benefits and dividends. Models to support community participation will be implemented as part of the new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). The two main methods of community investment indicated have the potential to offer significant socio-economic benefits including employment, supply-chain, cheaper energy, new revenue streams, energy use reduction and carbon footprint reduction.

Having regard to the submission of EMRA, it is acknowledged that the separation distances as set out under the Draft Plan are contrary to that set out under the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines, December 2019 (and the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines) and as such the inclusion of
specific separation distances under the Draft Plan is considered premature pending the adoption of said Guidelines. The Draft Plan should be amended accordingly.

4.2.21 Chapter 11 Climate Action

With regard to the Regional Policy Context regarding Climate Action, the Council is advised to consider RPO 3.6 and the preceding paragraphs of the RSES which outline the requirement of Development Plans to assess their impact on carbon reduction targets.

It is further advised that EMRA is leading an ESPON EU research project (QGasSP) to identify a robust method for quantifying the relative GHG impacts of alternative spatial planning policies, the outputs of which are anticipated in 2021, which should inform the Draft Plan as it progresses.

The Assembly acknowledge the beneficial inclusion of Table 11.1 which details Land Effects on Direct Emissions. The inclusion of a policy objective relating to the quantification of the baseline emissions would enhance the robustness of this approach is requested.

A note of caution is given in relation to the Climate Action Fund made available under the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and, in order to be availed of, requires policy support. In this regard, the Council is advised to identify potential projects as part of the finalised Plan.

4.2.22 Chief Executive Response

The importance of climate action is acknowledged. Climate action is one of the cross-cutting themes of the plan and accordingly has also been afforded a standalone chapter in the Draft Plan. It is a stated aim of the plan 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. It is further noted that CPO 11.2 provides for a reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions by providing for consolidated future development which supports sustainable travel patterns in line with the County Core Strategy.

The Council is committed to engagement with agencies in the delivery and implementation of climate actions through engagement for example with the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office (CARO). In terms of carbon reduction, the Council is committed to engagement with and support for EPSON EU research project (QGasSP) to identify a robust methodology for quantifying the relative GHG impacts of alternative spatial planning policies. A policy objective will be included in the plan in this regard.
Table 11.1 details Land Effects on Direct Emissions. EMRA’S request to include a policy objective relating to the quantification of the baseline emissions is noted. The Council is committed to working will CARO and all relevant stakeholders in relation to the reduction of emissions and in this regard will seek the advice of relevant experts in determining targets and quantifying data. The Climate Action Fund is referenced in Section 5.8.3 of the plan. It is acknowledged that additional policy support is required in order to avail of funding and will be duly incorporated into the plan.

4.2.23 Chapter 12 Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure

The Assembly advises that regard should be had to Section 7.7 of the RSES which details policy for green infrastructure and guiding principles for the preparation of Green Infrastructure Strategies, in formulating the finalised Green Infrastructure Strategies.

4.2.24 Chief Executive Response

The Council identifies green infrastructure as a key strategic asset for the County and the Development Plan includes policy objectives for the protection, preservation, management and enhancement of this resource in an integrated manner. It is the Council’s intention to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County in consultation will all key stakeholders including EMRA and adjoining Local Authorities during the lifetime of this Development Plan. This Strategy will identify key green infrastructure aims and objectives for Westmeath, taking account of the priority projects identified in this Development Plan and the delivery of these projects through appropriate funding mechanisms. Reference is made in Section 12.19 to the key Guiding Principles for Green Infrastructure Strategies as indicated in both the NPF and RSES.

4.2.25 Chapter 13 Landscape and Lake Amenities & Chapter 14 Cultural Heritage

Concern is raised regarding a number of amendments that have been made to the Areas of High Amenity, outlined at Section 13.18 and presented at Map 42. In this regard, it is requested that a clear rationale should be provided as part of the plan outlining the reasoning behind such amendments prior to the finalisation of the Plan. It is acknowledged that Chapter 14 is in keeping with Section 9.7 of the RSES.

4.2.26 Chief Executive Response

With regard to the proposed amendments to the High Amenity Areas at Lough Lene and Lough Derravaragh, it is acknowledged that these amendments dilute the level of protection afforded to High Amenity Areas in the County, with the potential to result in adverse effects upon the factors for which these areas of landscape have been designated. Furthermore, the piecemeal erosion of these important High Amenity designations will reduce the protection of the overall landscape and...
undermine the long-term integrity of these important assets (designated High Amenity Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Natural Heritage Areas, reflecting their significant environmental status). As such it is considered that the previous High Amenity land deletions should be reinserted to the Plan.

4.2.27 Chapter 15 and 16 Landuse Zoning Objectives and Development Management Standards
Notes that this section of the Draft Plan provides a comprehensive set of development standards and land use zoning objectives to be applied in the assessment of planning applications.

4.2.28 Chief Executive Response
The positive recognition of the approach taken in providing settlement plans for various settlements across the County is welcomed.

4.2.29 SEA/AA/SFRA
A number of comments are set out in relation to the integration of the SEA/AA and SFRA in as part of the Plan including the inclusion of Table 8.3 as part of the Environmental Report, which details motions that were advised against. The Assembly request that a clear rationale be provided for the inclusion of same as part of the finalised Plan and omitted where there is potential for significant negative environmental effects.

4.2.30 Chief Executive Response
The comments from EMRA in relation to SEA are noted and the advice will be taken on board. The guidance referred to by EMRA in relation to the new EPA Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring (Second Review of Strategic Environmental Assessment Effectiveness in Ireland), published January 2020 has informed the proposed Monitoring Programme included in the SEA Environmental Report and will inform the final Programme to be included in the SEA Statement.

Further to a review of the SFRA on foot of the submission, revisions have been recommended with regard to the zoning of a number of sites within the settlements detailed in Chapter 8. A full review of all submissions have been carried out as part of the this CE report with associated rational set out in respect to the suitability or otherwise for the inclusion of objectives/zonings as part of the Plan.
4.2.31 Other
Further details regarding strategic implementation and monitoring of the CDP are requested.

4.2.32 Chief Executive Response
The implementation level of Development Plan objectives can vary depending on funding, resources, timing and unforeseen issues. The Council will continue to avail of existing funding streams to implement the objectives of the plan. All Development Plans including objectives, are reviewed and monitored, after two years following adoption at which time the level of implementation or otherwise is assessed.

4.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE EMRA 2.1
Insert reference to both the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) of the NPF and the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) of the RSES under Section 1.5 of the plan.

CE EMRA 2.2
Insert new text in Section 2.9 as follows:

Westmeath and Roscommon County Council’s have jointly, commissioned the preparation of an Economic Strategy for Athlone, which also includes a Marketing Plan. This Strategy will set out a robust plan to successfully attract local, national and international businesses to the regional centre and will underpin the future Urban Area Plan for Athlone.

CE EMRA 2.3
Amend CPO 2.4 as follows:
Support the continued growth and sustainable development of Mullingar to act as a growth driver in the region and to fulfil its role as a Key Town in accordance with the principles and policies of the RSES.

CE EMRA 2.4
Insert new statement before CPO 2.6 as follows:
Policies and objectives specific to each individual settlement are contained within individual Settlement Plans, as outlined within Chapter 8 of the Plan

CE EMRA 2.5

Insert new CPO after CPO 2.6 as follows:

Promote consolidation in Self-Sustaining Growth Towns coupled with targeted investment where required to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options and to become more self-sustaining settlements, in line with settlement specific policy contained within Chapter 8 of the plan

CE EMRA 2.6

Insert new text above section entitled “Implementation & Monitoring” as follows:

The Core Strategy sets out a vision for Westmeath and strategic aims required to deliver an ecosystem services approach. In this regard, the Policy Objectives of the Core Strategy relevant to this vision include CPO 2.12, 2.13 and 2.17

CE EMRA 2.7

Amend CPO 3.13 as follows:

Support the ongoing monitoring and review of the HNDA in conjunction the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. This will include monitoring and maintenance of a record of residential development permitted as single rural houses

CE EMRA 2.8

Amend the title in Section 5.13.4 to reflect the classification of Mullingar as a Tier 2 settlement in accordance with the NPF/RSES, as follows:

5.13.4 Mullingar (Tier 2 –Key Town (RSES) and County Town)

CE EMRA 2.9

Insert new CPO after CPO 5.33 as follows:
To zone appropriately sized land banks for enterprise & employment development within the Joint Urban Area Plan for Athlone and the Mullingar Local Area Plan and support the development of FDI/IDA appropriate business premises within the respective plans.

CE EMRA 2.10

Amend the titles below to reflect the classification of the settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy

5.13.5 Castlepollard (Tier 3 – Self-Sustaining Growth Town)
5.13.6 Kilbeggan (Tier 3 – Self-Sustaining Growth Town)
5.13.7 Moate (Tier 3 – Self-Sustaining Growth Town)
5.13.8 Kinnegad (Tier 3 – Self-Sustaining Town)

CE EMRA 2.11

Update terminology in the Westmeath County Retail Strategy (Appendix 4) in line with national and regional terminology.

CE EMRA 2.12

Amend the text of the stated aim of Chapter 8 “Settlement Plans” as follows:

To create a network of attractive, liveable towns and villages in the County with increased appropriate levels of population, employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity which support a high quality of life and well-being.

CE EMRA 2.13

* Reference CE OPR 1.15 and 1.16

CE OPR 1.15

Amended rural housing policy to reflect that as set out in the current Plan.

CE OPR 1.16

Insert CPO after CPO 9.1 as follows:
In line with Circular Letter PL 2/2017, review rural housing policy in line with Development Plan or other relevant Guidelines issued by the Minister in this area having regard to NPO 19.

**CE EMRA 2.14**

* Reference CE OPR 1.10

**CE OPR 1.10**

(Revise CPO 10.132 from the Plan as follows:

*Provide the following separation distances between wind turbines and residential dwellings:

- **500 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 25 metres but does not exceed 50 metres.

- **1000 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 50 metres but does not exceed 100 metres.

- **1500 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 100 metres but does not exceed 150 metres.

- **More than 2000 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 150 metres.)

**CE EMRA 2.15**

Insert new CPO after CPO 11.8 as follows:

*To engage with, as necessary, with the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly’s EPSON EU research project (QGasSP) which seeks to identify a robust methodology for quantifying the relative GHG impacts of alternative spatial planning policies*

**CE EMRA 2.16**

Insert new CPO after CPO 11.8 as follows:

*To support the development of both climate mitigation and climate adaptation initiatives and seek funding for the implementation of these initiatives from available sources including the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment’s Climate Action Fund*
CE EMRA 2.17

* Reference CE OPR 1.17

CE OPR 1.17

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

CE EMRA 2.18

Recommendations in this regard are set out in response to the submission of the OPW.
5. Submissions to the Draft Plan and Chief Executive’s Response

5.1 Submissions by Chapter
This section provides an overview of the submissions received to the Draft Plan. A summary of the main observations raised, together with response and recommendations of the Chief Executive in relation to the issues raised is also included.

A total of 158 submissions were received during the Draft Plan consultation phase. The Council wishes to express its appreciation to those who made submissions on the Draft Plan. A list of the persons and organisations who made submissions on the plan is included in Appendix 2. The submissions are categorised in accordance with the chapters of the plan.

5.2 Chapter 1 Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submission Ref. No:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WM-C1-64, WM-C1-67, WM-C108, WM-C1-117, WM-C1-119</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

- Strategic Aim
- Local Authority Collaboration
- Implementation and Monitoring of the plan

5.2.1 Strategic Aim
The submissions welcome the content of Chapter 1. In particular, Failte Ireland (WM-C1-67) welcomed the emphasis placed on tourism as a strategic aim of the plan and its inclusion as a cross-cutting theme. Submission WH-C1-117 suggests that the strategic aims of the plan is amended to omit reference to the term “sustainable competitive growth”. It is further noted that Submissions WH-C1-117 and WH-C1-119 seek the inclusion of the UN Sustainable Goals into the Strategic aim of the plan.

5.2.2 Local Authority Collaboration
Meath County Council (MCC) in their submission (WM-C1-108) support the policies and objectives contained within the Draft Plan and look forward to working with Westmeath County Council in order to realise the objectives of the EMRA RSES. It is requested that WCC work with MCC and Irish Water in planning and developing cross boundary water services including an extension of the Kinnegad
water supply network to serve Clonard. Further collaboration is sought between both Councils in relation to the preparation of Urban Area Plans for Dundalk, Drogheda and Athlone.

5.2.3 Plan Implementation
Submission WM-C1-119 requests that the Council moves towards the inclusion of robust targets, actions and measures to achieve the tangible implementation of the plan's objectives and policies.

5.3 Chief Executive’s Response
Chapter 1 of the plan provides an overview of the basis of the Draft Plan including its strategic and legislative contexts, county profile, strategic vision and cross cutting themes.

Whilst the request from submission from WH-C1-117 to amend the strategic aim is noted, it is considered that the strategic aim adequately provides for the wellbeing of the people of Westmeath. Furthermore, there is significant policy provision as set out under the Sustainable Communities chapter of the Plan which supports the health and wellbeing of the people of Westmeath.

It is considered that the inclusion of the UN Sustainable Development Goals would constitute a welcome addition to Chapter 1 of the Plan. Given that the UN Sustainable Development Goals mirror the 10 RPO’s contained in the EMRA RSES, reference should be made to same under Section 1.5 of the plan. (Note: Associated recommendation set out in response to submission of the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly).

Support for the ongoing cooperation and established collaborative practices between County Westmeath and Meath in relation to infrastructural provision is welcomed. In this regard the Council is committed to positive engagement with neighbouring local authorities. The opportunity to apply a joint approach to forward planning in relevant areas of mutual interest is also welcome. The Council looks forward to engaging with Meath County Council with regards the preparation of the Urban Area Plans for our respective Regional Centres.

In terms of implementation of the CDP, it should be noted that such implementation is contingent upon a number of factors including availability of funding and other resources. The Council will continue to avail of existing funding streams to implement the objectives of the plan. All Development Plans including objectives, are reviewed and monitored, after two years following adoption at which time the level of implementation or otherwise is assessed.

5.4 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
Having consideration to the above, no changes are recommended in this instance.
6. Chapter 2 Core Strategy

Submission Ref. No:
WM-C1-25, WM-C1-33, WM-C1-65, WM-C1-7, WM-C1-77, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-112, WM-C1-119, WM-C1-26, WM-C1-140.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

- Review of Core Strategy required vis a vis population projections for lower tier settlements
- Sequential development
- Protection of the strategic function of the national road network
- Core Strategy is considered deficient in terms of Mullingar
- Regeneration of Columb Barracks Mullingar
- Athlone Population (NWRA)
- Core Strategy Policy objectives and implementation

Submission WM-C1-25 from the National Transport Authority (NTA) recommends that a review of the population projections allocated to the lower tier settlements in the Settlement Hierarchy is undertaken, in order to support the plan’s objectives related to the consolidation of development. The NTA also recommends that a clear policy objective is inserted into the development plan which states that residential development will be undertaken on a phased sequential basis.

Submission WM-C1-33 from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) advises that the Core Strategy is required to identify roads classified as national roads (national primary or secondary), whilst noting that the national roads are depicted on the Core Strategy Map Fig. 2.15. It also requests the addition of a statement identifying the critical strategic national road links within and through the County and to acknowledge the strategic function of the network in facilitating the movement of strategic traffic, including freight. In this regard, it further recommends the inclusion of a Core Strategy Objective to maintain the strategic capacity and safety of the national road network and to safeguard the investment in national roads.

Submission WM-C1-65 suggests that the Core Strategy is deficient as it fails to provide information about the zoned lands capacity for housing development in Mullingar and Athlone. Furthermore, it advises that the population projections for the county including Mullingar, are too low. It requests that the plan should identify the location of lands in Mullingar rather than leave it to a Local Area Plan. The submission advises that opportunities for economic development in Mullingar appear to be understated in the chapter, and as such the potential of the town having regard to available infrastructure and its strategic location.
Both submissions WM-C1-77 and WM-C1-140 refer to Mullingar in particular and highlight issues such as the regeneration of Columb Barracks, Mullingar together with request for a range of new developments within the town.

Submission WM-C1-126 from the North Western Regional Assembly (NRWA) specifically relates to Athlone. It is indicated that the NWRA RSES has indicated a population target of at least 1,500 by 2031 for the western part of Athlone (within our functional area). It is requested, in finalising the Westmeath CDP, that full consideration is given to the above target in association with the Regional Growth Centre. It requests an estimate of the actual population in 2020 and indicate how this is compatible with the population projections outlined in Table 2.6 of the Draft. It is further suggested that interim provision for the designation of zoned land in the major urban centres until such time as fully developed plans are made and adopted. Reference is also made to the inclusion of an objective in relation to the preparation of a building heights study for Athlone and for Joint Retail Strategy. It is stated that consideration should be given to the promotion of the N61 as a strategic link between the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone and Sligo.

Submission WM-C1-112 requests that the climate and biodiversity crises are addressed as part of the Core Strategy. In this regard, it is suggested that the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are included in CPO 2.11. Recommendations are given in relation to the inclusion of two additional CPO’s to reflect the climate and biodiversity crises.

Submission WM-C1-119 from An Taisce request that an evidence-based approach to land-use zoning and settlement planning is provided in accordance with the requirement of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended.

Submission WM-C1-84 seeks that supplementary information is required regarding implementation of the Core Strategy objectives and timelines for same.

6.1 Chief Executive’s Response

An ‘Asset Based Approach’ (similar to that presented in the RSES) as shown in Table 2.3 of the Core Strategy has been used to develop a settlement hierarchy for County Westmeath. The Settlement Hierarchy presented at Table 2.4 is in keeping with national and regional policy. Population targets have been apportioned to the settlements in accordance with their position on the Settlement Hierarchy. Mullingar is identified as a key town in the Settlement Hierarchy and will be subject to a Local Area Plan (LAP) which will identify the extent of land banks for development. CPO 2.4 provides for the continued growth and sustainable development of Mullingar and acknowledges its role as a growth driver in the region. Issues pertaining to Mullingar will be addressed in the forthcoming LAP.

With regard to the sequential development of residential lands, it is noted that CPO 7.26 provides for such development as follows:
“Facilitate the delivery of sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in the town core of Key Towns by consolidating the built footprint through a focus on regeneration and development of identified key town centre infill/brownfield/back land sites promoting sustainable higher densities.”

Furthermore the plan provides for a number of Opportunity sites in the Self Sustaining Growth Towns where it is an objective to consolidation development at this location.

The Council acknowledges the importance of the national road network in Section 10.5.1 of the plan. It is further noted that CPO 10.42 provides for the protection of the safety, capacity and efficiency of the national roads and associated junctions. Notwithstanding, a narrative on the national roads within the county will be provided in Chapter 2 together with a CPO to protect the national road network.

In terms of a population target for Athlone, it should be noted that the target a set out under the EMRA RSES for Athlone was applied to population projections which in turn are used to inform the extent of zoning necessary to cover relevant plan periods. In this regard it should be noted that no zoning in association with the ‘western part’ of Athlone is set out under the current Plan. In terms of comments with regard the use of Census data, it should be noted that a population projection analysis was undertaken utilising the verified “Demographic Component Method” that integrates the dynamic components of population change namely, mortality, fertility and migration, also enabling age cohort analysis. As such it is considered that the details included as part of the strategy are appropriate and no change is necessary in this regard. The preparation of a building heights policy will be undertaken as part of the Urban Area Plan for Athlone. Both Westmeath and Roscommon County Council’s prepared a Joint Retail Strategy for Athlone 2019-2026 which was subsequently adopted by both Councils.

It is noted that UN Sustainable Development Goals will be referenced in Section 1.5 of the plan. Section 2.20 of the plan acknowledges that the ecosystem services approach has been used in drafting the development plan policies. In this regard it takes cognisance of climate change and biodiversity issues. It is further stated in this section that the Council will monitor ongoing developments and review the operation and implementation of the plan.

### 6.2 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

**CE CH 2.1**

Insert new text under Section 2.3 as follows:

*Westmeath benefits from a strategic national road network reflecting its central location in the country. The N/M4 Dublin to Sligo (including connection via the N5 to Castlebar/Westport) corridor and the N/M6 Dublin to Galway corridor through County Westmeath are included as part of the EU TEN-T Comprehensive Network. In addition, the N51, N52, N55 and N62 national secondary roads, are*
important road corridors in County Westmeath. Together the EU TEN-T Network and the national roads identified provide important strategic links within and through the county and region, including providing critical international connectivity.

CE CH 2.2

Insert the following CPO after CPO

Maintain the strategic function, capacity and safety of the national roads network and to ensure that the existing extensive transport networks, which have been greatly enhanced over the last two decades, are maintained to a high level to ensure quality levels of service, safety, accessibility and connectivity to transport users.
7. Chapter 3 Housing Strategy

Submission Ref. No:
WM-C1-84

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submission received in this subject area:

It is requested that a Traveller Accommodation Programme (due to be completed in 2019) - detailing the implementation of the rolling programmes that will meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of the Travelling community in Westmeath be included as part of the Plan.

The following is also requested:

- A revision of the current thresholds for those seeking social housing in Westmeath.
- A revision of the restrictions in place around who is entitled to social housing (for example those who have previously purchased property).
- Raising the number of criteria people must fulfil if they are seeking planning permission for single one-off rural housing.
- Addressing how Westmeath County Council will ensure new housing stock and buildings have appropriate energy rating and do not unduly affect natural habitats.
- Including how Westmeath County Council will assess derelict buildings to establish if a vacant levy should be applied to the building or if the building should be made available to the public.
- That rainwater harvesting is required as standard in all new commercial and residential developments.

7.1 Chief Executive’s Response

In terms of the Traveller Accommodation Programme it should be noted that it is a key priority of the Council to ensure that groups with special housing needs, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, the homeless, those in need of emergency accommodation and Travellers are accommodated in a way suitable to their specific needs. In this regard CPO 3.9 sets out to secure the implementation of the Council’s Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 and to review this programme if required and/or deemed to be necessary, during the Plan period.

Current thresholds for those seeking social housing in Westmeath are determined by national policy and are considered operational issues for consideration by the Council’s Housing Department.

Responses in relation to one-off rural housing are set out in detail in response to the submissions of the OPR and EMRA having regard to recommendation on foot of the Flemish Decree and a recommendation to review Rural Housing policy having regard to NPF NOP 19 and any subsequent Development Plan/Rural Housing Guidelines in the area.
All planning permissions are subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directives with subsequent construction obligations, including energy requirements, set out under building regulations. In this regard the Plan supports the provision of rainwater harvesting as part of future developments.

The Council assess vacant/derelict sites in accordance with the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act and Urban Regeneration and Housing Act.

7.2 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

Having consideration to the above, no changes are recommended in this instance.
8. Chapter 4 Sustainable Communities

A number of issues were raised in relation to sustainable communities. Issues related, in general, to access to services, education, adequacy of infrastructure, delivery of infrastructure and facilities and health and wellbeing. It was noted that a number of voluntary organisations were particularly concerned with regard to quality of life and environmental issues.

WM-C1-112 made a detailed submission to this chapter and suggested a number of recommendations for additional policies in relation to social inclusion, environmental considerations and enhancement of education facilities including the suggestion for the inclusion of a number of CPO’s. In particular, reference was made to the issue of designing out anti-social behavior in community buildings and recreational areas.

Submission WM-C1-149 from the Environmental Health Service (EHS) welcomes the focus on age-friendly development, social inclusion measures and offers additional suggestions for inclusion in the plan in terms of road upgrades and public transport improvements.

Policies and objectives as outlined in the Draft Plan are welcomed in relation to recreational, community and sporting facilities and it is requested that the Council support the provision of such facilities in the county.

The Department of Education and Skills (WM-C1-105) welcomes the content of Section 4.11.4 Schools and Educational Facilities, in particular those objectives which support the provision of new or refurbished schools and the reservation of appropriately located school sites to meet anticipated future school place requirements. Whilst the submission supports CPO 4.28 the Department is happy to work with planning authorities in respect of school design to support community access to facilities and outline that it is important that the objective would be applied in a manner which allows flexibility for school authorities to make their own decisions around the use of those facilities.

8.1 Chief Executive’s Response

Chapter 4 Sustainable Communities is a new chapter in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027. It is a stated aim of the chapter “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”.

Submission Ref. No:
WM-C1-9, WM-C1-47, WM-C1-70, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-105, WM-C1-112, WM-C1-115
WM-C1-119, WM-C1-149 and WM-C1-157.
The introduction of a new chapter on Sustainable Communities was broadly welcomed and considered a positive addition to the plan. It is noted that reference was made to a number of publications on community wellbeing and quality of life issues. Whilst it would be impossible to list all of same, reference will be made to the recent PPN publication as it directly relates to Co. Westmeath.

Provision for accessible recreational, community and sporting facilities in the county is addressed in Chapter 4 under CPO 4.34 and CPO 4.41 which states that the Council will support the implementation of actions contained in the “Westmeath Recreation & Sports Strategy”, subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives.

The Department of Education’s comments are noted and the wording of CPO 4.28 should be amended accordingly to take account of community requirements. The Council look forward to working with the Department in relation to the future planning and design of schools.

The Council support measures to design out crime in relation to community infrastructure and recreational areas and accordingly a CPO to this effect should be included as part of the plan.

8.2 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE CH 4.1

Insert reference to the Westmeath PPN publication ‘Our vision for Community Wellbeing in County Westmeath 2020-2024’ in Section 4.7.

CE CH 4.2

To amend CPO 4.28 as follows:

CPO 4.28 Encourage the use of existing educational facilities and school playing fields for other community purposes. In new schools, it will be a requirement in consideration should be given in the design of the school to provide dual use facilities and take account of community requirements”

CE CH 4.3

To insert the following new CPO after CPO 4.33

To work with the Department of Education & Skills in relation to the planning and design of future education facilities
CE CH 4.4
To insert the following new CPO after CPO 4.22

To ensure crime prevention measures are incorporated into the design of community buildings and recreational areas
9. Chapter 5 Economic Development and Employment

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject:

- Economic interests and opportunities in Mullingar
- Identification of strategic opportunity sites in Mullingar
- Tourism and Economic CPOS
- Extractive Industry
- Remote Working

Chapter 5 Economic Development and Employment aims 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.

9.1.1 Economic Opportunities in Mullingar
Concerns were raised (Submission WM-C1-65) in relation to the understating of economic interests and economic opportunities in Mullingar. In this regard, the submission highlights a number of opportunity sites within Mullingar for development, such as Columb Barracks; Lough Sheever Corporate Park; Forest Park Business Campus; Business and Technology Park Marlinstown; Blackhall Car Park and Belvedere House and Gardens. It is suggested that the potential for development of these sites is referenced in the plan text rather than incorporating into the local area plan for Mullingar. The submission suggests additional Policy Objectives to reflect the importance of achieving growth in employment in Mullingar.

9.1.2 Remote Working and The Circular Economy
A number of submissions (WM-C1-112, WM C1-117) make reference to the promotion of remote working and the circular economy in the plan. In this regard, it is suggested that the plan mentions the European Green Deal and the European Commission’s Circular Economy Action Plan and includes support for the development of remote working centres /telecottages, improved broadband and telecommunications infrastructure. It is further recommended that in recognition of the technical expertise available in AIT and the existing research links with industry it would be appropriate to further the potential for “greening” industry in the Midlands by including the following objectives after CPO 5.13:
CPO 5.14 Support the cross-sectoral collaborations between AIT and local businesses to develop and integrate circular economy practices into their approaches to product lifecycle, service provision or business development.

CPO 5.15 Support the cross-sectoral collaborations between AIT and local businesses in developing green technologies.

9.1.3 Tourism - Economic Development Policy Objectives
Fáilte Ireland welcomes the general approach in relation to tourism and welcomes reference to ‘Tourism Development and Innovation – A strategy for Investment 2016-2022’ (Fáilte Ireland, 2016) and reference to Ireland’s Ancient East and Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands. It is stated that Fáilte Ireland supports the overall importance placed upon tourism by the Draft Plan to contribute to economic growth especially in the rural setting. The submission requests an insertion of a new policy objective in the chapter to support the development and delivery of Visitor Experience Development Plans. A minor amendment is also suggested in relation to CPO 5.14.

9.1.4 Extractive Industry
Concerns are raised (WM-C1-96) in relation to the absence of reference to quarrying or extractive industry within the Economic Development and Employment Chapter of the Plan.

9.2 Chief Executive’s Response
The issues raised in the submissions are acknowledged in relation to Economy and Employment.

In terms of Mullingar, it should be noted that the Draft Plan fully supports the economic growth of Mullingar. In this regard CPO 5.17 sets out to “Support Mullingar’s role as an important employment hub by promoting economic development and clustering of related enterprises. And continue to build resilience within Mullingar’s enterprise base, to allow businesses to withstand new challenges and realise sustained growth and employment creation for the longer-term”

The identification of opportunity sites in Mullingar for economic development is a matter which will be progressed under the forthcoming Mullingar Local Area Plan.

It is considered that there is sufficient policy in the CDP to promote remote working. In this regard, CPOs 5.30, CPO 5.42 and CPO 5.44 are of relevance as they support the establishment of a network of ‘remote working’ hubs and enterprise landing spaces and smart villages within the County. Furthermore, support for home base economic activity is provided for at Section 9.10.1 of the plan. The plan also supports the enhancement of broadband services at CPO 5.55.

Under the draft plan CPO 5.32 it is policy to “support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan as a means of developing further opportunities for enterprise, employment, education, innovation
and skills development for those who live and work in rural areas throughout Westmeath, where appropriate.”

In response to concerns regarding the absence of any reference to Circular Economy in Chapter 5, it is recommended that this is addressed through the insertion of a definition of the Circular Economy, which will provide further context and support the existing CPO 5.55 which refers to the transition towards a low carbon economy and circular economy. It is considered that the insertion of the suggested CPO’s in relation to the role of AIT should be considered as part of the forthcoming Urban Area Plan for Athlone.

In terms of supporting visitor experience in Westmeath, it is recommended that additional policy be provided as part of the plan which supports the delivery and implementation of Fáilte Ireland Destination Development Plans.

The contribution that the extractive industry makes to the Westmeath economy is acknowledged. With respect to the absence of the citing of the same within Chapter 5, it is noted that Extractive Industries are addressed in Section 9.15 of the Plan.

9.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE CH 5.1
To insert the definition of Circular Economy under Section 5.13.13 in Chapter 5 of the Draft Plan.

CE CH 5.2
To amend CPO 5.14 as follows:

Support the development of a cross sectoral approach to promote Athlone as a key tourism destination in the Midlands, building on Fáilte Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands brand and the forthcoming Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon Navigation, Shannon Tourism Masterplan to develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.

CE CH 5.3
Insert new CPO after CPO 5.64 as follows:

Support the delivery and implementation of Fáilte Ireland Destination Development Plans for Westmeath.
10. Chapter 6 Tourism

Submission Reference No:

WM-C1-33, WM-C1-36, WM-C1-42, WM-C1-67, WM-C1-70, WM-C1-91, WM-C1-111, WM-C1-112, WM-C1-152.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

- Tourism Signage
- Supporting Tourism in Rural Areas
- Greenway from Loughnavalley to Uisneach
- Royal Canal
- Tourism and transport
- Circular Economy and Tourism Development

Chapter 6 is a standalone chapter dedicated to Tourism. The aim of this chapter is to provide for the continued expansion of the tourism sector, with a focus on creating strong visitor destination towns and villages 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.

10.1.1 Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services

The approach to the Tourism Chapter is endorsed in several submissions. Positive recognition (WM-C1-47) for the policies and objectives as outlined in the Draft Plan relating to local tourism, recreation and sporting facilities, delivering local and wider community need is set out. In preparing the County Development Plan, Coillte request that the Council support the provision of tourism infrastructure and visitor services, including the provision of tourism accommodation at appropriate locations in the Coillte estate.

In relation to the promotion of tourism in rural areas (WM-C1-42, WM-C1-111 and WM-C1-152) a number of requests in terms of improvements to villages and smaller rural areas (specifically in North Westmeath) to support tourist infrastructure and visitor services and help bring more visitors to the area have been submitted. Areas highlighted in need of tourism improvement include Lough Lene, Lough Owel and Lough Derravaragh, which is associated with the famous Irish legend ‘The Children of Lir’.
Fáilte Ireland welcome the inclusion of a dedicated tourism chapter which, it is submitted is very detailed and comprehensive in its approach. The submission recognises that the Chapter references many of the key areas which relate to tourism such as natural and built heritage; and economic development and the rural economy and support the policies and objectives which provide guidance and enable decision makers and stakeholders to develop tourism in the county sustainably. The submission welcomes reference to Fáilte Ireland’s role and policies including Fáilte Ireland’s policy document ‘Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns’ and Fáilte Ireland’s brand initiatives including Ireland’s Ancient East and welcome the map included Section 6.2.2 and Figure 6.1 which it is suggested provides a useful geographical overview of key assets in the county. The submission also welcomes strong policies which support the integration of the County’s transport and tourism strategies to promote increasingly sustainable travel patterns and improved linkages.

It is requested that reference be included in the Plan to Fáilte Ireland’s Guidance on Sustainable Tourism; Fáilte Ireland Destination Development & Commercial Plans; Fáilte Ireland’s Destination Towns funding Programme; specific visitor numbers; the role of festivals in the county among other issues.

10.1.2 Greenways, Cycling and Walking

In terms of greenways as a source of tourism, a request (WM-C1-152) is submitted for the insertion of a policy to support a greenway connection between Loughnavalley and Ulisneach. New walking and cycling tracks are also requested (WM-C1-111) along the old Cavan railway line from Multyfarnham to Ballywilliam, Granard and to Co Fermanagh and the River Inny, as part of a natural blue-way stretching from Finnea to Lough Ree passing mostly through Westmeath and past the new Centre Parcs in Ballymahon. A separate chapter for walking and cycling is also suggested (WM-C1-70).

It is also suggested (WM-C1-112) that policy could be enhanced by way of promoting sustainable tourism through encouraging eco-tourism and linking with circular economy strategies, water quality, and restoration of major lakes in Westmeath.

It is suggested that the importance of the Royal Canal should be set out as part of the Plan.

10.1.3 Tourism Signage

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) welcome Section 6.4.1 General Tourism Development and Policy Objective CPO 6.12 which outlines the Council’s commitment to prepare and update a comprehensive tourism signage plan for the County, including proposals to remove old and obsolete signs. It is recommended that existing policy be strengthened with reference to DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities Guidelines; TII Policy ‘Provision of Tourism and Leisure Signage on National Roads (2011)’ in assisting with the preparation of a comprehensive tourism signage plan for Westmeath. With regard to the preparation of a comprehensive tourism
signage plan for the county, as proposed by Policy Objective CPO 6.12, TII provide a list of considerations to assist WCC in the preparation of any future tourism signage plan.

10.2 Chief Executive’s Response

Positive comments in relation to the structure and content of the Tourism Chapter in the Plan are welcomed. The constructive comments made in relation to the chapter are both acknowledged and welcome. Given the comprehensive commitment to support tourism across the County (CPOs 6.1 – 6.15) with CPO 6.5 specifically supporting the implementation of the County’s Tourism Strategy, in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, tourism businesses and communities and other supporting agencies it is considered that existing policy support for this objective be included as part of the Plan.

In terms of support for links to Uisneach, it should be noted that the Draft Plan sets out, at CPO 6.13, to “Continue to promote the Hill of Uisneach as a sustainable visitor offering and enhanced access to the site, including the creation of walking and cycling connections with the Old Rail Trail (Galway to Dublin) Greenway”

In addition, there are a number of CPO’s under Section 10.4.2 of the plan which support the development of further greenways in the County. It is the Council’s intention, in line with this policy to develop a network of greenways within Westmeath. In this regard the investigation of the feasibility of specific greenway links that have yet to be examined is considered an operational matter to be considered as part of the Council’s wider program for the delivery of such infrastructure.

In terms of tourism infrastructure, the draft plan supports the provision of such infrastructure and visitor services as set out at Chapter 6 Tourism (Section 6.5). In this regard, the council will continue to engage with stakeholders, including Coillte regarding the future roles of large estates.

References to Fáilte Ireland’s Guidance on Sustainable Tourism; Fáilte Ireland Destination Development & Commercial Plans; Fáilte Ireland’s Destination Towns funding Programme; specific visitor numbers; the role of festivals in the county among other issues is considered appropriate for inclusion in the context of tourism support as set out under the Draft Plan.

The Council is committed to restoring the major lakes in Westmeath to High Quality water status and will work with relevant stakeholders in this regard.

The importance of climate adaptation and the role of the circular economy is recognised under the Draft Plan and in this regard it is recommended that a new objective be inserted into the plan which emphasises the link with existing policy and the circular economy.

Significant emphasis on the role of the Royal Canal is set out under Policy Objectives CPO’s 6.19, 6.49, 6.6.
TII’s comments in relation to tourism signage are recognised and in this regard it is recommended that reference to their policy for tourist signs on national roads be included in the Plan. With regards the preparation of a comprehensive tourism signage plan, the Council is committed to engagement with TII in relation to the preparation of same.

10.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE CH 6.1

To insert the following CPO after CPO6.15:

Promote sustainable tourism in ways that positively enhance the environment and liaise with tourism providers to encourage the provision of “eco-tourism” schemes including the development of a “Circular Economy” approach to tourism.

CE CH 6.2

To amend the 2nd paragraph in Section 6.2.1 (page 140) as follows: National tourism policy falls within the remit of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and national agencies, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority. Its role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. It provides a range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services. It also works with other state agencies and representative bodies, at local and national levels, to implement and champion positive and practical strategies that will benefit Irish tourism and the Irish economy. Tourism Ireland is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a leading holiday destination.

CE CH 6.3

Update Section 6.2.2:

Add ‘Dun na Si Heritage and Amenity Park’ to the list of attractions in the final paragraph.

CE CH 6.4

To add the following text under Section 6.2.2:

The county itself, however has been outperforming some of our neighbouring counties, due to a number of strong visitor attractions and a critical mass of visitor services concentrated in the towns of
Athlone and Mullingar. “Fáilte Ireland’s figures indicate that in 2018, Westmeath welcomed 1% of the 9,609 million overseas tourists who came to Ireland, spending 1% of the €5,217bn overseas tourism expenditure in Ireland. Irish residents took 238,000 trips to Westmeath (2% of the 10,918 million domestic trips in 2018) spending €27m (1% of domestic tourist spend). Annual visitors to the county reached 262,000 in 2017, of which 103,000 were from overseas. Approximately 42% of the county’s overseas visitors are from Britain, 34% from mainland Europe and 18% from North America.

CE CH 6.5

Add reference to Fáilte Ireland Destination Development & Commercial Plans within the policy context Section 6.3

CE CH 6.6

To insert reference to Fáilte Ireland Destination Development & Commercial Development Plans in Section 6.3 as follows:

Ireland’s Ancient East has developed a suite of five-year Destination Development Plans. These are designed to be a roadmap for enhancing the existing Ireland’s Ancient East visitor proposition to achieve the objectives of addressing seasonality, increasing visitor numbers, improving dwell time and visitor dispersion across the destination. The Tales of Two Worlds Plan sets out to enhance the experiences at the stunning Houses and Gardens products as well as the attractions that tell the story of emigration and endeavour.

CE CH 6.7

To insert the following text under Section 6.4.1:

The key to unlocking the growth potential of an area is the development of experiences that will motivate potential tourists to firstly visit there and secondly to dwell in the area. These new experiences are less concerned with visitors passively seeing or doing things; they encourage tourists to immerse themselves actively in the locale, interacting with people, engaging the senses, and learning the history and stories of the places. Fáilte Ireland’s response to this challenge has been the creation of a framework to develop and deliver destination development plans along with strengthening destination towns. Ireland’s Ancient East has started work on a number of Destination Development Plans which aim to develop world-class experiences focused on the region’s rich heritage. The themes of the Experience Development Plans have been designed to enhance each area’s strongest tourism assets and appeal to core overseas markets. Vitally, these plans will be delivered in a way that encourages visitors to spend more time in an area, without compromising the environment or culture of the region. The ‘Tales of Two Worlds’ Development Plan brings together Ireland’s historic houses and gardens.
and the period in Ireland’s history of famine and emigration. A number of Westmeath businesses are now taking part in a bespoke Great Houses & Gardens Experience Development Programme as part of this, which focuses on the county’s rich historic houses and gardens. The Ancient Destination Development Plan is also bringing together businesses in Westmeath to develop world-class experiences centred around the area’s rich ancient history including the Hill of Uisneach, connecting Westmeath with the wider geography of the Boyne Valley.

CE CH 6.8

To add the following text to the end of the first paragraph under Section 6.4.2 (Destination Towns):

*In this regard, Athlone has been granted investment under Fáilte Ireland’s Destination Towns funding Programme.*

CE CH 6.9

Section 6.9 Arts, Culture and Festivals begin second paragraph with the following text:

*Fáilte Ireland has identified festivals as a key driver for tourism growth, particularly during off-season times. They are an important component of the Irish tourism product offering. They provide opportunities to showcase culture, food, people and places, thereby greatly improving the tourist experience. Investment in and business development support for festivals is helping to drive growth and entice both domestic and overseas visitors to different parts of the country in the off-peak season.*

CE CH 6.10

To make reference to Fáilte Ireland’s Guidance on Sustainable Tourism in Section 6.3 of the plan.

*Fáilte Ireland’s Guidance on Sustainable Tourism*

*Fáilte Ireland promotes the incorporation of the principles of sustainability in the tourism policy section of the County Development Plan. Fáilte Ireland has developed five key principles that ensure developments achieve a balance between appropriate tourism development and economic, environmental and social sustainability. Developments will be assessed having regard to compliance with these and the associated policies.*

*Principle 1: Tourism, when it is well managed and properly located, should be recognised as a positive activity which has potential to benefit the host community, the place itself and the visitor alike. Sustainable tourism planning requires a balance to be struck between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community.*
Principle 2: Our landscapes, our cultural heritage, our environment and our linguistic heritage all have an intrinsic value which outweighs their value simply as a tourism asset. However, sustainable tourism planning makes sure that they can continue to be enjoyed and cherished by future generations and not prejudiced simply by short term considerations.

Principle 3: Built development and other activities associated with tourism should in all respects be appropriate to the character of the place in which they are situated. This applies to the scale, design and nature of the place as well as to the particular land use, economic and social requirements of the place and the surroundings.

Principle 4: Strategic tourism assets – including special landscapes, important views, the setting of historic buildings and monuments, areas of cultural significance and access points to the open countryside, should be safeguarded from encroachment by inappropriate development.

Principle 5: Visitor accommodation, interpretation centres and commercial / retail facilities serving the tourism sector should generally be located within established settlements thereby fostering strong links to a whole range of other economic and commercial sectors and sustaining the host communities. Sustainable tourism facilities, when properly located and managed can, especially if accessible by a range of transport modes, encourage longer visitor stays, help to extend the tourism season and add to the vitality of settlements throughout the year. Underlying these principles for Sustainable Tourism, the definitions of economic, environmental and social sustainability against which any tourism project assessed are defined as follows:

Economic sustainability must be considered to ensure that the tourism sector is managed. The key strengths of the County include landscape, heritage, natural environment, lifestyle and amenity pursuits. The sector is highly affected by seasonality and there are extremes in visitor numbers at key attractions contrasted with smaller attractions which struggle to maintain visitor numbers. These ‘peaks and troughs’ should be carefully managed to ensure the protection of natural resources. Tourism innovation should also be encouraged – particularly where it brings about environmental benefits. Finally, for projects to be economically sustainable they should meet the needs of the permanent and also visitor population alike, so the preparation of robust business plans for all such developments will ensure proposals are viable and sustainable.

Environmental sustainability will be central to the development and protection of a viable tourism sector and this is a key consideration in a County where tourism attractions are located in environmentally sensitive areas and close to historic areas where the quality of the built heritage and environment must be protected from inappropriate development – whether tourism related or not. The ‘mainstreaming’ of policy guidance tools such as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will undoubtedly address any deficits in relation to many of these key policy areas.

Social Sustainability is arguably more difficult to assess. Many of the potentially negative impacts of tourism development can however be addressed through careful consideration of the social and cultural nature of the receiving environment. The impacts that large-scale developments can have on existing local communities policies can be assessed having regard to the impact of visitor numbers on
Local quality of life, culture and heritage – with a particular emphasis placed on unique areas such as culturally sensitive areas where small impacts over time may have a significant cumulative effect.

**CE CH 6.11**

To reword CPO 6.9 to include the word ‘immersive’:

Continue to support the development and expansion of tourism-related enterprise including immersive visitor attractions, services and accommodation and food and craft businesses, particularly those offering a visitor experience, such as tastings, tours and demonstrations.

**CE CH 6.12**

To edit CPO 6.13 as follows

Support opportunities for increased tourism as a result of warmer summers Climate Change, within limits of existing infrastructure and sensitive habitats.

**CE CH 6.13**

To amend CPO 6.18 text as follows:

Support the development of a cross sectoral approach to promote Athlone as a key tourism destination in the Midlands, building on Fáilte Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands brand and the forthcoming Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon Navigation, Shannon Tourism Masterplan to develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.

**CE CH 6.14**

To amend text to Section 6.7 Lakes and Waterways CPO 6.50 as follows:

Continue to work closely with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and neighbouring counties to realise the potential of implement the Strategic Initiatives of the Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon Navigation, particularly in relation to tourism actions for Athlone, Lough Ree and the Mid-Shannon region for tourism, taking account recommendations arising from Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands Shannon Masterplan’ and Discovery Zone. ‘Shannon Masterplan’, ‘Spirit Level’ and the ‘Athlone Waterfront Strategy’ will also be taken into account.
CE CH 6.15

To insert reference to the TII publication “Policy on the Provision of Tourism and Leisure Signage on National Roads (2011)” in Section 6.4.1 of the plan.
11. Chapter 7 Urban Centres and Place-Making

Submission Reference No.
WM-C1-63, WM-C1-77, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-112, WM-C1-117, WM-C1-119, WM-C1-148 and WM-C1-149.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject under the following headings:

- Town Centre Revitalisation
- Columb Barracks site Mullingar
- Public Realm
- Green Infrastructure and Climate Change
- Urban Regeneration and Development

11.1.1 Town Centre Revitalisation
The Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht (DCHG) (WM-C1-148) sets out a number of recommendations for the revitalisation of town centres including the consideration of a ‘Town First’ approach to the revitalisation of historic urban centres together with the appointment of a Local Authority multi-disciplinary team which focuses on the repair and upgrade of existing historic buildings and their adaptation to new uses with regard to their architectural character and significance. In this regard (WM-C1-84) also suggests that an explanation be included in the plan setting out how the Council will assess derelict buildings to establish if a vacant site levy should be applied to the building or if the building should be made available to the public.

11.1.2 Columb Barracks
Support for the regeneration of the Columb Barracks site in Mullingar (WM-C1-117 and WM-C1-77) is set out with recommendations to enhance plan policy in order to support the planning objectives for these lands together with explicit reference included to the lands as being a potential projector projects for funding under the URDF scheme. The various policy objectives contained in the draft Plan which are supportive of the physical and social regeneration of such sites are welcome; however, given the scale of the undertaking to regenerate the former barracks site in Mullingar, including the protection of 17 No. Protected Structures, a partnership approach with Westmeath County Council is advocated to help deliver the objectives of the Council as set out in the draft Development Plan.

It is requested that the Plan includes provision to; support and promote utilisation of available funding for the plan led development and regeneration of publicly owned landbanks to support unlocking strategic opportunity sites; include the barracks site as a potential project(s) for future URDF funding applications; provide for the regeneration of the barracks, primarily for residential use with ancillary
community uses; and introduce greater flexibility in development management standards as they apply to designated major regeneration opportunity sites.

11.1.3 Public Realm
It is submitted (WM-C1-63) with regards to CPO 7.2, which relates to key attributes when considering public realm and public space enhancements, that the new public seating in the Market Square in Mullingar fails to meet these attributes. It is suggested that this style of seating is not comfortable or safe for older people and those with balance issues and suggests an objective to significantly increase the stock of public seating that is accessible, functional, and attractive across the county. Further, it is proposed (WM-C1-119) that additional text under section 7.5.1 of the Draft Plan be included to support the redevelopment of the Market House in Castlepollard.

11.1.4 Green Infrastructure and Climate Change
The inclusion of CPO 7.14 which refers to “the incorporation of adaptable multi-functional and sensitive design that supports the transition to low carbon, carbon resilient, sustainable and attractive environment” is welcome and it is suggested that nature-based solutions be given priority in the planning process.

The need for new spaces zoned for Civic Amenities, Open Spaces or Urban Nature Reserves in the large urban centres such as Athlone or Mullingar is also highlighted. A request is also set out for an assessment as to the extent to which different minority communities have access to good quality green spaces in convenient locations, particularly school age children from minority communities, to ensure equal access to green spaces.

11.1.5 Urban Regeneration and Development
A number of recommendations (WM-C1-112) in relation to placemaking and the inclusion of green space considerations as part of CPO 7.32 and CPO 7.33 (supporting consolidation of town centres with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites) are submitted.
11.2 Chief Executive’s Response

As advocated in Section 7.5 of the plan, the Council’s approach to town centre renewal is to adhere to the Ministerial ‘Framework for Town Centre Renewal’ published in 2017. In this regard, it is an objective of the plan to prepare Place-making and Visual Appearance Strategies for Athlone and Mullingar and Placemaking Strategies for the towns of Castlepollard, Kilbeggan, Moate and Kinnegad. CPO 7.17 and 1.18 refer. The Council is committed to engagement with relevant stakeholders including the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht in the preparation of these strategies.

In terms of heritage-led urban regeneration, Section 7.4.3, sets out an approach to delivering ‘Creative Places’ with the aim to ‘enhance, integrate and protect our arts, culture and heritage assets to promote creative places and heritage led regeneration. Notwithstanding it is recommended that policy reference be included in the plan to reference the role of heritage considerations in promoting quality design.

In terms of the regeneration of the Columb Barracks site in Mullingar as highlighted by submissions WM-C1-77 and WM-C1-117, it should be noted that CPO 7.34 is of relevance. It provides for working with the Land Development Agency in co-ordinating and developing large, strategically located landbanks, particularly publicly owned lands in Athlone and Mullingar. It is considered that specific policy in relation to the future development of Columb Barracks is more appropriately considered as part of the forthcoming Mullingar Local Area Plan review.

Support for CPO 7.14 which refers to “the incorporation of adaptable multi-functional and sensitive design that supports the transition to low carbon, carbon resilient, sustainable an attractive environment” is welcome.

With regards the provision of open spaces, it is recommended that reference to green space considerations be incorporated into CPO 7.32 and 7.33 (consolidation of town centres with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites). With regards equal access to community services and open space, Chapter 4 CPO 4.19 sets out to “Consider cultural diversity and ethnic minorities in planning for the needs of communities and ensure community facilities and social services provided are accessible for all individuals, communities and sectors of society, including people with disabilities, people with special needs, elderly, youth, marginalised and disadvantaged groups.” The Council have also committed to supporting the implementation of actions contained in the “Westmeath Recreation & Sports Strategy” under CPO 4.41. CPO 7.9 also refers to “supporting the provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve.”

In response to WM-C1-84 Westmeath County Council, Section 7.6.2 provides detail in relation to the application of the vacant site levy. The process is prescribed in law in the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015.

In promoting the reuse of vacant lands, it should be noted that the Plan sets out at CPO 7.37 to “use specific powers, such as the Vacant Sites register to address issues of vacancy and underutilisation of
strategic lands in town centres, including the implementation of the Vacant Sites Levy in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015”.

It is considered that provision of street furniture at various locations across the County is an operational matter and outside the remit of this Plan.

Policy support has been provided to support the redevelopment of the Market House, Castlepollard, with the lands in question identified as an opportunity site under the Castlepollard Settlement Plan.

11.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

**CE CH 7.1**
To amend CPO 7.21 as follows:

Ensure the best quality of design is achieved for all new commercial and residential development and that design respects and enhances the specific characteristics and heritage of the different towns and villages in the County.

**CE CH 7.2**
To insert reference to ‘green space considerations’ in CPO 7.32 and CPO 7.33.
12. Chapter 8 Settlement Plans

Submission Reference No:
WM-C1-10, WM-C1-15, WM-1-33, WM-C1-36, WM-C1-40, WM-C1-67, WM-C1-74, WM-C1-81, WM-C1-99, WM-C1-104, WM-C1-105, WM-C1-115, WM-C1-119, WM-C1-122, WM-C1-140, WM-C1-149.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject:

- Settlement Plans
- Settlement specific recommendations for Castlepollard, Kilbeggan, Kinnegad; Moate, Killucan-Rathwire, Clonmellon; Delvin, Ballinalack, Ballymore, Castletown Geoghegan, Collinstown and Loughnavalley
- Housing Options for Our Ageing Population (DHPLG February 2019).
- Infrastructure e.g. broadband.
- School provision
- Rural planning
- Flooding

12.1 Settlement Plans

The Health Service Executive (HSE) welcome the addition of the settlement plans discussed in Chapter 8 and state that many objectives outlined throughout the plan are closely aligned with the objectives of HSE health strategies. It is submitted that proposals which promote active transport; sustainable housing for all; increasing the use of green infrastructure and climate mitigation measures, will also improve the health of the population. It is suggested that objectives specific to the requirements of each individual town and village should ensure a focused, meaningful approach to development in each area and also provide measurable outcomes on which the implementation of the plan can be measured.

12.1.1 Chief Executive Response

The Draft Plan promotes the measures addressed in terms of settlements across the county in terms of active transport; sustainable housing for all; increasing the use of green infrastructure and climate mitigation measures.
It should be noted that it is the intention of the Plan to provide a policy framework to guide and support the future development of the county in a sustainable manner. Specific implementation measures are contingent upon a number of factors including availability of funding, and resources. The Council will continue to avail of existing funding streams to implement such specific objectives of the Plan. All Plan objectives are reviewed and monitored after two years following adoption of the Plan, at which time the level of implementation or otherwise is assessed.

Self – Sustaining Growth Towns

12.2 Castlepollard

In promoting the value of place-making in Castlepollard, it is proposed (WM-C1-119) that additional text under section 7.5.1 of the Draft Plan be included to support the redevelopment of the Market House in Castlepollard.

The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies the need to carry out Flood Risk Assessment for development located in “Consolidation Site” in the west of the settlement and “Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands to the south east of Castlepollard. It is also submitted that pluvial flooding is a potential risk to undeveloped “Enterprise and Employment” and “Proposed Residential” zoned lands in the eastern end of the settlement and accordingly a Flood Risk Assessment is deemed necessary prior to the development of these lands.

12.2.1 Chief Executive Response

Policy has been provided in the Draft Plan to support the redevelopment of the Market House, Castlepollard, with the lands in question identified as an opportunity site under the Castlepollard Settlement Plan.

In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development on identified lands should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage.

It is recognised that pluvial flooding presents a potential risk to undeveloped “Enterprise and Employment” and “Proposed Residential” lands in the east of the settlement and the risk must be assessed and managed by an appropriately designed stormwater management system at Development Management stage. The FRA must be prepared in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.

Policy reflecting these requirements should be included as part of the Plan.
12.3 Kilbeggan
Failte Ireland (WM-C1-67) suggests the removal of reference to ‘Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands’ in association with Kilbeggan.

The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies flooding risk to development from an existing drain that enters Kilbeggan from the west.

12.3.1 Chief Executive Response
It is recommended that reference to ‘Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands’ in association with Kilbeggan be removed as it does not extend to Kilbeggan.

In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development adjacent to the OPW Drain that enter the settlement from the west should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10. Plan policy should be updated accordingly.

12.4 Kinnegad
A request (WM-C1-15) is submitted for an extension to the Kinnegad village boundary together with the zoning of lands for community uses to support the needs of an increasingly ageing population. It is proposed that this zoning be provided combined with a County Development Plan and Local Area Plan Objective to protect against speculative private residential development. The submission also references Housing Options for Our Ageing Population (DHPLG February 2019).

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) propose (WM-C1-33) a number of recommendations in relation to Kinnegad. Concerns are raised in relation to the CPO 8.103, which supports the construction of a link road between the Killucan Road and the roundabout at the junction of the R446/N4 thereby creating a bypass of the Main Street. It is submitted that further analysis of this proposal, including demonstration of compliance with the provisions of Section 2.7 of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012), is necessary prior to adoption of the Development Plan.

TII also considers that policy objectives and zonings, included in the Kinnegad Settlement Plan, should be appraised to ensure that lands can be developed complementary to safeguarding the national road network in the area.

TII considers that objectives should be assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in Section 2.7 of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) concerning ‘Development at National Road Interchanges or Junctions’. The cumulative impact of other
proposed policy objectives such as the Park & Ride (Policy Objective CPO 8.87) and other permitted development in the vicinity should also be factored into considerations.

TII refer to Section 8.3.3.6 of the Draft Plan in relation to lands to the west of Kinnegad zoned for Enterprise and Employment Use and acknowledges that other lands have been removed from the Settlement Plan, in particular, lands previously subject to Objective O-KGD11. However, it is submitted that there does not appear to be any assessment of the impact of the revised zoning associated with Enterprise and Employment lands at this location, either individually or in combination with the proposed link road associated with Policy Objective CPO 8.103.

It is requested (WM-C1-99) that provision be made to support the Kinnegad Action Plan (2019) in conjunction with the Community Development section of Westmeath County Council. A wide range of suggestions are proposed in relation to improving existing and future physical, social, economic and cultural infrastructure and amenities in addition to protecting existing heritage and environment in Kinnegad. The submission requests the Council to consider a proposed Elderly Community Complex, amending current objective MBLO 17 to support the development of a full-size indoor sports centre and meeting rooms at Coralstown Kinnegad GAA as well as requesting no change to the current plan in terms of wind turbine setbacks in order to protect the environment and the community. The submission makes reference to the rejuvenation of the Main Street; the facilitation of an Enterprise Hub and remote working at the Old Tanyard site; creating link and connecting roads and improving pedestrian connectivity and circulation; improving public transport services; additional housing; walking routes along the Boreen Bradach; working with the Dept. of Education to secure land; and facilitating a supporting road network to build an appropriately sized secondary school.

The ‘Opportunity Site’ designation in Kinnegad and the capacity of the site to deliver a regenerative and consolidatory form of development is welcomed (WM-C1-74). However, it is submitted that the current Expanded Settlement Zoning Objective at 15.12 of the Draft WCDP may be interpreted as being focused on commercial and retail bias with residential uses providing a supporting role and could as such be potentially inflexible and suitable for non-viable uses.

The Department of Education and Skills welcomes (WM-C1-105) objectives which support the provision of new or refurbished schools and the reservation of appropriately located school sites. The Department has identified a potential future requirement for additional primary school accommodation in Kinnegad, subject to the projected population materialising, the age profile of that future population and other factors which influence school accommodation needs. In that context, this Department requests that CPO 8.98 be amended to read: “Support the development of one or more schools on lands adjacent to St. Etchens Primary School (See Map 7)”. It is requested that the Community, Educational and Institutional zoning be extended to the south west to facilitate direct access from the current extent of the road at Tara Lawns (which currently serves St. Etchen’s NS).

The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies flooding risk to “Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands located to the north east of the settlement and close to the Kinnegad River.
12.4.1 Chief Executive Response

The recommendation to expand the boundary for Kinnegad is noted and is addressed as part of the consideration of zoning submissions later in this report. Reference to Housing Options for Our Ageing Population (DHPLG February 2019) should be included as part of the Plan.

In terms of roads infrastructure, it should be noted that significant investment and improvements in the existing road infrastructure have been made by the Local Authority in terms of upgrades, realignments, maintenance, traffic management measures, traffic calming measures and road safety measures, and it is important to protect and maintain the carrying capacity of this road network in the future as deemed necessary and as resources allow. In doing so, regard will be made to the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, relating to development affecting National Primary and Secondary roads, including motorways and associated junctions.

In response to TII concerns associated with CPO 8.103 (link road), Kinnegad is served well by the existing road network with direct connectivity to the M6. From a traffic perspective, it is acknowledged that there is no justification to bypass the Main St and accordingly it is considered that the proposal is premature within the timeframe of the Plan and should be removed from the Plan (see OPR recommendation CE OPR 1.24 to: Omit CPO 8.103 from the plan).

Traffic safety is addressed under section 10.5 of the Draft Plan. Road infrastructure and corresponding CPOS seek to support and encourage sustainable and compact forms of development which will have minimal impact on the carrying capacity, efficiency and safety of the road network. It should be noted that the Council is committed to engagement with TII in relation to any proposals regarding road networks which require input.

It should be noted that CPO 10.3 of Chapter 10 supports, together with other transport related polices, the implementation of - Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012.

While the merits of the range of initiatives proposed in association with the Kinnegad Action Plan, and other local project proposals, are acknowledged, it is considered that existing policy supporting the development of Kinnegad (CPO 8.83-8.119) is adequately provided for under Section 8.3.3 of the Draft Plan (and throughout the Plan) and as such no further amendments are necessary. It should be noted that the delivery of specific projects on the ground are considered operation matters.

In terms of Expanded Settlement Zoning Objectives throughout the plan, it is considered that such zoning designations are appropriate to support a range of uses associated with the future expansion of designated settlement (town/village) centers.

It is considered that the Draft Plan provides strong support for the provision of school infrastructure across the county. Notwithstanding, it is recommended that CPO 8.98 be amended to support the provision of one or more schools on lands adjacent to St. Etchens Primary School.
It is considered that there are sufficient lands provided for in the Draft Plan for “Community, Educational and Institutional” for the duration of the Plan, given the anticipated demand and Kinnegad’s position within the overall Settlement Hierarchy.

In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development on “Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands located to the north eastern end of the settlement and close to the Kinnegad River should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage. Any proposed development within the site should then apply the Sequential Approach, preferentially avoiding any less vulnerable development within Flood Zone A and setting appropriate development levels within Flood Zone C after having assessed the future impacts of climate change as part of a residual risk analysis. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.

12.5 Moate

The Department of Education and Skills (WM-C1-105) highlight the importance of the ongoing work of the Council in ensuring sufficient and appropriate land is zoned for school provision. In relation to Moate it is noted that the reservation of land for a primary school it is requested that any permission for adjacent development be contingent upon the delivery of adequate road and services infrastructure to the school site as part of such development and, should this not be delivered in a timeframe required for school development, that Westmeath County Council would undertake to deliver such infrastructure directly. Additionally, it is submitted that CPO 8.130 may require a school development proposal at this location to be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment. On this basis the Department requests that CPO 8.131 be amended to read: “Work with the Irish Water and landowners to provide serviced sites for residential development and educational provision within Moate (See Map 9).”

Moate Action Group (WM-C1-36) have proposed additional policy objectives in relation to enhancing Moate’s heritage and tourism through acknowledgment of its status as a Quaker Heritage Town; supporting the development of green infrastructure; and supporting the development of a heritage trail.

The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies flooding risk to lands within 200m of a drainage channel or within Benefiting Lands extents in Moate settlement.
12.5.1 Chief Executive Response
It is considered that the Draft Plan provides strong support for the provision of school infrastructure in Moate with a specific policy objective to support the development of a Primary School on lands adjacent to the Community Centre on Church Street.

There are several Moate - Tourism Policy Objectives set out under the Plan at Chapter 8, specifically CPOs 8.137 – 8.140, which support and encourage tourism related development in Moate. A further CPO, however, is recommended to be inserted into the plan to support initiatives to promote the Quaker Heritage of Moate.

In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development on lands within 200m of a drainage channel or within Benefiting Lands extents, should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.

Plan policy should be updated accordingly.

Self-Sustaining Towns:

12.6 Killucan - Rathwire
Submission WM-C1-140 from Edward J King refers to zoning request for four separate land plots within the settlement.

The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies flooding risk to “Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands located close to the Riverstown River in Killucan-Rathwire settlement.

12.6.1 Chief Executive Response
WM-C1-140 refers to four land plots in Rathwire and Killucan for development in relation to this settlement; however the exact extent/location of the subject lands is unclear and not identified within the submission. It is considered that adequate lands and supporting policy objectives are set out under the Draft Plan to support the future sustainable development of Killucan in line with the requirements of the submission.

In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development on “Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands located to the southwestern end of the settlement and close to the Riverstown River, should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.
recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10. Plan policy should be updated accordingly.

**Towns and Villages**

**12.7 Clonmellon**

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) have made recommendations (WM-C1-33) in relation to Clonmellon with reference to Enterprise and Employment zoned lands to the south of the town. TII considers that there is a requirement to align proposed zoning objectives along the N52 to the south of the town with existing speed limits. TII recommends that the Council review the proposed zoning objectives to reflect the provisions of official policy concerning access to the national road network outlined in the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines. New access or the intensification of existing access to national roads subject to speed limits greater than 60kph should be avoided.

St. Paul's Gaelic Football Club Clonmellon (WM-C1-115) requests the development of community projects such as the development of sports and recreation facilities in villages in Westmeath. Specifically, the submission has requested a floodlit walking track and improved facilities at St Paul’s GFC.

A number of concerns have been raised by Clonmellon Steering/Action Group (WM-C1-104) in relation road safety and traffic at the school entrance and the village park/amenity park. The submission requests traffic calming measures; reduction of speed limits; better signage for entering the village; clearly marked set down areas for a bus stop beside the school; an additional pedestrian crossing outside the school; and safe access for the amenity park as proposed under CPO 8.215 of the Draft Plan.

The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies flooding risk to “Enterprise and Employment” zoned lands to the south of the settlement in Clonmellon.

**12.7.1 Chief Executive Response**

The concerns raised regarding access to “Enterprise and Employment” zoned lands located outside of the speed limits on the N52 in Clonmellon are noted. In this regard it should be noted that the lands in question are appropriately situated, forming part of the established settlement. Pending any future revision to said speed limits by the Council, careful consideration to this issue should be had when assessing any future development proposal associated with the site.

Chapter 10 of the Plan supports, along with several other transport related polices, the implementation of Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012.

It is considered that the enforcement of the speed limits is outside the remit of the Plan, however it should be noted that Vehicle Actuated signs are in place on the main street in Clonmellon. Further a pedestrian crossing is in place adjacent to the school. The provision of additional school set down
facilities and bus parking facilities are a matter for the school authorities, the provision of which is supported under the Draft Plan.

In relation to the request for the development of community projects such as the development of sports and recreation facilities in villages in Westmeath, it should be noted that Plan policy supports such initiatives, the delivery of which are outside the remit of the Plan.

In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development within “Enterprise and Employment” zoned lands located on the Delvin Road, should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.

Plan policy should be updated accordingly.

12.8 Delvin
The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies flooding risk to “Established Residential” zoned lands located adjacent to the OPW Arterial Drainage channel to the eastern end of the settlement.

12.8.1 Chief Executive Response
In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development within “Established Residential” zoned lands located on the eastern side of the settlement, should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.

Plan policy should be updated accordingly.

Rural Serviced

12.9 Ballinalack
The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies the need to carry out Flood Risk Assessment for any new development located in “Mixed Use” or “Established Residential” in Ballinalack.
12.9.1 Chief Executive Response
In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development within the “Mixed Use” or “Established Residential” lands should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage which should specifically include a residual risk analysis of defence failure. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.

12.10 Ballymore
The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies the need to provide a development free riparian strip and carry out Flood Risk Assessment for any new development located in “Proposed Residential” and “Community, Educational and Institutional” lands with a boundary adjacent to the OPW Channel in Ballymore.

12.10.1 Chief Executive Response
In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development within “Proposed Residential” and “Community, Educational and Institutional” lands with a boundary adjacent to the OPW Channel should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.

12.11 Castletown - Geoghegan
Submission WM-C1-140 from Edward J King refers to a residential zoning request for Castletown Geoghegan as the subject lands are serviceable with public sewer.

The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies Pluvial Flooding Risk to “Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands in Castletown Geoghegan.

12.11.1 Chief Executive Response
WM-C1-140 refers to lands in Castletown-Geoghegan for residential development in relation to this settlement, however the exact extent of the subject lands is unclear and not identified within the submission. It is considered that adequate lands and supporting policy objectives are set out under
the Draft Plan to support the future sustainable development of Castletown - Geoghegan in line with the requirements of the submission.

In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development on identified lands should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage. Pluvial flooding is a potential risk to undeveloped “Community, Educational and Institutional” lands and the risk must be assessed and managed by an appropriately designed stormwater management system at Development Management stage. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.

12.12 Collinstown

The Collinstown Action Group (WM-C1-81) raise concerns in relation to speed limits in villages such as Collinstown and requests the introduction of a policy to allow for traffic calming measures to be introduced.

The OPW in their submission (WM-C1-10) identifies Flooding Risk to “Enterprise and Employment” located close to the southern periphery of the settlement.

12.12.1 Chief Executive Response

Traffic safety is addressed under section 10.5 of the Draft Plan. The enforcement of speed limits are outside the remit of the Plan with policy to support traffic safety measures. It should be noted that traffic calming measures are in place in Collinstown.

In relation to flooding, it should be noted that all flood related zoning submissions have been reviewed in line with the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, it is recommended that any further development within “Enterprise and Employment” zoned lands located on the southern periphery of the settlement, should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA at Development Management stage. The FRA must be in accordance with approved Plan Policy and in particular guidance provided at Section 10.14, Flood Risk, together with any further policy recommendations set out under this report in relation to Chapter 10.

12.13 Glasson

Submission WM-C1-122 requests an increase in the zoning of lands in smaller villages such as Glasson village which are located within commutable distance to Athlone for residential use to meet increasing
housing demands and to provide for higher quality housing to meet the needs of those looking for housing at the higher end of the market.

Submission WM-C1-10 from the OPW relates to the zoning of lands Mixed Use adjacent to a local watercourse within Glasson village. The submission highlights the lack of justification for the zoning proposed.

**12.13.1 Chief Executive Response**

It is considered that adequate lands and supporting policy objectives are set out under the Draft Plan to support the future sustainable development of Glasson in line with the requirements of the submission.

It should be noted that the forthcoming Urban Area Plan for Athlone will provide guiding policy in terms of the residential needs of the Athlone across all housing types.

In relation to flooding contained within submission WM-C1-10, this issue is address at Volume 2 Book of Maps where it is recommended to rezone affected “Mixed Use” lands as identified in Map 14a.

**Rural Nodes**

**12.14 Strete**

A request is submitted (WM-C1-40) for a review of planning regulations in rural areas such as Strete, Boherquill and Lismacaffrey. It is submitted, such areas have been affected by depopulation and an easing of planning restrictions for natives of these areas or for people returning home from abroad to rural towns and villages is encouraged. The submission also requests that sustainable housing projects and areas for industrial development be considered to support the viability of rural areas.

**12.14.1 Chief Executive Response**

It is considered that adequate lands and supporting policy objectives are set out under the Draft Plan to support the future sustainable development of Rural Nodes and rural areas in line with the requirements of the submission. Rural Housing policy amendments are considered in response to the submission of the Office of the Planning Regulator, at the outset of this report. Note: further zoning considerations are dealt with in “Volume 2 Book of Maps” for each of the settlements, however where zoning requests have not identified subject lands such requests are addressed above.
12.15 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE CH 8.1
To include reference to the Housing Options for Our Ageing Population (DHPLG February 2019).

CE CH 8.2
To amend CPO 8.98 as follows:

Support the development of a Secondary School \textit{one or more schools} on lands adjacent to St. Etchens Primary School (See Map 7).

CE CH 8.3
To amend CPO 8.130 as follows:

Support the development of a Primary School, \textit{including access roadway and associated infrastructure}, on lands adjacent to the Community Centre on Church Street, Moate. Development proposals on land identified as being at risk of flooding shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 9).

CE CH 8.4
To amend CPO 8.65 as follows:

Develop \textit{heritage} and \textit{activity-based tourism} and use the marketing momentum behind Ireland’s Ancient East and Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands to integrate its Tourism services into a strong and coherent offer that will build growing visitor numbers.

CE CH 8.5
To insert a new CPO under Moate - Tourism Policy Objectives after CPO8.140 as follows:

\textit{Support initiatives to promote the Quaker Heritage of Moate}
To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Castlepollard under section 8.3.1 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 3)*
To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Kilbeggan under section 8.3.2 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 5)*
CE CH 8.8

To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Kinnegad under section 8.3.3 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 7)*
To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Moate under section 8.3.4 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 9)*
CE CH 8.10

To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Killucan-Rathwire under section 8.4.1 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 11)*
CE CH 8.11

To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Clonmellon under section 8.5.1 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 15)*
CE CH 8.12

To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Delvin under section 8.5.2 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 17)*
CE CH 8.13

To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Ballinalack under section 8.6.1 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 20a)*
CE CH 8.14

To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Ballymore under section 8.6.2 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall contain a development free riparian strip and be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 21a)*
To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Castletown Geoghegan under section 8.6.4 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 23a)*

![Map of Castletown Geoghegan Objective Map](image)

*CE CH 8.15*
CE CH 8.16

To insert new CPO 8.XXX for Collinstown under section 8.6.5 as follows:

*Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 (See Map 24a)*
13. Chapter 9 Rural Westmeath

Submission Reference No.

WM-C1-27, WM-C1-47, WM-C1-48, WM-C1-70, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-96, WM-C1-108,
WM-C1-112 and WM-C1-119.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject:

- Rural Settlements and Housing Policies
- Rural Diversification
- Village Enhancements
- Quarries and Extractive Industries
- Forestry
- Agriculture
- Water protection
- Horticulture

13.1.1 Rural Settlements and Housing Policies

The approach of the Plan which sets out “To support the servicing of rural villages (serviced sites) to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside, in line with RPO 4.78 of the Eastern and Midland RSES” is welcomed. Further, it is submitted that the introduction of Rural Nodes, as part of the Draft, is a worthy addition and establishes a generally consistent zoning approach to rural housing demands, in line with that taken by Meath County Council. The focus on investment in rural towns and villages to combat the decline of settlements and the rural hinterland is also set out.

A number of submissions (WM-C1-27, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-108, WM-C1-119) raise concerns in relation to policy associated with one-off housing in the countryside in terms of impact on environment; water (having regard to the EU Water Framework Directive); heritage; biodiversity; road safety etc. In this regard it is submitted that revised policy should be provided which directs prospective rural applicants to serviced sites in rural nodes with one-off housing only being provided in instances where demonstrated rurally-generated occupational or employment needs are set out. In this regard it is submitted that additional criteria should be set out for people seeking single one-off rural housing.

The inclusion of policy objective CPO 10.90 which seeks a “changeover from septic tanks to public collection networks in all cases where this is feasible, and that all new developments utilise and connect to the public wastewater infrastructure” is welcome. Concerns however are raised in relation to wastewater treatment plants and it is submitted that all applications for permission should be accompanied by a report by a qualified hydrologist including water quality samples that have been
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13.1.2 Rural Diversification
Support for sustainable rural based enterprises (WM-C1-47) such as forestry and tourism in the county is requested.

13.1.3 Village Enhancements
The importance of Streete Parish Park Community Centre is highlighted and specific requests (WM-C1-48) have been set out for signage associated with the area.

The tourism potential of Loughnavalley (WM-C1-151) having regard to its proximity to the Hill of Uisneach is highlighted. Support for the development of a suitably themed signature Uisneach project adjacent to the site is sought. Opportunities for park & ride facilities, car parking, restaurant facilities, craft opportunities, bicycle hospitality facilities, cycle routes and walk ways to Uisneach and the need for necessary supporting water and sewerage services to support tourism development is highlighted as necessary in supporting tourism offering.

Recommendations (WM-C1-119) are submitted in relation to Rural Settlements and Rural Tourism, which relate to the restriction of spreading of animal slurries and the provision of village loops for walking and cycling.

13.1.4 Quarries and Extractive Industry
Enhanced policy (WM-C1-96) is requested to provide for adequate aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the county and that CPO 9.60 which seeks to ‘Facilitate the exploitation of the County’s natural resources and to exercise appropriate control over the types of development, including rural housing, taking place in areas containing proven deposits, whilst also ensuring that such developments are carried out in a manner which would not unduly impinge on the visual amenity or environmental quality in the area’ be supported by a map in order to protect them from the future development of incompatible land uses. Concerns surrounding quarrying are expressed (WM-C1-70, WM-C1-119) and it is recommended that additional policy be provided to state that conditions will be applied to all quarry developments and that enforcement against unauthorised development in this area will be taken.
13.1.5 Forestry
Concerns are raised (WM-C1-112, WM-C1-70, WM-C1-119) in relation to the use of pesticides/herbicides; and the protection of forests. It is recommended that policy be provided that; promotes the use of forest spaces primarily for biodiversity and recreational use rather than for commercial exploitation; ceases the use of pesticides, herbicides or fungicides in publicly held forests which are publicly accessible; raise awareness of nature through the use of information boards on-site and education campaigns in schools; foster and encourage the use of forests as educational spaces particularly for pre-school and primary aged children and manage appropriately incidences of antisocial behaviour in forest amenities.

Policy is also sought to prevent fertiliser loss to waterways, streams and rivers supported by water sampling and that new forest and replanting be 70% broadleaf to ensure that the carbon capture value of the wood is maintained when harvested.

13.1.6 Agriculture
Concerns (WM-C1-70, WM-C1-119) are raised in relation to farming and the potential for farm practices to impact negatively on the environment. It is submitted that additional policies are required to monitor farm practices and monitor water samples accordingly. It is submitted that agricultural development should only be permitted where it is demonstrably shown not to increase deterioration in water quality, to comply with the habitats Directive and not add to further emissions in line with EU and national climate change targets.

It is recommended that the Plan should also include reference to the EU “Farm to Fork Strategy” and the 14 point EU Nature Restoration Plan in the “EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives”.

Policy support is requested to; put in place measures to support Community Supported Agriculture Schemes; encourage Farmers Markets and other forms of local low transport selling; encourage the development of “greening” agriculture schemes in the County; support organic farming and farms as eco-tourism sites; support research and development partnerships aimed at reducing the environmental impact of farming.

13.1.7 Water Protection
It is submitted that the Council should develop a rigorous anti water-pollution policy in line with European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Water Regulations 2017, EU Water Framework Directive and its own Water Pollution (Agricultural) Bye-Laws. This pollution policy should develop programs to continually monitor the water quality of streams, rivers and lakes. This program should develop systems to identify the physical origin of the pollution.
13.1.8 Horticulture
It is submitted that policy restricting the use of peat for horticultural purposes be included as part of the Plan.

13.2 Chief Executive’s Response:

13.2.1 Rural Settlements and Housing Policies
In terms of rural housing policy, it should be noted that the European Commission issued an infringement notice against Ireland in 2007 in relation to the “local needs criteria” in the 2005 Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities. This infringement notice was subsequently deferred pending the outcome of an infringement case taken against Belgium, now referred to as the Flemish Decree case and on which the European Court of Justice (ECJ) delivered its Judgement in 2013.

In its 2013 Judgement, the ECJ ruled that the Flemish Decree (requirement to demonstrate “a sufficient connection” to an area) constituted an unjustified restriction on fundamental freedoms under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (the EU Treaty), in particular that it breached Article 43 of the EU Treaty on the freedom of movement of citizens. In order to avoid the up-scaling of the previous infringement notice against Ireland and referral of the matter to the ECJ for determination, the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government have indicated their intention to revise the 2005 Guidelines to ensure that rural housing policies and objectives contained in local authority development plans comply with article 43 of the EU Treaty on the freedom of movement of citizens.

In the interim, there is an obligation on planning authorities, in line with Circular Letter PL 2/2017 dated 31 May 2017, to ensure that existing 2005 Rural Housing Guidelines Policy specifically to the application of the “local housing needs residency criteria” remain in place pending the conclusion of the national policy review process and issue of advice otherwise by the Department.

Under Circular Letter PL 2/2017 Planning Authorities are required to “defer amending their rural housing policy/ local housing need criteria in existing statutory development plans either by way of the cyclical review or variation procedures”. This is considered prudent in order to avoid planning authorities adopting different approaches on the matter in the interim”.

Accordingly, having regard to Circular Letter PL 2/2017, in advance of revised guidance on rural generated housing, and in the absence of a comprehensive assessment of the need to tailor a wider approach to rural housing policy having regard to the provisions of the National Planning Framework, it is considered that the policy as set out under the Draft Plan should be amended to reflect that as set out in the current Plan (CDP 2014 – 2020) until such time as appropriate guidance is issued and that an objective be included to review rural housing policy in line with Development Plan or other Guidelines in the area having regard to NPF NPO 19.
In relation to wastewater treatment systems, it should be noted that the Plan sets out at CPO 9.4, that ‘In addition to complying with the most up-to-date EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses, proposals for development in rural nodes shall include an assessment undertaken by a qualified hydrologist, that demonstrates that the outfall from the septic tank will not, in combination with other septic tanks within the node and wider area, contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive’.

The Draft Plan also provides, at CPO 9.10 and CPO 9.11, that ‘all proposed on-site wastewater treatment systems for single dwellings and extensions which will increase the population equivalent loading shall comply with the EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and disposal Systems serving Single Houses (2009) and any revision thereof’ and to ‘seek to ensure that waste water treatment systems are installed by competent persons with regular monitoring and testing carried out on the treatment system, in accordance with the planning permission’. As such no changes are necessary in this regard.

13.2.2 Village Enhancements
The importance of potential signage associated with settlements such as Streete and Loughnavalley is recognised. It is considered, however, that the provision of specific signage and associated public realm enhancements are adequately supported by existing policy provision (section 16.2.3 of the Draft Plan) and as such their delivery are operational matters to be considered by the relevant District.

In terms of Loughnavalley, the tourism potential associated with Uisneach is recognised and the plan highlights the potential of activity tourism to contribute to economic growth in rural areas. In this regard the Plan provides for the promotion of the Hill of Uisneach as a sustainable visitor offering with enhanced access to the site, including the creation of walking and cycling connections with the Old Rail Trail (Galway to Dublin) Greenway. It is considered that the Plan adequately provides for the development of tourism related services in Loughnavalley appropriate to the settlements designated role as set out under the Settlement Hierarchy and as such no further change to the Plan is necessary.

The Plan supports the provision of village loops for walking and cycling with many greenway initiatives being currently funded under the Outdoor Recreation Scheme. The management of farm practices, however, is considered to be outside the remit of this Plan.

13.2.3 Rural Diversification
In terms of rural diversification, the Draft Plan, as set out under CPO 5.57, seeks to “support rural diversification through sustainable rural development practices, investment in rural towns and villages, providing for access to technology and skills- development networks.” The Plan also supports
sustainable rural based enterprises such as forestry and tourism as outlined in Section 9.10 Rural Enterprise and Economy in Chapter 9.

### 13.2.4 Quarries and Extractive Industries

The Plan acknowledges that a satisfactory balance is required between the needs of the building industry and the need to protect the environment. Section 261A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, afforded quarry owners and Local Authorities an opportunity to regularise the quarry industry, with regard to compliance with Planning Legislation, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and the Habitats Directives.

In terms of the concerns raised in relation to the monitoring of quarrying and the need for conditions to be applied to all quarry developments against unauthorised development, the Plan provides the policy context against which planning applications for any extractive industry are assessed. In this regard guidance as set out under the plan applies as follows; Quarrying and Ancillary Activities (DEHLG 2004); Guidelines for Environmental Management in the Extractive Sector (EPA, 2006); Guidance on Biodiversity in the Extractive Industry (NPWS); GSI’s Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry; the Archaeological Code of Practice and the Irish Concrete Federation Environmental Code (2005) and any other relevant superseding policy guidance as outlined under Section 16.10 of Chapter 16 – Development Management Standards of the Draft Plan. Any unauthorised developments come under the remit of Planning Enforcement in accordance with provisions as set out in the Planning & Development Act. As such no further change to the Plan is necessary.

### 13.2.5 Forestry

The importance of native woodlands is acknowledged in the draft plan and in response to the request that replanting would be 70% broadleaf to ensure that the carbon capture value of the wood is maintained when harvested, it is considered that a reference to the provision of broadleaf planting should be included in the Plan.

The Draft Plan supports the implementation of the Westmeath Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024. In this regard, Action Number 10 of the Westmeath Climate Change Adaptation Strategy states that the Council will work towards limiting and ultimately eliminating the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides and investigate more sustainable alternatives. The application of specific measures for the control of weeds is considered an operational issues which is outside the scope of this Plan.
13.2.6 Agriculture

In terms of agriculture, the Draft Plan supports the role of rural areas and the countryside in sustaining the rural economy and its role as a key resource for agriculture and agri-food, forestry, energy production and carbon reduction, tourism, recreation, mineral extraction and/or other new and emerging rural based enterprises, in an environmentally sustainable manner.

CPOs 9.26 – 9.34 provide extensive policy objectives which support environmentally sustainable agricultural practices in a manner that does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that protects watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance from the threat of pollution.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned policies, it is considered appropriate to include reference to the EU “A Farm to Fork Strategy” 2020 and the 14 point EU Nature Restoration Plan in the EU “Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives”.

13.2.7 Water protection

Monitoring of waters is the responsibility of the EPA; however it should be noted that Westmeath County Council also samples the Lakes and Rivers under the National Monitoring Programme. It should be noted that the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) also sets out the protection and enhancement of the country’s water resources. The plan also supports the implementation of recommendations and measures as outlined in the relevant River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, and associated Programme of Measures, in addition to any such plan that may supersede same. It is a policy of the Plan to seek to improve water quality and achieve ‘good’ ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, groundwaters) as set out under CPO10.76 of Chapter 10. As such no changes are necessary in this regard.

13.2.8 Horticulture

The Council recognises the importance of peatlands as a major natural, archaeological and non-renewable resource. The Plan acknowledges under Section 12.17 of Chapter 12, that Peatlands are the most important long-term carbon store in the terrestrial biosphere and in their natural state peatlands act as long-term sinks for atmospheric carbon dioxide. Given the extent of intact raised bogs in Westmeath, considerable potential exists to use this valuable resource to mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

In terms of restricting the use of peat for horticultural purposes it is noted that there are a number of Peatland policy objectives (CPO12.56-12.65) which seek to protect the County’s designated peatland areas and landscapes, and to exercise control of peat extraction, both individually and cumulatively. As such no changes are necessary in this regard.
13.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE CH 9.1

To insert a new CPO after CPO 9.26:

*Ensure that agriculture development is in compliance with the EU “A Farm to Fork strategy” 2020 and parallel to the 14 point EU Nature Restoration Plan in the EU “Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives.*

CE CH 9.2

To amend CP0 9.48 as follows:

Encourage the development of forestry, *with higher proportions of broadleaf*, to a scale and in a manner, which maximises its contribution to the economic and social well-being of the County on a sustainable basis.”

** Note: Recommendation in relation to the review of Rural Housing policy is set out in response to the submission of the Office of the Planning Regulator.
14. Chapter 10 Transport, Infrastructure and Energy

Submission Reference No.

WM C1-1, WM C1-10, WM C1-11, WM C1-14, WM C1-25, WM C1-28, WM C1-29, WM C1-31, WM C1-33, WM C1-37, WM C1-41, WM C1-43, WM C1-47, WM C1-53, WM C1-66, WM C1-67, WM C1-69, WM C1-70, WM C1-75, WM C1-78, WM C1-82, WM C1-84, WM C1-87, WM C1-90, WM C1-93, WM C1-95, WM C1-113, WM C1-117, WM C1-118, WM C1-119, WM C1-121, WM C1-125, WM C1-131, WM C1-136, WM C1-137, WM C1-138, WM C1-141, WM C1-145, WM C1-150.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject:

- Broadband Infrastructure in Rural Areas.
- Transportation
- Public Transport Infrastructure
- Road upgrades
- Wind Energy Development and Policy
- Renewable Energy Strategy and Wind Energy
- Waste Management
- Air and Noise Pollution
- Sustainable Energy
- The future re-use and regeneration of historic landfills

14.1.1 Broadband Infrastructure in Rural Areas
Concerns are expressed (WM C1-11) in relation to the level of Broadband infrastructure in Westmeath, particularly in Rural Areas. It requests that broadband services are improved in a timely manner.

14.1.2 Transportation
It is requested (WM C1-1) that any new road project should take account of the County Biodiversity and Climate Change Adaption Plans.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) advise (WM C1-25) that they provide rural transport services through the Local Link Rural Transport Programme. Their submission states that it is the NTA’s intention to develop and expand the Local Link Rural Transport Programme to seek further integration with other public transport services, ensure vehicle accessibility and encourage innovation in the service.
It is recommended that the Development Plan is reviewed in relation to these matters and that the role of the National Transport Authority in relation to public transport and, in particular, Local Link is clarified within the text and within the table setting out Public Transport Policies.

A request for CPO 10.64 (bicycle parking facilities) be amended to include reference to the location of cycle parking in convenient and secure locations in all new developments, e.g. close to the entrances of retail outlets, and that all long-term facilities are sheltered.

In addition, the NTA recommends that a policy is inserted into the plan which states that public cycle parking provision in urban areas will be reviewed in order to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of spaces; that they are of high quality; that they are secure; and, if necessary, sheltered.

The NTA welcomes the commitment to prepare Local Transport Plans for Athlone and Mullingar and have indicated their availability to engage with the local authority at the outset of these projects and throughout their preparation. It is recommended that provision is made within the Development Plan for similar plans to be prepared for other settlements in the County.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) acknowledges and welcomes (WM-C1-33) the generally positive alignment in the Draft Plan with official policy concerning development planning and development management and national roads and compliments the Council in this regard. TII provides the following comments for the Council’s consideration:

a. **Compliance with Section 28 Guidance: DOECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines**

   TII welcome a review of the text included in Policy Objective CPO 10.43 and Policy Objective CPO 10.45 to ensure the Draft Plan adheres to the provisions of official Government policy as the use of the terms ‘inappropriate access’ and ‘except in exceptional circumstances’ included in Policy Objective CPO 10.43 and Policy Objective CPO 10.45 respectively, may result in ambiguity and in TII’s opinion, do not conform to the provisions outlined in Section 2.5 of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities which outlines required development plan policy on access to national roads.

b. **Access to National Roads**

   TII strongly recommends including a Policy Objective in Section 9.16 in relation to the avoidance of the creation of new access and the intensification of existing accesses to national consistent with the provisions of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines.

c. **Having regard to the location and potential nature of developments facilitated by policies promoting rural enterprise and economic development, TII requests that an appropriate**
cross reference with policies included in Chapter 10 relating to access to national roads is included as a Policy Objective in Chapter 9 in the Development Plan prior to adoption.

d. Development at National Road Junctions - Recommendation no.5
   • Proposals for development and land use zoning designations at national road interchanges and junctions should be considered and be prepared in the context of the provisions of Section 2.7 of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines. TII would welcome consultation on the preparation of the proposed local area plans and area-based transport assessments for Mullingar and Athlone.

   • TII would welcome a new policy objective included in the Development Plan to include the explicit presumption against large out of town retail centres located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads/motorways reflecting policy outlined in the Retail Planning Guidelines, 2012.

e. Transport Planning and National Road Schemes
   • With regard to Table 10.1 in the plan, TII request that consideration be given to using the same scheme titles that is used in the National Development Plan in the interests of clarity.

   • In addition to reserving corridors for proposed routes free of development, TII suggests that consideration should be given to protecting ‘schemes’ which develop through constraints study areas, route selection, emerging preferred routes and preferred/proposed routes, etc. In this regard the following Policy Objective is suggested:
     “To protect the study area, route corridor options and thereafter the preferred route corridor selected for the national road schemes being progressed in accordance with National Development Plan Objectives included in Table 10.1 of the Development Plan and to prohibit development that could prejudice their future delivery”

f. Transport Planning and National Road Schemes - Recommendation no.6
   It is advised that additional improvements relating to national roads identified at a local level should be done so in consultation with and subject to the agreement of TII, the Council will be aware that TII may not be responsible for the funding of any such schemes or improvements.

g. Corridor and Route Selection Process - Recommendation no.7
   • While TII notes that a Corridor and Route Selection Process has been identified in Section 10.5.3 of the Draft Plan, the Council will be aware that all national road projects are required to be progressed in accordance with statutory processes and
TII Publications, including the Project Management Guidelines and Project Appraisal Guidelines.

- TII would welcome the above clarification in the Draft Plan prior to adoption in the interests of avoiding risk to proposed national road schemes, in the interests of clarity and in the interests of adherence to the provisions of official policy. Associated Policy Objective CPO 10.47 should also be reviewed.

h. Other Transport Proposals - Recommendation no.9

Policy Objective CPO 7.43 and CPO 10.58 requires Mobility Management Planning to be submitted with applications for trip intensive developments. TII considers that Council could also take the opportunity to consider requiring MMP for existing trip intensive locations such as schools and significant employers, including business parks and industrial estates where employer’s plans could be co-ordinated.

i. Ancillary Policy Provisions and Issues - Recommendation no.10

- TII welcomes the inclusion of the provision for Service Areas as set out under Development Management Standards Policy Objective CPO 16.38 in the Draft Plan which outlines that “service stations and associated truck parking facilities in locations at or near national roads will be assessed having regard to the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)”. The planning authority will also be aware that Section 2.8 of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities indicates the requirement for a forward planning approach to the provision of off-line motorway service areas at national road junctions and also addresses road side service facilities on non-motorway national roads and their junctions.

- It is submitted that although the Development Plan addresses service areas in the Development Management Section, there does not appear to be a complementary policy response. TII would welcome consideration being given to including the above provisions of the DoECLG Guidelines in formal policy included in the Development Plan, prior to adoption, in the interests of road user safety and adherence to the provisions of official policy.

j. Safeguarding national road drainage regimes - Recommendation no.11

TII would welcome consideration being given to including a new objective associated with Section 10.5.1 National Roads relating to protection of national road drainage regimes.

k. Renewable Energy - Recommendation no.12

For all renewable energy developments requiring grid connection to the national grid, TII recommends that an assessment of all alternatives for grid connection should be undertaken. It is submitted that it is inappropriate to only consider utilising the national grid.
road as a grid connection route when alternatives are available. It is requested that an objective is included in the plan in this regard.

l. **Other Plans/Strategies - Recommendation no.13**

TII note the preparation of a Joint Urban Area Plan for Athlone and the preparation of a Local Area Plan for Mullingar and associated Area Based Transport Assessments and requests that the Council consult with TII in relation to the preparation of same.

m. **Other Specific Policies and Objectives Recommendation no.14**

It is recommended that relevant references the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges are updated, for example Policy Objective CPO 10.49 and associated text and Policy Objective CPO 16.34.

n. **Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) - Recommendation no.15**

It is requested that reference to the TII Traffic & Transport Assessment Guidelines (2014) is made in Policy Objective CPO 16.34, similar to that included in Policy Objective CPO 10.46.

o. **Road Safety - Recommendation no.16**

Draft Development Plan Policy Objective CPO 16.34 advises that Road Safety Audit should be undertaken in accordance with TII’s Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines whereas TII Publications Standard GE-STY-01024 (Road Safety Audit) is the appropriate reference document. TII request that Council review the Draft Plan to consider the requirement to address RSIA in the plan prior to adoption and to update the reference for RSA preparation to TII Publications Standard GE-STY-01024 rather than the TII TTA Guidelines.

p. **Noise - Recommendation no.18**

TII acknowledges that Noise is addressed in Section 10.19 of the Draft Plan and would welcome clarification that the requirement that proposals in proximity to a noise source should include noise or vibration attenuation measures also applies to proposals in proximity to planned new roads as well as existing roads. The DoECLG Guidelines clearly require that the costs of implementing mitigation measures, in the circumstances referred to above, should be borne by the developer/applicant.

The Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport Department (DTTS) welcomes (WM-C1-141) the comprehensive Draft Westmeath County Development Plan and supports the recognition throughout the Draft Plan of the importance of aligning land use and transport policies. Reference is made to the fact that the Department is currently undertaking a review of “Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020 and the National Cycle Policy Framework in order to align with Project Ireland 2040. The Department welcomes the commitments to support public transport services in
rural areas and in particular support for the NTA’s Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022 under 10.3.9.

DTTS suggests that the Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022 should be included in CPO 10.3 as one of the national transport policies and Local Link bus services should also be referenced in section 10.4.5.

Section 10.3.10 refers to the Rural Transport Initiative (RTI). It is requested that references to the RTI should be removed from the Plan. It is also suggested that as section 10.3.9 covers the Local Link Rural Transport Programme, there is no need for a separate section 10.3.10 and that section 10.3.9 may be expanded as necessary taking account of the comments in paragraphs one and two above.

DTTS request that the Council include a new CPO in the Plan in relation to promoting a universal design approach to the built environment, including footpaths, roads, pedestrian crossing points, bus stops and interchange facilities, thus ensuring persons with disabilities and older persons can access same.

DTTS make reference to Section 10.4.4 which promotes the electrification of key rail routes including the Dublin to Galway line. It advises that the electrification of the national rail network does not form part of the current National Development Plan and therefore there are no current plans in that regard; however, and as noted above, the Department will shortly commence a study of higher speeds on the main inter-urban network. The Department welcomes the inclusion of tourism in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027. As with any local or national plans, it should ensure that it takes direction from National Tourism Policy.

Submission Nos WM-C1-119, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-149, WM CW1-102, WM CW-112, WM C1 95, WM C1 112 broadly welcome the renewed emphasis in the plan in relation to a modal shift to more sustainable transport modes. Many of the submissions request additional policies in the plan in relation to the further enhancement of public transport in the county. A number of submissions highlight the need for a coherent rural transport network. Some submissions sought additional policies to bring about a shift in modal change, in particular, request for additional bus stops and shelters within settlements, segregated pedestrian and cycle lanes and additional charging points for electric vehicles. Funding and targets for the implementation of sustainable transport initiatives was raised. The HSE recommends that a permeability and connectivity audit be carried out of existing pedestrian and cycle facilities in towns in Westmeath to identify any gaps in the existing infrastructure and highlight areas where investment can be made to form a coherent network.

The ESB request that minimum standards for parking of electric vehicles is required. It is further recommended that the Council should be using electric vehicles within its fleet.
Gas Networks Ireland recommends that ‘The National Policy Framework Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland’ be referenced in Section 10.3 and listed under CPO 10.3. It has further requested that reference to CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) which can be used in commercial vehicles is made in Section 10.4 of the plan.

14.1.3 Road Upgrades
Requests (WM-C1-41, WM C1 43 and WM C1 93) for the following road upgrades: upgrading of local primary road L1927 which links the N4 and R395; the provision of footpaths in Collinstown on the approach roads into village; Upgrading of the R392.

Concern is also raised (WM-C1-131) regarding the impact of the proposed M4 Mullingar to Longford road project on existing businesses in Ballinalack.

Request (WM-C1-75) for flexibility with regard to car parking standards for postal facilities/depots is set out. A request to examine the feasibility of an alternative use for the An Post depot site in Coosan and the inclusion of supportive polices to facilitate enhanced postal services is also submitted.

14.1.4 Wind Energy
Large-scale energy Production
There are contrasting views submitted within the submissions received in relation to the development and siting of ‘industrial scale’ wind farms across the County. Reference is made to the National Climate Action Plan 2019 renewable energy 70% target by 2030 and that the transition to a competitive low carbon economy is supported within the Draft Plan. Support has also been submitted for the consideration of the National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025 and the use, in principle of a specific Landscape Character Assessment for Westmeath in the assessment of development proposals.

A number of submissions received express strong opposition to the development of large-scale energy production on cutaway peatlands in the County. Concern is also raised (WM-C1-66, WM-C1-78, WM-C1-82, WM-C1-137, WM-C1-138) regarding the wording of Policy Objective 10.135. It is submitted that CPO 10.135 states “encourage” rather than “shall strictly direct” industrial windfarms to cut away bogs, it is suggested is more appropriate. It is further stated that the criteria to determine industrial scale windfarms in policy objective 10.135 is also ambiguous.

The following amendments to Section 10.23.2 are sought (WM-C1-87 ) – Industrial Scale Wind Farms Pg.308 First paragraph, 2nd last sentence – replace ‘worked-out’ with ‘former’ industrial peatlands and under CPO 10.135 remove final bullet ‘carbon emission balance’ as it is submitted that an increase in overall carbon losses is a matter to be considered and is relevant for all land types regardless of soil type.
Wind Energy Setbacks
Contrasting views are expressed in relation to the inclusion of the Wind Energy setback distances as set out under CPO 10.132. A number of submissions are broadly in support of such inclusion, however, a number of submissions request that this policy objective be reviewed and amended or removed in its entirety.

It is submitted (WM-C1-90) that it is important to aligning the plan with national and regional policy in terms of wind energy and it is requested that that the setback distances proposed be reviewed as, it is suggested, they are in conflict with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 and the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019. It is further submitted that a number of policy objectives including CPO 10.132, CPO 10.131 & CPO 10.137 in the plan could limit the capacity to deliver on renewable targets, are not consistent with national guidelines and that in light of this, the “preferred approach” as outlined by the Department should be incorporated into the plan.

Submissions WM-C1-66, WM-C1-78, WM-C1-82, WM-C1-137, WM-C1-138 request that the heights of wind turbine generators be specifically defined within the plan.

Landscape Character
Concerns are expressed regarding the content of the revised Landscape Character and its impact in classifying wind capacity. A number of submissions request that a review of same be undertaken. It is also requested that Map 47 under Volume 2, which relates to landscape character areas, be amended to include the location of key tourist sites and that a new objective be included in the plan which protects the integrity of these key tourist amenities from negative visual and landscape impacts.

Wind Energy Capacity
Clarifications and justification are sought regarding the previous and current wind energy capacity map (Map 48) and changes to wind energy designation areas in the County. A number of submissions request that the designation of the western lowlands area - Area 7 ‘medium capacity’ be omitted and replaced with ‘low capacity’ and that Policy P-Win2 from the current Development Plan be incorporated into the plan. There are also concerns surrounding the potential development of this area (Area 7) and the impact that such development may have on vistas associated with Uisneach. In contrast, a number of submissions express dis-satisfaction with the designation of only one area of the County as being ‘medium capacity’ for wind energy production within the County with the remainder designated as ‘low capacity’ or ‘no capacity’. It is requested that consideration be given to designate further desirable areas which would assist renewable companies in locating potentially suitable sites. It is put forward that the wind energy capacity map should be reconsidered and should align with the original wind farm capacity map for Westmeath 2008.
Noise and Human Health

In terms of noise and human health, CPO10.136 which relates to parameters on determining noise pollution is requested to be omitted, given, it is submitted that noise guidelines are a matter for national policy and this may cause conflict with CPO10.131 in the future. In contrast, a number of submissions request that this CPO be re-worded to address any ambiguity and provide for human health considerations. Further, a number of submissions (Elected Members) request that CPO10.123 should require that all energy developers or transmitters comply with WHO Guidelines and that health protection should be a policy requirement. The following additional wording as underlined is suggested for CPO 10.123: “Require all development to be designed and operated in a manner that will minimise and contain noise levels in accordance with World Health Organisation’s 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines (as may subsequently be amended).”

Community Based Projects

It is requested that the Council incorporate details in relation to community-based projects with respect to micro-generations of renewable energy (including small-scale wind energy development). It is suggested that CPO 10.134 in relation to Small-Scale Wind Energy Development should reference community-based wind projects (suggested wording provided) and information on outputs under 5MW detailed in this objective, or within a separate objective.

An amendment (WM-C1-67) is sought in relation to Section 10.23 by way of reference to tourism amenities as a potential sensitive receptor of wind energy developments and Fáilte Ireland as a potential consultee as per Section 10.23 ‘Wind Energy Policy Objectives’.

14.1.5 Wastewater Infrastructure

Irish Water (IW) welcome the inclusion of many policy objectives in the draft plan, including CPO10.89 (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs)) and CPO 10.108 (improvement of storm water infrastructure). With reference to CPO 10.89, it is suggested that early visibility of such public realm programmes is required to enable early assessment and support to those schemes that can deliver benefits. It is considered that early engagement is necessary to ensure solutions can be integrated at the pre-planning stage.

Irish Water note that there are constraints in sewer networks in a number of locations across the county. It is further noted that there are programmes available to support growth, e.g. the Small Towns and Villages Programme. Reference is made to water supply in the County and the 3 water supply zones. The following is submitted:

- Constraints at Athlone will be addressed by an interim project to be completed in the next 6 months, and phase 2 of the project will further increase capacity during the lifetime of this County Development Plan.
* Mullingar Regional (Portloman WTW) – Solutions to the issues will be addressed under the National Water Resources Plan, which will be out for public consultation later in 2020
* Ballany – there is some headroom available however, some upgrades may be needed within the lifetime of this Plan.

It is further noted that the National Water Resources Plan (due to be published for consultation later this year) will outline the longer-term plan for the Westmeath area and some of the works will be progressed to improve the existing network in the area.

The submission includes a table indicating wastewater capacity across the settlements.

IW recommends that a number of text edits are made to CPO 10.84 and CPO 10.109 and suggest the inclusion of a new policy objective as follows:

“When identifying areas for development, to ensure that full consideration is given to the level of investment that will be required in the provision of water services – particularly in environmentally sensitive areas - to ensure that the provision of water services does not negatively impact on habitat quality, species diversity or other environmental considerations.”

14.1.6 Bioenergy

In terms of bioenergy (WM-C1-119) is broadly supportive of the objectives contained in the plan. It is stated that the CDP must ensure that any provision of bioenergy is accomplished in a sustainable manner. Reference is also made to issues with emissions from anaerobic digesters and impact of greenhouse gases from intensive cattle farming. With regard to the section on Bioenergy, Bord Na Mona has suggested text changes in relation to the accuracy of Section 10.26 together with a recommendation for an additional policy objective in relation to developing an indigenous bioenergy sector.

14.1.7 Renewable Energy Strategy

Both the HSE and Coillte commend the commitment in the plan to the preparation of a Renewable Energy Strategy with requests (WM C1 121 and WM-C1-125) that this be prepared during the lifetime of the plan. It is further suggested that an evidence-based Wind Energy Strategy should be developed during the life of the 2021-2027 plan which is consistent with national guidelines and the Landscape Character Assessment.

14.1.8 Air Quality

The Health Service Executive (HSE) set out concerns in relation to the health of citizens in Westmeath and submit that the Strategic Development Plan should aim to reduce polluting emissions and implement measures which serve to improve both indoor and outdoor air quality by:

* Participating in, and facilitating national programmes of air quality monitoring,
• Working to develop and promote the Air Quality Index for Health,
• Develop Local Air Quality Management Plans that identify pollution 'hot spots' and aim to reduce pollution through local action on emissions.
• Assessing radon levels in indoor settings.

14.1.9 Regeneration of former Landfill Sites
Submission WM-C1-145 requests that policy is included in the plan to support the re-use of historic landfill sites and suggests policy in this regard.

14.1.10 Waste Management
Submission WM-C1-14 from Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCE) on behalf of the Waste Policy and Resources Efficiency Division suggests that in respect of the issue of waste in the documentation, it is requested that the Local Authority would consult directly with their respective Regional Waste Management Planning Office regarding the development of the final plan.

Recommendations (WM-C1-37) are submitted for the areas of waste collection, recycling, the environment, peat extraction, tourism and the purple flag accreditation. It is submitted that environmentally or recycling friendly public bins, together with replacing the Purple Flag accreditation and moving towards a recognised EU standard be considered.
14.2 Chief Executive’s Response:
Response to submissions WM-C1-11, WM-C1-25, WM-C1-28, WM-C1-29, WM-C1-31, WM-C1-33, WM-C1-41, WM-C1-43, WM-C1-53, WM-C1-66, WM-C1-69, WM-C1-75, WM-C1-78, WM-C1-82, WM-C1-87, WM-C1-90, WM-C1-93, WM-C1-95, WM-C1-102, WM-C1-113, WM-C1-118, WM-C1-119, WM-C1-121, WM-C1-125, WM-C1-131, WM-C1-136, WM-C1-137, WM-C1-138, WM-C1-141, WM-C1-150 are summarised below:

14.2.1 Broadband
In relation to rural broadband, CPO 5.32 of the Draft Plan states that the Council will support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan as a means of developing further opportunities for enterprise, employment, education, innovation and skills development for those who live and work in rural areas throughout Westmeath, where appropriate.

14.2.2 Transportation
In terms of the design of new roads projects, it is considered appropriate that regard be taken of the Westmeath County Heritage Plan, Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan and Westmeath Climate Adaptation Strategy. In this regard, reference should be made to the aforementioned publications in Section 10.5 of the plan.

With regard to the submission from the NTA, and the Local Link Rural Transport Programme in Section 10.3.9 of the plan it is considered that the Plan should be supplemented to reflect the NTA’s expansion plan for this service. Reference should be made in the plan to the role of the NTA in providing public transport in rural areas in Section 10.4.6. The Council will consult the NTA in regard to the planned preparation of Area Based Transport Assessments for Athlone and Mullingar.

The Council welcome TII’s comprehensive submission which includes a number of recommendations with regard to the insertion of additional policy objectives into the plan. TII’s recommendation with regard to a review of the text included in Policy Objective CPO 10.43 and Policy Objective CPO 10.45 to ensure the Draft Plan adheres to the provisions of official Government policy are noted. In this regard, Chapter 10 of the Plan supports, along with several other transport related polices, the implementation of Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012.

Comments in relation to referencing policy with regard to accessing national roads should be referenced in Chapter 9 as requested. A further CPO should be added to Section 9.6 in relation to the avoidance of new accesses for single houses onto national roads.
In terms of renewable energy developments, the assessment of alternatives is adequately considered in line with EIA Requirements and as such no further policy in this area is considered necessary as part of the Plan.

With regard to the request for a new policy objective to be included in the Development Plan regarding the explicit presumption against large out of town retail centres located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads/motorways, it should be noted the plan and its associated retail strategy does not support the delivery of large out-of-town retail centres located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads/motorways. In this regard the Council is committed to early engagement with TII in respect of Plans or projects that are located in proximity to such infrastructure.

Recommendations in relation to corridor and route selection and mobility management plans should be incorporated into the plan. In relation to service areas on or near national roads, CPO 16.38 should be updated to cite relevant section of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Road Guidelines 2012.

The Council notes the suggested recommendations for additional policy objectives in relation to national drainage regimes, noise attenuation measures and renewable energy projects and as such it is considered that the plan should address these areas.

Reference to recently superseded publications in the plan should be updated.

In relation to the preparation of area based transport assessments for Athlone and Mullingar, it should be noted that the Council is committed to engagement with TTI, NTA and other relevant stakeholders as part of the process.

The Council welcomes submission from the DTTS, and with respect to same it is recommended that the legislative context for this chapter be updated as requested. Further reference should also be made in the plan to the Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022 and universal design of public transport infrastructure.

The Council welcomes the positive sentiments (WM-C1-119, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-149, WM CW1-102, WM CW-112, WM C1 95, WM C1 112) expressed in relation to the inclusion of policies encouraging modal shift and promotion of behavioural change to bring about a reduction in the dependence on car travel. The inclusion of targets for the provision of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure is not recommended at this time as it is contingent upon available funding.

It should be noted that parking standards for electric vehicles are prescribed in Section 16.35 of the plan.

It is considered that the recommendation from HSE in relation to the preparation of permeability and connectivity audits in relation to pedestrian and cycle facilities is very worthwhile particularly in the
context of the larger settlements of Athlone and Mullingar. A policy objective to this effect will be included in the plan.

It is considered appropriate that ‘The National Policy Framework Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland’ be referenced under the Plan, as requested.

In relation to road upgrades, it should be noted that the Plan supports upgrades to both the local and regional road network, the delivery of which is considered an operational issue.

It should be noted, in relation to CPO 10.47 of the plan, (policy context for the implementation of road improvement schemes such as the M4 Mullingar to Longford), that such scheme is included for delivery under the NPF. The route selection and impact on existing businesses is an issue outside the scope of this plan.

Parking standards for developments are prescribed in Chapter 16.4.1 of the Plan. The Council supports the preparation of mobility management plans for trip intensive developments which would consider a number of issues including car parking.

In relation to the reference to the depot in Coosan, Athlone, the future use of said lands will be considered as part of the forthcoming Urban Area Plan for Athlone.

14.2.3 Energy

Large Scale Energy Production

With regard to the wording of CPO 10.135, it is considered that the intent of the objective is clear, i.e. the preferred location for large-scale energy production projects, in the form of windfarms, is on cutover cutaway peatlands in the county. The suggested text amendments to Section 10.23.2 in relation to the definition of industrial peatlands are considered appropriate and should be included as part of the Plan. With regard to the request to remove the term ‘carbon emission balance’ in CPO 10.135, it is considered that carbon emissions balance implies a gain or loss and therefore no amendment to the wording is recommended. As per recommendation CE OPR 1.12, the terminology used in CPO 10.135 should be amended to refer to taller commercial wind turbines.

In terms of consideration of developments associated with peatlands, it is considered appropriate to replace ‘worked-out’ with ‘former’ industrial peatlands and under CPO 10.135 remove final bullet ‘carbon emission balance’ as it is accepted that an increase in overall carbon losses is a matter to be considered and is relevant for all land types regardless of soil type.
Wind Energy Setbacks

It is acknowledged that the separation distances as set out under the Draft Plan are contrary to that set out under the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines, December 2019 (and the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines).

In relation to the assessment of wind energy developments, it should be noted that there are a number of Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by Government Departments as per Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Planning Authorities are required to ensure consistency of development plans with any specific planning policy requirements specified in guidelines issued.

In this regard, Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines were issued in December 2019, for public consultation. The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country for the treatment of planning applications for wind energy developments. The guidelines were also prepared within a wider national and EU energy policy context in line with binding EU and international obligations on Ireland to play its part in tackling both the causes and effects of climate change. As such, the Draft Plan also recognises the importance of wind energy, in addition to other renewable energy sources, in achieving national targets in relation to reducing fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions.

The Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines, December 2019 prescribe a setback requirement for visual amenity purposes of 4 times the tip height to be applied between a wind turbine and the nearest point of the curtilage of any residential property in the vicinity of the proposed development, subject to a mandatory minimum setback of 500 metres.

Further, the following are included in the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines:

- That assessments of noise are based on best international practice on wind turbine noise control including the Institute of Acoustics Good Practice Guides, WHO Guidelines and a procedure for the assessment of low frequency noise complaints.
- That a noise limit, referred to as a Relative Rated Noise Limit (RRNL) in the range of 35 – 43 dB(A), while not exceeding the background noise level by more than 5dB(A) with an upper limit of 43 dB(A). This is in line with the “preferred draft approach” announced by DHPCLG and DCCAE on 13th June 2017. The noise limits in the Draft Guidelines are more onerous that the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines and afford a higher level of protection to people who live in the vicinity of an any future wind farm developments.
- Include a policy of zero shadow flicker and recommend planning authorities or An Bord Pleanála to impose condition(s) to ensure that no existing dwelling or other affected property will experience shadow flicker as a result of the wind energy development.
- Require a Community Report, which must set out how wind energy developers intend to provide an opportunity for local communities to benefit from proposed wind developments through community investment/ownership or through benefits and dividends. Models to support
community participation will be implemented as part of the new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). The two main methods of community investment indicated have the potential to offer significant socio-economic benefits including employment, supply-chain, cheaper energy, new revenue streams, energy use reduction and carbon footprint reduction.

It is considered that the separation distances as set out under the Draft Plan are contrary to that set out under the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines, December 2019 (and the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines) and as such the inclusion of specific separation distances under the Draft Plan is considered premature pending the adoption of said Guidelines as such the inclusion of specific separation distances under the Plan is considered premature pending the adoption of said Guidelines.

In this regard it should be noted that, in response to a submission from the Office of the Planning Regulator, as set out in CE CH 10.25, it is recommended that CPO 10.132 be removed from the Plan as follows:

- **500 metres**, where height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 25 metres but does not exceed 50 metres.
- **1000 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 50 metres but does not exceed 100 metres.
- **1500 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 100 metres but does not exceed 150 metres.
- **More than 2000 metres**, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 150 metres.

As such, it is considered that existing policy as set out at CPO 10.131, which supports ‘the principles and planning guidance set out in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publications relating to ‘Wind Energy Development’ and the DCCAE Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland and any other relevant guidance which may be issued in relation to sustainable energy provisions, is appropriate and in line with government policy in this area.

**Landscape Character Assessment**

In term of the Landscape Character Assessment, it should be noted that details in this regard are included at Section 13.6 of the plan. In the interest of clarity, it should be noted that the strategy is consistent with that included under the current Development Plan. Whilst the comments on mapping of tourist amenities are acknowledged, it should be noted that reference to tourism amenities as a sensitive receptor of wind energy developments is included at Section 10.23 of the Draft Plan.
Wind Capacity Map

In terms of requests to revert wind energy mapping in line with that included under the current Development plan, it should be noted, in the interest of clarity, the Wind Capacity Map is consistent with that included under the current Development Plan. Whilst a recommendation for a change of the classification of Area 7 from “medium capacity” to “low capacity” for wind energy development is noted, it is considered that such amendment is not justified given the landscape character of the area in question. Concerns in relation to the Hill of Uisneach are noted. Notwithstanding, suitable protection has been afforded to the Hill of Uisneach which is located within an area which is designated as having no capacity for wind energy development.

Noise & Human Health

The Council notes the contrasting opinions expressed on this matter. The Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines, December 2019 set out the following noise limits for wind energy projects:

- That assessments of noise are based on best international practice on wind turbine noise control including the Institute of Acoustics Good Practice Guides, WHO Guidelines and a procedure for the assessment of low frequency noise complaints.

- That a noise limit, referred to as a Relative Rated Noise Limit (RRNL) in the range of 35 – 43 dB(A), while not exceeding the background noise level by more than 5dB(A) with an upper limit of 43 dB(A). This is in line with the “preferred draft approach” announced by DHPCLG and DCCAE on 13th June 2017.

The noise limits in the Draft Guidelines afford a higher level of protection to people who live in the vicinity of any future wind farm developments that that set out under the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines.

Furthermore, CPO 10.136 states the following, “Ensure that proposals for energy development demonstrate that human health has been considered, including those relating to the topics of:

- Noise (including consistency with the World Health Organisation’s 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region);
- Shadow Flicker (for wind turbine developments, including detailed Shadow Flicker Study);
- Ground Conditions/Geology (including landslide and slope stability risk assessment);
- Air Quality; and Water Quality;
- Assessment of impacts on collision risk species (bird and bats)”.

In order to address any ambiguity between CPO 10.136 and CPO 10.131, it is recommended that the reference to the World Health Organisation’s 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region in CPO 10.136 should be removed.
Community Based Projects
CPO 10.134 encourages and supports the development of small-scale wind energy development and single turbines in urban and rural areas and Industrial Parks, provided they do not negatively impact upon environmental quality, landscape, wildlife and habitats or residential amenity.

The Council will support community based wind energy projects subject to compliance with CPO 10.134. Given the plan is strategic in nature, further detail on community based projects is not considered necessary at this time.

Suggestions made in relation to the inclusion of tourism amenities as sensitive receptors of wind energy development and the addition of Fáilte Ireland as consultee in relation to wind energy developments are considered appropriate and should be included in the plan.

14.2.4 Water & Wastewater Infrastructure
The comments from Irish Water in relation to water and wastewater capacity are noted. In this regard, the Council has engaged extensively with Irish Water in the preparation of the Draft Plan. In this regard the Settlement Hierarchy set out under the Plan and associated zoning provisions are reflective of Irish Water infrastructure capacity, the details of which were provided to the Council as part of pre-plan consultation.

In this regard the Council is committed to continued engagement with Irish Water in relation to planning for the infrastructural requirements to meet anticipated growth in the county.

It should be noted that the Council have sought funding under IW Small Towns and Villages Programme in relation to the upgrade of Ballymore, Delvin, Collinstown and Clonmellon treatment plants which will address capacity issues. The suggested text edits and policy insertion are considered acceptable and should be included in the plan.

14.2.5 Bioenergy
An Taisce’s support for bioenergy once it is undertaken in a sustainable manner is noted. The plan seeks to promote and facilitate the development of bioenergy technologies, subject to environmental, habitats and landscape protection. Bord Na Mona’s suggestion in the relation to the correction of text with regard to bio energy fuel sources and technologies in Section 10.26 is noted and the text should be clarified in this regard. The suggestion for an additional policy objective to support the development of an indigenous bioenergy sector, including the mobilisation of low value residual biomass for the production of renewable electricity is considered acceptable and should be included in the plan.
14.2.6 Renewable Energy Strategy
In terms of renewable energy, as indicated in Section 10.22 and in CPO’s 10.128-130, the Council is committed to supporting renewable energy development. CPO 10.149 of the plan provides for the preparation of a Renewable Energy Strategy for the County over the lifetime of this plan. This strategy will support the development of renewable energy infrastructure to deliver government objectives in relation to energy efficiency and the transition to a low carbon future. It will focus on all renewable energy resources including wind energy.

14.2.7 Regeneration of Former Landfill Sites
With regard to Submission No. WM-C1-145, the Council acknowledge that redundant landfill sites are a valuable resource and would support their re-use for recreational purposes, subject to the site being suitably remediated. In this regard, it is recommended that supplementary text and additional CPO’s are added to the end of Section 10.17 of the plan to support the re-use of former landfill sites.

14.2.8 Miscellaneous
In accordance with the request from Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCE) on behalf of the Waste Policy and Resources Efficiency Division, (DCCE), the Draft Plan was referred to the Regional Waste Management Planning Office for comment in relation to waste. No submission was received from same.

14.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE CH 10.1
Insert reference to the “Westmeath County Heritage Plan”, “Westmeath Biodiversity Plan” and ‘Westmeath Climate Adaptation Strategy’ in Section 10.5 of the plan.

CE CH 10.2
Insert reference with regard to the role of National Transport Authority in providing public transport in Section 10.4.6 of the plan.

CE CH 10.3
Insert new CPO in Section 9.6 as follows:
Resist the creation of new accesses for single houses onto national roads, in order to safeguard the carrying capacity and safety of the national road network
CE CH 10.4
Update Table 10.1 to reflect terminology as set out under the National Development Plan 2029-2027

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| N4    | Realignment and Upgrade from Mullingar to Longford County Boundary  
       | N4 Mullingar to Longford |
| N52   | Realignment and Upgrade from Kilbeggan to Offaly County Boundary  
       | N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan |
| N55   | Realignment and Upgrade from the N6 Athlone to the Longford County Boundary |
| N51   | Realignment and Upgrade from Delvin to Meath County Boundary |
| N52   | Realignment offline Delvin Bypass |
| N51/N52 | Realignment offline Clonmellon Bypass |
|       | Realignment and Upgrade from Delvin to the Meath County Boundary including  
       | realignment offline Clonmellon Bypass |
| N62   | Realignment from Fardrum to Offaly County Boundary including Ballinahown Bypass |

CE CH 10.5
To insert new CPO after Section 10.5.3

To protect the study area, route corridor options and thereafter the preferred route corridor selected for the national road schemes being progressed in accordance with National Development Plan Objectives included in Table 10.1 of the Development Plan, from development that could prejudice their future delivery

CE CH 10.6
Insert the following text after Table 10.1

Any improvements relating to national roads identified at a local level should be carried out following consultation with TII

CE CH 10.7
To amend CPO10.58 as follows: Require mobility management plans to be submitted with applications for trip intensive developments including schools, significant employers, business parks and industrial estates
CE CH 10.8
Insert additional text into CPO 16.38 in relation to the provision of off-line motorway service areas at national road junctions including road side service facilities on non-motorway national roads and their junctions as per Section 2.8 of the Spatial Planning & National Road Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)

CE CH 10.9
Insert new CPO after CPO 10.47
*Seek to ensure that the capacity and efficiency of the national road network drainage regimes in County Westmeath will be safeguarded for national road drainage purposes*

CE CH 10.10
Replace references to “National Roads Authority’s Design Manual for Roads and Bridges” with relevant TII publication at CPO 10.49 and CPO 16.34.

CE CH 10.11

CE CH 10.12
Insert amendment to CPO 16.34 to include reference to Road Safety Impact Assessment (RSIA) and to reference to Road Safety Audit (RSA) to be prepared in accordance with “TII Publications Standard GE-STY-01024”

CE CH 10.13
Insert the following additional text before CPO 10.21
*Consideration also needs to be given to avoid adverse impacts when introducing noise sensitive uses in proximity to existing and future national roads. Where warranted, proposals should include mitigation and should have regard to Section 3.7 of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines*

CE CH 10.14
Omit text in Section 10.3.3 as follows and replace with new text in reference to The National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP)

10.3.3 Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021

The document ‘Building on Recovery – Infrastructure and Capital investment 2016-2021’ (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) sets out future capital spending proposals for investment in
infrastructure. €42 billion has been allocated for projects nationally up to 2021. Following a review in 2018, the Government published a new 10-year National Investment Plan for the period 2018–2027.

**CE CH 10.15**

To amend the following text under 10.3.5 Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future - A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020 (Department of Transport, 2009) as follows:

This document, which is currently under review by the Department of Transport, sets out how the vision for a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved. The policy recognises the vital importance of continued investment in transport to ensure an efficient economy and continued social development. The Government reaffirms its vision for sustainability in transport and sets out five key goals:

To reduce overall travel demand.

To maximise the efficiency of the transport network.

To reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

To reduce transport emissions.

To improve accessibility to transport.

The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020 (Department of Transport) which is derived from Smarter Travel, sets out a national policy for cycling, in order to create a stronger cycling culture, a safer environment for cycling and improved quality of life.

A new Sustainable Mobility Policy, which will be closely aligned with the national strategic outcomes of Project Ireland 2040, will be developed over the course of 2020.

**CE CH 10.16**

Support the implementation of the following national and regional transport policies as they apply to Westmeath:

- The National Planning Framework
- The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region
- Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 – 2020
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) 2019
- Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012
- Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, 2018
- Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022
CE CH 10.17
Insert reference to the “Local Link bus services” in Section 10.4.5 of the plan

CE CH 10.18
Delete reference to the Rural Transport Initiative under Section 10.3.10

“The Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) supports rural transport services in the County. The RTI Project provides community-based, door-to-door, flexible transport services, and facilitates passengers to access a wide range of services, which include shopping, health, day-care and social activities on a regular basis. Services are also scheduled to link with public and private transport services locally.

South Westmeath Rural Transport Association is a community-based transport initiative serving a large rural community in the southwest area of County Westmeath.”

CE CH 10.19
Amend CPO 10.64 as follows: Ensure the provision of appropriate sheltered bicycle parking facilities, in convenient and secure locations in all new developments, e.g. close to the entrances of retail outlets, as part of any new applications in urban areas to assist with supporting modal shift away from private cars to more sustainable modes of transport i.e. Cycling, Walking, Public Transport.

CE CH 10.20
Insert new CPO after CPO 10.26 as follows:

Ensure that new development proposals for public transport infrastructure are designed to be fully accessible to people with disabilities and older persons by adopting a universal design approach to the built environment, including footpaths, roads, pedestrian crossing points, bus stops and interchange facilities.

CE CH 10.21
Insert new CPO after CPO 10.64

Undertake a review of public cycle parking provision in Athlone and Mullingar, in order to inform any future Urban Area Plan for Athlone and Local Area Plan for Mullingar.
CE CH 10.22
Insert reference to *The National Policy Framework Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland* at Section 10.3 of the plan.

CE CH 10.23
Insert a new CPO after CPO 10.24
*Support the carrying out of a permeability and connectivity audit of existing pedestrian and cycle facilities in the towns of Athlone and Mullingar*

CE CH 10.24
Replace the term ‘worked-out’ with ‘former’ industrial peatlands in Section 10.23.2 of the plan.

CE CH 10.25
Update CPO 10.136 as follows.
Ensure that proposals for energy development demonstrate that human health has been considered, including those relating to the topics of:

- Noise (including consistency with the World Health Organisation’s 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region);
- Shadow Flicker (for wind turbine developments, including detailed Shadow Flicker Study);
- Ground Conditions/Geology (including landslide and slope stability risk assessment);
- Air Quality; and Water Quality;
- Assessment of impacts on collision risk species (bird and bats).

CE CH 10.26
Insert reference to tourism amenities as a sensitive receptor of wind energy developments in Section 10.23

CE CH 10.27
Insert reference to Fáilte Ireland as an additional consultee that potential Applicants are advised to consult with regarding wind energy developments in Section 10.23.
CE CH 10.28
Amend CPO 10.84 as follows:

Support the preparation and development of Water Safety Plans / Drinking Water Protection Plans and Source Protection Plans to protect sources of public water supply, in accordance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.

CE CH 10.29
Implement policies contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) in relation to SUDS and climate change or any revision thereof

CE CH 10.30
Insert new policy objective after CPO 10.84

New development proposals shall ensure that full consideration is given to the level of investment that will be required in the provision of water services, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas to ensure that the provision of water services does not negatively impact on habitat quality, species diversity or other environmental considerations.

CE CH 10.31
Insert additional text to Section 10.111 as follows:

Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midland Region National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) Irish Water has identified key projects for the County which are included in Project Ireland 2040 to support planned development and maintain and improve existing services. In this context, Irish Water is currently progressing the first National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) which will set out the strategy of how we will move towards an environmentally sustainable, secure and reliable drinking water supply over the next 25 years. This plan involves assessing the external factors that will affect our water supplies, including changing environmental legislation, government policy on growth, spatial planning, water usage patterns and climate change. The Plan will provide a framework for developing new water supply assets to improve the reliability, sustainability and resilience of the water supply over future investment cycles; and the Council will seek to align its water supply policies with the NWRP framework.

CE CH 10.32
Omit the following paragraph under Section 10.26 and replace with text underlined below
All dry resources; wood and wood residues (forest or sawmill residues) and dry agricultural residues such as straw, can be combusted to produce heat, electricity or both, and can also be co-fired in existing solid fuel systems.

All dry resources; wood and wood residues (forest or sawmill residues) and dry agricultural residues such as straw, has the potential to be combusted to produce heat, electricity or both, in suitable designed boilers. However, it must be noted that for typical commercial and industrial biomass burners as well as domestic units, a high specification biomass fuel must be used. Forest and wood residues require larger more robust boiler units – typically those used to generate electricity from peat.

CE CH 10.33
Insert new CPO after CPO 10.26
Support the development of an indigenous bioenergy sector, including the mobilisation of low value residual biomass for the production of renewable electricity

CE CH 10.34
Insert a new paragraph after Section 10.17 Waste Management to include the following text:

In recent years there has been a move away from the disposal of waste to landfill. According to Section 22 of the Waste Management Act 1996 as amended, there are 14 sites within Westmeath on the Register for Closed landfills. Historic landfills are those unregulated facilities that operated for the recovery or disposal of waste pre 1977.

Since 1977, there are 2 other landfills in the county, namely Ballydonagh and Marlinstown, which were regulated under waste licence from the EPA and which are now closed (2010 and 2002 respectively). There is no open landfill operating in the county at present.

The Council has carried out a risk assessment on all unregulated landfills. Only 2 of those landfills (Moate & Lickbla) were identified from the preliminary Tier 1 risk assessment as having an associated high risk. Further risk assessment is required on the Lickbla facility. In the case of Moate, full remediation works are on-going at present and due for completion later this year. The two licenced landfills at Ballydonagh and Marlinstown, although closed, continue to be monitored by the Council in accordance with the conditions of the waste licences.

The Council will continue to support the remediation of former landfill sites listed in Table 10.4 below, subject to compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
CE CH 10.35
Insert the following new policy objectives after Section 10.17 of the plan:

Support the re-use of former landfill sites in the County for parklands, recreational, nature conservation and/or low carbon or renewable energy use, subject to compliance with all legislative and regulatory requirements.

Facilitate and support the regeneration of closed landfill sites in Westmeath. Any application for the reuse of former landfill sites will require a Masterplan to be prepared to include the following elements:

- Evaluation of the setting of the site
- Risk Assessment
- Detailed proposal for the after-use of the site
- Review of all legislative and regulatory requirements in relation to the remediation of the site
- Consultation with the EPA or other relevant statutory agencies”
- Assessment of the social and economic benefits of the re-use of the site
- Analysis of public engagement undertaken.
- A “site manual” detailing landfill engineering features and pollution control systems”

CE CH 10.36
Promote and encourage the objectives of the Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 (or any subsequent plan) regarding the remediating of historic closed landfills prioritising actions to those sites which are the highest risk to the environment and human health. Any future development of lands incorporating historic closed landfills shall take full consideration of the environmental sensitivities of the local site and follow the national code of practice for assessment and remediation of such sites. This may include obtaining an appropriate authorisation from the EPA to regulate the proposed remediation.
15. Chapter 11 Climate Action

Submission Reference No.

WM-C1-27, WM-C1-37, WM-C1-47, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-87, WM-C1-117, WM-C1-119, WM-C1-147 and WM-C1-149

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject:

- Renewable Energy
- Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- Peat extraction
- Sustainable rural based enterprises
- Tourism infrastructure
- Tree Protection
- Implementation targets and timeframes

A number of submission supporting the approach taken in the Plan in the area of climate action, together with recommendation for enhanced policy in this area have been received.

Coillte (Submission WM-C1-47) welcomes the policies and objectives as outlined in the Draft Plan in relation to local tourism, recreation and sporting facilities, delivering local and wider community needs, in alignment with the objectives of the Council. In preparing the County Development Plan, Coillte request that the Council:

a. Promote the use of sustainable timber products in the Development Plan policies and objectives.

b. In respect to renewable energy:
   - Recognise and respond to the scale and urgency of climate change as part of the County Development Plan review process.
   - Work in partnership with other government agencies and third parties, including the public, to achieve these goals.

Bord na Móna (BnaM) set out their role in supporting an accelerated decarbonisation programme and commitments to rehabilitation targets (20,000 hectares of cutaway and cutover bog to wetland and woodland mosaics by 2025). Bord na Móna’s ambition in this area and contribution to climate action and ecosystem service benefits and support for the main carbon mitigation land-use objectives of the National Climate Action Plan are also set out.
Objectives in Chapter 11 which seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are welcome (Submission WM-C1-27); however it is suggested that proposed monitoring falls short of the standard imposed by the SEA Directive.

Concerns are raised (WM-C1-117, WM-C1-119) regarding setting implementation targets and timescales of CPOs. Support is set out with relation to section 1.1. and 11.2 of Chapter 11: Climate Action, however, it is suggested that the Draft Plan does not appear to recognise the urgency of dealing with climate change and a climate emergency as declared by Dáil Éireann and the Citizen’s Assembly.

Support (WM-C1-119) for a standalone chapter on Climate Action is set out.

The following observations and recommendations in relation to Climate Emergency and Climate Action, sustainability, eco-municipalities and transition towns are also set out:

a. Climate Emergency and Climate Action: Strongly supports the objective that the Council “must take a leading role at local levels, to guide individuals, community and business interests to mitigate against and adapt to climate change and its impacts”

b. Making the Transition to Sustainability: No clear target or timetable provided for the phasing out of the burning of turf or peat for electricity generation and the policy fails to recognise that making the transition to a sustainable society requires much more wider approach to changing the way we obtain and use energy, materials and other resources.

c. Request to consider Transition Towns as a grassroots network of communities working to build resilience on climate matters.

d. Requested to examine the concept of “eco- municipalities”, to provide support and assistance to cities and towns undertaking ecological community planning.

e. Suggested that steps to achieving sustainability should be clearly defined in the new CDP, with appropriate targets and timescale, and with institutional and financial support where needed.

Support for the actions detailed in the Westmeath Climate Change Adaptation Strategy are requested to be supported by the Plan. It is also submitted (WM-C1-84) that training for all Westmeath County Council staff on climate matters should be provided. In line with CPO 11.5 regarding the provision of training on climate mitigation measures it is recommended that Westmeath County Council use innovative training techniques to capture the public's interest in climate initiatives.

Further it is requested (WM-C1-149) that the climate impact of construction and sustainable farming practices to help reduce greenhouse gas emission from agricultural practices, be considered as part of the Plan. It is submitted that WCC need to adopt a strategic approach to monitoring the effectiveness of the climate action outlined in the Development Plan and provide measured targets to reduce carbon footprint, transport emissions, energy demands, flood risks and infrastructure vulnerability in the county. It is recommended that the impact of intensive agriculture practices on the status of water quality is monitored and assessed.
15.1 Chief Executive’s Response:
Response to submissions WM-C1-27, WM-C1-37, WM-C1-47, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-87, WM-C1-117, WM-C1-119, WM-C1-147 and WM-C1-149 are outlined below:

In response to concerns raised in relation to the monitoring and implementation of the previous development plan and how the results of that monitoring was considered during the review of the plan, it should be noted that a monitoring exercise was undertaken by way of a 2-year review of the current plan and its associated policy objectives, the findings of which were used, in association with subsequent updated national and regional policy and guidance to inform the Draft Plan.

In terms of climate, climate action has been addressed throughout the Development Plan and a dedicated Climate Action chapter is set out to address the increasing importance that climate change and action play in Westmeath.

Westmeath Climate Change Adaptation Strategy as supported by the Draft Plan supports training and awareness of Climate Change and it is considered that specific issues in this regard are best considered as part of this strategy.

In term of the contribution of the Plan to realising targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation, the Plan is committed to reducing carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. The designation of areas for specific measures is considered best considered as part of the Climate Action Plan currently in preparation by the Council.

It is acknowledged in the plan that the Council is open to new and innovative renewable energy sources and technological solutions to addressing climate change. In this regard, the Council will seek to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to progress the transition to green energy.

It is recommended that policy be provided which commits to working with key stakeholders to carry out an assessment of how the implementation of the Plan will contribute to realising overall national targets on renewable energy and climate change, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource. It is also anticipated that the forthcoming Development Plan Guidelines, will provide further guidance in this area and the Plan should reflect a commitment to take any steps considered necessary to align with the approach to climate action recommended in the guidelines over the lifetime of the Plan.

In relation to turf cutting policy has been provided as part of the Draft Plan at CPO 11.6 which seeks to ‘Support collaboration between local authorities, the Bord na Móna Transition Team and relevant stakeholders and the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management for a just transition that incorporate any relevant policies and strategies such as the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021 and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans. This shall include support for the rehabilitation and/or re-wetting of suitable peatland habitats’. 
In terms of responding to the scale and urgency of climate change, Chapter 11, and in particular Table 11.3, outlines the incorporation of climate adaptation/mitigation in the County Development Plan. CPO 11.1 sets out a commitment to support the implementation and achievement of European, national, regional and local objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the following documents, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage) and having regard to the Climate mitigation and adaptation measures which have been outlined through the policy objectives in this Development Plan:

- Climate Action Plan (2019 and any subsequent versions);
- National Mitigation Plan (2017 and any subsequent versions);
- National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions);
- Any Regional Decarbonisation Plan prepared on foot of commitments included in the emerging Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region;
- Relevant provisions of any Sectoral Adaptation Plans prepared to comply the requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, including those seeking to contribute towards the National Transition Objective, to pursue, and achieve, the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the end of the year 2050; and

The Draft Plan also provides for a reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions by providing for consolidated future development which supports sustainable travel patterns in line with the County Core Strategy. Further the Draft Plan seeks to support sustainable farming practices that maintain the quality of the natural environment, protect farm landscapes and support the achievement of climate targets.

### 15.2 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

#### CE CH 11.1

To insert a new CPO inserted after CPO 11.8 as follows:

*To review the outcomes of the Development Plan Guidelines, as adopted, and take any steps considered necessary to align with the approach to climate action recommended in the guidelines over the lifetime of the Plan*
16. Chapter 12 Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure

Submission Reference No.

WM-C1-12, WM-C1-21, WM-C1-62, WM-C1-63, WM-C1-70, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-86, WM-C1-87, WM-C1-108, WM-C1-112, WM-C1-119, WM-C1-123, WM-C1-146, WM-C1-155.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject:

- Peat Extraction
- Deletion of land from the proposed NHAs
- Peatlands
- Landscape, Lakes and Areas of High Amenity
- Tree and Hedgerow protection policies
- Green Infrastructure
- Public Rights of Way

A number of submissions welcome the inclusion of ‘Natural Heritage & Green Infrastructure’ and ‘Climate Action’ as prominent chapters within the draft plan. It is submitted that the aims set out in these chapters will assist Westmeath County Council in meeting the main objectives of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

The approach to; protecting biodiversity using the Ecosystem Services approach in developing objectives; providing for ‘Green Infrastructure’ as an important aspect of protecting biodiversity; setting out Natural Heritage policy objectives which are acknowledged as important in the context of biodiversity protection and enhancement are all endorsed.

The inclusion of objectives in relation to Appropriate Assessment (AA) are welcome and supplementary policy is recommended in this area in terms of assessing future development proposals arising from the Plan. It is also suggested that objectives 12.13 - 12.21 could be further enhanced by including an objective which requires an ‘Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)’ for any proposed development which may have a significant impact on rare and threatened species. In addition, the Plan should acknowledge the strict protection, provided for by the Habitats Directive, which applies to Annex IV species (e.g. Bats and Otter) wherever they occur; and should provide for this protection to be fully implemented in any plans and projects arising from the Plan. EUROBATS1 and Dark Sky lighting recommendations are also recommended for consideration in terms of reducing the impact of lighting on wildlife.

Positive aspects of the Natural Heritage objectives including those for ‘Biodiversity Sites of Value’ and ‘Non-Designated sites’ are highlighted and acknowledgement set out in respect of the survey work.
already completed by Westmeath County Council on hedgerows, woodlands, peatlands, the Swift survey, and other green infrastructure in the county. It is submitted that an Ecosystem Services Scoring approach could also be deployed as part of the plan in this regard.

Objectives in relation to protecting wetlands and peatlands within the County are acknowledged. It is submitted that an objective to support the implementation of the National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022 should be included as part of Plan policy.

Endorsement is set out in relation to ‘Green infrastructure’ (GI), Greenways, Blueways and Peatways. It is recommended that implementation plans for greenways are developed in conjunction with the CDP (subject to environmental assessments). The need to apply the precautionary principle when screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) and/or undertaking AA for such developments is highlighted.

The proposal to establish Lough Ree as a UNESCO Biosphere Nature Reserve is welcomed and the importance of all the Lakes within the County in terms of ‘High Amenity’ areas for both residents and tourism is highlighted. The commitment by Westmeath to protect lakeshores from inappropriate development is also acknowledged and it is suggested that objectives relating to proposals to increase access to areas such as Lough Ree, Lough Ennell and Lough Owel when proposing walking routes or bike trails along lakeshores should reflect this.

The Plan’s commitment to sustainable transport, new housing and prioritising existing brownfield sites; ensuring that any development is appropriately located within the County is welcomed. Attention is drawn to the proposed zoning of residential and community/education lands in Tyrellspass (Map 18) which is located near to the Cloncrow Bog NHA (No. 000677). Any proposed zoning of development near to the NHA should ensure that there are no negative impacts on the NHA.

Restoration plans for Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are highlighted and it is submitted that further consideration in the Plan in relation to the rehabilitation of cutaway Peatlands should be provided.

It is recommended that carbon benefit analysis is applied to the consideration of proposals for the future use of cutaway peatlands.

Attention is drawn to the area of peatland development, which it is stated are subject to the requirements of the planning code, the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and the requirements of the Habitats Directive. It is recommended that policy provision in the draft development plan (as set out in CPO 12.58) be strengthened to ensure clarity in relation to the requirements for planning permission provided for in the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) and environmental assessment in this regard. It is also submitted (WM-C1-27) that Policy CPO 12.58 should be amended to prevent further peat extraction.
Concerns (Submission WM-C1-84) are raised in relation to the preservation of bogs in Westmeath and that a County Wetlands Plan should guide biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. An objective to increase wetlands through habitat restoration and creation is also suggested. Wetland policy objectives (12.15) is welcome but it is suggested that an objective to promote the restoration of degraded wetlands and support the creation of new wetlands thus increasing the area of wetlands in the county would enhance existing policy provision in the area.

Further, a request is set out that CPO 12.58 be amended to include the following text “...activities not otherwise controlled by the Environmental Protection Agency or pursuant to an environmental licence,” after “...control of peat extraction...” and that policy document “Bealach Úr, Bealach Glas - The Future use of our Peatlands” is acknowledged and specifically mentioned. It is also suggested that the objectives of CPO 12.63 is encapsulated in CPO 12.61 and ought therefore to be removed from the final plan to avoid potential ambiguity.

The importance of the preservation of trees in Westmeath is highlighted and a series of suggestions, including the provision of standards and request to include ‘tree planting policy’ are set out to ensure that tree and hedgerow planting is protected and supported under the Plan.
TII recommends that the Council carefully consider the text of Policy Objectives CPO 12.5 and CPO 12.6 to acknowledge the Habitats Directive prior to finalisation of the Development Plan.

Proposals (WM-C1-62) to delete Lough Sheever Fen/Slevin’s Lough complex from the proposed Natural Heritage Area are set out.

The designation of additional rights of way are endorsed (WM-C1-70).

Support for wetland policy objectives in Section 12.15 of the Draft Plan is set out and it is recommended that a Wetlands Plan to inform natural resources planning and the maximisation of the potential of wetlands for biodiversity ecosystem services should be prepared. It is also submitted that the protection offered to wetlands by CPO 12.41 should be strengthened.

The Westmeath Heritage Forum welcomes the Policy Objective to prepare Strategic Habitat Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites in Council ownership (12.10) and CPOs 12.36 and 12.37 which seek to designate more Tree Preservation Orders and to protect mature trees and hedgerows are also welcomed. A policy objective that seeks to ensure that developments do not result in a net loss of biodiversity is also suggested.
16.1 Chief Executive’s Response

Response to submissions WM-C1-12, WM-C1-21, WM-C1-33, WM-C1-62, WM-C1-63, WM-C1-84, WM-C1-86, WM-C1-87, WM-C1-94, WM-C1-108, WM-C1-119, WM-C1-123, WM-C1-146, WM-C1-155 is outlined below.

The positive sentiments expressed in relation to policy provision as set out under the plan is both acknowledged and welcomed. Further, the DCHG’s endorsements and proposed recommendations to enhance the plan are duly noted.

In the interest of the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the protection of species, it is considered appropriate that the suggested inclusion of a policy objective requiring an ‘Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)’ for any proposed development which may have a significant impact on rare and threatened species be included in the plan. The suggestion for the deployment of an ecosystems services scoring approach is noted and in this regard, and such approach is considered to be a worthy initiative. Accordingly, a protocol for the application of an ecosystems services approach in relation to the assessment of planning applications is recommended. References made in the submission to EUROBATS guidelines and Dark Sky lighting should also be provided in the plan in the interest of reducing the impact of lighting on wildlife.

The observations made within the submissions received in respect of Greenways, Blueways, Lakes and Peatways are also noted. The Council will endeavour to develop implementation plans for greenways with supporting environmental assessments, subject to the availability of adequate resources and the inclusion of a specific policy objective to facilitate this is proposed.

In terms of policy with respect to peat extraction as set out under Policy Objective 12.58 (control of peat extraction), it is recommended in the interest of clarity, that reference to the protection of the environment to be included as part of said policy. The role of carbon benefit analysis in the consideration of proposals for the future use of cutaway peatlands is noted and such and it is considered that the requirement for such an approach to be applied as part of the assessment process associated with future planning applications in this area will provide a for a more robust assessment of development proposals. Support in relation to the implementation of the National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022 should also be included by way of policy. It is not considered any ambiguity arises in association with CPO12.61 and CPO12-63 which supports the preparation of management plans for the future use of peatlands.

The inclusion of a site-specific objective as part of the Tyrrellspass Settlement Plan and associated land use zoning plan (does not encroach on Cloncrow Bog NHA), to ensure that future development will not adversely affect the Cloncrow Bog NHA, is considered appropriate.

The importance of tree protection, maintenance and planting to the County’s biodiversity and overall environment is recognised and it is considered that the proposed plan is consistent with the Westmeath Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024. In this context, an appropriate policy to
be included within the plan which seeks the delivery of Tree Management Plans (where required) is recommended. Furthermore, an additional policy objective which supports the development of a tree planting policy for the County is also recommended for inclusion as part of the Plan.

In terms of Appropriate Assessment, in the interest of clarity, a footnote to be provided to CPO 12.5 and CPO 12.6 (development in association with Natura Sites) which satisfactorily addresses Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

In terms of NHA’s it should be noted that NHAs are legally protected from the date they are formally proposed for designation under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000) and the Council does not have authority to amend this statutory designation as requested in relation to Lough Sheever Fen/Slevin’s Lough complex. The Council will continue to comply with and implement legislative requirements in relation to all natural heritage sites designated or proposed for designation under national and European legislation. It is noted that CPO 12.20 provides for the protection of both designated and proposed NHA’s. It is considered that CPO 12.20 could be enhanced through provision for the maintenance and development of linkages between designated sites, where feasible and as resources permit.

Appendix 6 of the CDP outlines existing public rights of way within the county which are displayed on Map No. 52. In accordance with CPO 12.80, the Council will continue to review and protect existing public rights of way for the common good and bring forward proposals for the creation of public rights of way.

Suggested proposals for the strengthening of policies in relation to biodiversity (including wetlands) are acknowledged, however, it is considered that such detailed policies are more appropriately considered and under the remit of the Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan.

16.2 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE CH 12.1

Insert the following additional CPO within Section 12.10

Require, in special circumstances, that an 'Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)' prepared by a suitably qualified and indemnified person be undertaken for a proposed development which may potentially have a significant impact on rare and threatened species
CE CH 12.2

Insert the following additional CPO at Section 12.11

*Investigate a protocol in relation to the application of an ecosystems services scoring approach to inform the assessment of planning applications*

CE CH 12.3

Amend CPO 12.20 as follows:

Protect and conserve NHAs and pNHAs including NHAs that become designated and notified to the Local Authority during the lifetime of the *Plan and seek to develop linkages between designated sites, where feasible and as resources permit*

CE CH 12.4

Insert the following text change to CPO 12.21 within Section 12.11

CPO12.21 Lighting fixtures should provide only the amount of light necessary for personal safety and should be designed so as to avoid creating glare or emitting light above a horizontal plane. Lighting fixtures should have minimum environmental impact *and Dark Sky lighting should be considered in the interest of reducing the impact of lighting on wildlife as part of any future planning application*, thereby contributing towards the protection of amenity and the protection of light sensitive species such as bats. *Consideration of EUROBATS guidelines should be applied in informing proposed development(s), where relevant.*

CE CH 12.5

Insert the following text change to CPO 12.58 at Section 12.11 as follows:

Exercise control of peat extraction, both individually and cumulatively, which would have significant impacts on the environment, *in accordance with legislative provisions, in the interest of protecting and enhancing biodiversity and addressing climate change.*

CE CH 12.6

Insert the following additional CPO after CPO 12.66 at Section 12.8 as follows:

*Support the implementation of the National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022 within the County*
CE CH 12.7

Insert a new objective on the Tyrrellspass Objectives Map 19 associated with lands in proximity to Cloncrow Bog NHA (No. 000677) together with accompanying text at Section 8.5.3.8 Heritage of the Settlement Plan for Tyrrellspass as follows:

Any proposal for development on lands within proximity to Cloncrow Bog NHA (No. 000677) shall be accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) that considers ecological sensitivities, including those relating to the nearby Cloncrow Bog NHA, and the proposed design of any development. The EcIA shall demonstrate compliance of the proposal with the provisions of the Plan relating to biodiversity and flora and fauna; and that the NHA will not be adversely affected by the proposed development.

CE CH 12.8

Insert the following additional CPO at Section 12.22 as follows:
Support the development of implementation plans for greenways throughout the county together with supporting environmental assessments.

CE CH 12.9

Insert a new CPO in Section 12.14 as follows:
Require, where necessary, a Tree Management Plan to be submitted as part of new development proposals. Ensure that, where possible, established trees are incorporated into the overall design of new developments and are fully protected during development works in accordance with BS standards.

CE CH 12.10

Insert a new CPO in Section 12.14 as follows:
Support the preparation of a Tree Planting Policy for the County which promotes biodiversity and indigenous tree planting.

CE CH 12.11

Insert a footnote at the end of both CPO 12.5 and CPO 12.6 as follows;
Footnote: Exception as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.
17. Chapter 13 Landscape & Lake Amenities

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The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject:

- Lake Amenities
- Areas of High Amenity
- Views and Prospects

17.1.1 Lake Amenities
Submission WM-C1-35 requests a pedestrian connection/walkway such as a path or trail from Collinstown Village to ‘The Cut’ at Lough Lene Lough Lene to provide access for locals to the lake and enhance the area from a tourism perspective.

17.1.2 Areas of High Amenity
Submission WM-C1-63 and WM-C1-84 (Longford Westmeath Green Party) have raised concerns in relation to the protection of lakeshore high amenity areas and the lack of designated swimming areas. The submission requests the inclusion of additional CPO’s to provide for designated swimming areas.

WM-C1-63 relates to CPOs 13.19 and 13.21 (High Amenity Areas) and refers to changes set out under the Draft Plan to previously designated high amenity areas at Lough Derravaragh and Lough Lene. The submission expresses its opposition to any such change without proper public consultation in advance to enable appropriate assessment by qualified experts, appropriate bodies and the general public.

In terms of amendments to the “high amenity” designations associated with zones near three lakes in Westmeath, concerns are raised (WM-C1-84) that such changes will result in the degradation of the water quality in the lakes, thereby affecting natural habitats and tourism in the area.

Requests are submitted for policy enhancement (WM-C1-89 WM-C1-66, WM-C1-78, WM-C1-82, WM-C1-94 and WM-C1-138) in the Plan, in the area of protection of the landscape; lakes; and areas of high amenity, which it is submitted are more open to challenge and inappropriate development. Distinction has been outlined in terms of the role of policies as statements to be implemented and followed as a procedure in contrast to policy objectives which set out are desired outcomes and an alternative approach to the use of policy objectives is suggested.
Several submissions (WM-C1-66, WM-C1-78, WM-C1-82, WM-C1-94 and WM-C1-138) seek amendment and modification to current policies for the Hill of Uisneach, including policy objectives 13.17 and 13.18, to ensure the sensitivity of the historic setting of Uisneach is maintained, and that the precautionary principle is applied prior to the grant of any permissions. In this regard the inclusion of an objective under the Plan which requires that a zone of theoretical visibility including reverse zones as defined in the International U.N.E.S.C.O Guidelines, be applied to define where development would not normally be permitted due to the sensitivity of the setting and its associated zones.

With regard to CPO 13.11 which requires a visual impact assessment for proposed developments with the potential to impact on significant landscape features within the county, it is submitted (WM-C1-66, WM-C1-78, WM-C1-82, WM-C1-94 and WM-C1-138) that a visual impact assessment is a superficial assessment of development, and it is advised that a more rigorous landscape assessment should be utilised in accordance with national guidelines. An update to CPO 13.11, reflecting this, is proposed accordingly. Submissions also suggest that reference to relevant assessment guidelines are omitted from the Draft Plan. It is submitted that guidelines which underpin such assessments should be in accordance with the standards which are typically applied by An Bord Pleanála and as such suggested additional policy is proposed to support the undertaking of landscape and visual impact assessments to be carried out in line with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013 issued by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).

In relation to the above, concerns are also raised in relation to the extent of the zones associated with the Hill of Uisneach which, it is submitted, are unsatisfactory in terms of providing sufficient protection for beyond the hill to the panoramic views from the summit of the hill. The Heritage Council (WM-C1-114) and Westmeath Heritage Forum (WM-C1-155) also suggest that the protected views around the Hill of Uisneach should be included in Appendix 5 List of Protected Views. The submissions also seek evidential justification for the change from low to medium wind carrying capacity of the Western lowlands, particularly given their proximity to the Hill of Uisneach. It recommends mapping of key views to and from the Hill of Uisneach, with specific regard to visibility between significant archaeological monuments.

17.1.3 Views and Prospects
Submission WM-C1-85 requests that a scenic view of Lough Ennell from the R391 near Barretstown which was previously included in the County Development Plan 2014 – 2020 as a “view to be preserved or improved” is reinstated as a “Protected View” in the draft Plan.

Submission WM-C1-98 proposes the inclusion of an objective in the Development Plan in relation to identifying possible uses of marginal lands in the ownership of the Council which may be identified as suitable for community gain/biodiversity or related uses.
Submission WM-C1-112 suggests that the Water Framework Directive is not sufficiently referenced and requests that an explicit commitment to achieving “High” water quality status for each lake within the lifetime of this plan be included.

17.1.4 Lough Ree
Opposition (WM-C1-134) to CPO 13.40, which refers to exploring options for a lakeside walkway from Meehan Point to Coosan Point, is set out. Whilst of the submission supports greenways in principle, it is suggested that this proposal will infringe on the privacy of aging and vulnerable residents and it is requested that this proposal is reconsidered accordingly.

17.1.5 Lough Owel
A tree protection order is sought (WM-C1-139) along the eastern side of Lough Owel and the N4. It is stated that the purpose of this proposal is to protect the High Amenity Area, Special Area of Conservation and Natura 2000 Site from any visual destruction that would have a negative impact on the natural landscape, flora and fauna, and to protect any future tourism potential in the area.

17.2 Chief Executive’s Response

17.2.1 Lake Amenities
With regard to the request for a path or trail from Collinstown Village to The Cut at Lough Lene, CPO 13.12 and CP013.76 refer to the consideration of establishing walking routes around Lough Lene. It is recommended that additional text be added to CPO 13.76 to include reference to connecting Lough Lene with Collinstown Village.

In relation to the need for more designated swimming areas, specifically at Lough Owel and associated infrastructure and facilities, it should be noted that CPO 13.30 already supports the improvement of access to the lakes and around the lakeshore and seeks to increase public accessibility, subject to ecological sensitivities and constraints being addressed.

17.2.2 Areas of High Amenity
With respect to the proposed deletion of areas designated as high amenity areas in the vicinity of Lough Lene and Lough Derravaragh, it is acknowledged that these amendments dilute the level of protection afforded to High Amenity Areas in the County, with the potential to result in adverse effects upon the factors for which these areas of landscape have been designated. Furthermore, it is considered that the piecemeal erosion of these important High Amenity designations will reduce the protection of the overall landscape and undermine the long-term integrity of these important assets (designated High Amenity Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Natural...
Heritage Areas, reflecting their significant environmental status. As such it is considered that the previous High Amenity lands which were removed under the Draft Plan be reinserted to the Plan.

In this regard recommendations have been set out under CE OPR 1.17, in response to a submission from the Office of the Public Regulator on the matter, as follows.

*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*

It is considered that the use of policy objectives throughout the Plan are considered appropriate and in line with the approaches as set out at national and regional policy levels under the appropriate the NPF and EMRA RSES.

**17.2.3 Hill of Uisneach**

In recognition of the exceptional archaeological and cultural significance of the Hill of Uisneach, the site has been designated as a High Amenity Area in the plan. The Council recognise the significance and sensitivity of the Hill of Uisneach and given that the site is listed on the tentative list for UNESCO status since 2010, further protection has been afforded to the site by designating the area as a High Amenity Area with views from the perimeter skyline ridge identified as a Protected Panoramic View. The extent of the High Amenity Area is graphically depicted in the map below and comprises of the area highlighted in turquoise with associated protective policies.
In this regard, CPO 13.18 is of relevance. It provides as follows:

“Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views associated with the High Amenity Area around the Hill of Uisneach.

Require any development proposals within the High Amenity Area around the Hill of Uisneach to demonstrate that no adverse effects will occur on the established appearance or character of this feature as viewed from either the Protected Panoramic Views or from surrounding public roads”

Having regard to the foregoing, it is considered that the existing policy in the plan affords sufficient protection to the Hill of Uisneach. Furthermore, given the extent of the panoramic protected view, it is considered that the request for additional protected views is not required.

The comments in relation to the use of The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (Third Edition) (GLVIA3) when preparing landscape visual assessments are noted. It is further noted that regard should be had to additional policy such as EPA’s Guidelines On The Information To Be Contained In Environmental Impact Assessment Reports Draft August 2017 as well as the EPA’s companion document Advice Notes For Preparing Environmental Impact Statements Draft September 2015 which contains a specific chapter 4 on the topic of Landscape.

17.2.4 Views and Prospects
The Council conducted a review of the List of Protected Views contained within the current CDP to inform the Draft Plan. With regard to the request that a further scenic view of Lough Ennell be included as part of the Plan, it should be noted that an inspection of the view was undertaken. Given that this view offers only brief glimpses of Lough Ennell from the R391, its inclusion as a Protected View is not considered appropriate.

It is considered appropriate that an objective which supports the use of suitable marginal lands in Council ownership, for community projects such as neighborhood schemes and biodiversity projects be included as part of the Plan.

In terms of wind carrying capacity associated with the ‘Western Lowlands’, given their proximity to the Hill of Uisneach it should be noted that no changes were set out under the Draft Plan in relation to the previous Wind Energy Capacity Map set out. As indicated on Map 48, the Hill of Uisneach is located within an area where there is no capacity for wind energy.

The concerns in relation to the omission of the panoramic view at the Hill of Uisneach from Appendix 5 is noted and should be updated accordingly.
Regarding concerns relating to the lack of reference to the Water Directive Framework and a commitment to achieving high status for the lakes in Westmeath, it should be noted that Chapter 10, CPO 10.78, sets out a commitment to the protection of water resources. It is stated that that Council will “contribute towards, as appropriate, the protection of existing and potential water resources, and their use by humans and wildlife, including rivers, streams, wetlands, groundwater and associated habitats and species in accordance with the requirements and guidance in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/EC), the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (as amended), the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC and the European Communities Environmental Objectives (groundwater) Regulations 2010 (as amended) and other relevant EU Directives, including associated national legislation and policy guidance (including any superseding versions of same).”

17.2.5 Lough Ree
In terms of exploring options for a lakeside walkway from Meehan Point to Coosan Point, it is recommended that CPO 13.40 be amended in order to address community concerns through consultation, as part of any route selection process.

17.2.6 Lough Owel
With regards to the request for the inclusion of a tree protection order (TPO) along the eastern side of Lough Owel and the N4, CPO12.36 provides for the protection of trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders and seeks to designate additional Tree Preservation Orders, where appropriate. Further detailed assessment in this regard should be carried out in advance of a recommendation to designate any further TPO.
17.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

Based on the concerns and issues raised from the above-mentioned submissions, it is recommended that the following amendments are made to the Draft Plan.

CE CH 13.1

Update CPO 13.76 as follows:

Consider the establishment of walking routes along the northern shore of the lake, to link with Collinstown Village, Harte’s Rock, Fore and Coillte lands, consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the area.

CE CH 13.2

Update Appendix 5 to include reference to the Hill of Uisneach Panoramic View.

CE CH 13.3

Insert new CPO after CPO 13.53 as follows:

Support the use of suitable marginal lands in Council ownership for community projects such as neighbourwood schemes and biodiversity projects.

CE CH 13.4

Update CPO13.40 as follows:

Explore options for a lakeside walkway from Meehan Point to Coosan Point, incorporating local features such as Bog Lough in consultation with the local community.

CE CH 13.5

Reference to the following document to be included at Section 13:

The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (Third Edition) (GLVIA3)
18. Chapter 14 Cultural Heritage

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

- Record of Protected Structures
- Built Heritage
- Vernacular Architecture
- The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)
- Conservation Management Plan for the Hill of Uisneach
- Medieval Graveyards

The content of submissions received in relation to Chapter 14 Cultural Heritage are broadly encouraging and provide a number of suggested policy objectives which support the protection and preservation of the County’s Built Heritage and archaeology.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) recommend (WM C1 48) the appointment of a Conservation Officer with expert skills and practical experience to raise awareness of the county’s rich architectural heritage legacy; to guide best practice in terms of the re-use and adaptation of historic buildings to climate change; to support the implementation of national grant schemes such as the Historic Towns Initiative, the Built Heritage Investment Scheme; to support the securing of urban regeneration funding; and to coordinate major infrastructural projects.

DCHG further recommends the inclusion of a number of themes and supporting policy objectives for Built Heritage in terms of identifying architectural heritage that may be under threat, due to climate change; inclusion of all NIAH structures on the Record of Protected Structures and due recognition and policy support for the preservation of vernacular architecture throughout the County. A requirement to carry out climate change risk assessments for historic structures and sites and to develop resilience and adaptation strategies for architectural heritage sites by way of insertion of an objective into the plan is suggested by the DCHG. Reference is made in the submission to historic designed landscapes and it is stated that Westmeath boasts a significant number of these. Belvedere House & Gardens is noted in this regard. Further reference is made to the value of such demesnes and the contribution they make to the county.

The deletion (WM-C1-56) of a protected structure (Ref. 019-096/NIAH 15310093 Detached three-bay two-storey house at Millmount Road built c.1855) from the Record of Protected Structures on the basis that the original structure has been substantially altered over the years is sought.
Westmeath Heritage Forum support (WH C1 114) the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for the Hill of Uisneach. A request to include the requirement for a Tourism Plan alongside a Conservation Management Plan for Uisneach is also proposed by Fáilte Ireland.

In terms of industrial heritage, the insertion of a policy objective to conserve the equipment, machinery and techniques developed by Bord na Móna within an industrial heritage museum, interpretative centre and education centre is suggested.

The National Monuments Service (WH C1 157) recommends policy objectives in relation to archaeology in terms of extensions close to historic graveyards and providing for archaeological monitoring for all development affecting disturbance to peatlands.

18.1 Chief Executive’s Response

The following is a response to submissions WM-C1-2, WM-C1-56, WM-C1-67, WM-C1-114, WM-C1-117, WM-C1-119, WM-C1-148, WM-C1-155 and WM-C1-157.

The issues raised in the submissions received are noted and welcome.

The Council acknowledges the rich architectural heritage of County Westmeath as demonstrated by the 1,661 structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures for the County. The recommendation in relation to the appointment of a Conservation Officer is noted. However, the Council is mindful of its responsibilities in relation to the conservation of the built heritage of the county and measures are in place to avail of appropriate conservation expertise, both in house and from external sources, as required.

The Council notes that the majority of NIAH structures which are of regional significance are included within the Record of Protected Structures. In addition, individual structures may be considered for inclusion on the Record, as appropriate.

The suggestion in relation to carrying out climate change risk assessments for historic structures and sites and to develop resilience and adaptation strategies for architectural heritage sites is worthy. In this regard, CPO’s 14.29- 14.33 are relevant. Existing policy provision provides for the undertaking of an audit of Protected Structures in Council ownership to assess the impact of climate change on the buildings. Furthermore, CPO 14.32 sets out to provide guidance for owners of protected structures or historic buildings on upgrading for energy efficiency and climate resilient measures and promote the principles of sustainable building design in conservation.

The Council acknowledge the value of planned historic landscapes and in this regard have committed to undertaking a Conservation Management Plan for Belvedere House & Gardens. Given the Department’s comments in relation to the high instances of planned landscapes within the county, it is considered prudent to undertake a review of same.
Consideration has been given to the request for deletion of protected structure 019-196 at Millmount Road which is listed on the NIAH as having local rating. Whilst acknowledging that this building which dates c.1850-1860 has been significantly altered over the years, in the absence of architectural assessment accompanying the submission, the removal of this protected structure from the Record of Protected Structures cannot be justified at this time. It is noted provision exists under Section 54 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended in relation to the deletion of a Protected Structure from the Record of Protected Structures.

With regard to Failte Ireland’s request for a Tourism Plan to be prepared for the Hill of Uisneach, it should be noted the preparation of the Conservation Management Plan for Uisneach is currently underway and will include guidance on the tourist potential of the site.

In terms of industrial heritage, the insertion of a policy objective which encourages the conserving of equipment, machinery and techniques developed by Bord na Móna within an industrial heritage museum, interpretative centre and education centre is acceptable in principle, subject to satisfying all planning considerations in terms of site suitability. This objective is considered timely given the planned Just Transition to sustainable use of the peatlands.

Further to National Monuments recommendations, a new policy objective should be included in the plan in order to protect medieval burial grounds.

A proposal that archaeological monitoring for all development affecting disturbance to peatlands is of merit and the provision of an additional CPO in addressing this requirement is recommended.

18.2 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE CH 14.1

Rename Heading at under Section 14.7 as follows:

Architectural Heritage and Protected Structures Policy Objectives

CE CH 14.2

Insert a new CPO under the Archaeology Policy Objectives, Section 14.3 as follows;

Ensure that all proposed development affecting disturbance to peatlands is subject to archaeological monitoring, in consultation with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority.
CE CH 14.3

Insert additional CPO after CPO 14.9 as follows;

*Extensions to archaeologically significant burial grounds will only by permitted, in the event the extension would not constitute a proven risk to archaeological heritage, by means of a direct impact on archaeological features.*

CE CH 14.4

To insert a new CPO under Section 14.11 Industrial Heritage as follows;

*Encourage the conservation of industrial heritage, in particular the equipment, machinery and techniques developed by Bord na Móna and support the development of an industrial heritage museum, interpretative centre or education centre at a suitable location in the County.*

CE CH 14.5

Insert new CPO after CPO 14.49

*Support the undertaking of a review of historic designed landscapes, demesnes and gardens within the County.*
19. Chapter 16 Development Management Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submission Ref. No:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WM-C1-25, WM-C1-52, WM-C1-54, WM-C1-67, WM-C1-70, WM-C1-77, WM-C1-96, WM-C1-84 and WM-C1-119.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submission received in this subject area:

- Car Parking standards.
- Greater flexibility of Development Management Standards.
- Engagement with the housebuilding sector.

Endorsement to the approach of the Plan is set out under a number of submissions.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) welcomes the inclusion of CPO 16.43, which sets out the considerations for school location and design which will be taken into account in assessing proposals for development. The need to ensure that schools are located in such a manner as to maximise the number of pupils who will live within walking and cycling distance, connected by a safe and continuous network serving these modes is emphasized. Furthermore, it is submitted that the design of school facilities should prioritise accessibility by non-car modes and encourage reduced use of the private car. It is recommended that this policy is expanded to include these aspects of school development. In addition, the inclusion of a specific policy objective requiring Mobility Management Plans to be submitted with large scale planning applications is regarded as positive. It is recommended that references to the NTA’s Workplace Travel Plans: A Guide for Implementers and the Toolkit for School Travel are incorporated into the final plan.

Amendments are sought to table 16.2 so that car parking standards are provided as maximum for all non-residential land uses and recommends an amendment to CPO 16.36 to include standards as outlined in table 16.3, Cycle Storage Standards.

Reference to enhanced pedestrian and cyclist permeability, in particular within the Settlement Plans is also welcomed. It is noted, however, that this aspect is not referred to within any specific objective of the County Development Plan and requests that this is addressed in the final plan. Attention is also drawn to ‘Standards for Cycle Parking and Associated Cycling Facilities for New Developments’ document issued by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in 2018.

It is requested (WM-C1-52) that consideration be given to the development management standards applicable to car parking in the context of Athlone Town. In this regard an amendment to the parking standards under Section 16.4.1 of the Development Plan is proposed which provides for a flexible approach to car parking standards outside the designated town center area of Athlone.
In terms of tourism, an amendment to Section 16.8 and CPO16.50 is sought (WM-C1-67) by way of deletion of the term ‘niche tourism’.

Requests for increased flexibility (WM-C1-54, WM-C1-77) to be provided in association with Development Management Standards with regards residential schemes is sought ‘in order to give developers and the Council the tools to achieve the policy objectives set out across all tiers of the planning hierarchy’. As part of this process, it is considered that engagement with the housebuilding sector is critical to ensure a fit for purpose Plan exists going forward. A similar request for flexibility in development management standards as they apply to designated major regeneration opportunity sites is also set out.

It is requested (WM-C1-84) that rainwater harvesting is required as standard in all new commercial and residential developments.

Concerns are expressed (WM-C1-96) in relation quarry and extractive industries, in particular duration of planning permissions and development contributions as outlined in Chapter 16. It is submitted that longer durations of permissions to factor in the life of the reserves within the development should be incorporated in to the Plan.

It is suggested (WM-C1-119) that the Draft CDP should be guided by existing essential social infrastructure (schools, community facilities, etc.) and physical infrastructure (transport, water services, communications, etc.), including realistic prospects for addressing capacity constraints and recommends that the Council make the seven location test standards for new housing outlined in the now replaced National Spatial Strategy 2002 a mandatory CDP requirement for new housing development. It is submitted that, unlike sustainability and quality of life indicators, these should be strictly enforced threshold standards without which no development should be permitted. This requires that zoning and decisions for new housing be conditional on integration with existing communities, affordability and mix of housing types, walking and cycling access to local services and schools, public transport access to employment locations, and availability of recreation facilities.

A new CPO (WM-C1-84, WM-C1-149) is requested to encourage workplaces to have on site shower facilities to facilitate people to cycle to work.

19.1 Chief Executive’s Response

The Council welcomes the positive recommendations made by the National Transport Authority (NTA) in their submission on the Draft Plan. In this regard CPO 16.43 sets out the principal considerations and criteria for assessing planning applications for educational facilities. This policy should be expanded to take account of transport and movement when considering sites for new schools and the promotion of walking and cycling over the private car. Further points raised include the submission of Mobility Management Plans for large scale planning applications and inclusion of NTA’s Workplace
Travel Plans: A Guide for Implementers and the Toolkit for School Travel should also be incorporated into the Final Plan. Furthermore it is considered that Table 16.2 should be amended so car parking standards are provided as maximum for all non-residential land uses.

The merits of the submission supporting a flexible approach to parking standards in Athlone are recognised. In this regard Section 16.4.1 of the Draft Plan promotes modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport. Notwithstanding, it is considered that specific parking standards (including bike storage requirements) relating to the area outside that prescribed in the Draft CDP should be considered under the forthcoming Athlone Urban Area Plan which will be informed by the Area Based Transport Plan for the Athlone which is currently underway. In this regard clarity should be provided, indicating that a flexible approach to car parking standards will also be considered at suitable locations outside the designated town centre of Athlone.

In terms of cycle standards, this issue is dealt with in association with Chapter 10, Transport, Infrastructure and Energy and in this regard, it should be noted that a recommendation has been set out which seeks insert a new CPO associated with a review of public cycle parking provision in Athlone and Mullingar.

With regard to the Seven Tests for Housing Locations outlined in the National Spatial Strategy 2002, it is noted that this strategy has since been replaced by the National Planning Framework 2018. The Draft Plan contains measures with respect to the location and design of new residential development as well as policies relating to associated areas of sustainable transport and Smarter Travel.

In terms of flexibility of Development Management standards, it is considered that the development management standards prescribed in Chapter 16 allow for sufficient flexibility with an emphasis on delivering innovative design solutions to lands. As such, no changes are recommended in this regard. This approach also applies to opportunity sites which will be the subject to UAP/LAP reviews in Athlone and Mullingar.

The promotion of the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other measures such as rainwater harvesting is provided for in the plan under CPO 16.12 and CPO 16.49.

It is considered appropriate to update terminology associated with tourism development.
19.2 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE.CH 16.1
Amend CPO 16.43 as follows:

Education Facilities

The location and provision of schools and other educational facilities are an integral part of the evolution of compact sustainable urban development and the development of sustainable communities, both in an urban and rural context. In this regard, the Council seeks to undertake planned approach to education provision and the location of new school facilities within settlements and with access to public transport and active travel modes, where feasible.

In assessing planning applications for educational facilities, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- The need for school accommodation.
- Justification for proposed site location
- Details on accessibility, including pedestrian, cycle and public transport provisions and linkages to the proposed development. In this regard, schools should be located in such a manner as to maximise the number of pupils who will live within walking and cycling distance, connected by a safe and continuous network serving these modes. The design of school facilities should prioritise accessibility by non-car modes and encourage reduced use of the private car.
- Adequate and safe set-down and collection areas to facilitate peak traffic movements and adequate car parking for staff.
- Mobility Management Plan for the proposal having regard to the National Transport Authority publication “Workplace Travel Plans: A Guide for Implementers and the Toolkit for School Travel”
- Adequate play area(s) for pupils

CE CH 16.2
Change car parking standards in Table 16.2 to maxima standards
CE CH 16.3
Insert new CPO’S after CPO 16.24 as follows:

*New development proposals should be fully permeable for walking and cycling and the retrospective implementation of walking and cycling facilities should be undertaken where practicable in existing neighbourhoods, in order to give competitive advantage to these modes for local trip making.*

*Where possible, new residential developments should provide for filtered permeability, i.e. provide for walking, cycling, public transport and private vehicle access while restricting or discouraging private car through trips.*

CE CH 16.4
To amend CPO 16.36 to refer to the standards in Table 16.3 as minimum standards.

CE CH 16.5
To amend Section 16.8 as follows:

The Council promotes and encourages *sustainable forms of tourism, niche tourism and recreation in the countryside, where appropriate.* Certain facilities and amenities, and associated services, are often required to support the enjoyment of tourism and recreational attractions, including areas of High Amenity value. Examples of facilities of this type ancillary to tourism include car parks, viewing points, sanitary facilities and cafes. *A tourism industry that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable including recreation in the countryside, where appropriate.*

CE CH 16.6
To amend to CPO16.50: Bullet point 4 as follows:

In terms of sustainable *forms of niche tourism and recreation,* facilities should be located within existing structures, or in buildings of character requiring renovation or in traditional farm houses, where possible *and if appropriate.* Where new buildings are proposed, they should be modest in scale, sensitively located and designed having regard to existing buildings, topography and landscaped and be adequately serviced and suitably managed.

CE CH 16.7
Amend CPO 10.59 as follows:

Allow for the reduction in car parking standards in suitable *town centre* locations in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking.
20. Volume 3 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Submission Reference No:
WM-C1-4, WM-C1-21, WM-C1-27, WM-C1-49

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in this subject area:

- SEA Monitoring
- Climate Change - Greenhouse gas emissions.
- Biodiversity
- Peat Extraction/Drainage
- RSES Measures on SEA
- GSI Datasets

The Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly welcome the Councils consistency in approach with the measures identified within the RSES SEA.

A number of submissions refer to matters associated with SEA Monitoring including the manner in which it should be consistent with Article 17 of the SEA Regulations and be clear and specific. It is submitted that consideration should be given to the approach to recording the impacts of the plan’s implementation on biodiversity (loss and enhancement) during its lifetime and reference is made to the results of the SEA monitoring of the implementation of the 2014-2020 CDP in informing the Draft Plan.

It is suggested that the Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO) in respect of climate change (‘Climatic Factors’) which seeks only to ‘minimise’ emissions should be amended to comply with national legislative and policy requirements for a sustained and rapid reduction of emissions.

The EPA suggests a number of specific considerations in relation to the SEA as follows:

- That peat soils, may also be net sources of carbon if they are drained or extracted as part of land management activities
- Amending policy as follows, “Promote Prioritise the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield within the County”
- That the built surface cover target limit of 4% below the EU average, is also included as a target in the National Planning Framework.
- Landscape objectives should also seek to align with the National Landscape Strategy.
- Recommendations in respect of implementing the motions of elected members and compliance with national and regional policies and guidelines.
- Content of the Environmental Report should be in accordance with the SEA Regulations.
- Assessment of Alternatives - Should describe the alternatives considered and assessment which led to the selection of the preferred alternative.
- Alternatives should be assessed against the ‘Strategic Environmental Objectives’ identified in the SEA ER.
- Assessment of Environmental Effects in implementing the plan should be set out.
- Appropriate mitigation measures to be provided where required and include a clear commitment to implement same.
- The Monitoring Programme should be flexible; consider the possibility of cumulative effects; monitor both positive and negative effects; set out the various data sources, monitor frequencies and responsibilities.
- The findings of the SEA should be clearly integrated into the Plan.
- Screening process to be undertaken for any future amendments to the plan.
- SEA Screening Statement to be undertaken, once adopted.

Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) welcomes the use of certain GSI datasets in the SEA and Plan and requests the use of additional datasets.

20.1 Chief Executive’s Response
The importance of the SEA process in evaluating the environmental implications of the policy objectives contained within the Plan is recognised by the Council. The Council is required to ensure that the Plan aligns with key relevant higher-level plans and programmes and is consistent with the relevant objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework and the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

In terms of SEA monitoring, the SEA Environmental Report contains the information on monitoring required by the Annex I of the SEA Directive and transposing Regulations. Furthermore, the SEA Environmental Report includes a description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment. The SEA Environmental Report details the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) as 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 which are required to be implemented. These SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Draft Plan and the alternatives 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. The SEOs are linked to indicators which can facilitate monitoring the environmental effects of the Plan as well
as identifying targets which the Plan can help work towards. In this regard, it is considered that the proposed monitoring is consistent with the standard imposed by the SEA Directive.

It is not considered appropriate to amend the cited SEO on climate change in relation to minimizing emissions as this SEO and the accompanying SEOs are consistent both with that used by the upper tier Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and legislation. It should be noted that the word “minimise” does not appear in targets under ‘Climatic Factors’. Notwithstanding, a link between the relevant legislative commitments referred to in the SEA Environmental Report and this SEO should be included.

It is recommended that reference to the potential of peatlands to be net sources of carbon be referenced.

The Plan aligns with key relevant higher-level plans and programmes and is consistent with the relevant objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework and the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. The required information on mitigation measures is provided in Section 9 of the SEA Environmental Report.

The requirements on the content of the SEA Environmental Report (ER) and compliance with regard to the following is contained within the ER as follows;

- SEA Regulations and how this was addressed is detailed within Table 3.1.
- Assessment of alternatives is provided in Sections 6 and 7.
- Monitoring measures is provided in Section 10 (Note: This will inform the final Programme to be included in the SEA Statement).
- Recommendations, key issues and challenges described in the 2016 State of the Environment Report have been taken into account by the Plan as detailed within Section 4.2. The next iteration of this report will be taken into account during the Plan-preparation/SEA process as relevant.

In terms of mapping, relevant datasets were mapped in the SEA Environmental Report. GSIs comments in relation to the use of additional available datasets are noted and reference to same should be made, particularly in relation to future project-level assessments.

The EPA as a statutory environmental authority under the SEA Regulations has provided a number of specific suggestions for consideration in integrating into the SEA. All of these have been duly considered and it is put forward that a number of additions be made to the SEA which allows for their incorporation into the plan. However, in relation to suggested change of wording in respect of SEO on the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield within the County, it is considered appropriate to retain the existing wording for consistency with the Monitoring Programme as set out in the EMRA RSES.

It is advised that any future amendments/material alterations to the Plan be screened for likely significant environmental effects, using the same method of assessment applied in the
“environmental assessment” of the Plan and an SEA Statement containing the required information will be prepared at the end of the process.

20.2 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE SEA 1

Include reference to all GSI datasets that are not mapped in the SEA Environmental Report.

CE SEA 2

Insert Text Addition within Section 4.8 of the SEA Environmental Report as follows:

In addition to being significant net sinks of carbon, peatlands have the potential to be net sources of carbon if these soils are drained or extracted as part of land management activities.

CE SEA 3

Insert Text addition highlighted below within Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs), Indicators and Targets – Target associated with Soil & Land Component of the SEA Environmental Report as follows:

Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4% “as per the NPF

CE SEA 4

Insert a new SEO within Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs), Indicators and Targets – Target Landscape as follows;

To seek to align with the National Landscape Strategy

CE SEA 5

To insert the following footnote after the SEO ‘Climatic Factors within Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs), Indicators and Targets – Target Landscape as follows;

Please also refer to relevant legislation and requirements under Section 4.10, Section 8.8.11 and Appendix I
To insert the following footnote after the SEO ‘Climatic Factors within Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs), Indicators and Targets – Target as follows;

*Please also refer to relevant legislation and requirements under Section 4.10, Section 8.8.11 and Appendix I*
21. **Volume 4 Natura Impact Report**

WM-C1-21

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submissions received in relation to the Natura Impact Report:

- Hydrological processes
- Mitigation Measures

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) noted that;

- ‘Likely significant effects’ utilised in Appropriate Assessment Screening can occur beyond 15km zone, specifically in relation to river SACs and SPAs designated for bird species. Highlights that hydrological interactions may have a potential impact on Natura 2000 sites, and that the term ‘hydrological’ should include both surface and geological hydrological processes.
- Mitigation measures should be clear, concise and directly linked to the likely impacts identified, must be sufficient to avoid significant adverse effects to the relevant Natura 2000 site and should be capable of being implemented in full. Cite an example within the NIA where this is not achieved.

### 21.1 Chief Executive’s Response

The comments and recommendations put forward by DCHG are noted. The matter raised in respect of ‘likely significant effects’ outside of the 15km zone is addressed within Section 3.2 of the Natura Impact Report which states that “A review of all sites within this zone (i.e. the 15 km buffer zone) has allowed a determination to be made that in the absence of significant hydrological links, the characteristics of the Plan will not impose effects beyond the 15 km buffer.”

In terms of mitigation measures within this Natura Impact Report and the example cited which is contained within footnote 19, it is proposed to incorporate a textual change which ensures that this mitigation measure is clear, concise and capable of being implemented in full.
21.2 Chief Executive Recommendation:

CE NIR1

Replace Existing Text at Footnote 19 as follows:

Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.

Seek to avoid significant effects on European Sites that might occur as a result of increases in visitor numbers. This will be done by, for example, ensuring that any new projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.
22. Volume 5 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

The following is a summary of the main issues raised in submission received in this subject area:

- Arterial Drainage Schemes
- PFRA Mapping
- Benefitting Land Maps
- Justification Test
- Settlements
- Flood Risk Policy

The Office of Public Works (OPW) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and acknowledges the work which has been undertaken to produce the plan. The submission highlights the following opportunities for further improvement of the Draft Plan:

- It is submitted that Section 5.2 of the SFRA which deals with Arterial Drainage Schemes requires further expansion as it is a fundamental necessity to reducing flood risk in a number of areas.
- It is submitted that the PFRA fluvial mapping is indicative only and in certain instances, further detailed analysis and assessment is considered necessary in some instances to support zonings.
- Concerns are raised in relation to consideration of benefitting lands to indicate Flood Zones A and B in the SFRA.
- ‘Justification tests’ are indicated as necessary in a number of instances.
- Commitments should be provided under the Plan for sites requiring a Flood Risk Assessment.
- Clarity is requested in association with a number of site assessments and their associated commentary.
- It is submitted that zonings provided should clearly indicated where residential development is permitted (e.g. ‘Expanded Settlement Centre’ in instances where flooding is associated with such lands).
- Further consideration in relation to undefended flood risk is requested in association within the SFRA.
Specific flood related comments/queries are set out in relation to lands in the following settlements:

**Castlepollard**
“Consolidation Site” to the west of the settlement and “Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands to the south east.

It is further stated that Pluvial flooding is a potential risk to undeveloped “Enterprise and Employment” and “Proposed Residential” zoned lands in the eastern end of the settlement.

**Kilbeggan**
Identifies flooding risk to development from the OPW drain that enters Kilbeggan from the west.

**Kinnegad**
“Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands located to the north east of the settlement close to the Kinnegad River.

**Moate**
Advises flooding risk to lands within 200m of a drainage channel or within Benefiting Lands extents in Moate settlement.

**Killucan-Rathwire**
“Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands located close to the Riverstown River.

**Clonmellon**
“Enterprise and Employment” zoned lands to the south of Clonmellon.

**Delvin**
“Established Residential” zoned lands located adjacent to the OPW Arterial Drainage channel to the eastern end of the settlement.

**Ballinalack**
Identifies the need to carry out Flood Risk Assessment for any new development located on “Mixed Use” or “Established Residential” lands in Ballinalack.
Ballymore

“Proposed Residential” and “Community, Educational and Institutional” lands with a boundary adjacent to the OPW Channel in Ballymore. Identifies the need to provide a development free riparian strip.

Castletown Geoghegan

“Community, Educational and Institutional” zoned lands in Castletown Geoghegan.

Collinstown

“Enterprise and Employment” zoned lands to the southern end of Collinstown.

22.1 Chief Executive’s Response

The comments of the OPR are acknowledged and welcomed.

It should be noted that, in responding to the issues highlighted, the Council have engaged with OPW to discuss various matters set out under their submission.

In terms of Arterial Drainage Schemes in the County, the OPW has committed to engaging further in order to provide further information in this area.

As set out in the EMRA Regional Flood Risk Appraisal Report, the Flood Zone mapping for the County is principally derived from the CFRAM, where possible. However, most settlements in the Draft Plan are not covered by the CFRAM and as such a range of other datasets, as shown in Table 4.1 of the SFRA were used as supplementary information to inform this SFRA.

Having regard to recent guidance from OPW in relation to the use of the first generation PFRA mapping and the indicative nature of the flood extents, the approach used under the Westmeath SFRA has been precautionary. All sources of available flood mapping were reviewed in cases where proposed undeveloped lands are zoned for highly or less vulnerable use (where CFRAM was not available). As such, a single dataset of County Flood Zones has not been prepared, but in each settlement specific guidance is provided based on the data review and site visits. During the site visit flood mapping was appraised by an experienced flood risk manager and professional opinion and judgement has been used to develop recommendations (as set out in relation to Chapter 8).

The review of the suite of flood risk data has been developed as a spatial planning tool to guide land-use zoning and development management decisions. The data sets are considered appropriate for the planning decisions being made at this stage of the plan making process and where potential flood risk is identified the following approach has been undertaken;

- Application of the Justification Test and/or;
- Further detailed analysis, or;
• Rezoning to a less vulnerable use, or;

• Further assessment at Development Management stage in limited circumstances where it has been determined that development should be possible in principle, taking into account a site specific opinion.

It should be noted that benefitting Lands (BL) maps were used in a tiered approach where such information constitutes the best available data. This data was subsequently verified on site. It is recommended, in the interest of clarity, that this approach be set out under the SFRA. It is acknowledged that any direct link between BL and Flood Zones is not appropriate. It is however acknowledged that BL data is still part of the wider flooding datasets used in the SFRA.

With regard to the comments in relation to Justification Tests undertaken in the SFRA, it is noted that a Justification Test has been carried out, with regard to the lands zoned Community, Educational & Institutional to the east of Kinnegad and with regard to part of the lands zoned commercial to the south of the R148.

In this regard, the principal risk to the zoned land is from the Kinnegad River, however this is subject to an OPW Arterial Drainage scheme and the channel here is widened and deepened. Based on the completion of a site based assessment it is highly likely that the actual flood extents are much less conservative than existing mapped flood risk. A Stage 3 detailed FRA must be undertaken at Development Management stage to confirm the extent of Flood Zones A and B. Any proposed development within the site should then apply the Sequential Approach, preferentially avoiding any less vulnerable development within Flood Zone A and setting appropriate development levels within Flood Zone C after having assessed the future impacts of climate change as part of a residual risk analysis. There is sufficient land available within the zoning type to adopt this approach and manage the risk of flooding to any potential development. The FRA should be in accordance with the plan policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

All recommendations contained in the SFRA in relation to the requirement to conduct Site Specific Flood Risk Assessments have been dealt with in response to submission received in associated with individual settlement plans associated with Chapter 8 of the Draft Plan.

In terms of Expanded Settlement Centre and ‘Mixed Use’ was submitted in error, it should be noted that the lands in question relate to existing developed sites and any future re-developments should be considered in line with relevant guidelines with respect to vulnerable uses.
Castlepollard

See Recommendation CE CH 8.6

Kilbeggan

See Recommendation CE CH 8.7

Kinnegad

See Recommendation CE CH 8.8

Moate

See Recommendation CE CH 8.9

Killucan-Rathwire

See Recommendation CE CH 8.10

Clonmellon

See Recommendation CE CH 8.11

Delvin

See Recommendation CE CH 8.12

Ballinalack

See Recommendation CE CH 8.13
Ballymore
See Recommendation CE CH 8.14

Castletown Geoghegan
See Recommendation CE CH 8.15

Collinstown
See Recommendation CE CH 8.16

Rochfortbridge
See Recommendation CE ZO 4 (Section 23)

Glasson
See Recommendation CE ZO 7 (Section 23)

Milltownpass
See Recommendation CE ZO 7 (Section 23)

Flood Risk Policy
It is considered appropriate to amend CPO 10.98 to ensure that a flood risk assessment is required for any development proposal within 200m of a watercourse.
22.2 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE FR 1
Insert supplementary details regarding Arterial Drainage Systems in the county into Section 5.2 of the SFRA

CE FR 2
Insert additional detail in relation to available flood risk datasets in Table 4.1 of the SFRA

CE FR 3
Omit reference to any direct link between Benefitting Lands and Flood Zones in the SFRA

CE FR 4
Insert Justification Test for Kinnegad in the SFRA.

CE FR 5
Amend CPO 10.98 in the plan as follows:

“Ensure that a flood risk assessment is carried out for any development proposal within 200m of a watercourse, in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG/OPW 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to the potential development”
23. **Volume 2 Book of Maps – Land Use Zoning**

23.1 **Submissions by Settlement**
This section provides an overview of the submissions received to the Draft Plan in relation to requests for zoning of land. The submissions have been categorized by settlement. A summary of the main observations raised, together with response and recommendations of the Chief Executive in relation to the issues raised is also included.

**Submission Reference No:**


23.2 **Castlepollard:**
The following submissions were received in relation to Castlepollard WM-C1-46, WM-C1-61, WM-C1 142 and WM-C1-158.
23.2.1 Submission WM C1-46
Submission WM-C1-46 requests a change of land zoning to “Proposed Residential” from “Open Space” on the subject land at Water Street, Castlepollard in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The rationale supporting this submission includes:
1. To allow for better use of the site and provide infill development.
2. Lands in private ownership.

23.2.2 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged.

It should be noted that the subject lands were initially included for amenity purposes in association with planning application Ref No. 00/1601, which was a grant of planning permission for two dwelling houses. A subsequent planning application Ref No. 06/2021 on the subject lands was refused planning permission and one of the reasons cited “The development would contravene materially condition no. 1 attached to previously granted permission PI Ref: 00-1601”. Notwithstanding the history associated with the site, it is considered that there is no justification for rezoning the subject lands “Proposed Residential” as it would impact on the residential amenity of the existing property in the vicinity.
The SEA report considers that zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

23.2.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

23.2.4 Submission WM-C1-61
Submission WM-C1-61 relates to a zoning request for lands at Green Street, Townparks, Castlepollard. The subject lands are unzoned and the submission request lands to be zoned “Proposed Residential”.

The rationale supporting this submission includes:
1. These lands were previously zoned for residential use up until 2014.
2. It is now appropriate to zone the lands 'Proposed Residential' use to facilitate the town’s growth as a self-sustaining principal town and main service centre for North Westmeath.
3. It is considered that the subject lands will facilitate permeability and linkage to the adjoining residential estate development and the town.
4. Will support a number of policy objective including CPO 8.13, 8.14, 8.17, 8.19 and 8.20.
5. The subject lands are considered to be in an optimum location for residential zoning in terms of achieving actual development of the site when compared to other areas within the town that remain idle despite their residential zoning.

23.2.5 Submission WM-C1-142
Submission WM-C1-142 relates to lands at Green Street, Castlepollard the subject lands are unzoned. The submission seeks to promote the inclusion of the identified lands, situated immediately adjacent to Cluain Mullan residential development Green Street Castlepollard, within the future development boundary of Castlepollard and their zoning as "Proposed Residential" within the adopted County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The rationale supporting this submission includes:
1. The subject lands provide a realistic option for future housing, delivered in a sustainable manner adjacent to an existing residential estate.
2. These lands present a logical extension and ensure the completion of Cluain Mullan as originally intended and supports the development of a brownfield site as per policy objective CPO 8.15 of the CDP.
23.2.6 Chief Executive’s Response

The intention of submissions WM-C1-61 and WM-C1-142 to zone additional residential lands at the periphery of the settlement boundary is acknowledged.

The amount of lands zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

Castlepollard is defined as a ‘Self Sustaining Growth Town’ in the RSES. Such towns are considered ‘towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining’. It is considered that there are sufficient lands zoned in this settlement, to cater for the population and housing provision during this Plan period.

Furthermore, the amount and location of zoned lands required was also guided by the NPF and RSES requirements to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. These greenfield sites, removed from the established settlement boundary do not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of the town and in this regard, it is not considered that the proposed lands, in this instance, fulfil this objective.

The SEA report considers that zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above, 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. The addition of these lands would result in a housing and population growth that would be considered unsustainable over the lifetime of this plan and it is therefore recommended that the lands not be zoned for residential purposes as part of the Plan.

23.2.7 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.
23.2.8 Submission WM-C1-158
Submission WM-C1-158 relates to lands at Packenhamhall Rd, Castlepollard which are unzoned and located outside of the development boundary in the Draft County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The rationale supporting this submission acknowledges lands zoned "Consolidation Site" and "Expanded Settlement Centre" within the owners’ landholding and requests that other additional adjacent lands is the same landownership be included as "Consolidation Site".

23.2.9 Chief Executive’s Response
The subject lands are located to the north west of the settlement with potential access onto the Pakenhamhall Road, lands are situated adjacent to a Consolidation site. There are 4.68 hectares of Land zoned for Consolidation Site in the Draft Plan for Castlepollard. It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site does not provide for brownfield or infill development of Castlepollard, considering the existence of alternative suitable sites within the existing town envelope. It is considered that there are sufficient lands provided for in the Draft Plan for Consolidation site for the duration of the Plan, given the anticipated demand and Castlepollard’s position within the overall Settlement Hierarchy.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the quantum of land zoned for consolidation purposes in Castlepollard, opportunities for infill development inside the current development boundary, its position in the county settlement hierarchy, its projected growth to 2027, SEA report, it is considered that there is no justification for rezoning further land Consolidation Site in Castlepollard.

23.2.10 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.
23.3 Kilbeggan

The following submissions were received in relation to Kilbeggan WM-C1-8, WM-C1-76, WM-C1-133, WM-C1-143.

Map 2.

23.3.1 Submission WM-C1-8

Submission WM-C1-8 relates to lands at Clara Road, Kilbeggan. The Executive Committee of the Combined Counties Football League have made a submission to request the re-zoning of 4.98 hectares of subject lands from its current zoning mixed status of residential (expired)/Industrial to be re-zoned as Sporting Recreational.

The rationale supporting this submission includes:

1. Facilitate the development of a Centre of Excellence for the local junior soccer league.
2. This amenity will be available for use by the local and wider community.
23.3.2 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the submission is acknowledged.

The issues raised in the submission are noted in relation to these lands and in this regard the subject lands are already zoned “Sporting Recreational” under the Draft Plan in line with the request as set out under the submission.

23.3.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

23.3.4 Submission WM-C1-76
Submission WM-C1-76 relates to lands at Abbeybrook, Tullamore Road, Kilbeggan. This submission requests rezoning of three parcels of lands in the Draft County Development Pan 2021-2027.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. A strip of land zoned ‘Open Space’ on the subject lands should be removed as it contains part of the rear garden of dwellings recently granted planning.
   a. Planning permission was granted for 69 dwellings, the requested “Open Space” zoning would include portions of the rear gardens of dwellings approved under Reg. Ref. 19/6084.
   b. The inclusion of these rear gardens in lands zoned open Space, will negatively impact the sale of each dwelling due to the limitations associated with Open Space zoning objectives.

2. Requests that the Planning Authority provide a residential zoning objective (previously contained within the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020) for a small piece of land in Abbeybrook to facilitate the provision of childcare facilities in the Abbeybrook area. It is submitted that:
   a. This land is necessary for the future provision of childcare facilities in the Abbeybrook area.
   b. The site is well suited to such a use due to its location between the exiting dwellings in Abbeybrook and the recently approved dwellings.
   c. Land is adjacent to open space zoned lands which would allow for outdoor play areas.
   d. Abbeybrook already contain a large area dedicated to outdoor amenity space.

3. Requests that the Planning Authority considers rezoning lands at Abbeybrook to residential use from Enterprise and Employment. It is submitted that:
   a. Excessive lands zoned for Enterprise and Employment in Kilbeggan.
   b. Residential zoned lands would be better suited at this location due to the presence of dwellings (built and approved) to the east.
   c. It is submitted that Enterprise and Employment zoning is incompatible with Open Space zoning from an urban design perspective and would become a hub for anti-social activity and would impact on the residential amenity of Abbeybrook.
23.3.5 Chief Executive’s Response

The intention of the submission is acknowledged.

1. Request that the proposed strip of land zoned ‘Open Space’ through the subject lands be removed.

The “Open Space” zoning on the subject lands are included so as to provide a buffer between the residential zoning and the neighbouring “Enterprise & Employment” zoning. It is noted the planning history on this site, the inclusion of “Open Space” zoning in the rear gardens of granted planning permission Ref No. 19/6084 is a digitizing error. As such the open space boundary should be revised to coincide with residential development boundary as set out under said grant of planning permission.

2. Request that a Residential zoning objective for a small piece of land in Abbeybrook be included.

The subject lands are located on the opposite side of the roadway from the residential houses and are sandwiched between a playground and open space area. It is noted that the submission identifies these lands as being suitable for childcare facilities which are permitted within “residential” zoned lands. The existing houses in Abbeybrook were developed under 03/4377 which was only partially implemented and the creche as part of that scheme was not constructed. The merits of having a childcare facility at this location are noted and it is recommended that the zoning be changed to “Proposed Residential” with a site-specific objective to accommodate a Childcare facility on the subject lands.

3. Request that lands at Abbeybrook be changed to Residential use from Enterprise and Employment.

The amount of land zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

Kilbeggan is defined as a ‘Self Sustaining Growth Town’ in the RSES. Such towns are considered ‘towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining’. It is considered that there are sufficient lands zoned in Kilbeggan, to cater for the population and housing provision during this Plan period.
Furthermore, the amount and location of zoned lands required was also guided by the NPF and RSES requirements to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements.

Having regard to the above, 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. The addition of these lands would result in a housing and population growth that would be considered unsustainable over the lifetime of this plan and it is therefore recommended that the lands not be zoned for residential purposes in accordance with the Core Strategy.

23.3.6 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE ZO 1

Modify “Open Space” to align with development boundary identified in grant of planning Ref No 19/6084 in accordance with subject lands in Map 2a.

CE ZO 2

Amend “Open Space” on subject lands to “Proposed Residential” and include site-specific objective to provide Childcare Facilities in accordance with subject lands in Map 2a.

*It is a policy objective of Westmeath County Council to:*

“Support the development of Childcare Facilities on lands identified which shall demonstrate compliance with the ‘Guidelines on Childcare Facilities, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) and Circular Letter PL3 2016 or any superseding guidelines and in accordance with the needs identified by Westmeath County Childcare Committee (WCC)”.*
23.3.7 Submission WM-C1-133

Submission WM-C1-133 relates to two separate plots of land.

1. The first land parcel is situated at Moate Rd, Kilbeggan and were previously zoned “Enterprise & Employment” under the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020.

   The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
   a. Permission to develop a warehouse building on this area of land.
   b. This development allows for expansion of current facilities, which enables us to increase staff numbers and provide parking for staff.

2. The second parcel of land is situated at the Clara Rd, Kilbeggan which are zoned “Open Space”. The submission requests a change to “Sporting Recreational”.

   The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
   a. Lands are adjoining the local GAA pitch.
   b. Allows for expansion of GAA/other sporting facilities.
23.3.8 Chief Executive’s Response

The intention of the submission is acknowledged.

1. Lands on the Moate Rd Kilbeggan:

The subject lands are located off the R446 Kilbeggan to Moate road, lands comprise of 3.13 hectares and were zoned “Enterprise & Employment” within the previous Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020. The Draft plan contains 33.51 hectares of “Enterprise & Employment” zoned lands. Enterprise and Employment zoned lands have been reduced at this location in order to consolidate development within the settlement of Kilbeggan in line with the town’s position in the Settlement Hierarchy.

It is noted that lands within the submitter’s ownership have the benefit of planning permission for warehouse development and are included under the “Enterprise and Employment” zoning designation as set out under the Draft Plan.

An underlying key principle of the NPF and RSES is to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site on the peripheral of the settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of the town and in this regard, it is not considered that the proposed lands, in this instance, fulfil this objective.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

It is considered that there are sufficient lands provided for in the Draft Plan for enterprise and employment for the duration of the Plan, given Kilbeggan’s position within the overall Settlement Hierarchy.

2. Lands on the Clara Rd Kilbeggan:

The second element of this submission refers to lands which are zoned as “Open Space” and are located adjacent to Kilbeggan GAA. It is requested to change the zoning from “Open Space” to “Sporting Recreational”. It should be noted that the zoning matrix as set out under the Draft Plan includes sports facilities as “Open for consideration”, while open space is “Permitted development” within “Sporting Recreational” zoned lands. In the event that these lands are required for the expansion of Kilbeggan GAA or any other sporting organisation, and in order to give greater certainty
to such a proposal, it is suggested that the zoning associated with the subject lands be modified to “Sporting Recreational” as requested in submission received.

23.3.9 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended regarding previously zoned “Enterprise & Employment” lands.

CE ZO 3

It is recommended to amend zoning from “Open Space” to “Sporting Recreational” in accordance with Map 2b.

Map 2b.

23.3.10 Submission WM-C1-143

Submission WM-C1-143 relates to lands at Tullamore Road, Kilbeggan. The submission is in relation to lands which have varied zoning of “Proposed Residential”, “Sporting Recreational” and unspecified zoning within the Draft County Development Plan 2021-2027.
The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. There is an existing planning permission on these lands for a GP Practice, Primary Care Centre and Pharmacy and the associated zoning should reflect this status.
2. Allow for future potential development of these lands, including independent and support living units for the elderly and/or disabled, together with related ancillary and community services

23.3.11 Chief Executive’s Response

The intention of the submission is acknowledged.

Kilbeggan is designated as a self-sustaining growth in the Core Strategy, and these towns offer potential for regional economic growth and can accommodate average or above average growth to provide for natural increase, service and/or employment growth where appropriate, in accordance with the settlement hierarchy identified within the Core Strategy. Key priorities for Self-Sustaining Growth Towns are consolidation coupled with targeted investment where required, to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options and to become more self-sustaining settlements.

The subject lands are located off the R389 Kilbeggan to Tullamore Road, lands comprise of 3.72 hectares of which 2.47 hectares are zoned “Proposed Residential”, approx. 0.4 hectares are zoned “Sporting Recreational” with the remainder 0.85 hectares are unzoned and located outside of the Kilbeggan development boundary. Planning permission was granted for a Primary Health Care Centre on portion of these lands (12/4061 EOD Dec 2022), the submission received requests that the zoning of lands within the ownership reflects this and allows for future expansion. The area of lands associated with the above grant of planning permission was identified at 1.15 hectares, which forms part of lands zoned “Proposed Residential” within an area of 2.47 hectares. It noted that a Health Centre and multiple residential units are considered “Permitted in Principle” within “Proposed Residential” land zoning. It is therefore considered that the intended usage is allowable within the current land use zoning.

23.3.12 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.
23.4 Kinnegad

The following submissions were received in relation to Kinnegad WM-C1-7, WM-C1-15, WM-C1-19, WM-C1-68, WM-C1-73, WM-C1-88 and WM-C1-110.

![Map of Kinnegad Submissions](image)

23.4.1 Submission WM-C1-7

Submission WM-C1-7 relates to lands at Killucan Rd, Kinnegad.

This submission notes that 3.82 hectares of lands within the ownership of the submitter are zoned for residential development and requests that the lands be extended to include lands immediately to the north as part of the zoning associated with Kinnegad.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. The subject lands contained a lapsed planning permission for residential development.
2. The subject lands are fully serviced with water, foul and surface water with good pedestrian and transport links.
23.4.2 Submission WM-C1-15
Submission WM-C1-15 request additional zoning of lands to accommodate a site-specific zoning objective for ageing population at Killucan Rd, Mullingar.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. It is presented that the concept of residential accommodation for an ageing population in the form of a retirement village incorporating ‘independent and assisted living accommodation’ delivers economic and social benefits.
2. Lands represents an opportunity to establish a fully functioning life-time housing solution to meet the needs of an increasingly ageing population.
3. Population statistics and elderly care accommodation statistics demonstrate that Kinnegad is underprovided for in terms of these facilities.
4. The development for example of a retirement village represents a sustainable model for future proofing our ageing population.
5. The site is strategically located in proximity to the village centre of Kinnegad, the rural environs to facilitate those living in rural isolation, the option of moving to a community setting where they can live independently rather than in nursing homes, to allow residents to engage with local services while still availing of good residential amenity and a pleasant environment on the edge of the settlement.
6. The submission also refers to Housing Options for Our Ageing Population (DHPLG February 2019) in the Draft County Development Plan.

23.4.3 Submission WM-C1-68
Submission WM-C1-68 request for lands with access onto the R148, Old Athlone Rd, Kinnegad. The subject lands are zoned Proposed Residential, Open Space and Enterprise and Employment in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

This submission seeks the designation of the subject lands to “Proposed Residential”.

Whilst the submission notes and welcomes part of the lands in their ownership as ‘Proposed Residential’, the submission seeks that the entirety of the lands be afforded such designation.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. The lands are located within Kinnegad Development Boundary.
2. Residential zoning would be more consistent with the surrounding area.
3. Lands are readily accessible and within walking distance to open spaces and recreational facilities, village centre facilities such as the Health Centre, Kinnegad GAA Sports Grounds, St Etchens National School and commercial and retail facilities.

23.4.4 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the submissions WM-C1-7, WM-C1-15 and WM-C1-68 is acknowledged.
Regarding submission WM-C1-15, it should be noted that Section 4.9.1 Lifetime Housing/Housing for Older People, of the Draft Plan advocates a range of measures to facilitate longer and healthier lives in the community.

The amount of lands zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

Kinnegad is defined as a ‘Self Sustaining Growth Town’ in the RSES. Such towns are considered ‘towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining’. It is considered that there are sufficient lands zoned in Kinnegad, to cater for the population and housing provision during this Plan period.

The SEA report notes that zoning of the additional lands would be unnecessary given the projected growth for the settlement. Suitable lands within and/or closer to the settlement’s centre have been zoned by the Draft Plan based on evidence-led planning. Zoning lands in response to this proposal at this time would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Furthermore, the amount and location of zoned lands required was also guided by the NPF and RSES requirements to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements, it is not considered that the proposed lands, in this instance, fulfil this objective.

In conclusion, there is no evidence-based need or planning rationale for the proposed zonings which would be in breach of the Core Strategy of both the Draft Plan and the RSES and NPF.

23.4.5 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.
23.4.6 Submission WM-C1-19
Submission WM-C1-19 relates to lands at Trim Rd, Kinnegad. The submission requests that the Planning Authority review the Development Plan objectives for the environs of Kinnegad, with a view to preparing a zoning plan for the area (either standalone or joint plan), to harness the significant latent capacity of the area to act as an urban extension to the existing town. The site in question is 0.43 hectares and adjoins the built-up area of Kinnegad but is located within the Meath County boundary.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. Designation of the subject site and adjoining area provides for an urban extension.
2. Subject lands would provide for sequentially logical and formal infilling of an existing partially developed area.
3. The existing N4 corridor acts as a natural enclosure to such infilling.
4. Proposal is supported by NPO 70 which states: “Provision will be made for urban area plans, based on current local area plan provisions, and joint urban area plans and local area plans will be prepared where a town and environs lie within the combined functional area of more than one local authority.”

23.4.7 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the submission is acknowledged.

The NPF and RSES supports the principle of joint urban planning with a single unit town focus, to enhance co-ordination of development more generally in town locations that straddle administrative boundaries.

It is noted that the subject lands are outside the remit of this Plan and cannot be considered for inclusion within the development boundary associated with Kinnegad at this time.

In the context of Westmeath, the NPF and RSES has set out that it will be necessary to prepare a co-ordinated strategy for Athlone at both regional and town level, to ensure that the town and environs has the capacity to grow sustainably and to secure investment, as the key regional centre in the Midlands. No such provision has been included in respect of Kinnegad.

Whilst the Council is committed to ongoing engagement and co-operation with adjoining Local Authorities (Meath County Council in this instance) It is not considered appropriate that a joint local area plan be prepared in respect of Kinnegad in order to facilitate the development of a limited extent of lands situated outside the current development boundary of the town.

23.4.8 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.
23.4.9 Submission WM-C1-73
Submission WM-C1-73 relates to a zoning request for lands to the rear of the Primary Care Centre with access onto the Main Street Kinnegad.

This submission proposes a change to the open space zoning of the subject land to mixed use in order to facilitate the expansion of the primary care centre.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. The submission provides an inventory of existing information and the identification of flooding water management issues in the vicinity of the proposed site.
2. Enabling infrastructure exists and it is presented that proposal will positively contribute to the vitality and viability of the town core, due to its proximity to the town core, increased permeability within the town.
3. Potential for development of a linear landscaped walkway along the river bank and enhance opportunities for the regeneration of this area.

23.4.10 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the submission is acknowledged.

The SEA Report notes that zoning of the additional lands would be unnecessary given the projected growth for the town. Suitable lands within and/or closer to the settlement’s centre have been zoned by the Draft Plan based on evidence-led planning. Zoning lands in response to this proposal at this time would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

The principal risk associated with the zoned land is from the Kinnegad River; however, this is subject to an OPW Arterial Drainage scheme and the channel here has been widened and deepened. This site is contained entirely within PFRA 1% AEP flood outline and it is not certain that the site is developable until a more detailed assessment is undertaken. A Stage 3 detailed FRA must be undertaken at Plan Making Stage to confirm the extent of Flood Zones A and B. In the absence of such a Justification Test, an amendment to the zoning cannot be recommended.

23.4.11 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.
23.4.12 Submission WM-C1-88
Submission WM-C1-88 supports the ‘Expanded Settlement Centre’ zoning objective that has been applied to the Tesco Kinnegad site and the adjacent lands in recognition of the important retailing function of this area of the town.

Clarification provided in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 of the uses that are considered appropriate under this zoning are welcomed.

It is noted that the location of these lands, within 200m of Main Street, are well placed to contribute to an expanded town centre area through the provision of appropriate uses and linkages with Main Street. It is also submitted that this zoning objective will encourage and facilitate the objectives of the Westmeath CDP to expand Kinnegad Town Centre, improve the vitality and viability of the core town centre area, reduce retail expenditure leakage and progress the development of underutilised lands.

23.4.13 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the submission and support for the policies and objectives contained in the Draft Plan are acknowledged and welcomed.

23.4.14 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

23.4.15 Submission WM-C1-110
Submission WM-C1-110 relates to permitted uses in the zoning matrix of the Plan. The submission relates to lands with access onto the R148, Old Athlone Rd, Kinnegad, along with the proposed new link road outlined in CPO 8.103 and seeks the modification of the zoning matrix associated with ‘Enterprise and Employment’ zonings as follows:

Light Industry – should be classed as ‘Permitted’ rather than ‘Open for Consideration’;
Warehouse – should be classified as ‘Permitted’ rather than ‘Open for Consideration’.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
The submission presents that it is important that these are both classed as permitted development as they are use types which are highly compatible with the Enterprise and Employment zoning. Policy CPO15.17 specifically states that this zoning is intended to provide suitable space for industrial uses and services.

23.4.16 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the submission is acknowledged.
The subject lands comprise of approximately 4.02 hectares and are located to the north of the M4 motorway in Kinnegad and access to the lands are via the R148.

The Draft Plan sets out that ‘Enterprise and Employment’ zoning provides for the creation of enterprise and employment uses save for traditional commercial functions that should locate within a town core area.

Lands zoned for ‘enterprise and employment’ include the use and development of land for high-end research and development, business, science and technology-based industry, financial services, call centres/telemarketing, software development, enterprise and incubator units, small/medium manufacturing, warehousing and corporate offices in high quality campus/park type development.

Policy objective CPO 15.7 provides for enterprise and employment and related uses including industrial and service uses and compatible uses such as office and distribution.

Given that such enterprise and employment lands are often situated in proximity to residential zoned lands and established residential areas, it is considered appropriate that these uses be open for consideration having regard to considerations of residential amenity and subject to careful siting and design. As such it is considered appropriate that light industry and warehouse uses be “Open for Consideration” within the enterprise and employing zoning category subject to assessment in line with appropriate development management standards as set out under the Plan.

23.4.17 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.
23.5 Moate

The following submissions were received in relation to Moate: WM-C1-97 and WM-C1-124.

Map 4.

23.5.1 Submission WM-C1-88

Submission WM-C1-97 relates to the rezoning of lands located on the Athone Road in Moate, from “Open Space” to “Proposed Residential”.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. Lands are situated in a strategic location with ease of access to all existing utility services to serve the site.
2. Lands are in close proximity to the town’s main educational, medical and economic services all of which are within walking distance of this site.
3. Lands are suitable to serve local housing needs.
4. This infill site if developed would add to and compliment the continuation and balance of the streetscape at this location as people enter the town from the West, as opposed to the gapped effect which currently exists.
23.5.2 Submission WM-C1-124
Submission WM-C1-124 requests the rezoning of land currently zoned as “Sporting Recreational” at Cartronkeel, Moate to “Proposed Residential”.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. Lands are serviced.
2. Lands are in close proximity to existing social infrastructure and recreational amenities.
3. Currently insufficient lands available for housing to meet demand.
4. Subject lands have the ability to facilitate the demand for low density high class sustainable housing especially in light of the changing home requirements post COVID 19 Lockdown.

23.5.3 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of submissions WM-C1-97 and WM-C1-124 to zone additional residential lands within the settlement boundary is acknowledged.

The amount of lands zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

Moate is defined as a ‘Self Sustaining Growth Town’ in the RSES. Such towns are considered ‘towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining’. It is considered that there are sufficient lands zoned in Moate to cater for the population and housing provision during this Plan period.

The SEA report considers that zoning lands in response to submissions WM-C1-97 and WM-C1-124 would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above, 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. The
addition of these lands would result in a housing and population growth that would be considered unsustainable over the lifetime of this plan and it is therefore recommended that the lands not be zoned for residential purposes as part of the Plan.

23.5.4 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.

23.6 Killucan-Rathwire
The following submissions were received in relation to Killucan-Rathwire: WM-C1-51, WM-C1-59, WM-C1-80, WM-C1-101 and WM-C1-127.

Map 5.

23.6.1 Submission WM-C1-51
Submission WM-C1-51 relates to the zoning of lands at St Joseph’s Terrace, Killucan-Rathwire, currently located outside of the development boundary.
The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. Subject lands were zoned residential in the 2008-2014 County Development Plan.
2. Lands are fully serviced with water, wastewater and surface water.
3. Proposal will enable the village to organically grow as a self-sustaining town.

23.6.2 Submission WM-C1-59
Submission WM-C1-59 relates to a zoning request for lands with access onto the Raharney Road, Killucan. The subject lands are currently zoned “Consolidation Site” and the submission seeks the change of the subject lands to “Proposed Residential”.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. Fully consistent with the pattern of development of the settlement having regard to the local character of the village,
2. The proximity of lands to the settlement centre, established pedestrian link, availability of local services and amenities.

23.6.3 Submission WM-C1-127
Submission WM-C1-127 relates to a change in zoning request to “Proposed Residential” for lands currently zoned “Open Space” situated between the settlements of Killucan and Rathwire. It is submitted that residential development on this 0.776 hectare plot will be a valuable addition to the settlement due to its proximity to local services.

23.6.4 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of submissions WM-C1-51, WM-C1-59 and WM-C1-127 to zone additional residential lands within the settlement boundary of Killucan-Rathwire is acknowledged.

The amount of lands zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

Killucan-Rathwire is defined as a ‘Self Sustaining Town’ in the Core Strategy. Such towns are considered ‘towns with a low level of jobs and services and are characteristically commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-
sustaining’. It is considered that there are sufficient lands zoned in this settlement, to cater for the population and housing provision during this Plan period.

Furthermore, the amount and location of zoned lands required was also guided by the NPF and RSES requirements to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements.

These greenfield sites contained within submissions WM-C1-51, WM-C1-80 and WM-C1-127 do not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of the town and in this regard, it is not considered that the proposed lands, in this instance, fulfil this objective.

Submission WM-C1-59 is located in the centre of Killucan with access onto the Raharney Road, lands comprise of 3 hectares and are zoned “Consolidation Site” in the draft plan. This ‘Consolidation Site’ zoning supports compact consolidated development of towns, at an appropriate scale in line with their position in the Settlement Hierarchy. The zoning seeks to promote the sustainable consolidation of town centres with a focus on the regeneration of infill and brownfield sites through the establishment of a mix of uses including residential development and as such it is not considered appropriate to amend the zoning in this instance.

Submission WM-C1-127 refers to a plot located between the settlements of Killucan and Rathwire 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. 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 it states, “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.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to submissions WM-C1-51, WM-C1-101 and WM-C1-127 would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above, 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. The addition of these lands would result in a housing and population growth that would be considered unsustainable over the lifetime of this plan and it is therefore recommended that the lands not be zoned for residential purposes as part of the Plan.

23.6.5 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.
23.6.6 Submission WM-C1-80
Submission WM-C1-80 relates to a zoning request on Sporting Recreational lands with access onto the Mullingar Rd, Killucan. The submission seeks a zoning change to provide for light industrial, service facilities and residential lands.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. This site has the ability to create a strong Village Entrance of quality residential design.
2. The provision of a much-needed service infrastructure (filling station).
3. The provision of light industrial units to aid in the creation of sustainable local employment.
4. An orderly extension to the existing village.

23.6.7 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the submission is acknowledged.

The lands subject to this submission are located on the western edge of Killucan-Rathwire and comprise 1.2ha on the Mullingar Road which are zoned for “Sporting Recreational” in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The lands offer a level of protection to the setting of the Rathwire Moat and Castle site, which contributes significantly to Killucan-Rathwire’s rich heritage.

The submission requests a mix of development types, namely enterprise and employment and residential use (this residential element has been dealt with in the previous response). Regarding enterprise and employment there are 3 hectares of land zoned for enterprise and employment in the Draft Plan for Killucan-Rathwire in addition to 4.1 hectares “Expanded Settlement Centre” zoning which can also cater for appropriate types of enterprise and employment uses.

It is considered that there are sufficient lands provided for in the Draft Plan for enterprise and employment for the duration of the Plan, given the role of Killucan-Rathwire in the overall Settlement Hierarchy.

The NPF and RSES promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site does not provide for brownfield or infill development or the sequential development of Killucan-Rathwire, considering the existence of alternative suitable sites within the existing village envelope.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with
associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above, it is considered that there is no evidence-based need or planning rationale for the proposed additional enterprise and employment zoning to be included as part of the Plan at this time. It is considered that there are sufficient lands provided for in the Draft Plan for enterprise and employment for the duration of the Plan, given the anticipated demand and Killucan-Rathwire position within the overall Settlement Hierarchy.

23.6.8 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

23.6.9 Submission WM-C1-101
Submission WM-C1-101 relates to a zoning request for lands at Rathwire Lower with access onto Radharc An Mhuilinn Rd, Rathwire. The subject lands are currently located outside of the development boundary of the town.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. Has the potential to enhance the streetscape and facilitate the creation of compatible land uses adjacent to the school.
2. By broadening the zoning objective on the identified lands, a wider range of development would become viable.
3. The realisation that this type of development would improve the connectivity and permeability of community uses on this side of Killucan-Rathwire and complement the surrounding residential neighbourhoods.
4. This enlargement of the zoning objective would also acknowledge the community gain and infrastructure provision to date enabled by Killucan Parish to the local area over recent years

23.6.10 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the submission is acknowledged.

The proposal consists of two plots of lands. Plot 1 is situated to the north and north east of St Joseph’s Primary School where a requested zoning designation of consolidation development is sought to facilitate Community/Residential/Mixed Uses in order to allow for a greater sense of community and or ‘placemaking’.

There are 3.1 hectares of Land zoned for Consolidation Site in the Draft Plan for Killucan-Rathwire. It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield
development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site does not provide for brownfield or infill development or the sequential development of Killucan-Rathwire, considering the existence of alternative suitable sites within the existing village envelope. It is considered that there are sufficient lands provided for in the Draft Plan for Consolidation site for the duration of the Plan, given Killucan-Rathwire’s position within the overall Settlement Hierarchy.

The second plot located to the south of the Primary School is identified as a potential site for the future expansion of the local wastewater treatment plant. The site of the wastewater treatment plant is located outside of the settlement development boundary and accordingly is not afforded land use zoning. Chapter 10 contains policies which support the development, expansion and timely delivery of water and waste-water infrastructure for the county in line with Irish Water capital investment programme which is aligned with the County Settlement Hierarchy.

It is considered that the Draft plan adequately provides for the expansion of the local wastewater treatment system, if required and as such no further zoning is necessary in this instance.

23.6.11 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.
23.7 Rochfortbridge

The following submissions were received in relation to Rochfortbridge WM-C1-10, WM-C1-18, WM C1-50 and WM-C1-154.

Map 6.

23.7.1 Submission WM-C1-18
Submission WM-C1-18 requests the zoning of lands at the R400 at Mullingar Rd, Rochfortbridge, for residential purposes. The lands are currently located outside of the development boundary of the town.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. The close proximity to the settlement centre is highlighted as is the presence of safe pedestrian access to the lands,
2. There is a sufficient volume of appropriately located and zoned public space in the surrounding area, and
3. The availability of good sports facilities at St. Marys GAA sports grounds and the Pitch and Putt Club.
23.7.2 Submission WM-C1-50
Submission WM-C1-50 requests the zoning of lands, currently located outside of the development boundary at Rahanine, Rochfortbridge, for residential development purposes.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. Lands were previously zoned residential use in the 2008-2014 plan,
2. Lands are well serviced with water, sewerage, footpath and public lighting and will provide an opportunity to offer a range of house types to meet the ongoing changing needs of residents within Rochfortbridge.

23.7.3 Submission WM-C1-154
Submission WM-C1-154 requests the zoning of lands, currently located outside of the development boundary, at Castlelost, be included in the Plan for residential development purposes.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. The subject lands comprise of approx. 2 hectares of serviced lands, located in close proximity to settlement centre,
2. An opportunity exists to provide low density detached housing to meet local demand for those unable to meet rural local need.
3. An element of community gain is suggested by providing lands to facilitate the installation of a public pathway/cycle path connecting the Castlelost and Rochfortbridge Roads and linkages with the Derry River.

23.7.4 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of submissions WM-C1-18, WM-C1-50 and WM-C1-154 to zone additional residential lands within the settlement boundary is acknowledged.

The amount of lands zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

Rochfortbridge is defined as a ‘Self Sustaining Town’ in the Core Strategy. Such towns are considered ‘towns with a low level of jobs and services and are characteristically commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining’. It is considered that there are sufficient lands zoned in this settlement, to cater for the population and housing provision during this Plan period.
Furthermore, the amount and location of zoned lands required was also guided by the NPF and RSES requirements to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. These greenfield sites removed from the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of the town and in this regard, it is not considered that the proposed lands, in this instance, fulfil this objective.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to submissions WM-C1-18, WM-C1-50 and WM-C1-154 would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above, 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. The addition of these lands would result in a housing and population growth that would be considered unsustainable over the lifetime of this plan and it is therefore recommended that the lands not be zoned for residential purposes as part of the Plan.

23.7.5 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

23.7.6 Submission WM-C1-10
Submission WM-C1-10 from the OPW relates to the zoning of lands adjacent to a local watercourse within Rochfortbridge village. The submission highlights the lack of justification for the zoning proposed.

It is submitted that this zoning and should have a more definitive designation. It is suggested that sites adjacent to the watercourse, ‘PR’ (Zone 0.90 and 1.26), ‘ER’ (Zone Area 0.21, 0.84 and 1.28), ‘MU’ (Zone Area 0.12 and 2.74) ‘IE’ (Zone 6.49) and ‘ESC’ (Zone 0.64) may be required to carry out FRA to an appropriate level of detail before further development takes place on these sites.

The OPW welcomes the policy object CPO 8.186 for Rochfortbridge which requests that a site-specific FRA will be carried out in accordance with the “Guidelines’ ‘EE’ site (Zone Area 6.40).

23.7.7 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged
The zoning submission has been reviewed in accordance with the requirements of the SFRA and in this instance it is considered that the principal risk to zoning at this location is from the local watercourse. These lands are impacted by PFRA 1% and 0.1% AEP flood outline and as such it cannot be certain that the site is developable until a more detailed assessment is undertaken. As such, a Stage 3 detailed FRA must be undertaken at Plan Making Stage to confirm the extent of Flood Zones A and B. In the absence of such a Justification Test, it is recommended to amend affected “Proposed Residential” and “Enterprise and Employment” zoning to “Open Space”.

23.7.8 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE ZO 4

Change “Proposed Residential” and “Enterprise and Employment” zoning to “Open Space” as indicated on Map 6a.

Map 6a.
23.8 Clonmellon
The following submissions were received in relation to Clonmellon, WM-C1-5, WM-C1-57 and WM C1-107.

Map 7.

23.8.1 Submission WM-C1-5
Submission WM-C1-5 requests the zoning of lands, currently located outside of the development, at Delvin Rd, Clonmellon, for residential purposes.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. Details regarding ability to connect to the existing sewerage network provided.
2. Lands were zoned Enterprise and Employment purposes in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020.

23.8.2 Submission WM-C1-57
Submission WM-C1-57 requests the zoning of lands, currently located outside of the development /boundary, adjacent to and south of existing residential development Carraig Mhor, Main Street, Clonmellon, for residential purposes.
The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. The subject lands were previously zoned for development and planning permission granted for residential development in 2008.
2. Works had commenced on services with the installation of sewerage pipeline and electrical ducting.
3. Lands considered to be a logical extension of the existing settlement pattern of the village of Clonmellon.
4. Proposal will provide future housing needs for the growing community of Clonmellon and its environs.

23.8.3 Submission WM-C1-107

Submission WM-C1-107 requests the zoning of lands, currently located outside of the development boundary, at Delvin Rd, Clonmellon, for residential use.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. All services are available at the site.
2. Submitter is a builder and wishes to deliver houses straight away.

23.8.4 Chief Executive’s Response

The intention of submissions WM-C1-5, WM-C1-57 and WM-C1-107 to zone additional residential lands in the settlement is acknowledged.

The amount of lands zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

Clonmellon is designated within the category “Towns and Villages” in the Core Strategy. Such towns provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to the rural hinterland. The development strategy for these settlements is to provide for sustainable live-work patterns to strengthen same and to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options to enable the towns and villages to become more self-sustaining during this Plan period.

Furthermore, the amount and location of zoned lands required was also guided by the NPF and RSES requirements to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. These greenfield sites removed from the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield
or the sequential development of the town and in this regard, it is not considered that the proposed lands, in this instance, fulfil this objective.

SEA reports consider that Zoning lands in response to submissions WM-C1-5, WM-C1-57 and WM-C1-107 would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above and details contained within the SEA 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. The addition of these lands would result in a housing and population growth that would be considered unsustainable over the lifetime of this plan and it is therefore recommended that the lands not be zoned for residential purposes as part of the Plan.

23.8.5 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.

23.9 Delvin
The following submission was received in relation to Delvin WM-C1-106.
23.9.1 Submission WM-C1-106
Submission WM-C1-106 relates to the zoning of lands at Athboy Rd, Delvin. The submission refers to the inclusion of “Proposed Residential” of 0.83 acres.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. The submitter owns circa 4.5 acres of land at this location of which approximately 3.7 acres is proposed to be zoned for residential use under the Draft Westmeath Development Plan 2021.
2. The inclusion of additional residential zoning will provide an opportunity to facilitate the preparation of a masterplan for the entire landholding.

23.9.2 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of submission WM-C1-106 to zone additional residential lands within the settlement boundary is acknowledged.

The amount of lands zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

Delvin is designated within the category “Towns and Villages” in the Core Strategy. Such towns provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to the rural hinterland. The development strategy for these settlements is to provide for sustainable live-work patterns to strengthen same and to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options to enable the towns and villages to become more self-sustaining during this Plan period.

Furthermore, the amount and location of zoned lands required was also guided by the NPF and RSES requirements to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. These greenfield sites removed from the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of the town and in this regard, it is not considered that the proposed lands, in this instance, fulfil this objective.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.
Having regard to the above, 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. The addition of these lands would result in a housing and population growth that would be considered unsustainable over the lifetime of this plan and it is therefore recommended that the lands not be zoned for residential purposes as part of the Plan.

23.9.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.

23.10 Ballymore
The following submissions were received in relation to Ballymore WM-C1-26 and WM-C1-60.

Map 9.

23.10.1 Submission WM-C1-26
Submission WM-C1-26 relates to a request to change the zoning of lands at Ballymore, the subject lands are currently zoned “Community, Educational & Institutional” and “Mixed Use”. This submission requests a change in the “Mixed Use” zoning to “Community, Educational & Institutional” and the inclusion of a Specific Local Objective to facilitate residential based use for supported/unsupported accommodation to allow the over 55 / 65 and active retired demographic to live independently.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. There is currently no specific provision within the County Development Plan for supported/unsupported accommodation to allow the over 55 / 65 and active retired demographic to live independently.

2. This type of accommodation will allow this demographic to downsize from large, expensive to run, isolated rural accommodation, to modern, efficient to run and supported by immediate neighbours and potentially medical/care staff.

3. Residents will benefit from the services and amenities of the village on their doorstep and within walking distance. In turn such provision will be important in maintaining viable and stable communities going forward.

4. The development of the subject lands would offer an opportunity to further consolidate the streetscape, with an appropriate built form while still enclosing the street.

5. Population analysis of Ballymore and its surrounding hinterland demonstrates that approx. 20% of the village and hinterland population is over 55.

6. It will also allow Westmeath County Council to comply with the national policy document Housing Options for our Ageing Population – Policy Statement 2019.

**23.10.2 Chief Executive’s Response**

The intention of the motion is acknowledged.

The subject lands are zoned “Mixed Use” and “Community, Educational & Institutional” within the Draft County Development Plan 2021-2027, the proposal seeks a change in “Mixed Use” zoning to “Community, Educational & Institutional” so as to facilitate development of supported/unsupported accommodation to allow the over 55 / 65 and active retired demographic to live independently.

‘Community, Educational & Institutional’ zoning provides for the safeguarding and provision of facilities that serve and contribute to the creation of viable and stable communities. Such facilities include schools, churches, community centres, creches and childcare facilities, nursing homes, libraries, museums, health centres, fire stations, graveyards, arts/entertainment facilities and infrastructure as well as sporting, recreational and cultural facilities.

‘Mixed Use’ zoning reflects the mixture of uses which have always co-existed in town/village centres and which offers the variety required to make them attractive and important places for community interaction. The zoning provides for a range of uses to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres, making provision where appropriate, for primary and secondary uses e.g. commercial/retail/service development as the primary use with residential development as a secondary use. Secondary uses will be considered by the local authority having regard to the particular character of the area and its role in the Settlement Hierarchy.

It is considered that there is scope for the type of development referenced in this submission, at an appropriate scale to the settlement, within the existing zoning classes of “Mixed Use” and “Community, Educational & Institutional”.

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23.10.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

23.10.4 Submission WM-C1-60
Submission WM-C1-60 relates to a request for the zoning of lands for residential development at Ballymore.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. The current exclusion of these lands from within the development boundary is inappropriate for a central location in a Rural (Serviced) settlement.
2. Ideally located and surrounded by existing residential area.
3. Offer the potential to provide high quality housing development in the heart of the village of Ballymore.

23.10.5 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged.

Ballymore is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site situated outside the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield development of Ballymore.

The SEA reports consider that Zoning lands in response to submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the quantum of land zoned for Proposed Residential in Ballymore, opportunities for infill development inside the current development boundary, its position in the county settlement hierarchy, its projected growth to 2027, and noting the content of the SEA Environmental Report, it is considered that there is no justification for rezoning further land Proposed Residential outside the development boundary of Ballymore.
23.10.6 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

23.11 Castletown Geoghegan
The following submissions were received in relation to Castletown Geoghegan WM-C1-6, WM-C1-44, WM-C1-71 and WM-C1-144.

Map 10.

23.11.1 Submission WM-C1-6
Submission WM-C1-6 relates to a request to zone lands to the south of Castletown Geoghegan on the Kilbeggan Road. This submission proposes extending the development boundary approx. 300m in a southerly direction to incorporate a 1.95 hectare plot for Proposed Residential usage.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. This proposed development would be ideal for local people outside the village who are currently trying to attain planning permission but are falling short on local need requirements.
2. The development would increase the population, and therefore the activity, of the village allowing for regeneration which would support the aims of the Castletown Geoghegan Village Plan 2018-2023.
23.11.2 Chief Executive’s Response

The intention of the motion is acknowledged.

Castletown Geoghegan is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site situated a distance of 300m outside the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of Castletown Geoghegan.

The SEA reports consider that Zoning lands in response to submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

The Draft Plan promotes the consolidation of the village and protection of its form and character. The proposed motion 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.

23.11.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.

23.11.4 Submission WM-C1-44

Submission WM-C1-44 relates to two distinct land plots and requests:

1. To a change in zoning of lands to “Mixed Use” at Castletown Geoghegan. An NIAH former Church of Ireland church/chapel is located on the subject site.

   The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
   a. The Church is currently vacant having previously been used as a garage/workshop/store which does not accord with “Established Residential” zoning in the draft plan.
   b. “Established Residential” zoning class will have a significant negative impact on the potential range of uses available.
   c. Potential commercial benefits which the land can provide to its surrounding area as a wider range of uses may be carried out including Residential Development if the land was designated as “Mixed Use”.

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d. The sought “Mixed Use” zoning will allow the land to have a more positive regenerative benefit on the area.

2. The submission requests a ‘Specific Local Objective’ at Mount Druid to create opportunity to attract tourism and heritage into these lands.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

a. The subject lands present an accessible and suitable site for extending tourism and commercial development to occur in the Mount Druid area in a sustainable manner.

b. The landowners have developed a ‘Masterplan’ proposal which is intended to express the future tourism potential of the lands and provides for a retirement village, creche, drop off and school parking, retreat centre, cycle track, sports field, restaurant, glass houses and arboretum.

23.11.5 Chief Executive’s Response

The intention of the motion is acknowledged.

1. The subject lands are located within the centre of the village and adjacent to a historic graveyard, lands were zoned “Residential” within the Castletown-Geoghegan LAP 2012-2018 and zoned “Established Residential” within the Draft plan. The proposal seeks a change in zoning from “Proposed Residential” to “Mixed Use” zoning so as to facilitate future use of the site. ‘Mixed Use’ zoning provides for a range of uses to sustain and enhance the vitality and Agreed to incorporate some of the text sought viability of town centres, making provision where appropriate, for primary and secondary uses e.g. commercial/retail/service development as the primary use with residential development as a secondary use. Secondary uses will be considered by the local authority having regard to the particular character of the area and its role in the Settlement Hierarchy.

‘Mixed-use’ zoning in or near village centres affords a diverse range of day and evening uses where there are high levels of accessibility, including pedestrian, cyclists and public transport. Having regard to the history of this site, and to allow usage flexibility and enhance the potential vitality and viability of the village settlement, a change to “Mixed Use” is considered acceptable.

2. The subject lands are located in the village of Castletown Geoghegan with access onto the R389. Mount Druid lands comprise of approximately 47 ha. The GAA Club is situated North West of the lands and the school and crèche are located within close proximity of the subject lands. Castletown Geoghegan is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

It should be noted that Castletown-Geoghegan is situated at a settlement tier for which no Map Based Local Objectives local objectives are provided in the Plan. Notwithstanding this, the draft plan contains
a specific policy objective with regard to development at Mount Druid which seeks to “Support tourism and commercial related development associated with the Mount Druid complex”.

Having regard to the position of Castletown-Geoghegan within the settlement hierarchy it is considered that there is adequate policy contained within the Draft plan to support tourism and commercial related development to an appropriate scale within the Mount Druid complex.

23.11.6 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE ZO 5

It is considered that the zoning of the subject lands contained within the above submission be amended to “Mixed Use” as indicated on Map10a, no further amendments are recommended.

Map 10a.
23.11.7 Submission WM-C1-71
Submission WM-C1-71 relates to a request to consider zoning lands for a future new school in Castletown Geoghegan.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. The submission presents a case citing Health and Safety, lack of facilities, restricted space and traffic management as ongoing concerns.

23.11.8 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged.

Castletown Geoghegan is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

The Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 contains the designation of a 2.5 hectare site within Castletown Geoghegan settlement core for “Community, Educational and Institutional”. This ‘Community, Educational & Institutional’ zoning provides for the safeguarding and provision of facilities that serve and contribute to the creation of viable and stable communities, such facilities include schools.

23.11.9 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
It is considered that the above submission is provided for within the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027, no changes are recommended.

23.11.10 Submission WM-C1-144
Submission WM-C1-144 relates to a request to change land zoning at Castletown Geoghegan. The land area the subject of this submission measures approx. 0.5 acres and are adjacent to lands within the submitters landownership which is zoned “Mixed Use”.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. Presently employ up to 50 people and have outgrown current accommodation which is only suitable for residential purposes.
2. In order to sustain their Electrical Business purpose-built offices and storage on subject lands are required.

23.11.11 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged.
Castletown Geoghegan is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

‘Mixed Use’ zoning reflects the mixture of uses which have always co-existed in town/village centres and which offers the variety required to make them attractive and important places for community interaction. The zoning provides for a range of uses to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of settlement centres, making provision where appropriate, for primary and secondary uses.

It is considered that the expansion of the existing “Mixed Use” to include the subject lands represents a logical and natural extension and will not deter from the residential amenities of neighbouring properties.

23.11.12

Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE ZO 6

Amend zoning from Residential to “Mixed Use” as indicated on Map10b.
23.12 Collinstown
The following submission was received in relation to Collinstown WM-C1-23.

Map 11.

23.12.1 Submission WM-C1-23
Submission WM-C1-23 relates to the zoning of lands at Collinstown. This submission requests the extension of the development boundary to include the subject lands and zone “Proposed Residential”. The submitter is currently constructing a residential development adjacent to the subject lands.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. Having regard to the infrastructure investment to date, the location of the land as infill and backland development, thus providing a preferred sequentially location.
2. Providing compact growth patterns as envisaged by the National Planning Framework –Project Ireland 2040.

23.12.2 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged.
Collinstown is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site situated outside the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield development of Collinstown.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above, 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. In addition, considering the quantum of land zoned for Proposed Residential in Collinstown, opportunities for infill development inside the current development boundary, its position in the county settlement hierarchy, its projected growth to 2027, Westmeath County Council considers that there is no justification for rezoning further land Proposed Residential outside the development boundary of Collinstown.

**23.12.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations**
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.
23.13 Milltownpass
The following submission was received in relation to Milltownpass WM-C1-17 and WM-C1-10.

Map 12.

23.13.1 Submission WM-C1-17
Submission WM-C1-17 relates to the zoning of lands at Milltownpass. This submission requests the extension of the development boundary to include the subject lands and zone “Proposed Residential”.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:
1. Having regard to the local character of the village, the location of the land, the surrounding area and that part of the land are currently zoned as “Established Residential”.

23.13.2 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged.
Milltownpass is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site situated outside the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of Milltownpass.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above, 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. In addition, considering the quantum of land zoned for Proposed Residential in Milltownpass, opportunities for infill development inside the current development boundary, its position in the county settlement hierarchy, its projected growth to 2027, Westmeath County Council considers that there is no justification for rezoning further land Proposed Residential outside the development boundary of Milltownpass.

23.13.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

23.13.4 Submission WM-C1-10
Submission WM-C1-10 from the OPW relates to the zoning of lands adjacent to a local watercourse within Milltownpass village. The submission highlights the lack of justification for the zoning proposed.

It is submitted that:
1. Any new development located in ‘PR’ (Zone Area 1.17), ‘ER’ (Zone Area 0.29, 0.3, 1.35 and 1.66), ‘MU’ (Zone 1.30) and ‘IE’ (Zone 1.27) should be assessed to an appropriate level of detail for flood risk
2. PFRA extents have been used and it has been highlighted that these are indicative only and should not be used for planning purposes.

23.13.5 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged
It should be noted that all submissions received in relation to flooding have been reviewed in line of the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, the principal risk to zoning is from the local watercourse the Milltown River. These lands are impacted by PFRA 1% and 0.1% AEP flood outline and cannot be certain that the site is developable until a more detailed assessment is undertaken. A Stage 3 detailed FRA must be undertaken at Plan Making Stage to confirm the extent of Flood Zones A and B. In the absence of such a Justification Test, it is recommended to amend affected “Proposed Residential” to “Open Space”.

23.13.6 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

CE ZO 7

Amend “Proposed Residential” zoning to “Open Space” as indicated on Map12a.

Map 12a.
23.14 Multyfarnham

The following submissions were received in relation to Multyfarnham WM-C1-16, WM-C1-103 and WM-C1-129.

Map 13.

23.14.1 Submission WM-C1-16

Submission WM-C1-16 relates to a request to change zoning designation of lands at Multyfarnham from Open Space to Existing Residential. The subject lands occur to the rear of a large residential dwelling.

The supporting rationale presented is as follows:

1. The submission outlines that there is no public access to the subject lands and the only access is via the existing residential dwelling.
2. Continued zoning of the lands as Open Space will yield no benefit for Multyfarnham or its residents.
3. Amend the land use zoning designation to Existing Residential thereby aligning more accurately with both the current use of the lands (incidental to the residential use of the adjacent dwelling),
4. Identifies lands potential to provide permanent accommodation for family members.
5. A change in zoning to existing residential cannot prejudice the assessment and decision of the Planning Authority in regard to any subsequent planning applications.
23.14.2 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged.

Subject lands are located to the rear of Riverdale House. Lands are contained within the curtilage of a protected structure (Riverdale House) Ref No. 007-037 Volume 6 Record of Protected Structures of the Draft Plan. This submission is seeking a zoning change with a view to submitting a planning application for residential units, at some future date.

The amount of lands zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Furthermore, the amount and location of zoned lands required was also guided by the NPF and RSES requirements to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements, it is not considered that the proposed lands, in this instance, fulfil this objective.

23.14.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

Submission WM-C1-103 relates to a request to proposed residential zoning of lands at Multyfarnham.

There is no justification or supporting documentation submitted, subject lands are identified on mapping submitted. The subject lands are currently located outside of the development boundary and with no zoning designation in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.
23.14.4 Chief Executive’s Response

The intention of the motion is acknowledged.

Multyfarnham is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site situated outside the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of Multyfarnham.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above, 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. In addition, considering the quantum of land zoned for Proposed Residential in Multyfarnham, opportunities for infill development inside the current development boundary, its position in the county settlement hierarchy, its projected growth to 2027, Westmeath County Council considers that there is no justification for rezoning further land Proposed Residential outside the development boundary of Multyfarnham.

23.14.5 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

With respect the above submission no change is recommended.

23.14.6 Submission WM-C1-129

Submission WM-C1-129 relates to a request to change zoning designation of lands at Multyfarnham from Open Space to Residential.

The supporting rationale presents that the change in zoning of land in Multyfarnham from "open space" under the Draft Plan to residential is required to meet housing needs of their extended family.
23.14.7 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged.

It is noted that the subject lands are in private ownership and were zoned “Open Space” in Multyfarnham Village Plan 2007-2013 and the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020. The Multyfarnham Village Plan identified these lands for high quality landscaping in an important Open Space. The lands are situated in a prominent position on an elevated site located between two public roadways on the main road departing the village in a westerly direction. The subject lands occupy a prominent vista and are situated in a strategic location within the settlement boundary which provides an opportunity to enhance the public realm of this historic village. The status of the ownership should not act as deterrent for the potential enhancement of the public realm within Multyfarnham.

The SEA report considers that Zoning lands in response to this submission would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other zoning proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

However, it is noted that part of the Open Space zoning contains a structure which is within the curtilage of a dwelling house, it is noted that this is a cartographical error and accordingly it is recommended that this portion of the Open Space zoning be amended to “Established Residential”.

23.14.8 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
CE ZO 8

Amend zoning on already constructed lands from Open Space Established Residential as indicated on Maps 13a and 13b.

No changes are recommended to the zoning in association the remainder of the subject lands.
Map 13a – Draft Plan.

Map 13b – Amendment proposed.
23.15 Glasson

The following submissions were received in relation to Glasson WM-C1-10, WM-C1-22, WM-C1-45, WM-C1-58, WM-C1-135 and C1-156.

Map 14.

23.15.1 Submission WM-C1-22

Submission WM-C1-22 relates to the zoning of lands at Glasson village. This submission seeks the extension of the Glasson development boundary as designated in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the rezoning of three subject sites to provide for future residential development in Glasson village.

The rationale for the proposed zoning is threefold.
1. Will facilitate the growth of Glasson as the population projections within the Draft plan are underestimated and according sufficient residential lands are required
2. Close proximity to village centre will avoid urban sprawling
3. Achieve objective of compact growth as set out in the NPF and RSES.
23.15.2 Submission WM-C1-45
Submission WM-C1-45 relates to the zoning of lands north of Glasson village, with access onto the N55. The subject lands are currently located outside of the development boundary and with no zoning designation in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027.

The rationale for the proposed zoning is threefold.
1. Satisfy local demand for housing within the immediate area surrounding the village
2. Provide an opportunity for sequential in-depth residential development.
3. Suitable use of serviceable lands which will provide a natural sequential extension of the village and aid in the strengthening and consolidation of the settlement

23.15.3 Submission WM-C1-58
Submission WM-C1-58 relates to the zoning of lands north of Glasson village, with access onto the N55. The submission requests subject lands to be included in the Glasson Rural Serviced boundary and zoned for “Proposed Residential”.

The rationale for the proposed zoning is fourfold.
1. Proposal presents a logical infill site which can create a strong residential area that supports and compliments its surrounding area.
2. The subject lands are located on the N55 providing for sustainable transportation via a public bus, to Athlone, reducing the need of a private car.
3. There is currently an excellent pedestrian walkway which links this land to the village centre, allowing for active travel for future residents to access the village and its commensurate services and commercial facilities.
4. Proposal will allow for sustainable and consolidated growth of the community in Glasson.

23.15.4 Submission WM-C1-135
Submission WM-C1-135 relates to the zoning of lands at the low road to Ballykeernan. The submission requests the subject lands to be zoned for housing, no supporting justification provided.

23.15.5 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of submissions WM-C1-22, WM-C1-45, WM-C1-58 and WM-C1-135 to zone additional residential lands at the periphery of the settlement boundary is acknowledged.
Glasson is designated as a rural serviced settlement in the Draft Plan, wherein it is an objective to provide important local level residential, retailing and community functions to their associated rural hinterlands. In these areas, emphasis is placed on maintaining towns and villages as local service centres by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services.

It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. These greenfield sites outside the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of Glasson, considering the existence of alternative suitable sites within the existing village envelope.

The amount of lands zoned for residential development as part of the Draft Plan is underpinned by the Westmeath Core Strategy and accompanying Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy and Housing Strategy are evidence based, using robust and verified methodologies, that define the housing and population requirements for County Westmeath for the Plan period, whilst maintaining consistency with National and Regional Policy (namely NPF and RSES). Based on these housing and population requirements, the Draft Plan provides an evidence-based rationale for the extent of lands zoned for residential purposes.

The amount and location of zoned lands required was also guided by the NPF and RSES requirements to promote consolidation of existing settlements and more compact forms of growth. As such, it is an objective of the Draft Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. These greenfield sites removed from the established settlement boundary do not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of the town and in this regard, it is not considered that the proposed lands, in this instance, fulfil this objective.

The SEA Report considers that expanding the development boundary/zoning these lands in response to submissions WM-C1-22, WM-C1-45, WM-C1-58 and WM-C1-135 would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Having regard to the above, 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. The addition of these lands would result in a housing and population growth that would be considered unsustainable over the lifetime of this plan and it is therefore recommended that the lands not be zoned for residential purposes in accordance with the Core Strategy.

23.15.6 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.
23.15.7 Submission WM-C1-156
Submission WM-C1-156 relates to the zoning of lands at Glasson village, the subject lands are zoned “Proposed Residential” and “Mixed Use” in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027. The submission by the landowner welcomes the zoning on the Draft County Development Plan affecting the subject lands and the uses permitted within the zoning matrix.

23.15.8 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the motion is acknowledged, and the support of the subject land zoning and zoning matrix is noted.

23.15.9 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submission, no changes are recommended.

23.15.10 Submission WM-C1-10
Submission WM-C1-10 from the OPW relates to the zoning of lands Mixed Use adjacent to a local watercourse within Glasson village. The submission highlights the lack of justification for the zoning proposed.

The submission sets out that; no OPW arterial drainage maintenance work is carried out in Glasson; the PFRA extents are indicative only and should not be used for planning purposes; the ‘MU’ site (Zone Area 4.44) may be at risk of fluvial flooding and FRA.

23.15.11 Chief Executive’s Response
The content of the submission is acknowledged.

It should be noted that all submissions received in relation to flooding have been reviewed in line of the requirements of the SFRA. In this instance, the principal risk to “Mixed Use” zoned lands at this location is from the local watercourse which was once used as a mill race. These lands are impacted by PFRA 1% and 0.1% AEP flood outline and cannot be certain that the site is developable until a more detailed assessment is undertaken A Stage 3 detailed FRA must be undertaken at Plan Making Stage to confirm the extent of Flood Zones A and B. In the absence of such a Justification Test, it is recommended to amend affected “Mixed Use” zoning to “Open Space”.

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Amend “Mixed Use” zoning to “Open Space” in association with lands affected by the PFRA 1% and 0.1% AEP flood outline.

Map 14a.
23.16 Mount Temple

The following submissions were received in relation to Mount Temple WM-C1-3 and WM-C1-55.

![Map 15](image)

23.16.1 Submission WM-C1-3

Submission WM-C1-3 relates to lands at Mount Temple, this submission seeks inclusion of lands for low density housing within the settlement boundary.

The rationale for the proposed extension to the settlement includes:

1. Traffic safety, use of established access roadway to Loch Luatha residential development.
2. Established pedestrian link from the subject lands to the village centre with soft landscaping in place.
3. The provision of eco-quality housing to meet local demand.
4. Site suitability report recommends the installation of a packaged wastewater treatment system as a means of effluent treatment.

Submission WM-C1-55 relates to lands at Mount Temple, the subject lands consist of 1.1 hectares, a small portion of these lands alongside the public roadway, are located within the development boundary the remainder is in-depth development which are currently located outside of the development boundary designation in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-
2027. The submission requests to zone lands for low scale residential development. The submission is absence of supporting rationale, a site suitability report recommends the installation of a packaged wastewater treatment system as a means of effluent treatment.

23.16.2 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of submissions WM-C1-3 and WM-C1-55 to zone additional residential lands at the periphery of Mount Temple settlement boundary is acknowledged.

In this regard Mount Temple is designated as a Rural Node in the Draft Plan. Rural nodes are unserviced settlements intended to support appropriately scaled development capable of being serviced by local arrangements (e.g. individual wastewater treatment system).

The quantum and location of zoned land in the County is directly influenced by the Development Plan’s Settlement and Core Strategy. The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 introduced the requirement for an evidence based ‘Core Strategy’ to be provided in Development Plans. The Core Strategy identifies the quantum and location of development for the plan period that is consistent with the regionally and nationally defined population targets and settlement hierarchy, and, which reflects the availability of existing services, planned investment, sequential development and environmental requirements.

It is noted that Mount Temple has been subject to recent drinking water restrictions. In addition to these issues, groundwater at this location is extremely vulnerable to pollution and it is considered that residential development at this scale could, if permitted, impact upon vulnerable groundwaters. Such an approach is not consistent with the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive.

The SEA Report considers that expanding the development boundary/zoning these lands in response to submissions WM-C1-3 and WM-C1-55 would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Accordingly, the zoning of lands at this location for residential development, in the absence of available services, would result in significant cumulative adverse effects on the environment, contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and accordingly it is recommended that no amendment to the Plan be made in this instance.

23.16.3 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.
23.17 Loughnavalley

The following submissions were received in relation to Loughnavalley WM-C1-20, WM-C1-116, WM-C1-130 and WM-C1-153.

Map 16

23.17.1 Submission WM-C1-116
Submission WM-C1-116 relates to lands at Loughnavalley, the majority of the subject lands are currently located outside of the development boundary. The submitter requests that the development boundary be extended to include subject lands.

The rationale supporting this submission is twofold:
1. Lands are suitable for low density residential development.
2. Willing to provide lands for community sewage treatment plant to service future tourism development within the settlement.

23.17.2 Submission WM-C1-130
Submission WM-C1-130 relates to lands at Loughnavalley, part of the subject lands is currently located outside of the development boundary. The submitter requests that the development boundary be extended to include all subject lands.
The rationale supporting this submission informs:

1. Infrastructure with capacity potential consisting of a private water supply and sewage treatment plant exist at subject lands.

23.17.3 Chief Executive’s Response

The intention of submissions WM-C1-116 and WM-C1-130 to extend the settlement development boundary of Loughnavalley to accommodate residential development is acknowledged.

In this regard Loughnavalley is designated as a Rural Node in the Draft Plan. Rural nodes are unserviced settlements intended to support appropriately scaled development capable of being serviced by local arrangements (e.g. individual wastewater treatment system).

The quantum and location of zoned land in the County is directly influenced by the Development Plan’s Settlement and Core Strategy. The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 introduced the requirement for an evidence based ‘Core Strategy’ to be provided in Development Plans. The Core Strategy identifies the quantum and location of development for the plan period that is consistent with the regionally and nationally defined population targets and settlement hierarchy, and, which reflects the availability of existing services, planned investment, sequential development and environmental requirements.

The SEA Report considers that expanding the development boundary/zoning these lands in response to submissions WM-C1-116 and WM-C1-130 would be premature and would not wholly align with objectives relating to sustainable development. Cumulatively, in-combination with all other proposals contained within other submissions, additional potential adverse significant effects would be likely on various environmental components and full SEA (with associated time and resource requirement) would be required on proposed material alterations arising.

Accordingly, having regard to the designated development boundary limits of Loughnavalley, existing opportunities for infill development, the potential for underused lands or premises, its position in the county settlement hierarchy, its projected growth to 2027, Westmeath County Council considers that there is no justification for extending the development boundary limits of Loughnavalley rural node as requested.

23.17.4 Chief Executive’s Recommendations

With respect to the above submissions, no changes are recommended.

23.17.5 Submission WM-C1-20

Submission WM-C1-20 relates to lands at Loughnavalley, this submission seeks the subject lands to be included in the Loughnavalley Rural Node development boundary.
The rationale supporting this submission is as follows:

1. Development will consolidate the settlement and its community services such as national primary school, church, bar and Gaelic grounds.
2. The location of the subject lands is within walking distance of the village centre with the potential to develop a pedestrian link and reduce the need of using motor vehicles to travel to and from the village centre to these residential units.
3. Rural Node boundary extension will act as a viable alternative to rural one-off housing, contributing to the principle of compact growth will assist the achievement of development plan objectives.

**23.17.6 Submission WM-C1-153**

Submission WM-C1-153 relates to lands at Loughnavalley, the submission formally requests that the proposed Loughnavalley Rural Nodes Boundary, at the western side of the village, be extended to be in line with the Unserviced Settlement Limits of the 2002-2008 Westmeath County Development Plan. Submission also requests enhanced hierarchical status for Loughnavalley to allow provision of services that will benefit Uisneach, the tourist economy and rural employment opportunities.

The rationale supporting this submission informs:

1. Boundary extension is necessary to support the existing services and maintain and maximise the opportunity to sustain the rural settlement node designation.
2. Supporting residential lands are necessary to develop housing cluster which support the “walkable” services within the settlement.
3. Required services include a sewage treatment plant, public water supply, park and ride, restaurant, crafts, and a greenway link from the village to Uisneach.
4. Opportunities are limited to Infrastructure with capacity potential consisting of a private water supply and sewage treatment plant exist at subject lands.

Having regard to that element of submission WM-C1-153 which refers to upgrading the status of Loughnavalley to allow provision of services that will benefit Uisneach, the tourist economy and rural employment opportunities, it should be noted that the Plan supports rural diversification and tourism related development at an appropriate scale.

Rural nodes, however, are designated for development at a sustainable scale through the development of clusters and consideration must be given to the role of nodes having regard to their relationship with designated rural towns and villages in terms of the services they provide or the role and function they play within their own area.

Accordingly, having regard to the evidence-based nature of the ‘Core Strategy’ and the consequent settlement hierarchy, it is considered that there is currently no justification for upgrading the status of Loughnavalley.
In relation to submission WM-C1-20 and WM-C1-153 it is noted that there is a cartographic discrepancy between the extent of the Node as illustrated on the Consultation Portal and the published Book of Maps. Accordingly, in the interest of transparency, the extent of the Node as previously agreed under the current Plan and as set out under the published Book of Maps should be updated as part of the final Plan.

23.17.7 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
CE 20 10

Clarify boundary as per Map 34 Book of Maps. With respect to the above submissions, no further changes are recommended.

Map 17.
23.18 Athlone

The following submissions were received in relation to Athlone and its environs WM-C1-24, WM-C1-32, WM-C1-83, WM-C1-109 and WM-C1-132.

Map 18.

23.18.1 Submission WM-C1-24
Submission WM-C1-24 relates to lands at Ballykeeran, Athlone. The submission proposes that the subject land be zoned to commercial, or alternatively residential.

The rationale supporting this submission informs that subject lands:

1. Provides potential for a considered and defined gateway commercial development on entry to Athlone town through the provision of an architecturally pleasing landmark building(s).

23.18.2 Submission WM-C1-32
Submission WM-C1-32 requests the zoning of the subject lands, which are situated east of the Blyry Business and Commercial Park in Athlone and currently unzoned and located outside of Athlone development boundary, to Enterprise and Employment.
The rationale supporting this submission is due to:
1. Proximity to existing business and commercial park, which benefits from a high level of connectivity and infrastructure most notably the M6 motorway, bus and train stations, fibre optic broadband and Digital Training Hub.
2. Potential access to subject lands through Blyry Business and Commercial Park which is local authority controlled.
3. Proximity to AIT in addition to major and emerging employers.
4. Subjects lands are a natural and contiguous extension of Blyry Industrial Estate.
5. Has potential to increase accessibility, which is currently restricted to one access and egress point, with a potential link to nearby regional road R390.

23.18.3 Submission WM-C1-83
Submission WM-C1-83 refers to a Strategic Road Link contained within the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 is indicative in nature.

The rationale supporting this submission:
1. Cornamagh LAP contains biasing zoning of Strategic Road which is damaging to the subject site’s market value, restricting its existing residential land use and potential statutory development rights. Zoning should be indicative as to allow for detailed design and associated environmental assessment.
2. Cornamagh LAP July 2009 effectively zones an indicative road alignment, when a final alignment does not yet exist.
3. Due to the location of the subject lands being outside of the Athlone development boundary the submission requests that the issues raised, and solution proposed, which involves a modification to the Master Plan Framework to include the subject lands, be considered under the draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

23.18.4 Submission WM-C1-132
Submission WM-C1-132 relates to a section of land at "Doovoge", Athlone and proposes the rezoning of land from its current "Industrial & Commercial" zone to "Residential" zone.

The rationale supporting this submission is twofold:
1. The land and buildings are in a ruinous and derelict condition and are of no use to anybody.
2. This would be of great benefit to the local people, landowners and the County Council to improve the conditions of the area.
23.18.5 Submission WM-C1-109
Submission WM-C1-109 relates to a request in respect of the 3 no. adjacent sites measuring a total area of 15.06ha at Creggan, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

The rationale supporting this submission is as follows:
1. Given the location and prominence of each of the sites, in proximity to Athlone town and zoned within the Creggan Local Area Plan, it is considered that there is an opportunity, as part of the forthcoming County Development Plan, to further promote the sites as suitable locations for development.

23.18.6 Chief Executive’s Response
The intention of the submissions is acknowledged.

The subject lands identified within submission WM-C1-24, WM-C1-32, WM-C1-83, WM-C1-109 and WM-C1-132 are located within or adjacent to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 designated development boundary. It is stated policy objective CPO 2.1 of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 to support the continued growth of Athlone, with a focus on quality of life and securing the investment to fulfil its role as a key Regional Growth Centre and economic driver in the centre of Ireland.

Zoning and policy provision associated with lands in Athlone and its environs will be considered as part of any future Athlone Urban Area Plan following completion of the County Development Plan review process.

23.18.7 Chief Executive’s Recommendations
Having consideration to the above it is recommended that the Draft Development Plan not be amended in this instance.
23.19 Mullingar

The following submissions were received in relation to Mullingar WM-C1-13, WM-C1-30 and WM-C1-128.

Map 19.

23.19.1 Submission WM-C1-13
Submission WM-C1-13 relates to a request for the proposed rezoning of land at Marlinstown, Mullingar Co Westmeath.

The rationale supporting this submission is as follows:
1. The subject site is currently unzoned land having previously been zoned Enterprise and Employment & Institutional and Educational in the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2008-2014.

23.19.2 Submission WM-C1-30
Submission WM-C1-30 refers to the proposed rezoning of subject lands consist of 1.4 hectares at C link road (R394) near Ashe Road in Mullingar to ‘Proposed Residential’.
The rationale supporting this submission is as follows:

1. Proximity of the subject lands to the existing services and amenities

**23.19.3 Submission WM-C1-128**

Submission WM-C1-128 relates to a request for the rezoning of subject lands in the townlands of Farranfolliot and Grange South, Mullingar. The area of land in question abuts the Royal Canal Greenway and Old Rail Trail from Mullingar to Athlone.

The rationale supporting this submission is as follows:

1. Lands are located at the intersection of the two cycle routes.
2. Lands are serviced and has the potential for refreshments and a temporary rest area.

**23.19.4 Chief Executive’s Response**

The intention of the submissions is acknowledged.

The subject lands identified within submission WM-C1-13, WM-C1-30 and WM-C1-128 are situated located within or adjacent to the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020 designated development boundary. Mullingar is designated as a Key Town in the Draft Plan, defined as ‘large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers’. It is a stated objective to support the continued growth and sustainable development of Mullingar to act as a growth driver in the region and in this regard it is a policy of the Plan as set out at CPO 2.5, to “Prepare a Local Area Plan (LAP) for Mullingar to align with the RSES and this Core Strategy”, following the adoption of the Development Plan.

Accordingly, matters relating to zonings associated with Mullingar can be considered as part of the LAP review process.

**23.19.5 Chief Executive’s Recommendations**

Having consideration to the above it is recommended that the Draft Development Plan not be amended in this instance.
24. Conclusion

24.1 Procedure following preparation of the Chief Executive’s Report

In accordance with section 12(5)(b) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 as amended, the Members must complete their consideration of the Chief Executive’s Report and the Draft Development Plan within 12 weeks of receiving the Chief Executive’s Report, i.e. 13th December 2020.

Following their consideration of the Draft Plan and the Managers Report, the Members can resolve to either make or amend the Plan, in accordance with this report. If it is resolved by the Members, to alter the Draft Plan and where the proposed amendment(s) would be a material alteration, a further period of public consultation is required. In addition, where the proposed amendment(s) is (are) material, the Planning Authority must also determine whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment or an Appropriate Assessment, or both, are required to be carried out.
### Appendix A: List of Prescribed bodies informed of the Draft Plan

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### Appendix B List of written submission by Name & Reference No:

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