

VARIATION NO.3 - MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027 SEA SCREENING REPORT



Strategic Assessment **Built Environment**

Client:

Meath County Council

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1 Introduction

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 22 September 2021 and came into effect on the 03 November 2021 (hereafter the Meath CDP). The CDP is divided into four volumes. Volume 1 of the CDP sets out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for the development of the County over the plan period 2021-2027. Volume 2 of the CDP includes written statements and accompanying maps for all settlements within the county and sets out development and land use zoning objectives for each area. Volume 3 of the CDP includes a book of maps for the county, which includes the UNESCO heritage site of Brú na Bóinne. Volume 4 includes Environmental Assessments.

In accordance with Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, Meath County Council is proposing Variation No.3 of the County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Brady Shipman Martin (BSM) was appointed by Meath County Council to carry out screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in respect of the proposed *Variation No.3 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027* (hereafter the ‘Variation No.3’).

This report documents the screening exercise for SEA in respect of Variation No.3 for the purposes of consultation, in accordance with Article 13K of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended and S.I. 436 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011.

This SEA Screening should be read in conjunction with Variation No.3 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (MCC, 2024) and the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report (BSM, 2024).

2 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

2.1 Introduction

Directive 2001/42/EC¹ of the European Parliament and of the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the 'SEA Directive') requires EU Member States to assess the 'likely significant environmental effects' of plans and programmes prior to their adoption. This provides for the assessment of strategic environmental considerations at an early stage in the decision-making process.

Article 1 of the SEA Directive states that:

"The objective of this directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment."

The SEA Directive was transposed into Irish law through:

- Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011); and
- S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011, relates to SEA as it applies to plans or programmes prepared for "agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and town and country planning or land use"².

S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011, relates to SEA as it applies to plans or programmes where the context requires, "a development plan, a variation of a development plan, a local area plan (or an amendment thereto), regional planning guidelines or a planning scheme"³.

As the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 is a statutory plan, the Variation No. 3 was screened for the requirement for SEA under the requirements of S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011.

This screening report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (as amended). Article 13(K)(1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended states that:

"Where a planning authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan under section 13 of the Act, it shall, before giving notice under section 13(2) of the Act, consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A."

2.2 Methodology

This report takes the following guidance documents into account:

¹ SEA Directive: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

² See Section 9(1)(a)

³ Section 5(c)

- Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of certain plans and programmes on the environment.
- S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.
- Guidance on Implementation of Directive 2001/42/EC, European Commission, 2004, at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf
- SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans - EPA Recommendations and Resources. EPA, Updated January 2025.
- SEA Pack. EPA, Updated January 2023.
- SEA Spatial Information Sources Inventory. EPA, Updated April 2024.
- SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities. EPA, 2015.
- Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening. EPA, December 2021.
- Good Practice Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Landscape. EPA, December 2023.
- Good Practice Guidance on Cumulative Effects Assessment in Strategic Environmental Assessment. EPA, January 2020.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment, Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, March 2022.
- Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines. Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, March 2023.
- EPA Ireland's State of Environment Report 2024 at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/state-of-environment-report-/>
- EPA Ireland's Environment – An Integrated Assessment 2020 at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/irelands-environment/state-of-environment-report-/#>
- Climate Action Plan 2024. Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, 2024.
- SEA and Climate Change, Integrating Climatic Factors into the Strategic Environmental Assessment Process in Ireland, A Guidance Note. EPA, 2019.
- Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment – Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual. EPA 2013.

Information was collated from the organisations and websites listed below:

- Data on European sites and rare and protected plant and animal species contained in the following databases:
 - The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (www.NPWS.ie);
 - The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NDBC) (www.biodiversityireland.ie);
 - BirdWatch Ireland (www.birdwatchireland.ie);
 - Bat Conservation Ireland (www.batconservationireland.org).
- Information on land-use zoning from the online mapping of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (<http://www.myplan.ie/en/index.html>);
- Recent and historical OSi mapping and aerial photography, including www.geohive.ie;
- Information on local watercourses from www.catchments.ie;

- Information on water quality in the area (www.epa.ie);
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area (www.gsi.ie);
- 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2024);
- Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied, and the accompanying reports.

The report takes full account of the details of the Variation No.3 and a detailed examination of all relevant elements was undertaken.

2.3 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the ‘Habitats Directive’) require Appropriate Assessment (AA) to be carried out where a plan or project is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. Natura 2000 sites include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC), designated for the conservation of Annex I habitats and Annex II species of the Habitats Directive; and
- Special Protection Areas (SPA), designated for the protection of Annex I birds of Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the ‘Birds Directive’) and other regularly occurring migratory birds and their habitats.

Stage 1 in the AA process is to establish whether AA is required for the particular plan or project. This stage is referred to as ‘screening for the requirement for AA’, and its purpose is to determine:

- Whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site; and
- Whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

As set out in Department Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08⁴ (15 February 2008), Screening for AA is of relevance to SEA in that *“where following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting the precautionary approach:*

- An AA of the plan must be carried out, and
- In any case where SEA would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out.”

Hence, if the Draft Plan requires AA, it shall also require SEA.

The *Draft Variation No.3* was screened for the requirement for AA. The AA Screening Report, (BSM, 2024: refer to standalone report under separate cover) has concluded that:

“Following review of the Variation No.3 against the Conservation Objectives of the relevant European sites, it is concluded that there is no possibility that the implementation of the Variation No.3 could result in any likely significant effects on European sites on its own or in combination with other plans and programmes. This conclusion was reached without considering or taking into account mitigation measures or measures intended to avoid or reduce any impact on European sites.

In view of best scientific knowledge therefore, this report concludes that the Variation No.3 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, individually or in combination with another plan or project, is not likely to have a significant effect on European sites under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in light of their conservation objectives. The Variation does not require an Appropriate Assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Report.”

⁴ NPWS SEA letter: <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

3 Description of the Proposed Variation No.3 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

3.1 Overview

The purpose of Variation No.3 is to give effect to Amendments to the three chapters (Chapter 3, 7 & 11) of Vol. 1 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 where modifications are warranted to give effect to the following amendments:

- **Proposed Amendment No. 1: Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines 2024** – The proposed amendment will take account of the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in January 2024 and issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Section 28 provides that planning authorities shall have regard to Ministerial Guidelines and shall apply any specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) of the Guidelines, within the meaning of Section 28 (1C) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in the performance of their functions.
- **Proposed Amendment No. 2: Age Friendly Housing** - The proposed amendment takes into consideration the actions outlined in the following policy statements:
 - “Housing Options for Our Ageing Population” prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health (2019);
 - “Section 6.4 Age Friendly Communities” of the National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040); and
 - Housing Policy Objective 6: Increase and improve housing options for Older People within policy “Housing for All, A new Housing Plan for Ireland” prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2021).
- **Proposed Amendment No. 3: Percentage range for the quantum of residential uses permitted on Town Centre / Mixed Use zoning** - The *Town Centre First Policy* (Department of Rural and Community Development; Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022 (as updated)) aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. Leading on from this, we need to consider how we can encourage increased residential occupancy into our towns and villages. More people living in town centres means more support for local businesses. It provides a safer environment with passive policing. In this regard, it is considered that greater flexibility should be built into the quantum of residential uses permitted on both town centre and mixed-use zoned lands. In this way, each application can be assessed on a case-by-case basis with greater flexibility in relation to the quantum of residential uses relevant to the site’s location and context.

The above amendments are further detailed in the section below.

3.2 Schedule of the Proposed Variation No.3

The detail of the proposed variation is set out in the following with deleted text shown in ~~strikethrough~~ and new text shown in **bold blue** text.

3.2.1 Proposed Amendment No. 1: Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines 2024

Variation No.3 proposes to amend the following policies and objectives in line with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in January 2024:

SH POL 8: To support the creation of attractive residential developments with a range of housing options and appropriate provision of functional public and private open space that is consistent with the standards and principles set out in the **Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024)**, ~~Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and the associated Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide, DEHLG (2009)~~ and any subsequent Guidelines **or Urban Design Manuals**.

SH POL 9: To promote higher residential densities in appropriate locations and in particular close to town centres and along public transport corridors, in accordance with the **Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024)**, ~~Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG (2009)~~.

SH OBJ 21: To require that, where relevant, all new residential developments shall be in accordance with SPPR 1 to SPPR 4 of the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities, December 2018 as well as SPPR 1 to SPPR 9 of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities, ~~2023 March 2018~~. All new residential development should comply with the densities outlined in Chapter 11 of this plan.

DM POL 4: To require that all proposals for residential development demonstrate compliance with the ~~Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Cities, Towns & Villages (2009)~~ **Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024 and the associated Design Manual**, ~~and the Urban Design Manual A Best Practice Guide, 2009~~ or any updates thereof.

DM OBJ 13: A detailed Design Statement shall accompany all planning applications for residential development on sites in excess of 0.2 hectares or for more than 10 residential units.

The Design Statement shall:

- Provide a Site Analysis
- Outline the design concept;
- Clearly demonstrate how the **criteria set down in the Urban Design Manual and Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024 have been taken into account**; ~~12 Urban Design Criteria have been taken into account when designing schemes in urban area (as per the 'Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide (2009))~~;
- **Include any supplementary information as required in Appendix C of the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines (DHLGH, 2024);**
- Set out how the development meets the relevant Development Plan Objectives, Local Area Plan, Masterplan, Public Realm Strategy, etc;
- Provide site photographs;
- Provide an open space/landscape strategy which identifies any areas of ecological interest and sets out proposals for same; and
- Set out how energy efficiency measures have been incorporated into the project design process (Refer to DM POL 2).

- Provide a universal design statement for all new residential development of ten dwellings/ apartments or more demonstrating the universal design principles applied through the proposed development and how the proposed development complies with the 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design', 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. In residential schemes of 100 units or more, this statement shall include a community safety audit to ensure a high level of safety and security is maintained including, overlooking, passive surveillance, street lighting and clear accessible routes.

DM OBJ 14: The following densities shall be encouraged when considering planning applications for residential development:

- Residential Development Beside Rail Stations: 50 uph or above
- Regional Growth Centres/Key Towns: (Navan/Drogheda) 35-45 uph
- Self Sustaining Growth Towns: (Dunboyne, Ashbourne, Trim, Kells): greater than 35 uph
- Self Sustaining Towns: 25 uph - 35 uph
- Smaller Towns and Villages: 25 uph - 35 uph
- Outer locations: 15 uph - 25 uph

Regional Growth Centres and Metropolitan towns

Centre and Urban Neighbourhoods	50-150 uph
Suburban/Urban Extension	35-50 uph Up to 100 uph open for consideration at accessible ⁵ suburban/urban extension locations

Key Towns and Large Towns (5000+ population)

Centre and Urban Neighbourhoods	40-100 uph
Suburban/Urban Extension	30-50 uph Up to 80 uph open for consideration at accessible suburban/urban extension

Small and Medium Sized Towns (1,500-5,000 population)

Town Centre	Responds to existing scale, form and character of existing development and to the capacity of services and infrastructure
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⁵ Lands within 1,000 metres (1km) walking distance of an existing or planned high capacity public transport node or interchange, namely an interchange or node that includes DART, high frequency Commuter Rail, light rail or MetroLink services or locations within 500 metres walking distance (i.e. up to 5-6 minute walk) of existing or planned high frequency (i.e. 10 minute peak hour frequency) urban bus services.

Town Edge	25-40 uph
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Rural Towns and Villages (<1,500 population)

Rural Town and Village	Responds to the existing scale, form and character of existing development and to the capacity of services and infrastructure
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Densities at or above the mid-density range is encouraged at the most central and accessible locations in each area, densities closer to the mid-range at intermediate locations and densities below the mid-density range at peripheral locations. The definition of accessible, intermediate and peripheral is set down in the **Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024**.

DM OBJ 18: A minimum of ~~22~~¹⁶ metres separation between directly opposing rear **or side** windows at ~~first~~^{first} floor level **above ground floor level** in the case of detached, semi- detached, terraced units shall generally be observed.

DM OBJ 19: A minimum of ~~22~~¹⁶ metres separation distance between opposing **rear or side** windows will apply in the case of apartments/duplex units up to three storeys in height.

DM OBJ 25: To require development with increased building height at the following locations;

- Dunboyne Central rail station
- Pace Rail Station
- Maynooth Environs
- Drogheda Environs
- Navan
- **Proposed rail station Navan**

DM OBJ 26: Public open space shall be provided for residential development at a minimum rate of 15% of total site area. In all cases lands zoned F1 Open Space, G1 Community Infrastructure and H1 High Amenity cannot be included as part of the 15%. Each residential development proposal shall be accompanied by a statement setting out how the scheme complies with this requirement.

A reduction in public open space provision (not less than a minimum of 10% of net site area) may be considered in exceptional circumstances where it has been clearly demonstrated, through the submission of a Social Infrastructure Assessment, that existing and proposed public open space provision in the area meets the needs of the potential population increase associated with the development. In other cases, the planning authority may consider that the needs of the population would be better served by the provision of a new park in the area or the upgrade or enhancement of an existing public open space or amenity. In such circumstances, the planning authority may seek a financial contribution within the terms of Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in lieu of provision of public open space within an application site.

DM POL 7: Residential development shall provide private open space ~~Apartment schemes shall~~ in accordance with the requirements set out in Table 11.1. Each residential development proposal shall be accompanied by a statement setting out how the scheme complies with the requirements set out in Table 11.1.

House Type	Minimum Area of Private Open Space to be provided
One/two bedroom	55sq.m.

Three Bedroom	60sq.m.
Four bedrooms or more	75sq.m

House	Minimum Private Open Space	Max Semi-Private (in lieu)
1 bed house	20 sq.m	10 sq.m
2 bed house	30 sq.m	15 sq.m
3 bed house	40 sq.m	20 sq.m
4 bed + house	50 sq.m	25 sq.m

Table 11.1 Minimum Private Open Space and Semi-Private Standards for Houses

A further reduction below the minimum standard of private open space may be considered acceptable, in exceptional circumstances, where an equivalent amount of high quality semi-private open space is provided in lieu of the private open space, subject to at least 50% of the area being provided as private open space (see table 11.1 above).

DM POL 14: All planning applications for apartments are required to demonstrate compliance with, 'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018) (2023), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage', and any updates thereof. While these Guidelines set out minimum design standards, the Council strongly encourage the provision of apartments above these standards, in the interest of creating attractive living environments and sustainable communities.

DM OBJ 89: Car parking shall be provided in accordance with Table 11.2 and associated guidance notes.

Table 11.2 Car Parking

Land Use – Residential	Car Spaces
Dwellings/Apartments	2 per conventional dwelling Accessible locations ⁶ : Maximum of 1.5 spaces per dwelling/unit Intermediate and peripheral locations: Maximum should be 2 per dwelling/unit
Flats/Apartments (Refer to the Design Standards for New Apartments in relation to reduced car parking requirements for development adjacent to existing and future rail stations and minimum requirements in peripheral/or less accessible urban locations)	2 per unit In all cases, 1 visitor space per 4 apartments

⁶ Accessible, intermediate and peripheral locations are defined in the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2024.

DM OBJ 96: To require the provision of cycle parking facilities in accordance with the Design Standards for New Apartments **2023 (March 2018)**, **the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines 2024** and Table 11.4 Cycle Parking Standards.

Table 11.4 Cycle Parking Standards

Type of Development	Cycle Parking Standard
Apartments	<p>Minimum of 1 private secure bicycle space per bedroom space (note – design should not require bicycle access via living area), minimum 2 spaces</p> <p>1 visitor bicycle space per two housing units</p> <p>Please refer to SPPR 4 of the 'Sustainable Residential and Compact Settlements Guidelines' (2024) for further requirements.</p>

3.2.2 Proposed Amendment No. 2: Age Friendly Housing

Variation No. 3 proposes to amend the following policies and objectives in line with the age friendly guidelines detailed in Section 3.1:

SH OBJ 22: **The Planning Authority will require the provision of between 15-30% of dwellings and apartments in new residential developments of ten units or more to be Age Friendly Adaptable Lifetime Homes, suitable to accommodate or adaptable to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and older people in accordance with the requirements of the 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement' (2019), published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health and 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design', 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. Planning applications will be required to demonstrate compliance with this objective, and to show an accessible route to the residential units from the boundary of the property. Proximity and access to local services must also be considered relative to the units. A universal design statement shall be provided as part of all new planning applications to demonstrate this requirement.**

~~To seek that all new residential developments on zoned lands in excess of 20 residential units provide for a minimum of 5% universally designed units in accordance with the requirements of the 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority).~~

SH OBJ 24: **The Planning Authority will require the provision of 30% of social housing in new residential developments of ten units or more to be Age Friendly Adaptable Lifetime Homes, suitable to accommodate or adaptable to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and older people in accordance with the requirements of the 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement' (2019), published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health and 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design', 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. Planning**

applications will be required to demonstrate compliance with this objective, and to show an accessible route to the residential units from the boundary of the property. Proximity and access to local services must also be considered relative to the units. A universal design statement shall be provided as part of all new planning applications to demonstrate this requirement.

DM OBJ 67: Planning applications for the change of use of a residential dwelling or other building to nursing home, residential care home, or for the construction of new residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages or sheltered accommodation/step down housing, shall be assessed for compliance with the following criteria:

- It is essential that adequate and suitable open space and other facilities are provided for residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation. It is recognised that reduced quantitative standards may be appropriate in some cases due to the level of care that is provided or by virtue of the location of the facility. Planning applications for such development should include detailed open space and landscaping plans that take account of the location of the facility, the availability/ suitability of existing open space and the needs of the residents of the facility.

3.2.3 Proposed Amendment No. 3: Percentage range for the quantum of residential uses permitted on Town Centre / Mixed Use zoning

Variation No. 3 proposes to amend the following Land Use Zoning Objectives in line with *The Town Centre First Policy* (Department of Rural and Community Development; Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022 (as updated)):

B1 Commercial/Town or Village Centre

Objective: To protect, provide for and/or improve town and village centre facilities and uses

Guidance

The primary land use in B1 zones is employment generating, service and retail provision. In order to achieve balanced development and create vibrant urban communities, residential use can also be considered on these lands. In order to ensure the delivery of commercial uses commensurate with the status of the settlement **while also encouraging increased residential occupancy within our towns, the** percentage of residential development in B1 zones shall generally **fall within the range of** ~~not exceed~~ 30%-50% of the quantum of a development site in any development proposal in Key Towns, Self-sustaining Growth Towns, Self-sustaining Towns. Exceptions may be facilitated on a case by case basis **where a clear evidence base has been demonstrated.**

C1 Mixed Use

Objective: To provide for and facilitate mixed residential and employment generating uses

Guidance

Lands identified for mixed use development are only appropriate in higher tier settlements. The objective on these lands is to provide opportunities for high-density mixed-use employment generating activities that also accommodate appropriate levels of residential development thereby facilitating the creation of functional 'live work' communities. These areas are generally located in proximity to high frequency public transport corridors. In order to achieve balanced development, the percentage of residential development in C1 zones shall generally **fall within the range of** ~~not exceed~~ 50%-70% of the quantum of a development site. **Exceptions may be facilitated on a case by case basis where a clear evidence base has been demonstrated.**

3.3 Public Consultation

The Draft Variation No.3 and its supporting documents— the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report and the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report were subject to public consultation for a period of four weeks, between 18 October 2024 to 18 November 2024. The Chief Executive prepared a report on submissions and observations made in relation to the Draft Variation No. 3.

4 Screening for Requirement for SEA

The screening for the requirement for SEA has been conducted in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011.

The criteria are set out under two principal headings:

- Characteristics of the Plan; and
- Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected.

The corresponding sub-criteria are addressed in **Tables 4.1** and **4.2**, below, respectively.

Table 4.1: Characteristics of the Plan, having regard, in particular, to:

The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions, or by allocating resources

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (adopted on 22 September 2021 and came into effect on the 03 November 2021) sets a framework for projects and other activities within County Meath and was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as part of the plan making and adoption process.

The proposed Variation No. 3 to the County Development Plan proposes amendments across 3 broad areas:

- Proposed Amendment No. 1: The proposed amendment will take account of the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities* published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in January 2024 and issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
- Proposed Amendment No. 2: The proposed amendment takes into consideration the actions outlined in the following policy statements:
 - “Housing Options for Our Ageing Population” prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health (2019);
 - “Section 6.4 Age Friendly Communities” of the National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040); and
 - Housing Policy Objective 6: Increase and improve housing options for Older People within policy “Housing for All, A new Housing Plan for Ireland” prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2021).
- Proposed Amendment No. 3: Percentage range for the quantum of residential uses permitted on Town Centre / Mixed Use zoning - The *Town Centre First Policy* (Department of Rural and Community Development; Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022 (as updated)) aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. In this regard, it is considered that greater flexibility should be built into the quantum of residential uses permitted on both town centre and mixed-use zoned lands. In this way, each application can be assessed on a case-by-case basis with greater flexibility in relation to the quantum of residential uses relevant to the site’s location and context.

The above amendments proposed under Variation No.3 proposes to amend the following policies and objectives (as described in Section 3.2) – SH POL 8, SH POL 9, SH OBJ 21, DM POL 4, DM OBJ 13, DM OBJ 14, DM OBJ 18, DM OBJ 19, DM OBJ 25, DM POL 7, DM POL 14, DM OBJ 67, DM OBJ 89, DM OBJ 96, SH OBJ 22, Land Use Zoning Objectives B1 and C1. The Variation No.3 also includes a new Objective SH OBJ 24 as follows:

SH OBJ 24: The Planning Authority will require the provision of 30% of social housing in new residential developments of ten units or more to be Age Friendly Adaptable Lifetime Homes, suitable to accommodate or adaptable to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and older people in accordance with the requirements of the 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement' (2019), published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health and 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design', 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. Planning applications will be required to demonstrate compliance with this objective, and to show an accessible route to the residential units from the boundary of the property. Proximity and access to local services must also be considered relative to the units. A universal design statement shall be provided as part of all new planning applications to demonstrate this requirement.

It is proposed to amend the development plan by deleting now out of date references pertaining to Sustainable Residential Development and updating references to *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines 2024* where required. These new development standards for housing will allow for greater flexibility and innovation and support the delivery of a greater range of housing options. The Variation also takes into account the actions outlined for age-friendly policy statements and to amend zoning objectives to provide greater flexibility for the quantum of residential uses permitted on both town centre and mixed-use zoned lands.

These amendments have no effect on the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities. No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed and there is no change in the manner in which the Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions, or by allocating resources.

There is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy

Under the Spatial Planning Hierarchy in Ireland, the Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 sits at the Local Government level and is below the Regional, National and International levels. The CDP influences plans at a lower level of plan hierarchy, including Local Area Plans and other area-specific plans such as Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Local Heritage Plan, Local Climate Action etc. The CDP was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).

Variation No.3 corrects and reflects revised and new circumstances that have emerged since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and will not result in significant effect on the receiving environment.

No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed and there is no change in the manner in which the Plan influences on other plans, including those in a hierarchy.

The proposed amendments have no influence on other plans, including those in a hierarchy and there is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 provides a positive vision for Meath which will enable the county to continue to make a significant contribution to national economic recovery by promoting sustainable development and facilitating stable economic growth thus delivering long term benefits for the County.

The content of the Development Plan has been informed by SEA, AA and SFRA undertaken as parallel processes in tandem with each stage of the Development Plan, thereby ensuring full integration and consideration of environmental issues.

Variation No. 3 is compatible and complementary with the strategies, policies and objectives of the Development Plan relating to sustainable residential developments, compact settlement, age-friendly development and the town centre first policy. These amendments are also compliant with the National Policy Objective contained within the National Planning Framework.

Variation No.3 corrects and reflects revised and new circumstances that have emerged since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and will not result in significant effect on the receiving environment. No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed the associated amendments will have the positive effect of enhancing the delivery of residential development and age-friendly developments on appropriately zoned and serviced lands.

The modifications warranted to give effect to the adoption of the proposed amendments, as described in Section 3, do not adversely alter the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.

There is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme

The environmental problems relevant to the Meath CDP 2021-2027 are detailed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment prepared for the plan.

The amendments proposed under Variation No. 3 do not give rise to environmental problems for the Plan area. Variation No.3 corrects and reflects revised and new circumstances that have emerged since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and will not result in significant effect on the receiving environment. No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed the associated amendments will have the positive effect of enhancing the delivery of residential development and age-friendly developments on appropriately zoned and serviced lands.

There is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)

The Development Plan includes a wide range of policies and objectives in relation to implementation of European Union legislation on the environment. The proposed amendments do not include changes to policies and objectives in relation to the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment.

The proposed amendments do not affect the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection) and there is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Table 4.2: Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

<i>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</i>
<p>The proposed Variation No. 3 to the County Development Plan proposes amendments across 3 broad areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed Amendment No. 1: The proposed amendment will take account of the <i>Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in January 2024 and issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. ▪ Proposed Amendment No. 2: The proposed amendment takes into consideration the actions outlined in the following policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ “Housing Options for Our Ageing Population” prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health (2019); □ “Section 6.4 Age Friendly Communities” of the National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040); and □ Housing Policy Objective 6: Increase and improve housing options for Older People within policy “Housing for All, A new Housing Plan for Ireland” prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2021). ▪ Proposed Amendment No. 3: Percentage range for the quantum of residential uses permitted on Town Centre / Mixed Use zoning - The <i>Town Centre First Policy</i> (Department of Rural and Community Development; Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022 (as updated)) aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. In this regard, it is considered that greater flexibility should be built into the quantum of residential uses permitted on both town centre and mixed-use zoned lands. In this way, each application can be assessed on a case-by-case basis with greater flexibility in relation to the quantum of residential uses relevant to the site’s location and context. <p>The above amendments proposed under Variation No.3 proposes to amend the following policies and objectives (as described in Section 3.2) – SH POL 8, SH POL 9, SH OBJ 21, DM POL 4, DM OBJ 13, DM OBJ 14, DM OBJ 18, DM OBJ 19, DM OBJ 25, DM POL 7, DM POL 14, DM OBJ 67, DM OBJ 89, DM OBJ 96, SH OBJ 22, Land Use Zoning objective B1 and C1. The Variation No.3 also includes a new Objective SH OBJ 24 as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>SH OBJ 24: The Planning Authority will require the provision of 30% of social housing in new residential developments of ten units or more to be Age Friendly Adaptable Lifetime Homes, suitable to accommodate or adaptable to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and older people in accordance with the requirements of the ‘Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement’ (2019), published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health and ‘Building for Everyone: A Universal Design’, ‘Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland’ developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. Planning applications will be required to demonstrate compliance with this objective, and to show an accessible route to the residential units from the boundary of the property. Proximity and access to local services must also be considered relative to the units. A universal design statement shall be provided as part of all new planning applications to demonstrate this requirement.</i></p>

No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed and the proposed amendments are limited in nature and will not result in significant effects on the environment. Therefore, the proposed Variation does not alter or change in any way findings of the SEA for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Therefore, considerations of probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects arising from Variation No.3 do not arise and there is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The cumulative nature of the effects

The content of the Development Plan has been informed by SEA, AA and SFRA undertaken as parallel processes in tandem with each stage of the Development Plan, thereby ensuring full integration and consideration of environmental issues. Variation No. 3 is compatible and complementary with the strategies, policies and objectives of the Development Plan relating to compact growth, population distribution, settlement strategy, urban regeneration, mixed-use development and with environmental protection.

The proposed Variation No. 3 to the County Development Plan proposes amendments across 3 broad areas:

- Proposed Amendment No. 1: The proposed amendment will take account of the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities* published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in January 2024 and issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
- Proposed Amendment No. 2: The proposed amendment takes into consideration the actions outlined in the following policy statements:
 - “Housing Options for Our Ageing Population” prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health (2019);
 - “Section 6.4 Age Friendly Communities” of the National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040); and
 - Housing Policy Objective 6: Increase and improve housing options for Older People within policy “Housing for All, A new Housing Plan for Ireland” prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2021).
- Proposed Amendment No. 3: Percentage range for the quantum of residential uses permitted on Town Centre / Mixed Use zoning - The *Town Centre First Policy* (Department of Rural and Community Development; Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022 (as updated)) aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. In this regard, it is considered that greater flexibility should be built into the quantum of residential uses permitted on both town centre and mixed-use zoned lands. In this way, each application can be assessed on a case-by-case basis with greater flexibility in relation to the quantum of residential uses relevant to the site’s location and context.

The above amendments proposed under Variation No.3 proposes to amend the following policies and objectives (as described in Section 3.2) – SH POL 8, SH POL 9, SH OBJ 21, DM POL 4, DM OBJ 13, DM OBJ 14, DM OBJ 18, DM OBJ 19, DM OBJ 25, DM POL 7, DM POL 14, DM OBJ 67, DM OBJ 89, DM OBJ 96, SH OBJ 22, Land Use Zoning objective B1 and C1. The Variation No.3 also includes a new Objective SH OBJ 24 as follows:

SH OBJ 24: The Planning Authority will require the provision of 30% of social housing in new residential developments of ten units or more to be Age Friendly Adaptable Lifetime Homes, suitable to accommodate or adaptable to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and older people in accordance with the requirements of the 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement' (2019), published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health and 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design', 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. Planning applications will be required to demonstrate compliance with this objective, and to show an accessible route to the residential units from the boundary of the property. Proximity and access to local services must also be considered relative to the units. A universal design statement shall be provided as part of all new planning applications to demonstrate this requirement.

No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed and the proposed amendments are limited in nature and will not result in significant effects on the environment.

No cumulative effects on the environment arise from Variation No.3 and there is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The trans-boundary nature of the effects

The Variation No.3 will have no national, regional or inter-county transboundary effects, over and above the effects of the strategy, policies and objectives of the Development Plan.

The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)

The Variation No. 3 would not give rise to risks to human health or the environment due to accidents owing to the limited scale, nature and character of the proposed amendments. The Variation is consistent with the existing and current land use and no new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed.

The proposed amendments do not give rise to effects for human health or the environment and there is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, as adopted underwent Strategic Environmental Assessment for the entire of the Meath County Council's area. The proposed Variation No. 3 to the County Development Plan proposes amendments across 3 broad areas:

- Proposed Amendment No. 1: The proposed amendment will take account of the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities* published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in January 2024 and issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
- Proposed Amendment No. 2: The proposed amendment takes into consideration the actions outlined in the following policy statements:
 - "Housing Options for Our Ageing Population" prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health (2019);

- “Section 6.4 Age Friendly Communities” of the National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040); and
- Housing Policy Objective 6: Increase and improve housing options for Older People within policy “Housing for All, A new Housing Plan for Ireland” prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2021).
- Proposed Amendment No. 3: Percentage range for the quantum of residential uses permitted on Town Centre / Mixed Use zoning - The *Town Centre First Policy* (Department of Rural and Community Development; Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022 (as updated)) aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. In this regard, it is considered that greater flexibility should be built into the quantum of residential uses permitted on both town centre and mixed-use zoned lands. In this way, each application can be assessed on a case-by-case basis with greater flexibility in relation to the quantum of residential uses relevant to the site’s location and context.

The above amendments proposed under Variation No.3 proposes to amend the following policies and objectives (as described in Section 3.2) – SH POL 8, SH POL 9, SH OBJ 21, DM POL 4, DM OBJ 13, DM OBJ 14, DM OBJ 18, DM OBJ 19, DM OBJ 25, DM POL 7, DM POL 14, DM OBJ 67, DM OBJ 89, DM OBJ 96, SH OBJ 22, Land Use Zoning objective B1 and C1. The Variation No.3 also includes a new Objective SH OBJ 24 as follows:

SH OBJ 24: The Planning Authority will require the provision of 30% of social housing in new residential developments of ten units or more to be Age Friendly Adaptable Lifetime Homes, suitable to accommodate or adaptable to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and older people in accordance with the requirements of the ‘Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement’ (2019), published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health and ‘Building for Everyone: A Universal Design’, ‘Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland’ developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. Planning applications will be required to demonstrate compliance with this objective, and to show an accessible route to the residential units from the boundary of the property. Proximity and access to local services must also be considered relative to the units. A universal design statement shall be provided as part of all new planning applications to demonstrate this requirement.

No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed.

The proposed amendments do not give rise to significant effects and the issue of the magnitude or spatial extent of effects does not arise. There is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

The amendments proposed under Variation No. 3 do not give rise to environmental problems for the Plan area. Variation No.3 corrects and reflects revised and new circumstances that have emerged since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and will not result in significant effect on the receiving environment. No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed the associated

amendments will have the positive effect of enhancing the delivery of residential development and age-friendly developments on appropriately zoned and serviced lands.

No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed.

The Variation will not result in impacts on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.

(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values

The amendments proposed under Variation No. 3 do not give rise to environmental problems for the Plan area. Variation No.3 corrects and reflects revised and new circumstances that have emerged since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and will not result in significant effect on the receiving environment. No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed the associated amendments will have the positive effect of enhancing the delivery of residential development and age-friendly developments on appropriately zoned and serviced lands.

No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed.

The Variation will not result in exceedance of environmental quality standards or limit values.

(c) Intensive land-use

The amendments proposed under Variation No. 3 do not give rise to environmental problems for the Plan area. Variation No.3 corrects and reflects revised and new circumstances that have emerged since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and will not result in significant effect on the receiving environment. No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed the associated amendments will have the positive effect of enhancing the delivery of residential development and age-friendly developments on appropriately zoned and serviced lands.

No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed.

The Variation will not result in intensification of land use.

The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status

The amendments proposed under Variation No. 3 do not give rise to environmental problems for the Plan area. Variation No.3 corrects and reflects revised and new circumstances that have emerged since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and will not result in significant effect on the receiving environment. No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed the associated amendments will have the positive effect of enhancing the delivery of residential development and age-friendly developments on appropriately zoned and serviced lands.

No new land use zonings or changes to land use zonings are proposed.

Variation No. 3 will not result in any significant effect on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status and there is no change to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and associated environmental report and statement prepared for the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

5 Public Consultation – Draft Variation No.3 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Draft Variation No. 3 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 went on public display from 18 October (Friday) until 18 November (Monday) 2024 at the offices of Meath County Council, Buvinda House, Dublin Road, Navan, Co. Meath, during normal opening hours and the following Municipal District Offices during normal opening hours - Ashbourne Municipal District, 1-2 Killegland Square Upper, Ashbourne, Kells Municipal District, Town Hall, Headfort Place, Kells, Laytown/Bettystown Municipal District, Main Street, Duleek, Ratoath Municipal District, Drumree Road, Dunshaughlin and Trim Municipal District, Mornington House, Summerhill Road, Trim.

In accordance with the requirements of S.I. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011, and Article 13K(3) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, Meath County Council notified the environmental authorities, specified in Article 13A(4) of the 2001 Regulations that the planning authority proposes to make a variation of the development plan under section 13 of the Act. Submission was received from the Environmental Protection Agency providing information on guidance and legislation in relation to SEA. This information has been taken into account and has informed the preparation of this SEA Screening report.

A total of 16no. submissions were received during the Proposed Draft Variation No.3 consultation period. The submissions received and outcome of the consultation process has been summarised in the Chief Executive's (CE) Report prepared by Meath County Council. The CE report sets out the Chief Executive's response to the issues raised in the submissions, and makes recommendations on the proposed amendments, as appropriate.

The alterations were screened for the requirement for Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment and no likely significant environmental effects were identified. Refer to **Table 5.1** below.

In the following table, text deleted from the Variation No. 3 is shown ***red strikethrough***, while new text is shown ***green italic***. New text as included in the Draft Variation which remains unaltered is in ***blue text***.

Table 5.1 Screening for Alterations for AA and SEA

Section of the Variation document	Revised Text	Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA)
Proposed Amendment No. 1: Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines 2024	DM OBJ 14: The following <i>net</i> densities shall be encouraged when considering planning applications for residential development:	Having regard to the criteria set in Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011, no likely significant environmental effects arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3 and the requirement for SEA is screened out.	No likely significant environmental effects on European sites arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3. The requirement for Stage 2 AA is screened out.
Proposed Amendment No. 2: Age Friendly Housing	SH OBJ 22: The Planning Authority will require the provision of between 15-30% of dwellings and apartments in new residential developments of ten units or more to be Age Friendly <i>Adaptable</i> Lifetime <i>Adaptable</i> Homes, suitable to accommodate or adaptable to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and older people in accordance with the requirements of the 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement' (2019), published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health and 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design', 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. Planning applications will be required to demonstrate	Having regard to the criteria set in Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011, no likely significant environmental effects arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3 and the requirement for SEA is screened out.	No likely significant environmental effects on European sites arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3. The requirement for Stage 2 AA is screened out.

Section of the Variation document	Revised Text	Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA)
	<p>compliance with this objective, and to show an accessible route to the residential units from the boundary of the property. Proximity and access to local services must also be considered relative to the units. A universal design statement shall be provided as part of all new planning applications to demonstrate this requirement.</p>		
Proposed Amendment No. 2: Age Friendly Housing	<p>SH OBJ 24: The Planning Authority will require the provision of 30% of social housing in new residential developments of ten units or more to be Age Friendly <i>Adaptable</i> Lifetime <i>Adaptable</i> Homes, suitable to accommodate or adaptable to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and older people in accordance with the requirements of the 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement' (2019), published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health and 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design', 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (National Disability Authority) and section 11.5.29 of this Plan. Planning applications will be required to demonstrate compliance with this objective, and to show an accessible route to the residential units from the boundary of the</p>	<p>Having regard to the criteria set in Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011, no likely significant environmental effects arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3 and the requirement for SEA is screened out.</p>	<p>No likely significant environmental effects on European sites arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3.</p> <p>The requirement for Stage 2 AA is screened out.</p>

Section of the Variation document	Revised Text	Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA)
	<p>property. Proximity and access to local services must also be considered relative to the units. A universal design statement shall be provided as part of all new planning applications to demonstrate this requirement.</p>		
Proposed Amendment No. 3: Percentage range for the quantum of residential uses permitted on Town Centre / Mixed Use zoning	<p>Objective: To protect, provide for and/or improve town and village centre facilities and uses</p> <p>Guidance</p> <p>The primary land use in B1 zones is employment generating, service and retail provision. In order to achieve balanced development and create vibrant urban communities, residential use can also be considered on these lands. In order to ensure the delivery of commercial uses commensurate with the status of the settlement while also encouraging increased residential occupancy within our towns, the percentage of residential development in B1 zones shall generally fall within the range of not exceed 30%-50% of the quantum of a development site in any development proposal in Key Towns, Self-sustaining Growth Towns, Self-sustaining Towns. Exceptions may be facilitated on a case by case basis where a clear evidence base has been demonstrated. Where an applicant proposes a high percentage of</p>	<p>Having regard to the criteria set in Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011, no likely significant environmental effects arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3 and the requirement for SEA is screened out.</p>	<p>No likely significant environmental effects on European sites arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3.</p> <p>The requirement for Stage 2 AA is screened out.</p>

Section of the Variation document	Revised Text	Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA)
	<p><i>residential uses on B1 zoned land, it must be demonstrated;</i></p> <p><i>A) that such development proposals have regard to the Asset Test set out in Section 9.3 Housing and Regeneration and Appendix A of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031.</i></p> <p><i>B) that there are substantial commercial vacancies in the area and that there is no demand or need for additional commercial uses.</i></p>		
Proposed Amendment No. 3: Percentage range for the quantum of residential uses permitted on Town Centre / Mixed Use zoning	<p>C1 Mixed Use</p> <p>Objective: To provide for and facilitate mixed residential and employment generating uses</p> <p>Guidance</p> <p>Lands identified for mixed use development are only appropriate in higher-tier settlements. The objective on these lands is to provide opportunities for high-density mixed-use employment generating activities that also accommodate appropriate levels of residential development thereby facilitating the creation of functional 'live work' communities. These areas are generally located in proximity to high frequency public transport corridors. <i>In order to achieve balanced development, Where a residential component is proposed, the</i></p>	<p>Having regard to the criteria set in Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011, no likely significant environmental effects arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3 and the requirement for SEA is screened out.</p>	<p>No likely significant environmental effects on European sites arise as a result of the amendment to the text in the Variation No. 3.</p> <p>The requirement for Stage 2 AA is screened out.</p>

Section of the Variation document	Revised Text	Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA)
	<p>percentage of residential development in C1 zones shall generally <i>fall within the range of</i> not exceed 50%-70% of the quantum of a development site. Exceptions may be facilitated on a case by case basis where a clear evidence base has been demonstrated. Where an applicant proposes a high percentage of residential uses on C1 zoned land, it must be demonstrated;</p> <p><i>A) that such development proposals have regard to the Asset Test set out in Section 9.3 Housing and Regeneration and Appendix A of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031.</i></p> <p><i>B) that there are substantial commercial vacancies in the area and that there is no demand or need for additional commercial uses.</i></p>		

6 Recommendation on Requirement for SEA

As the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 is a statutory plan, *Variation No. 3* has been screened for the requirement for SEA under the requirements of S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011.

Variation No. 3 has been considered in respect of the SEA screening criteria set out in Schedule 2A of S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011, and the findings are set out in [Section 4](#) of this report. It is considered, on the basis of this exercise, that the implementation of Variation No. 3 has no real likelihood of having likely significant negative effects on the environment.

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment (BSM, 2024) has concluded that-

“...the Variation No. 3 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, individually or in combination with another plan or project, is not likely to have a significant effect on European sites under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in light of their conservation objectives. The Variation does not require an Appropriate Assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Report.”

In accordance with the requirements of S.I. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011, and Article 13K(3) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, Meath County Council did give notice to the environmental authorities, specified in Article 13A(4) of the 2001 Regulations, that Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

It is therefore recommended that the competent authority reach a determination that **Variation No.3 is not likely to have significant negative effects on the environment and, therefore, SEA is not required.**

7 References

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Brady Shipman Martin

DUBLIN

Mountpleasant Business Centre
Ranelagh
Dublin 6
D06 X7P8
+353 1 208 1900

CORK

Penrose Wharf Business Centre
Penrose Wharf
Cork
+353 21 242 5620

LIMERICK

11 The Crescent
Limerick
+353 61 315 127

mail@bradyshipmanmartin.com
www.bradyshipmanmartin.com

