

**VARIATION No. 5 OF MEATH COUNTY  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027**  
**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT**

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Client:

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## CONTENTS

GLOSSARY .....	i
1 Introduction .....	4
2 Description of the Proposed Variation No.5 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 .....	6
3 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) .....	33
4 Other Relevant Plans and Programmes .....	45
5 Current State of the Receiving Environment (Environmental Baseline and Issues).....	49
6 Strategic Environmental Objectives.....	103
7 Assessment of Alternatives .....	105
8 Assessment of Effects of the Variation No.5.....	108
9 Mitigation Measures .....	123
10 Monitoring Measures.....	126
11 References .....	127
Appendices .....	129



## GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
AA	Appropriate Assessment
ACAs	Architectural Conservation Areas
AQIH	air quality index for health
C&D	Construction and Demolition
c.	Circa
CDP	County Development Plan
CFRAM	Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management
CO	carbon monoxide
CO <sub>2</sub>	carbon dioxide
ED	electoral division
EMRA	Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly
END	Environmental Noise Directive
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FCC	Fingal County Council
FEM-FRAMS	Fingal East Meath Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study
GDA	Greater Dublin Area
GHGs	Greenhouse Gases
GIS	Geographical Information System
GSI	Geological Survey of Ireland
ha	hectares
HSE	Health Service Executive
IGH	Irish Geological Heritage
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
km <sup>2</sup>	per square kilometre
LAP	Local Area Plan
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LCT	Landscape Character Types
MANs	Metropolitan Area Networks
MBAP	Meath Biodiversity Action Plan
MCC	Meath County Council
NBAP	National Biodiversity Action Plan
NBP	National Broadband Plan
NDP	National Development Plan

Term	Definition
NHA	Natural Heritage Areas
NIR	Natura Impact Report
NO <sub>2</sub>	Nitrogen dioxide
NPF	National Planning Framework
NTA	National Roads Authority
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
OPW	Office of Public Works
P / Ps	Plans or Programmes
P&R	Park and Ride
PDA	Planning and Development Act
PDR	Planning and Development Regulations
PM	Particulate Matter
PM <sub>10</sub>	particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter
pNHAs	Proposed Natural Heritage Areas
PPN	Public Participation Network
PRPs	Pollution Reduction Programmes
RBDs	River Basin Districts
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
RPS	Record of Protected Structures
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
S.I.	Statutory Instrument
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEO	Strategic Environmental Objectives
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SNR	Statutory Nature Reserves
SPA	Special Protection Area
SuDS	Sustainable urban Drainage Systems
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Network
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
UWWT	Urban Wastewater Treatment
VOCs	Volatile Organic Compounds
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WMP	Waste Management Plan

Term	Definition
WSSP	Water Services Strategic Plan
WtE	Waste to Energy
WWTPs	Wastewater Treatment Plants
Zol	Zone of Influence

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

This is the Environmental Report of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for *Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027* (hereafter “Variation No. 5”).

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (the Meath CDP / CDP) was adopted on 22 September 2021 and came into effect on the 03 November 2021. 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. Volume 4 includes the Environmental Assessments.

In accordance with Section 58 of the Planning and Development Act 2024, as amended, Meath County Council prepared Draft Variation No.5 of the County Development Plan 2021-2027 and placed it on public display, together with associated environmental reports, from Tuesday 31 March to Friday 1 May, 2026.

The Variation was adopted by the Elected Members of Meath County Council on Monday the 8 June 2026.

This environmental report has been prepared to comply with the provisions of Article 8 of S.I. 456 of 2025 – European Communities (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2025).

The Report has had due regard to the SEA Regulations<sup>1</sup>, in particular to: -

- methods of assessment;
- contents and level of detail in the Variation;
- the stage in the Plan or Programme-making process;
- the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in the decision-making process in order to avoid duplication of environmental assessment; and
- consultation with the SEA Environmental Authorities.

Brady Shipman Martin (BSM) has been appointed by Meath County Council to carry out the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) in respect of Variation No.5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. This Environmental Report should be read in conjunction with the Variation No. 5 and the AA Screening and Natura Impact Report (NIR).

## 1.2 Context to Variation No.5

In April 2025 the *National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision* was adopted to address evolving challenges in relation to climate change, housing, regional development and population growth. In July 2025 following the approval of the Revised NPF, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published the *NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines* in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The *NPF Housing Growth Requirements*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2025/si/456/made/en/print>

*Guidelines* will replace the *Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, published in December 2020.

Local authorities are now required to update development plans to reflect on the national targets given by the Department. *The NPF Housing Growth Requirement Guidelines* requires sufficient zoning in County Meath to deliver 2,942 units annually up to 2035. This figure reduces to 1,362 from 2035 to 2040. The County Development Plan is mandated to be consistent with the *National Planning Framework* and the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy*. Accordingly, Variation 5 is required to integrate the updated housing figures into the Core Strategy to ensure consistency with the planning hierarchy.

As required by Section 3.0 of the *NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines*, local authorities must initially assess the current adopted development plan and review the Core Strategy, related settlement strategies and zoning objectives against the objectives of the *NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines*.

The high-level *National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision* was subject to strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and appropriate assessment (AA).

Brady Shipman Martin (BSM) has been appointed by Meath County Council to carry out the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) in respect of the proposed Variation No.5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (hereafter the 'Variation No.5').

## 2 Description of the Proposed Variation No.5 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

### 2.1 Introduction

Variation No.5 has been prepared in response to the recent changes in National Planning Policy, namely the publication of the National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision and the publication of Section 28 Guidelines, NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements, Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), both published in 2025.

The Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) requires that a Development Plan shall, so far as is practicable, be consistent with national plans, policies and strategies which relate to proper planning and development and is also required to have regard to Guidelines published under Section 28.

As outlined in the Section 28 Guidelines, further to the approval of the Revised National Planning Framework (NPF) in April 2025, there is now a need for development plans to be updated to reflect the requirements of the NPF in respect of housing.

Section 2.7 of the Revised NPF “Translating the NPF to City and County Levels” states that:

*‘The revised targets will support a plan-led approach to NPF implementation at regional and local level, allowing NPF growth objectives to be incorporated into city and county development plans as they are reviewed. In this regard, matters related to the targeted population and housing numbers and the estimated capacity of each settlement for growth is determined at the plan-making stage, in accordance with the hierarchy of plans prescribed under the Planning and Development Act.’*

These Guidelines set out the housing demand scenario to 2040 for each local authority by translating the NPF requirements into estimated average annual figures, drawing on the range of scenarios presented by the ESRI in the 2024 updated research and modelling on population growth and structural housing demand, and assumptions relating to unmet demand. The Guidelines also state that –

*‘Planning authorities should therefore assess the current adopted City and County development plans against the requirement to provide the capacity to develop housing to the extent identified in these Guidelines. This assessment should involve the review of the relevant core strategy and settlement strategy, with the associated identification of development potential and zoning objectives updated where necessary to reflect the housing growth requirements set out in Appendix 1, and the application of ‘additional provision’ as set out below, subject to the relevant environmental assessments being undertaken as required by the Act and in accordance with the Revised NPF.’*

The Guidelines set out the following NPF Housing Growth Requirements –

Policy and Objective 1 –

*‘It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that the housing growth requirements for each planning authority set out in Appendix 1 are reflected in the relevant City or County Development Plan, subject to consistency with the policies and objectives of the National*

*Planning Framework – First Revision (2025), relevant Ministerial Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), relevant Government policy, and the undertaking of necessary environmental assessments.'*

Policy and Objective 2 –

*'It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that 'additional provision' of up to 50% over and above the housing growth requirement for each local authority set out in Appendix 1 is reflected within the relevant City or County Development Plan, subject to consistency with the policies and objectives of the National Planning Framework – First Revision (2025), relevant Ministerial Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), relevant Government policy, and the undertaking of necessary environmental assessments.'*

Policy and Objective 3-

*'It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that planning authorities should use all available means to ensure that the objectives of these Guidelines are incorporated within development plans as quickly as possible through the variation of the current adopted development plan. Where a planning authority is undertaking a development plan review under the Act of 2000 or preparing a new development plan under the Act of 2024, a parallel process of varying the current adopted development plan, as appropriate, should be undertaken. The policies and objectives of these Guidelines should not be reflected in Local Area Plans without also being reflected within the relevant development plan.'*

The Guidelines set out a requirement for Planning Authorities to assess the current adopted development plan and review the core strategy and associated settlement strategy and zoning objectives against the objectives of these Guidelines. Furthermore, the Guidelines state that -

*'In all cases, a review of the adequacy of existing zoned lands to cater for the Housing Growth Requirement figures (Appendix 1) and the potential for 'additional provision' as set out above for the full duration of the current adopted development plan should be assessed, with a particular focus on the likelihood that the lands identified for residential development within the plan will come forward for development within the remaining period of the plan. This assessment should take into account factors including the planning history of zoned lands and activation of sites, and the availability of or potential for servicing. Where the planning authority considers that lands may not come forward for development within the remaining period of the existing plan, it may be necessary to consider the zoning of alternative lands where there is capacity to deliver housing in the short to medium term.'*

Appendix 1 referred to above consists of a table with the housing requirements for 31 Local Authorities including Meath County Council, see **Figure 2.1.1**.

In accordance with the above, Meath County Council has prepared Variation to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 to cater for the Housing Growth Requirement figures and the potential for 'additional provision' (shown in **Figure 2.1.1**). This has a particular focus on the likelihood that the lands identified for residential development within the plan will come forward for development within the remaining period of the plan.

This review and the detailed analysis of the current core strategy and settlement strategy resulted in the proposed Variation, which includes potential updates to these strategies and associated

identification of development potential and zoning objectives where necessary to reflect the housing growth requirements, subject to the relevant environmental assessments being undertaken as required by the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended and in accordance with the Revised NPF.

**Figure 2.1.1 NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements, Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) (July 2025) – Appendix 1**

			2025 to 2034	2035 to 2040
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Existing Annual 2020 Housing Requirement (Housing Supply Target)</b>	<b>Adopted Development Plan - Annual Housing Requirement (Housing Supply Target)</b>	<b>New Annual New Housing Growth Requirement to 2034</b>	<b>New Annual New Housing Growth Requirement 2035 to 2040</b>
Carlow County Council	406	518	518	507
Cavan County Council	479	666	666	599
Clare County Council	550	960	985	687
Cork City Council	2,032	2,706	2,706	2,539
Cork County Council	2,437	3,769	3,837	3,045
Donegal County Council	965	1,280	1,283	1,206
Dublin City Council	4,861	8,196	8,196	6,075
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	1,908	3,085	3,585	2,384
Fingal County Council	1,717	2,738	3,153	2,146
Galway City Council	754	739	790	942
Galway County Council	1,831	1,790	2,008	2,288
Kerry County Council	690	1,167	1,167	862
Kildare County Council	1,535	1,524	2,755	1,918
Kilkenny County Council	618	775	948	772
Laois County Council	468	666	1,244	585
Leitrim County Council	124	201	201	155
Limerick City & County Council	2,193	2,599	2,599	2,740
Longford County Council	333	428	428	416
Louth County Council	956	1,380	1,677	1,195
Mayo County Council	501	542	1,111	626
<b>Meath County Council</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>2,826</b>	<b>2,942</b>	<b>1,362</b>
Monaghan County Council	306	330	751	382
Offaly County Council	439	663	891	549
Roscommon County Council	285	392	392	356
Sligo County Council	468	672	672	585
South Dublin County Council	1,932	2,596	3,270	2,414
Tipperary County Council	605	1,008	1,008	756
Waterford City & County Council	705	804	1,144	881
Westmeath County Council	548	983	983	685
Wexford County Council	578	1,072	1,622	722
Wicklow County Council	745	1,411	2,068	931
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,059</b>	<b>48,484</b>	<b>55,598</b>	<b>41,312</b>

## 2.2 Purpose and Scope of Variation No. 5

Variation No. 5 is being brought forward to contribute to delivering the NPF housing requirement set out by the NPF Implementation Circular. The measures set out in the Variation primarily relate to the following amendments.

### 1. Proposed Amendment No. 1: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Volume 1 - Written Statement

To update the County Development Plan to take account of the new housing targets set out in the National Planning Framework Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in July 2025 and issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

In addition to updates as required to the text to the CDP Written Statement the amendment provides for the following updated/new objectives:

- Updated objectives CS OBJ 3, CS OBJ 8 and CS OBJ 11 in Chapter 2 Core Strategy
- Updated objectives SH OBJ 2, SH OBJ 7 and SH OBJ 20 in Chapter 3 Settlement and Housing Strategy
- New objective INF OBJ 25B in Chapter 6 (in relation to Protection of Surface Waters)

## **2. Proposed Amendment No.2: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Volume 2 - Written Statement for Settlements**

In order to ensure consistency with the Written Statement of the Development Plan (Volume 1) and the revised housing targets, the Written Statements for the settlements that contain lands proposed for rezoning are required to be amended as part of this variation. The amendments primarily relate to adjustments to the household allocation for the relevant areas and projected population growth having regard to Census 2022 data and the new annual housing growth requirements for the county as set out in the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines 2025.

In addition to updates as required to the text to the CDP Written Statement for Settlements, the amendment provides for the following new objectives:

- New objective DCE OBJ 23 (Flood Risk Management) (Dunboyne)
- New objective DNS OBJ 14 (Flood Risk Management) (Dunshaughlin)
- New objective KIL OBJ 5B (Flooding) (Kilcock)
- New objective NAV OBJ 38 (Flood Risk Management) (Navan)

## **3. Proposed Amendment No.3: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Volume 2 - Maps for Settlements**

In order to ensure consistency with the National Planning Framework and accommodate revised housing targets for the County, it is proposed to amend land use zonings as shown on the County Development Plan Map Sheets. It is also proposed to amend the development / settlement boundaries accordingly to ensure any lands that have been identified for development within the lifetime of the Plan fall within the development boundary of the relevant settlement.

The proposed rezonings are summarised below with details provided as to the existing and proposed land use zoning objectives for each individual area. The proposed rezonings are illustrated individually through updated land use zoning map sheets for the relevant settlements / areas with the proposed variations clearly marked on each sheet. Where no zoning changes are proposed in settlements under this Variation, the current map sheets remain in effect.

Lands in 11 settlements have been identified for rezoning as follows:

- Dunboyne
- Southern Environs of Drogheda
- Navan

- Kilcock
- Dunshaughlin
- Enfield
- Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarne- Mornington(East Meath)
- Duleek
- Stamullen
- Athboy
- Carlanstown

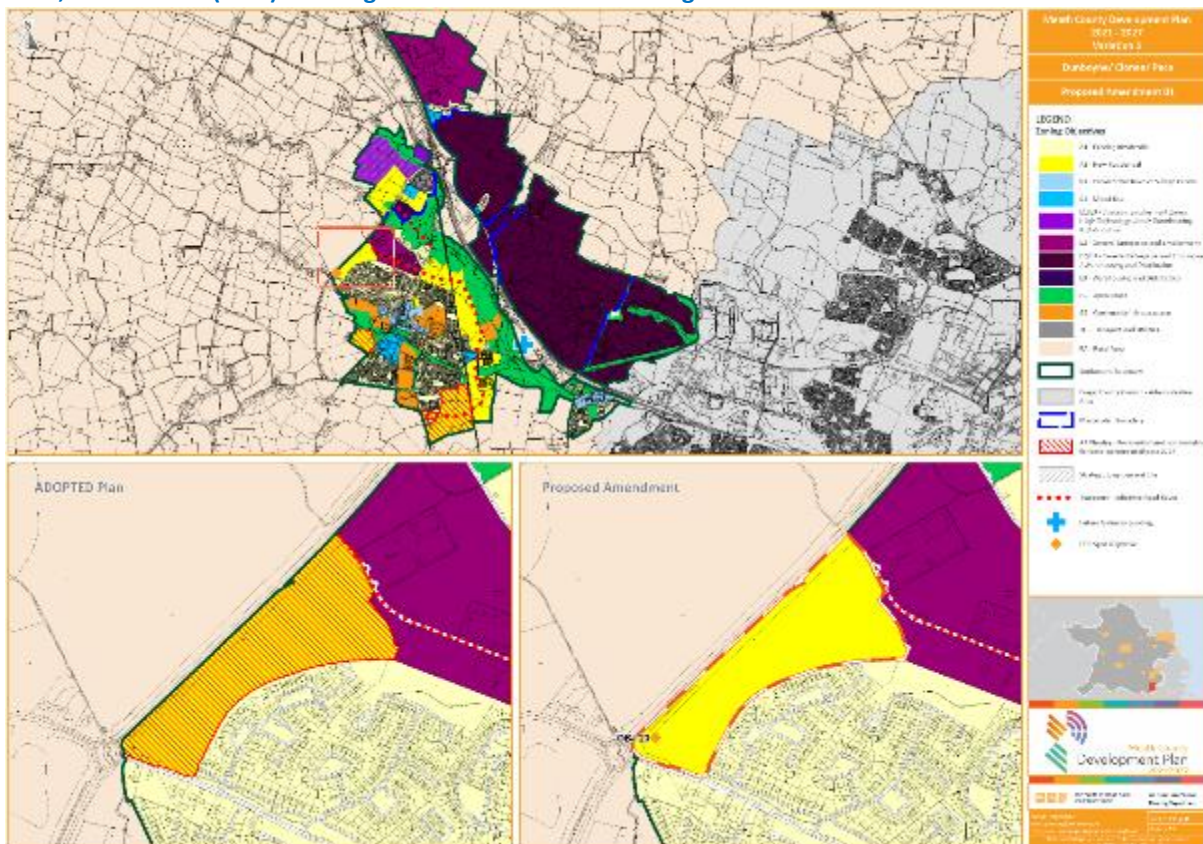
## 2.3 Site selection

In identifying suitable alternative lands capable of accommodating additional growth, due regard was given to the settlement hierarchy. County Meath contains Metropolitan Areas of Dunboyne and Kilcock, the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda and the Key Town of Navan where growth should be directed, to promote sustainable development patterns. Having regard to this and the development trends/rates of delivery in these settlements, it is recommended that specific parcels of land be brought forward within each of the following settlements (refer to sub-sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.15).

### 2.3.1 Dunboyne

Tier 1 lands of approximately 8.56ha located to the north west of the settlement which are currently zoned A2 Phasing – Post 2027 are considered appropriate to be zoned A2 – New Residential. These lands are serviced and capable of delivering approximately 308 housing units. They are located immediately adjacent an established residential community and in close proximity to the employment lands at Dunboyne Business Park and the Dunboyne College of Further Education. Due to potential flood risk impacts on the south western corner of the lands, any planning application for the future development of these lands shall be accompanied by a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment in accordance with the requirements of the “*Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.*” See **Figure 2.3.1**.

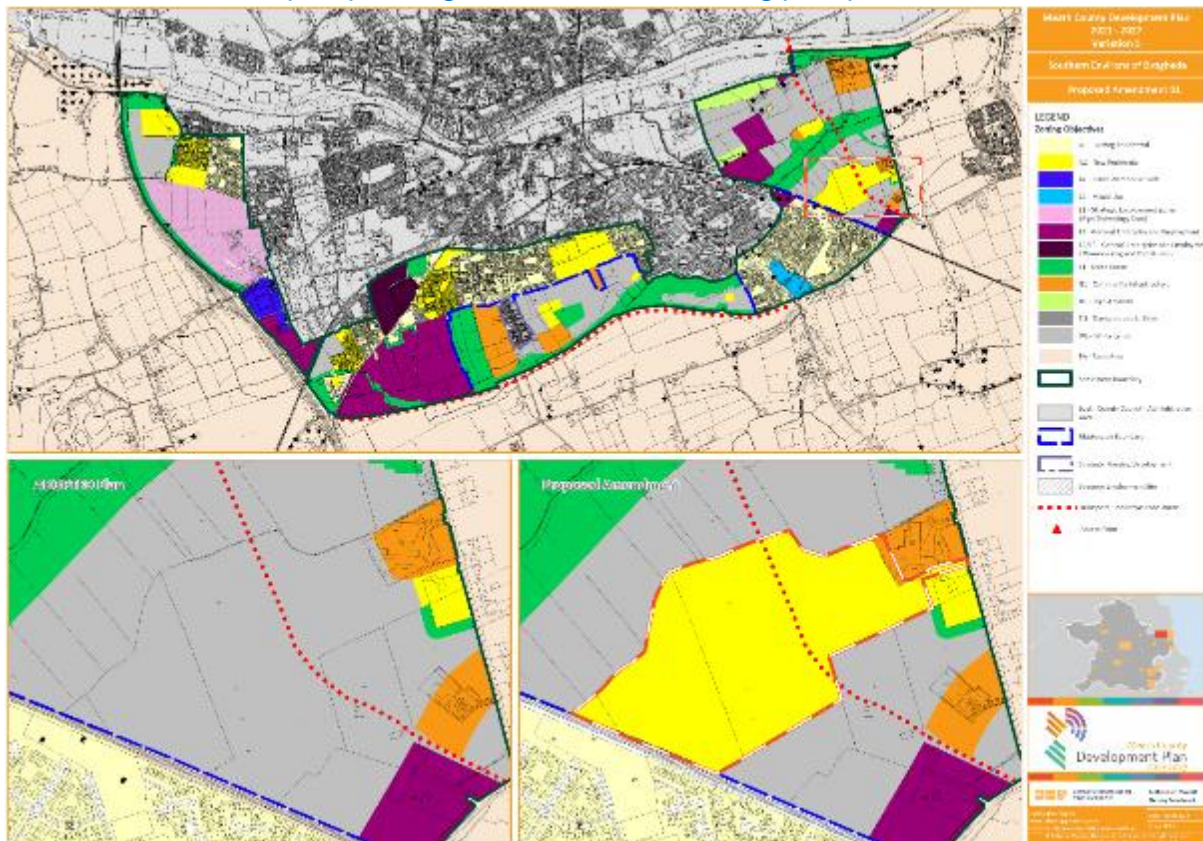
**Figure 2.3.1** Below is Current Zoning Map for Dunboyne as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extract (1no.) showing lands identified for rezoning



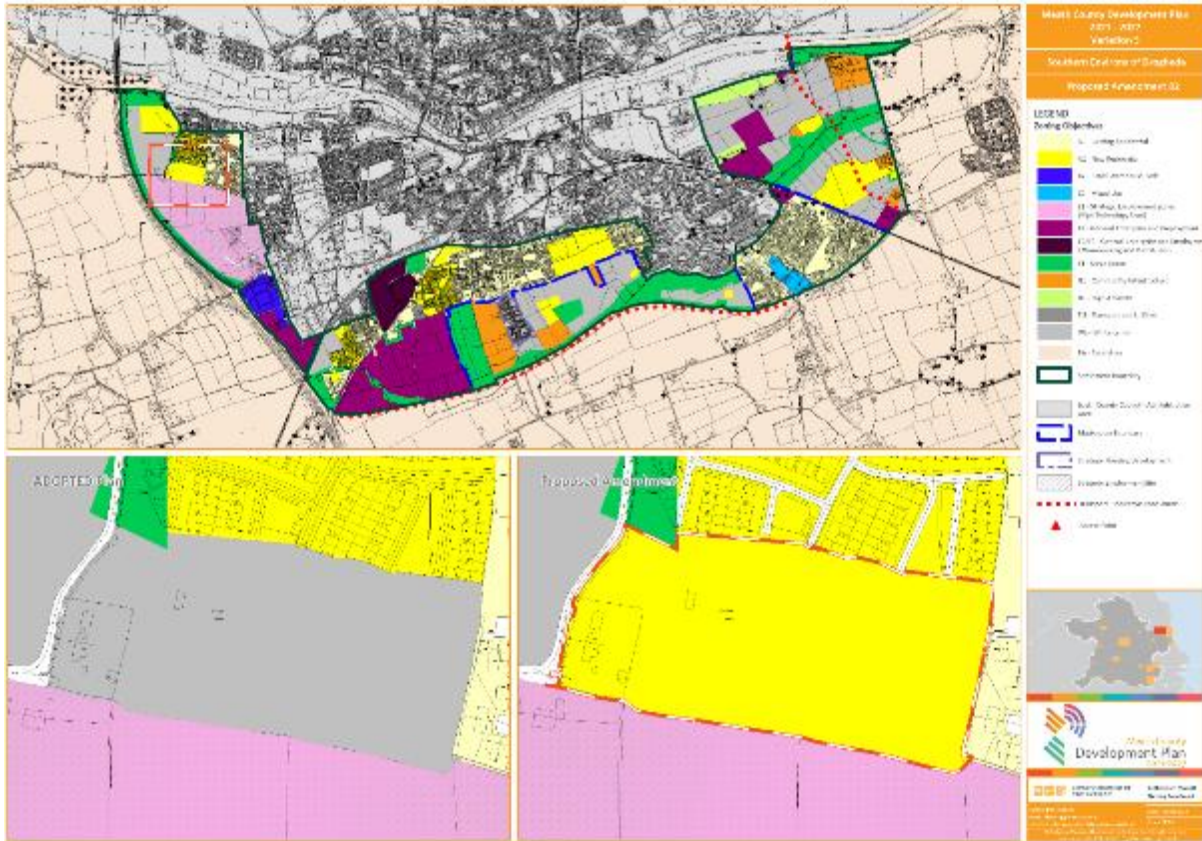
### 2.3.2 Southern Environs of Drogheda

Two parcels of Tier 1 land totalling 20.66ha that are currently zoned White Lands have been identified as being appropriate to be rezoned to A2 – New Residential. The Amendment 1 lands (15.77) are located within a Masterplan boundary (MP14) continuous to existing residential lands. Site 2 (4.89ha) is located between Strategic Employment Lands and an existing residential development. Proposed Amendment 1 also includes the rezoning of a minor section of White Lands to G1 – Community Infrastructure at Gaelscoil an Bhradáin Feasa to reflect the existing use of the school site. Collectively, both parcels of land are capable of accommodating 661 new housing units. The strategic location of both sites and potential for housing development would represent the logical and coherent extension of established residential areas in close proximity to employment uses. Both sites are serviced / serviceable with no known infrastructural constraints that would impact the delivery of housing on the lands. See **Figure 2.3.2**.

**Figure 2.3.2** Below is Current Zoning Map for South Drogheda as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extracts (2 no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2)



Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
 Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report



### 2.3.3 Navan

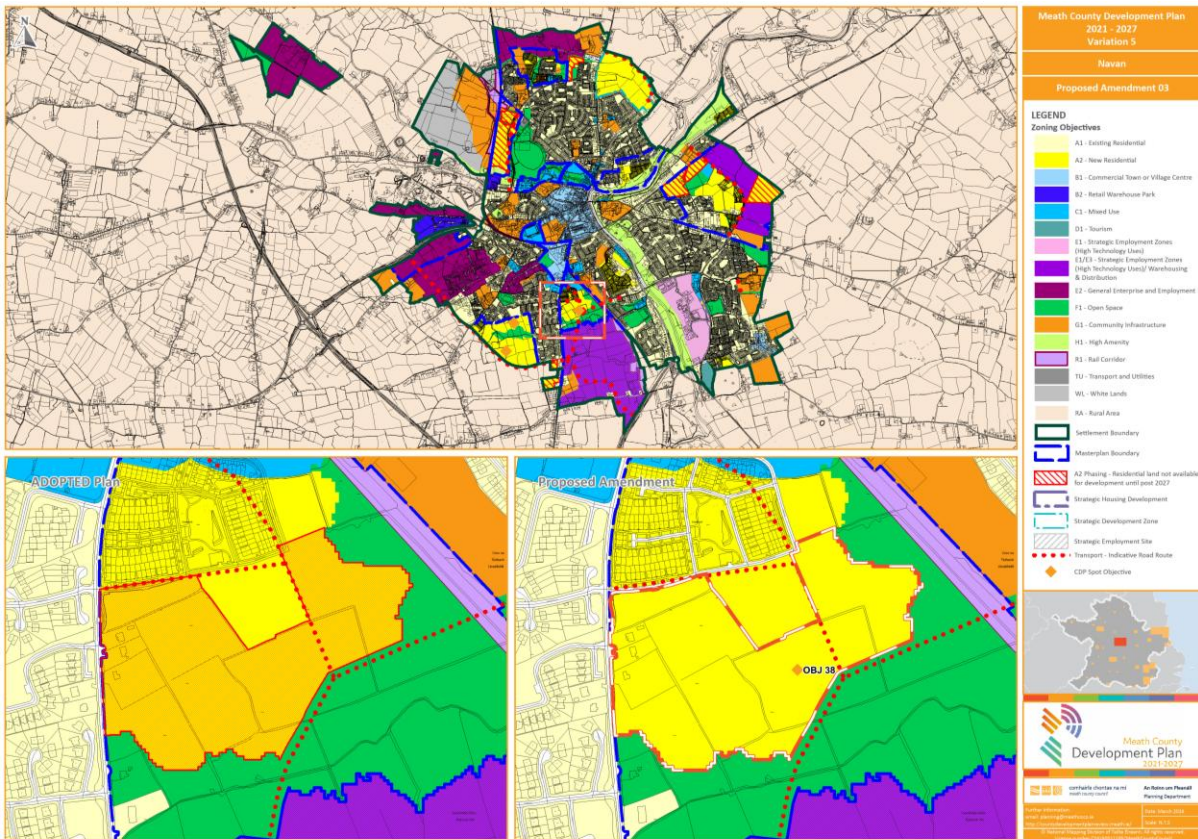
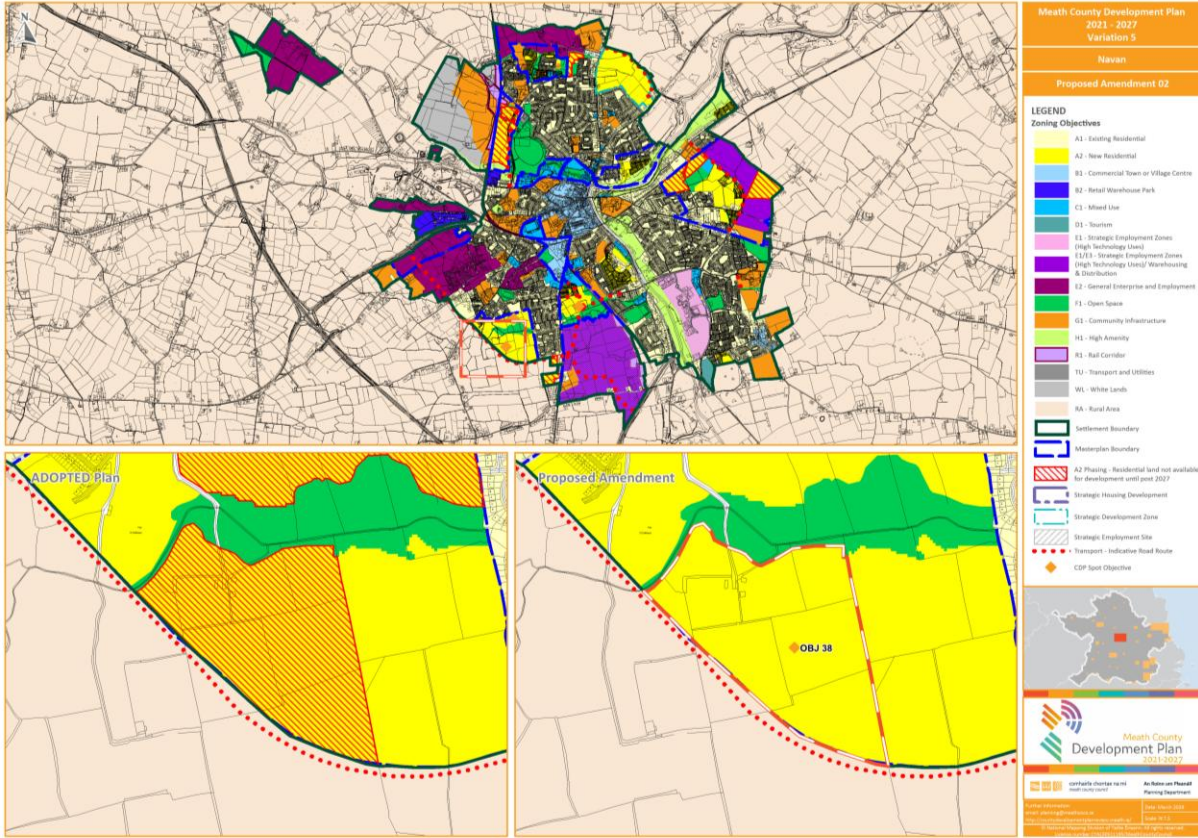
Three parcels of Tier 1 land totalling 26.37ha that are currently zoned A2 Phasing – Post 2027 have been deemed appropriate to be brought forward for development under the current Plan period. The lands are fully serviced and capable of providing 1,164 units. The lands are located contiguous to existing residential zoned lands which would facilitate the integration of future housing within an established residential setting. In addition, the lands are positioned within the boundaries of Masterplan lands (MP8 and MP13) and in close proximity to a Strategic Employment Site. Planning applications for development proposals on the lands that are subject to Spot Objective NAV OBJ 38 shall be accompanied by a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out in accordance with the requirements of the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.” See **Figure 2.3.3**.

**Figure 2.3.3 Below is Current Zoning Map for Navan as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extracts (3no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (Tier 1 lands) (to A2)**



# Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

## Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report



It is recognised that the post-2027 land parcel in Farganstown presently lies between two employment zones. To allow for the continuity of this employment zoning, it is considered that these post-2027 lands would be more appropriately zoned for employment use by relocating them directly south of their current location as part of the proposed variation. See **Figure 2.3.4**.

**Figure 2.3.4** Below is Current Zoning Map for Navan as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extracts (2no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (Farganstown)



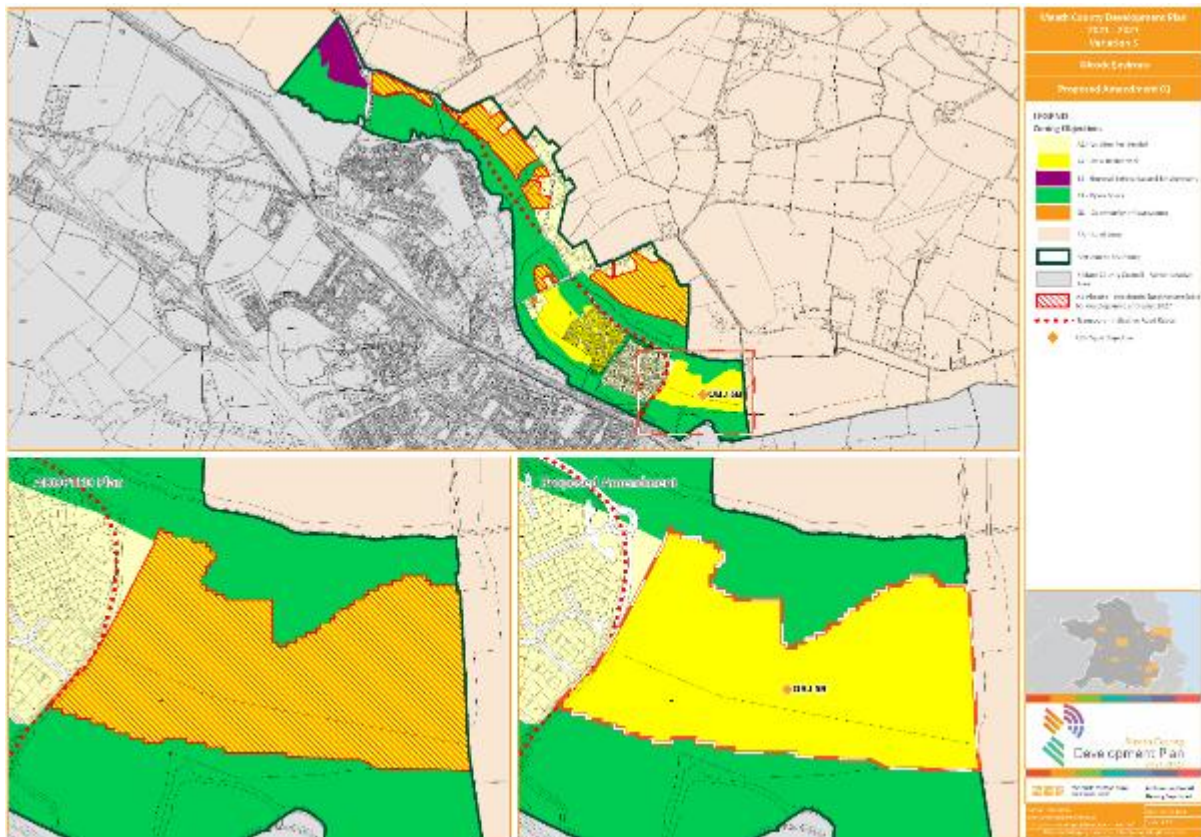


### 2.3.4 Kilcock

Tier 1 lands presently zoned A2 Phasing – Post 2027 and located to the south east of the settlement boundary are recommended to be rezoned to A2 – New Residential as part of this variation. The lands comprising approximately 6.81ha are capable of accommodating 190 units and are located to the immediate east of the Millerstown housing development. Planning applications for development proposals on the lands shall be accompanied by a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out in accordance with the requirements of the “*Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.*” Lands that are impacted by Flood Zone B and Climate Change shall be reserved for storage areas only and kept free from vulnerable land uses.

Having regard to the limited pipeline of housing for the settlement, together with the limited availability of undeveloped A2 zoned land, it is considered appropriate to bring forward the subject lands for development under the current Development Plan. Kilcock is located in the Metropolitan Area and the Dart+ is proposed to be extended to serve same. See **Figure 2.3.5**.

**Figure 2.3.5 Below is Current Zoning Map for Kilcock as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extract (1no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2)**



### 2.3.5 Dunshaughlin

Two parcels of Tier 1 lands (5.89ha), both of which are currently zoned A2 Phasing – Post 2027, located to the west of the settlement and with a capacity to deliver approximately 165 housing units are considered appropriate to be rezoned A2 – New Residential. Site 1 comprises 1.45ha of undeveloped land and is located to the immediate south of A2 zoned lands. Site 2 is located to the immediate north of a designated Strategic Employment Site.

Since 2019, Dunshaughlin has consistently performed well in terms of housing delivery with the additional zoned lands deemed necessary to ensure continuity of supply in the event existing zoned lands are not brought forward for development during the Plan period. Latest available flood mapping shows that there is a watercourse located along the northern boundary of Site 2. Any future development proposals for the lands shall incorporate a 10m riparian corridor along the watercourse to protect future development from flood related impacts in line with Policy Objective INF POL 22 of the Development Plan. See **Figure 2.3.6**.

**Figure 2.3.6 Below is Current Zoning Map for Dunshaughlin as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extracts (2no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2)**

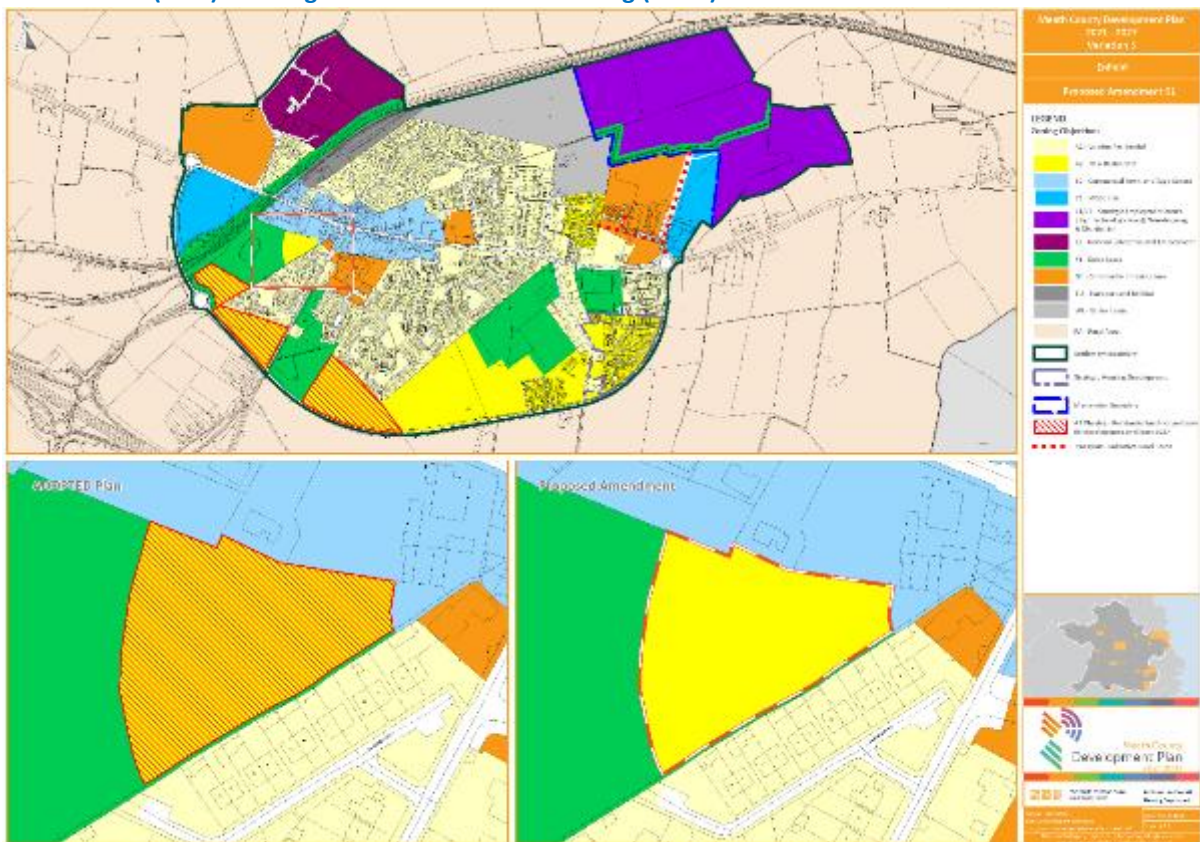




### 2.3.6 Enfield

Two parcels of Tier 1 lands (4.29ha) located to the west and south of the settlement that are currently zoned for A2 Phasing – Post 2027 are recommended to be brought forward for development under the current Plan period. Enfield holds a strong track record in housing delivery and was assessed further for its potential to deliver housing given its consistency with the key principles of Transport Orientated Development. While Post 2027 lands were initially considered, the proposed lands below are strategically located contiguous to existing residential developments and contain the necessary infrastructure to expand housing delivery in this area. Collectively the lands are capable of accommodating 120 housing units which will contribute to achieving the revised housing targets for the county. See **Figure 2.3.7**.

**Figure 2.3.7** Below is Current Zoning Map for Enfield as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extracts (2no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2)





2.3.7 East Meath (Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East – Donacarney – Mornington (East Meath))

Tier 2 lands of approximately 9.7ha that are currently zoned Whitelands are considered suitable for rezoning to A2 -Residential as part of this variation. The lands are located to the immediate north of an established residential community and capable of accommodating approximately 272 housing units. Laytown/Bettystown is a highly sought after location with minimal lands available for development and little or no permitted units in the system. Having regard to its consistency with the key principles of Transport Orientated Development, the proposed land is within walking distance to both primary and secondary education facilities, the town centre of both Laytown and Bettystown, and Laytown train station. Recent development of road infrastructure has resulted in the proposed lands now being serviced by road and footpath infrastructure. See **Figure 2.3.8**.

**Figure 2.3.8 Below is Current Zoning Map for Bettystown-Laytown as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extract (1no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2)**



Approximately 9.7ha of lands zoned RA – Rural Area located to the west of Donacorney are considered suitable for rezoning to A2 – New Residential as part of this variation process. The subject Tier 1 lands are fully serviced and located to the immediate west of an established residential development. The lands are brownfield in nature and capable of providing approximately 231 housing units which would help address the current housing availability gap in the area. See **Figure 2.3.9**.

**Figure 2.3.9** Below is Current Zoning Map for Donacorney as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extract (1no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2)

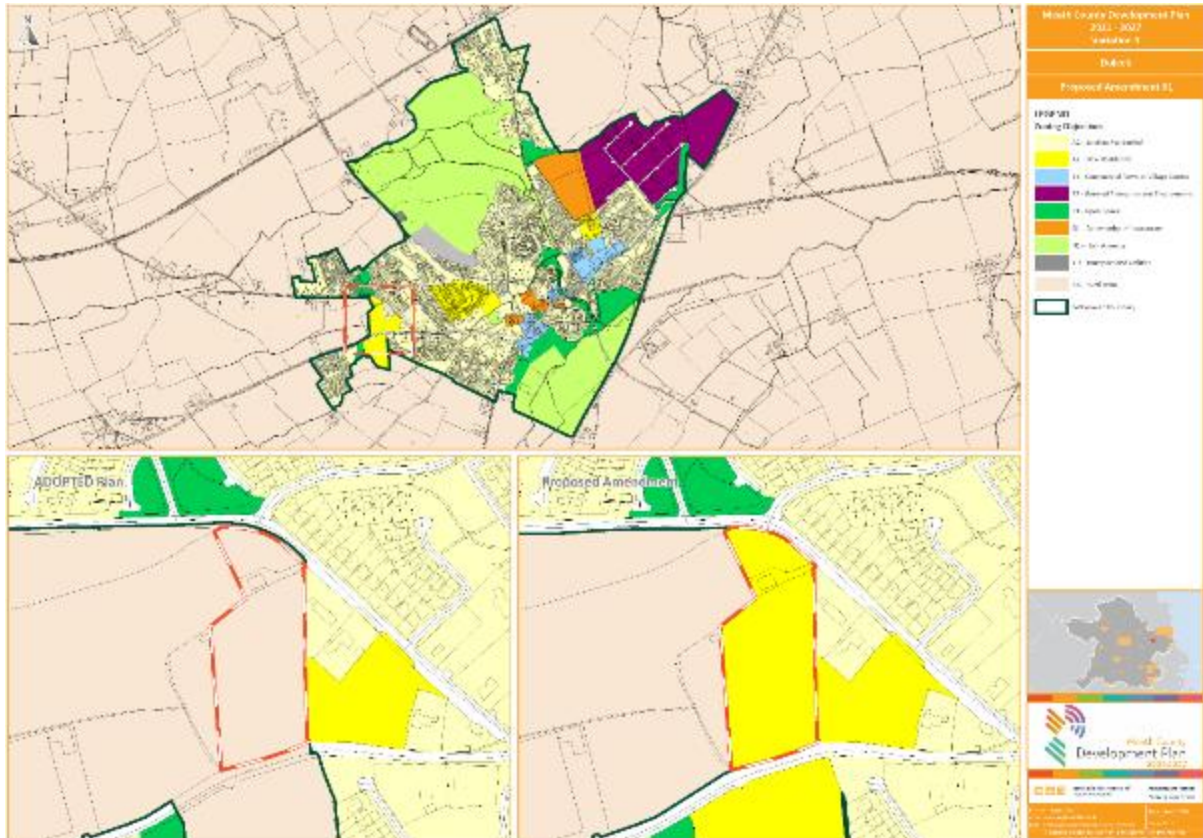




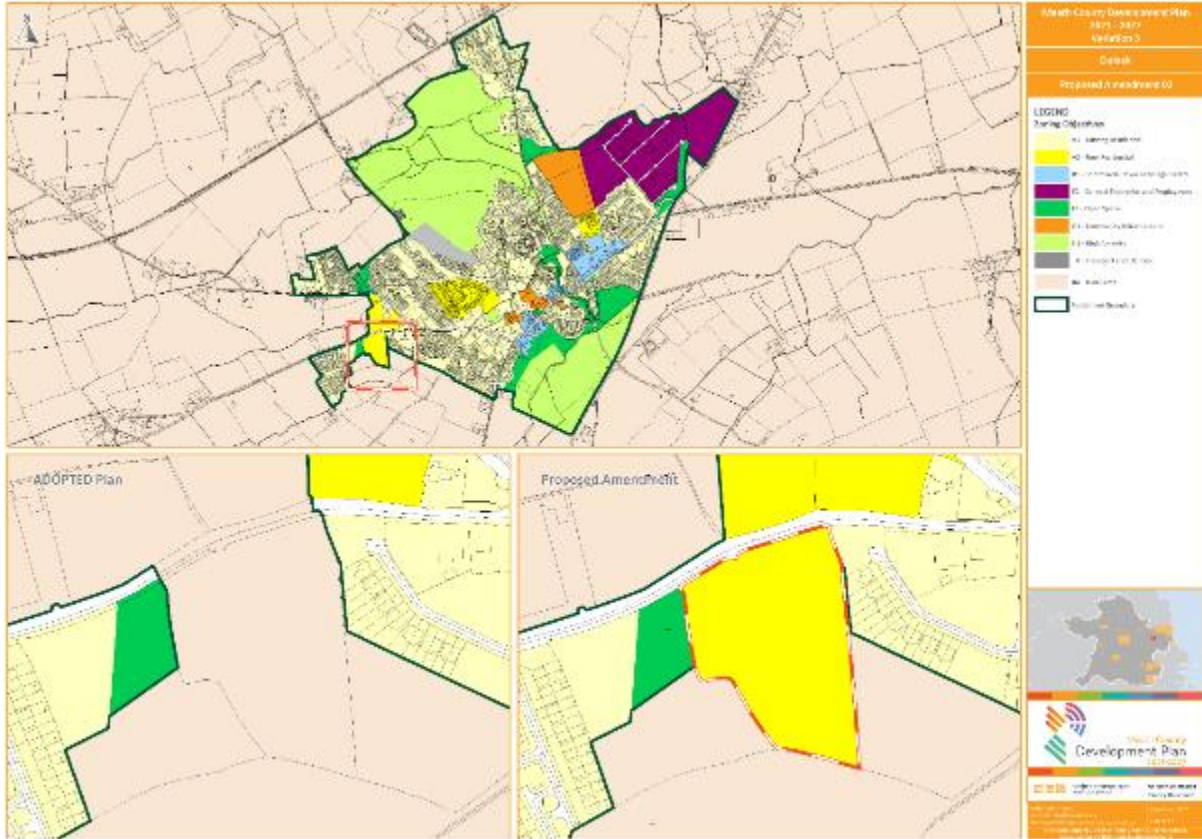
### 2.3.8 Duleek

It is proposed to rezone approximately 3.32ha of RA – Rural Area lands to A2 – New Residential to accommodate additional housing targets for the settlement. Both parcels of land are located to the south west of the settlement and positioned within an established residential setting and comprise infill and compact growth land parcels. The lands are fully serviced with no known infrastructural constraints and are capable of delivering approximately 80 housing units. See **Figure 2.3.11**.

**Figure 2.3.11** Below is Current Zoning Map for Duleek as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extracts (2no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2)

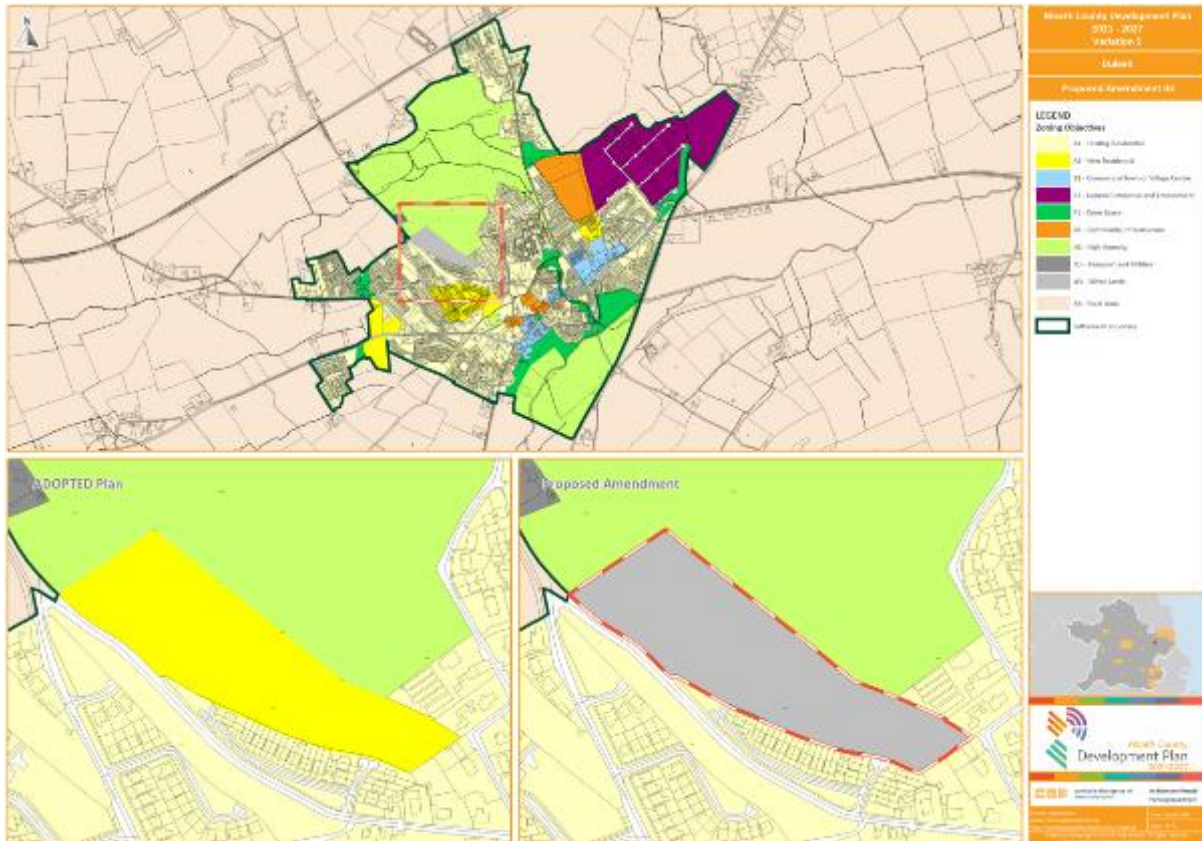


Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
 Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report



It is also proposed to rezone approximately 3.24ha of A2 – New Residential zoned lands to WL – White Lands as part of this variation. It is understood that the landowner does not intend to develop the lands and therefore alternative, serviced and more viable lands are required to ensure an appropriate quantum of lands within the settlement remains zoned to facilitate housing delivery. The revised zoning designation for the area results in a net increase of approximately 0.06ha of A2 – New Residential zoned lands. See **Figure 2.3.12**.

**Figure 2.3.12** Below is Current Zoning Map for Duleek as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extract (1no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to White Lands)





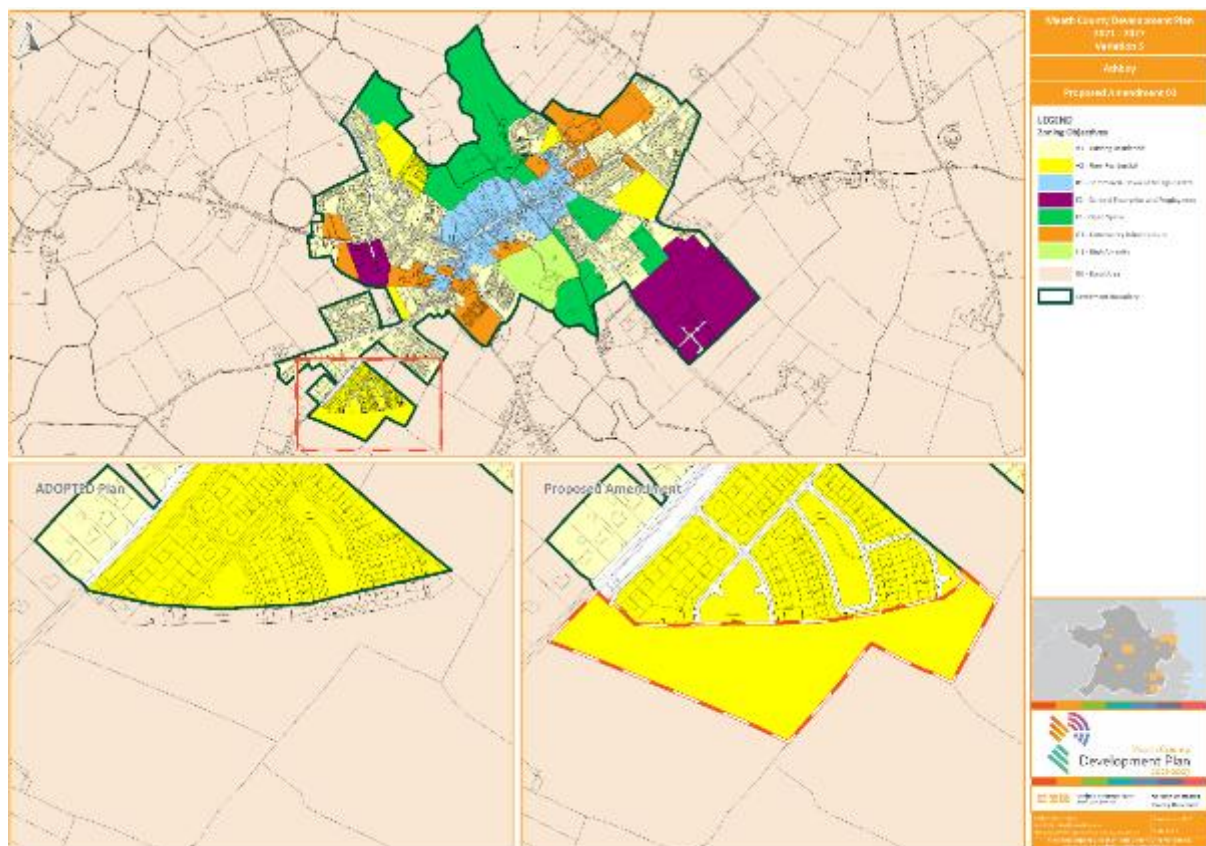
### 2.3.10 Athboy

Lands of approximately 3.63ha that are currently zoned RA – Rural Area and located to the south west of the settlement are proposed to be rezoned to A2 – New Residential as part of the variation process.

During the review of all A2 Residential land use zonings in the county, Athboy was found to contain two anomalies, whereby two land parcels containing sporting facilities - a GAA Pitch and Basketball Court were zoned A2 New Residential. These are recognised as essential facilities for the community, and it is therefore acknowledged that these lands would be more appropriately zoned for ‘Community Use’.

In order to account for the rezoning of 3.81ha of A2 zoned land to community use, alternative lands are required to accommodate housing demand. The subject lands as identified below are fully serviced and capable of providing approximately 90 housing units. The lands are ideally positioned to facilitate the logical and coherent expansion of existing A2 zoned lands that have been recently developed. Having regard to the presence of existing services, the lack of any physical, environmental and cultural heritage constraints and recent construction activity on the adjoining lands, the following parcel is recommended to be brought forward as part of the proposed variation. See **Figure 2.3.14**.

**Figure 2.3.14 Below is Current Zoning Map for Athboy as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extracts (3no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2 and G1)**

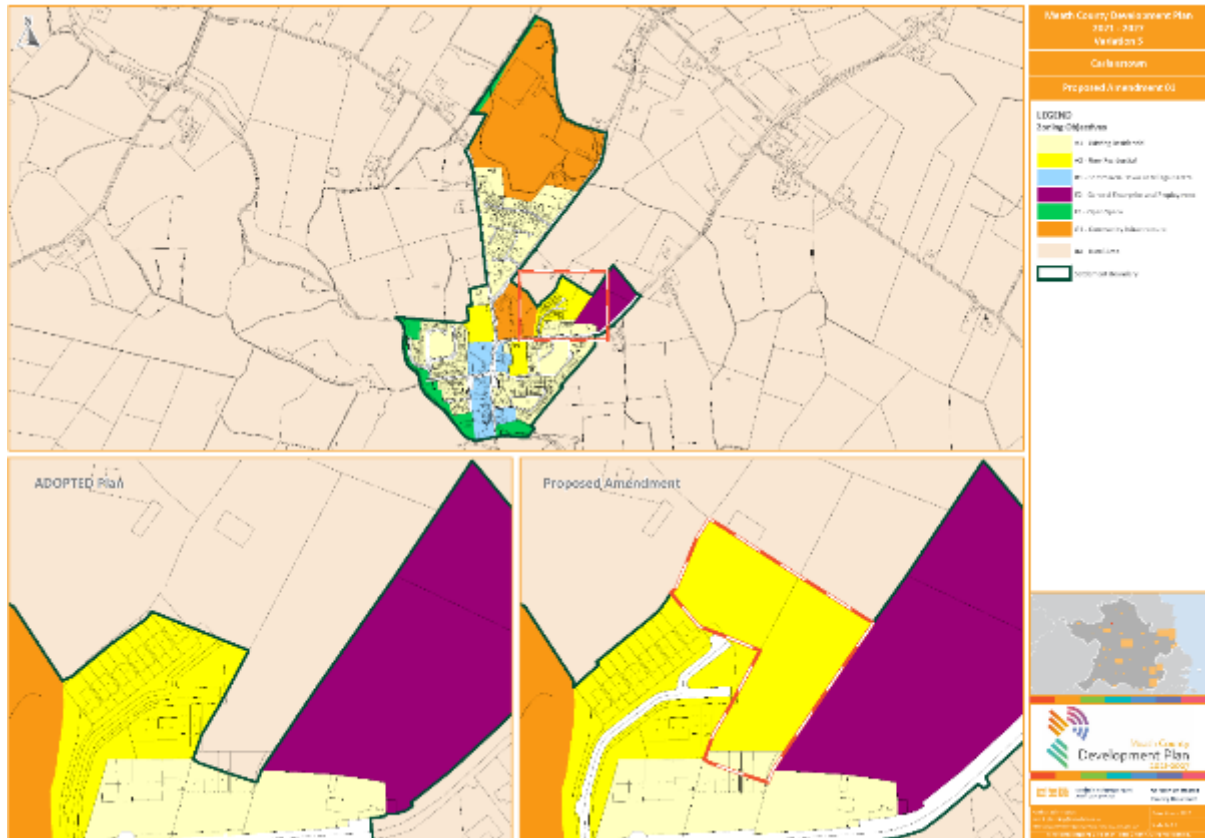




### 2.3.11 Carlanstown

A relatively small site (0.8ha) zoned RA – Rural Area located to the east of the Carlanstown settlement is proposed to be rezoned to A2 – New Residential. The lands are adjacent a newly constructed residential development, are full serviced, infill and are capable of accommodating approximately 20 housing units. See **Figure 2.3.15**.

**Figure 2.3.15** Below is Current Zoning Map for Carlanstown as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, with extract (1no.) showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2)



## 3 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

### 3.1 Introduction

SEA is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental quality and consequences of Plans or Programmes (P/Ps). The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of P/Ps are assessed both during their preparation and prior to their adoption. The SEA process also gives specified environmental authorities, interested parties and the general public, an opportunity to comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed P/P and to be kept informed during the decision-making process.

*Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>2</sup> 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. 456 of 2025 – European Communities (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2025.*

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, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive.”*<sup>3</sup>.

S.I. No. 456 of 2025 relates to SEA as it applies *“to the consideration of the likely significant effects on the environment of a plan made under Parts 3, 21 and 22 of the Planning and Development Act 2024.”*<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the SEA for Variation No.5 is being prepared under the requirements of S.I. No. 456 of 2025.

The SEA process is designed to ensure that significant environmental effects arising from plans are:

- Properly identified and assessed;
- Subject to public participation;

<sup>2</sup> SEA Directive: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

<sup>3</sup> See Section 9(1)(a)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2025/si/456/made/en/print>

- Taken into account by decision makers; and
- Regularly monitored.



The SEA Directive and SEA Regulations require that competent authorities determine whether the implementation of plans or programmes, or modifications thereof, will be likely to have significant effects on the environment. This determination process is referred to as an Environmental Assessment and defined as:

*“...the preparation of an environmental report, the carrying out of consultations, the taking into account of the environmental report and the results of the consultations in decision-making and the provision of information on the decision...”<sup>5</sup>*

### 3.2 SEA Stages and Process

The key focus of SEA is to take environmental issues, and in particular ‘likely significant environmental effects’ of a P / P, into consideration during the plan or programme making process. The key stages in the SEA process as they relate to the Variation No. 5 are outlined in **Table 3.1** and **Figure 3.1** below.

**Table 3.1 Outline of the SEA Process**

Stage	Description	Status
1. Screening	<p>The requirement to undertake a SEA is mandatory for certain Plan / Programme (P / P). Where SEA is not a mandatory requirement, the P / Ps is subject to a ‘Screening process’, to consider if it is <i>likely to have significant effects</i> on the environment, and therefore, if SEA is required.</p> <p>The preparation of the <i>draft Variation No.5</i> has been screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) and it has been concluded that potential for effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt and is required to undergo Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>Therefore, in accordance with <i>Circular Letter SEA 1/08 &amp; NPWS 1/08</i> the <i>draft Variation No.5</i> was also required to undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with <i>Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment</i> (known as the SEA Directive).</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p> 
2. Scoping	<p>Preparation of a SEA Scoping Report highlighting that the Environmental Report is required to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ methods of assessment;</li> <li>■ contents and level of detail in the Plan / Programme;</li> <li>■ the stage in the Plan or Programme-making process; and</li> <li>■ the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in the decision-making process in order to avoid duplication of environmental assessment.</li> </ul> <p>Scoping provides for consultation with the Environmental Authorities specified in S.I. No. 456 of 2025, and the process allows for incorporation of the views of the environmental authorities within <i>draft Variation No.5</i> and the SEA Environmental Report.</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p> 

<sup>5</sup> Article 2(b) of Directive 2001/42/EC, European Union, Article 3 (a) of S.I. No. 456/2004 – European Communities (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2025


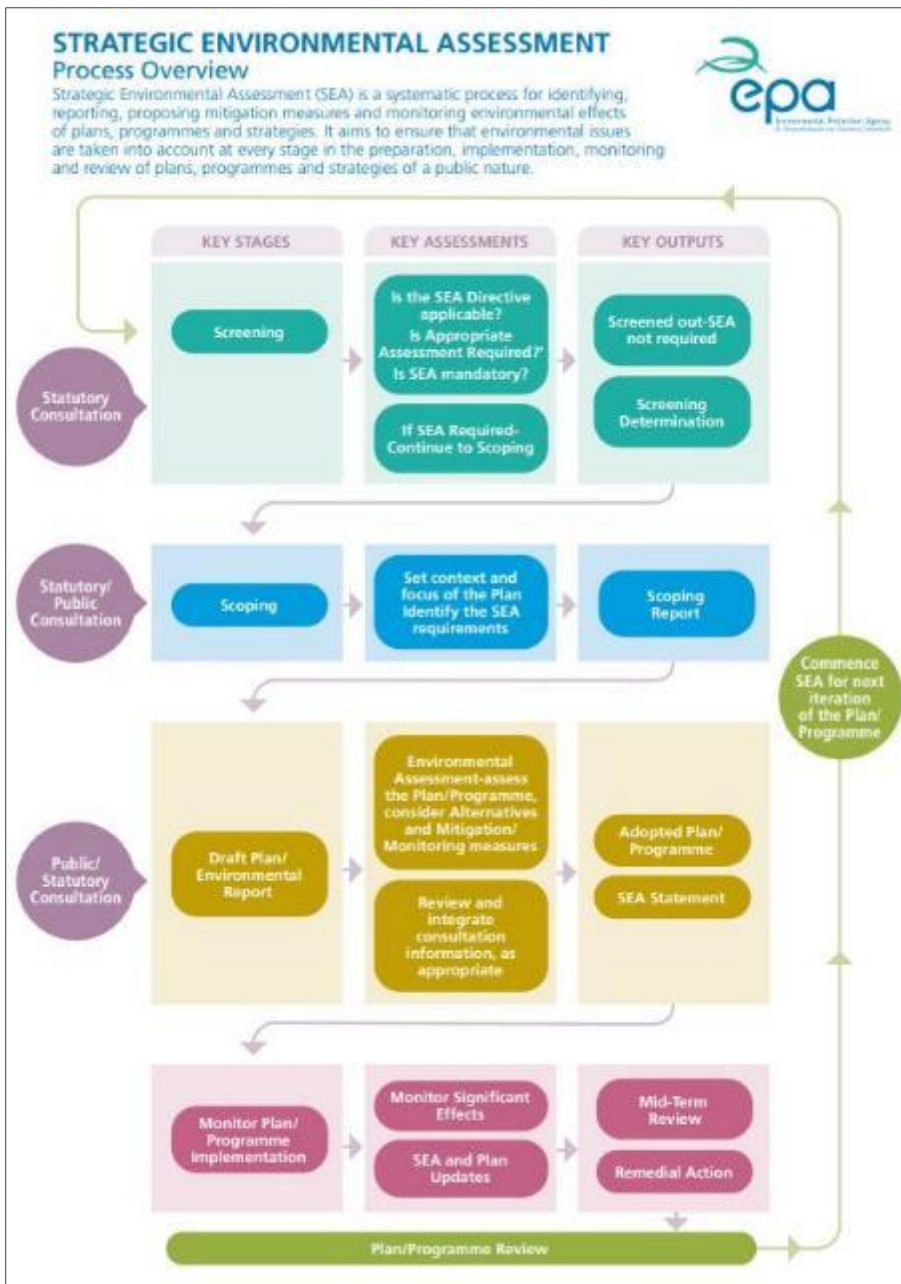
Stage	Description	Status
<p><b>3. Environmental Report</b></p>	<p>Preparation of a systemic identification and evaluation of alternatives and assessment of the <i>likely significant environmental effects</i> of implementing the P / P.</p> <p>The findings of the assessment, which is carried out at various stages in the P / P making (e.g. Draft, Amended Draft etc.), are provided in the SEA Environmental Report in accordance with S.I. No. 456 of 2025.</p> <p>The Environmental Report accompanied the <i>draft Variation No.5</i> on public display.</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p> 
<p><b>4. SEA Statement</b></p>	<p>Completion / adoption of Variation No.5, taking account of <i>likely significant environmental effects</i>, any submissions or observations received from consultations and integration of mitigation and monitoring measures within the Plan.</p> <p>The Environmental Report is concluded, and an SEA Statement is prepared in accordance with S.I. No. 456 of 2025, summarising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan / Programme;</li> <li>▪ how the environmental report, and any submissions /observations or consultations have been taken into account in the preparation of the Plan / Programme;</li> <li>▪ the reasons for choosing the Plan / Programme in light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and</li> <li>▪ the measures decided for monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Plan / Programme.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Current Stage</b></p>

Figure 3.1 Overview of SEA Process (EPA SEA Process Flow, 2021<sup>6</sup>)



### 3.3 Screening for the Requirement for SEA

The requirement to undertake a SEA is mandatory for certain P / Ps that are above specified thresholds. Where SEA is not a mandatory requirement, the P / P is subject to a ‘Screening process’, (Stage 1) to consider if it is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and therefore, if SEA is required.

Screening for the purposes of SEA is defined as “the determination of whether implementation of a P / P [Plan or Programme] would be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment. The process of deciding whether a P / P [Plan or Programme] requires SEA.”<sup>7</sup> The criteria for screening, i.e. determining whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental effects are set out

<sup>6</sup> EPA: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/SEA%20Process%20Checklist.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> EPA: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/SEA%20Pack%202018.pdf>

in Annex II of the SEA Directive. The criteria are set out under two principal headings, each of which have a number of sub-criteria:

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

It is also noted that in accordance with Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08<sup>8</sup>, SEA for a P / P is also a mandatory requirement where the P / P requires Appropriate Assessment (AA) under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

Article 3(2) of the SEA Directive requires that:

*“Subject to paragraph 3, an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes,*

*(a) which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 85/337/EEC, or*

*(b) which, in view of the likely effect on sites, have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC.”*

Article 4(6) of S.I. No. 456 of 2025 further states that:

*“4. (6) ...the competent authority shall determine whether or not the implementation of the plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2 and any submission or observation received in response to a notice under paragraph (5)”*

Draft Variation No.5 was screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the *Habitats Directive* (92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42 of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011*, as amended. The AA Screening has concluded that potential for effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt and therefore appropriate assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Report (NIR) is required.

Therefore, in accordance with *Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08*<sup>9</sup> Variation No.5 was also required to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with *Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment*<sup>10</sup> (the SEA Directive).

Screening of Draft Variation No.5 for SEA is set out in Appendix 3.1 and this Environmental Report has been prepared as Variation No.5 was subject to requirements of SEA.

### 3.4 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Draft Variation No.5 was screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992<sup>11</sup>) and it has been concluded that potential for effects

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> DIRECTIVE 2001/42/EC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

<sup>11</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive_en)

on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt and a Natura Impact Report (NIR) is being prepared.

The Variation No.5 was subject to 'Stage 2 AA' as required by Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and a NIR was prepared and accompanied the Draft Variation No.5 on public display.

### 3.5 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

Draft Variation No.5 was subject to a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) which addresses the issues of assessment and management of flood risk relevant to the Variation. The SFRA identified potential flood related considerations in relation to the proposed land use zonings in Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Kilcock and Navan and specific new objectives (DCE OBJ 23; DNS OBJ 14; KIL OBJ 5B, and NAV OBJ 38 – refer to Section 2.2 of this report and to the Variation) have been included in the Variation.

The SFRA has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of *The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines for Planning Authorities*<sup>12</sup>, and accompanied the Draft Variation No.5 on public display.

### 3.6 SEA Scoping

SEA Scoping (Stage 2) has been undertaken for consideration of the range and level of detail of the information to be included in the SEA Environmental Report in accordance with S.I. 456/2025 – European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025. This ensured that the SEA is focused on the relevant environmental issues and examines issues at the appropriate level of detail.

The SEA Scoping Report was issued to the following Environmental Authorities:

**Table 3.2 List of Environmental Authorities for SEA Scoping**

Prescribed Environmental Authorities*	
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	
Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage	
Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Development Applications Unit	
Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment	
Minister for Agriculture, Food, & the Marine	
Adjoining planning authorities –	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Louth County Council</li> <li>■ Monaghan County Council</li> <li>■ Cavan County Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Westmeath County Council</li> <li>■ Offaly County Council</li> <li>■ Kildare County Council</li> <li>■ Fingal County Council</li> </ul>

\*For purposes of consultation under S.I. No. 456 of 2025

<sup>12</sup> Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government: <https://www.opw.ie/en/media/Planning%20Guidelines%20-%20FRM%20-%20Nov%202009.pdf>

Submissions / observations on the scoping of the Environmental Report were received from the environmental authorities and comments have been incorporated into the Plan and Environmental Report as set out in **Table 3.2**.

**Table 3.2 SEA Scoping Submissions / Observations from Environmental Authorities**

Environmental Authority	Outline of Nature of the Submission	Response to consideration of nature of submission
<p><b>Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)</b></p>	<p>Ensure that the Variation aligns with key higher-level plans and programmes and is consistent with the relevant objectives and policy commitments of the revised National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region.</p>	<p>The information provided has informed the preparation of the Variation and the Environmental Report.</p>
	<p>Climatic factors should be considered with reference to the most up to date Climate Action Plan and relevant Flood Risk Management Plan.</p>	<p>These factors have been referenced</p>
	<p>Data / Resources - The Submission provides links to a range of SEA guidance and resources</p>	<p>The information provided has informed the preparation of the Environmental Report.</p>
	<p>State of the Environment (EPA, 2024) - The Submission refers to key relevant areas in the EPA State of the Environment Report (2024).</p>	
	<p>Reference is provided to the Environmental Monitoring set out in Table 7.1 of the revised NPF's SEA Statement. This monitoring should be reflected, where relevant and appropriate, in the context of future, environmental monitoring and related reporting associated with the revised CDP implementation.</p>	<p>This is noted. In addition as a Variation to the Development Plan, monitoring as detailed in the Environmental Report prepared for the Development Plan remains relevant to Variation as noted in this Environmental Report.</p>
	<p>The Variation should align with national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as relevant sectoral, regional and local adaptation plans.</p>	<p>The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan.</p>

Environmental Authority	Outline of Nature of the Submission	Response to consideration of nature of submission
<p><b>Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage</b></p>	<p>The submission notes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide map of protected structures from Record of Protected Structures</li> <li>▪ Reference to historic designed landscapes (or cultural heritage landscapes), gardens and demesnes</li> <li>▪ Have regard to Ministerial Guidelines ‘<i>Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i>’</li> <li>▪ Note sections from Chapter 8 of Development Plan relating to built heritage</li> <li>▪ Proximity of new zonings to ACAs architectural conservation areas and protected structures, their curtilage/s and/or associated historic demesne/s</li> <li>▪ Provides definitions for aspects of architectural heritage</li> <li>▪ In relation to nature conservation the submission endorses the approach set out in the scoping report</li> <li>▪ Evaluate whether subsequent development of lands to be rezoned in the East Meath area between Bettystown and Laytown and in Donacarney, and in the southern environs of Drogheda as proposed in Variation No. 5 might affect the ex-situ usage of these lands by Special Conservation Interest (SCI) bird species for the nearby River Nanny Estuary and Shore Special Protection Area (SPA) and Boyne Estuary SPA, such as Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Lapwing and Redshank.</li> <li>▪ Evaluation of the possible effects that pollutants entering the Rye Water from developments on the rezoned Kilcock lands during both the developments’ construction and operational phases might have on Qualifying Interests (QIs) for the downstream Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC.</li> <li>▪ Proposed rezoning in vicinity of Duleek Commons pNHA</li> </ul>	<p>The information provided has been reviewed and has informed the preparation and assessment of the Environmental Report and the Appropriate Assessment/Natura Impact Report, as relevant.</p> <p>Map for Record of Protected Structures is included in the Environmental Report.</p> <p>A new objective (INF OBJ 25B) has been included in the Draft Variation in relation to the protection of all surface waters (including the Rye Water – as noted in the submission).</p> <p>The proposed rezoning in the vicinity of Duleek Commons pNHA is from A2 – New Residential to Whitelands – therefore, there is no risk to the pNHA.</p>
<p><b>Louth County Council</b></p>	<p>SEA scoping report is acknowledged and notes that LCC is satisfied that it has been prepared in accordance with the relevant legislation and best-practice guidance.</p>	<p>Noted</p>

### 3.7 SEA Environmental Report

The current stage of the SEA process (Stage 4) involves the finalisation of the Environmental Report – as prepared for the Draft Variation (Stage 3) – for the identification, description, evaluation and mitigation of the potential environmental impacts associated with Variation No.5 and the alternatives taking account of the geographical scope of the Plan.

Article 5(1) and Annex I of the *SEA Directive* provide detail on the information to be included in an Environmental Report. **Table 3.3** provides a checklist of the information referred to in Article 5(1) with a confirmation of where the relevant information is contained within the SEA.

The SEA Environmental Report was placed on public display, together with the Draft Variation No.5 and associated reports for comment from statutory bodies, the public and interested parties from 31 March to 1 May 2026.

**Table 3.3 Information required under Annex I of the SEA Directive**

Information referred to in Article 5(1)	Environmental Report Section
(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Section 1, 2 & Section 4
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	Section 5
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	Section 5
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	Section 5
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	Section 6
(f) the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Section 8
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	Section 9
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;	Section 7
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10;	Section 10

Information referred to in Article 5(1)	Environmental Report Section
(j) a non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.	Refer to Non-technical Summary Report

### 3.8 SEA Statement

Variation No.5 was adopted by the Elected Representatives of Meath County Council on 8 June 2026, and as SEA Statement (Stage 4) has been prepared which includes information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Variation No.5, highlighting the main changes to the Variation which resulted from the SEA process;
- How the SEA Environmental Report and consultations have been taken into account, summarising the key issues raised in consultations and in the Environmental Report indicating what action was taken in response;
- The reasons for choosing the Variation in the light of the other alternatives, identifying the other alternatives considered, commenting on their potential effects and explaining why the Variation, as adopted, was selected; and
- The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing the Variation.

### 3.9 SEA Guidance

The SEA Environmental Report reflects the requirements of *Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the SEA Directive)* and the national implementing Regulations S.I. No. 456 of 2025.

The following principal sources of guidance were used in the SEA process including in the preparation of this Environmental Report:

- Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment.
- S.I. No. 456 of 2025 – European Communities (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2025).
- S.I. No. 201 of 2011 - Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.
- Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
- Planning and Development Act 2024, as amended.
- 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](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf)
- SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans - EPA Recommendations and Resources. EPA, Version 1.27 updated October 2025.
- SEA Pack. EPA, Updated January 2024.
- SEA Spatial Information Sources Inventory. EPA, May 2025.
- SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities. EPA, 2015.

- Good Practice Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Landscape. EPA, December 2023.
- Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statements and Monitoring. EPA, March 2023.
- Good Practice Guidance on Cumulative Effects Assessment in Strategic Environmental Assessment. EPA, January 2020.
- Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment - Environmental Impact Assessment Tiering, EPA, 2021.
- Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines. Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, March 2023.
- EPA Mapping. Environmental Mapping / Geographical Information System (GIS) tools are available at: <http://gis.epa.ie/SeeMaps>
- EPA Water and Air Quality Reports at: <https://www.epa.ie/pubs/legislation/air/quality/>
- EPA Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024, <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/state-of-the-environment/irelands-state-of-the-environment-report-2024.php>
- EPA Ireland's Environment – An Integrated Assessment 2020 at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/irelands-environment/state-of-environment-report/#>
- SEA (EPA) Spatial Information Sources at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/>
- Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment, EPA 2015 at: [https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/biodiversity/EPA-157\\_web.pdf](https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/biodiversity/EPA-157_web.pdf)
- Integrating Climate Change into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note. EPA, 2019.
- Climate Action Plan 2025. Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, 2025.
- Circular Letter PL 9/2013: Article 8 (Decision Making) of EU Directives 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as amended. Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013.
- Circular Letter PSSP 6/2011: Further Transposition of EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2011.
- Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08: Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008.
- Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment - Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual. Strive Report Series No. 106. Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013.
- Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Strategic Environmental Assessment. European Commission 2013.
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites - The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission, 2000, at: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/provision\\_of\\_art6\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/provision_of_art6_en.pdf)

- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission, 2002, at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/natura\\_2000\\_asses\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/natura_2000_asses_en.pdf)
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. National Parks and Wildlife Service, 2009, at: [http://www.npws.ie/publications/archive/NPWS\\_2009\\_AA\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.npws.ie/publications/archive/NPWS_2009_AA_Guidance.pdf)

## 4 Other Relevant Plans and Programmes

### 4.1 Overview

The Meath County Development Plan, including Variation No.5, has been prepared in accordance with the relevant Planning and Development Acts, which sets out the statutory requirements and content of a Development Plan and of the proposed Variation. In accordance with the Planning and Development Acts, the Plan, and the Plan as varied, is strategic in nature for the purposes of developing objectives to deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. Therefore the Plan and the proposed Variation has taken account of the statutory obligations of the Council and the relevant policies or objectives of the Government or Ministers of the Government in the preparation of the Variation.

### 4.2 Planning Hierarchy

Variation No.5 to the CDP has been prepared in direct response to the requirements of higher-level plans and programmes.

In April 2025 the *National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision* was adopted to address evolving challenges in relation to climate change, housing, regional development and population growth.

On the 29th of July 2025 following the approval of the Revised NPF, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published the *NPF Implementation; Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines* in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The *NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines* will replace the *Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, published in December 2020. Local authorities are required to update development plans to reflect the national targets set out by the Department. The *NPF Housing Growth Requirement Guidelines* requires sufficient zoning in County Meath to deliver 2,942 units annually up to 2034. This figure reduces to 1,362 from 2035 to 2040.

In accordance with Section 43 of the *Planning and Development Act 2024* (as amended), the County Development Plan is mandated to be consistent with the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Accordingly, Proposed Variation 5 is required to integrate the updated housing figures into the Core Strategy to ensure consistency with the planning hierarchy.

As required by Section 3.0 of the *NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines*, local authorities must initially assess the current adopted Development Plan and review the Core Strategy, related settlement strategies and zoning objectives against the objectives of the *NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines*.

The relationship with other plans and programmes is discussed, as appropriate, under the Current State of the Environment in Section 5 of this Report.

There is a legislative framework for the protection of the environment and our natural resources relevant to the Variation No.5. Table 4.1 below provides a list of the principle legislative framework.

Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 below provides a working list of the principal plans and programmes influencing the study area, either directly or through European, National and / or County level policy.

**Table 4.1 Legislative Framework**

Legislative Framework	
Planning and Development Act 2024, as amended	Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC)
Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended	
Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended	Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC)
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EEC)	Fourth Daughter Directive (2004/107/EC)
Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU) as amended by (2014/52/EU)	Renewable Energy Directive (2018/2001/EU) as amended by (EU/2023/2413)
Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)	European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations) 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) (as amended)
Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) on the Conservation of Wild Birds, 1979	Renewable Energies in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century: Building a More Sustainable Future
Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC)	EU 2020 climate and energy package
Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	EU Renewable Energy Road Map
Flood Directive (2007/60/EC)	European Landscape Convention 2000
Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC)	Wildlife Acts 1976-2024
Shellfish Waters Directive (2006/113/EC)	The Water Services Act 2007, as amended
Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)	Foreshore Act 1933, as amended
Urban Wastewater Directive (91/271/EEC)	Aquaculture Act 1997, as amended
Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC)	Sea Fisheries & Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006
Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC)	The National Monuments Act 1930-2014
EU Landfill Directive (1999/31/EC)	Roads Act 1993, as amended
Water Environment (Abstractions and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022	European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Sea Fisheries) Regulations 2013, as amended
Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC)	Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023
Directive (EU) 2024/2881 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe	

**Table 4.2 Relevant National Plans and Programmes**

National & Regional Plans and Programmes	
National Planning Framework (NPF) Project 2040	National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development
National Planning Framework First Revision (April, 2025)	Sectoral Climate Change Adaption Strategies and Low Carbon Roadmaps
National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030	Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012)

**Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027**  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

National & Regional Plans and Programmes	
Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022	National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 for the Eastern Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA)	The Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines (2014)
Ireland's Environment - An Integrated Assessment 2020	Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042
National Mitigation Plan 2017	Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2019)
Our Sustainable Future - A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012)	The National Renewable Energy Action Plan
Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland (2021)	National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2017-2020
Design Standards for Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2025)	Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways 2018
Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness - 2016	The National Broadband Plan 2020
Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024)	National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025
National 4 <sup>th</sup> Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030	Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)
National Planning Framework	Heritage Ireland 2030
National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture Development 2014- 2020	Food Harvest 2020
National CFRAMS Programme	National Adaptation Framework Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland 2018 and Review of the National Adaptation Framework 2022
River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021	Climate Action Plan 2025
River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027	Water Services Strategic Plan / Capital Investment Programme (Uisce Éireann)
Water Action Plan 2024, A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland	Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (2009)	Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study
Waste Action Plan for Circular Economy – Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020-2025	National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2023-2029

**Table 4.3 Relevant Local Plans and Programmes**

Local Plans and Programmes	
Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied)	Meath Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029
Meath County Council Corporate Plan 2024-2029	County Meath Biodiversity Action Plan 2015-2020

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Local Plans and Programmes	
Draft Drogheda Joint Local Area Plan Issues Paper (February 2024)	Meath Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030
Action Plan for Jobs - Mid East Region	County Meath Heritage Strategy 2024-2030
Meath Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022	Boyne Valley Food Development Strategy 2024-2028
Maynooth & Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031	

## 5 Current State of the Receiving Environment (Environmental Baseline and Issues)

### 5.1 Introduction

The *SEA Directive* requires that the information on the baseline environment is focused upon the relevant aspects of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected and the likely evolution of the current environment in the absence of the Variation No.5. This section provides a strategic description of aspects of environmental components and any existing environmental issues which have the greatest potential to be affected by implementation of the Variation No.5, if unmitigated.

The administrative area of Meath is c.230,000 hectares and is the second largest county in Leinster. Meath adjoins Dublin to the south and is a vital supporting partner in the recent growth of the Greater Dublin Area. The environmental aspects are described in line with the legislative requirements, under the following headings:

- Biodiversity (including Flora & Fauna);
- Population and Human Health;
- Land, Soils and Geology;
- Water Quality;
- Air, Noise and Climate;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Landscape;
- Material Assets;
- Interaction of the foregoing; and
- Cumulative Impacts.

#### 5.1.1 Ireland's State of the Environment Report (2024)

The eighth State of the Environment Report highlights that the scale of improvements that are being made across a variety of areas is insufficient to meet national long-term environmental objectives and targets, especially where they require coordinated action across thematic areas. In all cases, the outlook is not positive with substantial challenges to deliver on climate, air, nature, water and the circular economy.

The report highlights the need to continue intensifying activities to address climate change and biodiversity decline while also addressing Ireland's other environmental priorities. These include tackling water pollution from nutrients, physical damage to our waterways and deficits in the safety of our water supplies, improving our waste segregation and increasing recycling rates, while at the same time reducing our overall consumption of our resources. A further priority is improving air quality to protect our health, including reducing ambient pollution from particulates and nitrogen dioxide.

This report shows not only that there is a need for urgent interventions to address climate change and biodiversity decline but also that there are other environmental priorities for Ireland. These include tackling water pollution, investing in critical water services, improving waste segregation and recycling rates, continuing to improve our air quality and mitigating radiological risks. In addition, this assessment

indicates that how we use our land is a significant contributor to the climate, biodiversity and water quality challenges.

The report highlights five key priorities as follows:

- Delivering a national policy position on the environment - *We urgently need to have a national policy position on the environment to address the complex interactions, synergies and trade-offs across environmental policy areas and to deal with its interactions with other policy domains.*
- Driving policy implementation - *We must rigorously implement existing environmental plans and programmes to achieve the benefits that they were developed to deliver.*
- Transforming our systems - Transformation of our energy, transport, food and industrial sectors is critical to achieving a sustainable future.
- Scaling up investment in infrastructure - *Investment in water, energy, transport and waste management infrastructure is essential to protect the environment now and into the future.*
- Protecting the environment to protect our health - *Protecting the environment is key to protecting our health and we must act to reduce the modifiable risks to our health from environmental exposures.*

## 5.2 Biodiversity

Biodiversity plays a significant role in the provision of clean air, water, healthy soils and food as well as visually contributing to a plan area with its natural beauty and heritage. The natural heritage of County Meath is an important asset and a unique resource.

Habitat biodiversity in County Meath is focused around the Boyne and Blackwater rivers as well as along the short coastline which supports a wide range of rare or threatened flora and fauna species. Protecting and conserving these habitats is critically important, not just to the residents of the County but also in a national and international context.

### 5.2.1 Ecological Networks and Connectivity

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive recognises the importance of ecological networks as corridors and stepping stones for wildlife, including for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species of flora and fauna. The Directive requires that ecological connectivity and areas of ecological value outside the Natura 2000 network of designated ecological sites are maintained, and it recognises the need for the management of these areas through land use planning and development policies. Ecological networks are important in connecting areas of local biodiversity with each other and with nearby designated sites so as to prevent islands of habitat from being isolated entities.

Ecological networks are important in connecting areas of local biodiversity with each other and with nearby designated sites so as to prevent islands of habitat from being isolated entities. They are composed of linear features, such as treelines, hedgerows and rivers / streams which provide corridors or stepping stones for wildlife species moving within their normal range.

Ecological corridors are important for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species, particularly for mammals, bats and small birds and facilitate linkages both between and within designated ecological sites, non-designated surrounding countryside and the more urban areas of the County.

Woodlands in Meath tend to be small and fragmented and are more frequent near rivers, particularly along the lower stretches of the River Boyne. The most abundant native woodland habitat type in the County is Oak-Ash-Hazel woodland (WN2) reflecting the limestone derived soils. A large proportion of the County's woodlands are parklands associated with historic demesnes.

Hedgerows are perhaps the most characteristic feature of the County's landscape and provide an important habitat for many species and act as a wildlife corridor in a landscape dominated by large tracts of intensive agriculture.

The County contains significant stretches of both operational and derelict waterways including the River Boyne, River Blackwater, River Nanny, River Delvin, River Inney, River Broadmeadow and the Royal Canal.

### 5.2.2 National Biodiversity Action Plan

Ireland's fourth *National Biodiversity Action Plan* (NBAP) sets national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030. The Plan's vision for Ireland in 2050 is as follows:

*Biodiversity in Ireland is valued, conserved, restored and sustainably used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.*

The key objectives of the NBAP are as follows:

- Adopt a Whole-of Government, Whole of-Society Approach to Biodiversity;
- Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs;
- Secure Nature's Contribution to People;
- Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity;
- Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives.

### 5.2.3 Designated European Sites

Within County Meath, there are a total of 14 sites designated for protection under the Natura 2000 network (there are nine SACs and five SPAs). All designated European Sites located within County Meath are listed in **Table 5.1** and shown in **Figure 5.1** below. The settlements where re-zoning is proposed as part of Variation No.5 are presented as blue dots in **Figure 5.1** below. None of these land parcels are within the Natura 2000 network.

There are a further 13 SPAs and 19 SACs within the potential ZoI (ZoI) of the MCC area listed in **Table 5.1**. These sites (a total of 46) are the sites located within the potential zone of influence of the county boundary.

Conservation objectives for SACs and SPAs have been set for the habitats and species for which the sites have been selected. Site specific detailed conservation objectives are available on the NPWS website<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> NPWS website 2019: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives>

**Table 5.1 European Sites located in County Meath and within the potential Zone of Influence of the County Boundary**

European Sites in County Meath			
Site Code	Special Protection Area (SPA)	Site Code	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA	002299	River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC
004065	Lough Sheelin SPA	002342	Mount Hevey Bog SAC
004080	Boyne Estuary SPA	000006	Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally) SAC
004158	River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA	002340	Moneybeg & Clareisland Bogs SAC
004236	North-West Irish Sea SPA	002120	Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC
		002203	Girley (Drewstown) Bog SAC
		001957	Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC
		001398	Rye Water Valley / Carton SAC
		001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs & Lough Doo SAC
European Sites within a zone of influence (15km) of the County Boundary			
Site Code	Special Protection Area (SPA)	Site Code	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
004061	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	002201	Derragh Bog SAC
004043	Lough Derravarragh SPA	002121	Lough Lene SAC
004102	Garriskill Bog SPA	000679	Garriskil Bog SAC
004044	Lough Ennell SPA	002341	Ardagullion Bog SAC
004006	North Bull Island SPA	002205	Wooddown Bog SAC
004024	South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA	000582	Raheenmore Bog SAC
004016	Baldoyle Bay SPA	000685	Lough Ennell SAC
004025	Malahide Estuary SPA	000925	The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC
004015	Rogerstown Estuary SPA	000391	Ballynafagh Bog SAC
004122	Skerries Islands SPA	001387	Ballynafagh Lake SAC
004014	Rockabill SPA	001831	Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC
004091	Stabannan-Braganstown SPA	000206	North Dublin Bay SAC
004026	Dundalk Bay SPA	000210	South Dublin Bay SAC
		000199	Baldoyle Bay SAC
		000205	Malahide Estuary SAC
		000208	Rogerstown Estuary SAC
		003000	Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC
		001459	Clogher Head SAC
		000455	Dundalk Bay SAC

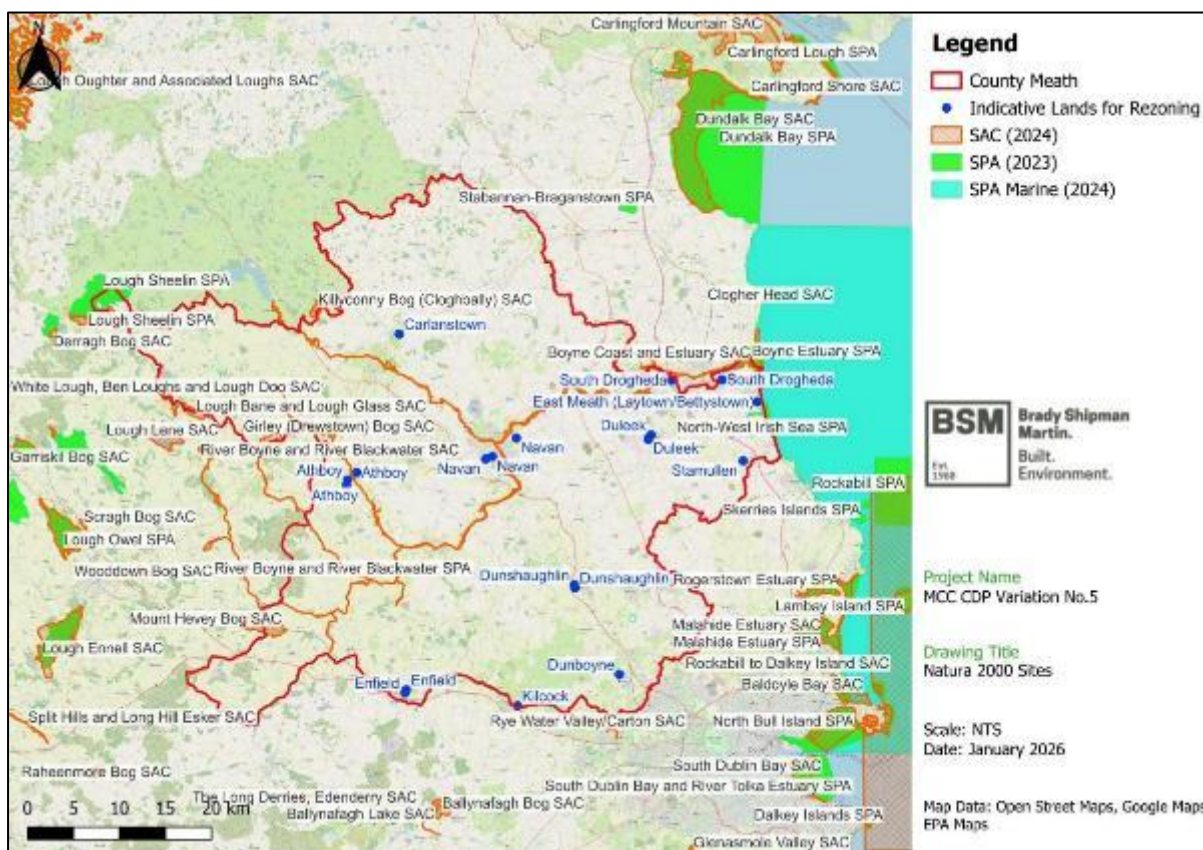


Figure 5.1 European Sites in the study area and within potential zone of influence

Conservation objectives for SACs and SPAs have been set for the habitats and species for which the sites have been selected. Site specific detailed conservation objectives are available on the NPWS website<sup>14</sup>. Any potential for impact on European Sites are fully addressed in the NIR that accompanies the Variation No.5 and SEA Environment Report.

#### 5.2.4 Nationally Designated Sites

Nationally Designated Sites include Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) which are legally protected areas that are considered important for their habitats, or which holds species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection. Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) are also of significance for wildlife and habitats but have not yet been statutorily designated. However, under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000) NHAs are legally protected from damage from the date they are formally proposed for designation<sup>15</sup>. Further protection has been afforded to these areas by including appropriate protective measures in the Meath CDP.

There are no NHAs within the study area. See **Table 5.2** below for pNHAs located in the study area NHAs and pNHAs within a 15km buffer of the study area. **Figure 5.2** shows all the NHA and pNHAs in the study area and in the surrounding potential Zol.

<sup>14</sup> NPWS website 2019: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives>

<sup>15</sup> NPWS website 2019: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/nha>

**Table 5.2 Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) located in County Meath and within the zone of influence of the County Boundary**

Natural Heritage Areas in County Meath			
Site Code	Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)	Site Code	Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)
001324	Jamestown Bog NHA	000006	Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)
001580	Girley Bog NHA	000987	Lough Sheelin
001582	Molerick Bog NHA	001814	Lough Naneagh
		001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs And Lough Doo
		000556	Lough Shesk
		002103	Royal Canal
		001398	Rye Water Valley/Carton
		001584	Mount Hevey Bog
		001357	Trim
		000557	Rathmoylan Esker
		001592	Boyne Woods
		000553	Crewbane Marsh
		001591	Slane Riverbank
		001589	Rosnaree Riverbank
		001593	Thomastown Bog
		001578	Duleek Commons
		001579	Balrath Woods
		001576	Cromwell's Bush Fen
		000554	Laytown Dunes / Nanny Estuary
		001957	Boyne Coast And Estuary
		001861	Dowth Wetland
		001862	Boyne River Islands
		001587	Mentrim Lough
		000552	Corstown Loughs
		001594	Ballyhoe Lough
		001558	Breakey Loughs
		001573	Ballynabarny Fen
Natural Heritage Areas within the zone of influence (15km) of the County Boundary			
Site Code	Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)	Site Code	Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)
000985	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough	001203	Knock Lake
000684	Lough Derravaragh	001204	Bog of the Ring
000694	Wooddown Bog	002000	Loughshinny Coast

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

002323	Milltownpass Bog	000207	Rockabill Island
000677	Cloncrow Bog (New Forest)	001616	Louth Hall and Ardee Woods
001725	Nure Bog	001856	Dunany Point
000570	Black Castle Bog	001801	Barmeath Woods
001388	Carbury Bog	001454	Ardee Cutaway Bog
001393	Hodgestown Bog	001464	Melifont Abbey Woods
001218	Skerries Islands NHA	001293	Blackhall Woods
		000208	Rogerstown Estuary
		000205	Malahide Estuary
		001215	Portraine Shore
		001208	Feltrim Hill
		000199	Baldoyle Bay
		001763	Sluice River Marsh
		000178	Santry Demesne
		000206	North Dublin Bay
		000128	Liffey Valley
		000390	Ballina Bog
		001391	Donadea Wood
		001387	Ballynafagh Lake
		000391	Ballynafagh Bog
		002104	Grand Canal
		000925	The Long Derries, Edenderry
		000582	Raheenmore Bog
		000685	Lough Ennell
		000690	Lough Sheever Fen/ Slevin's Lough Complex
		002069	Ardagullion Bog
		000679	Garriskil Bog
		000672	Aghalasty Fen
		000686	Lough Glore
		000681	Hill of Mael and the Rock of Curry
		000992	Lough Gowna
		000008	Lough Ramor
		001608	Monalty Lough
		001671	Spring and Corcrin Lough
		001828	Reaghstown Marsh
		000560	Lough Fea Demesne

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

	000561	Lough Naglack
	002077	Nafarty Fen
	000456	Stabannan-Braganstown
	001806	Kildemock Marsh
	001464	Mellifont Abbey Woods
	001804	King William's Glen
	001721	Lough Bane
	001459	Clogher Head
	001458	Castlecoo Hill
	000692	Scragh Bog
	000978	Cordonaghy Bog
	000690	Lough Sheever Fen / Slevin's Lough Complex
	001599	Creevy Lough
	001461	Darver Castle Woods
	001462	Drumacg, Toprass and Cortial Lough
	000455	Dundalk Bay
	001803	Stephenstown Pond
	000991	Dodder Valley
	000211	Slade of Saggart and Crooksling Glen
	001212	Lugmore Glen

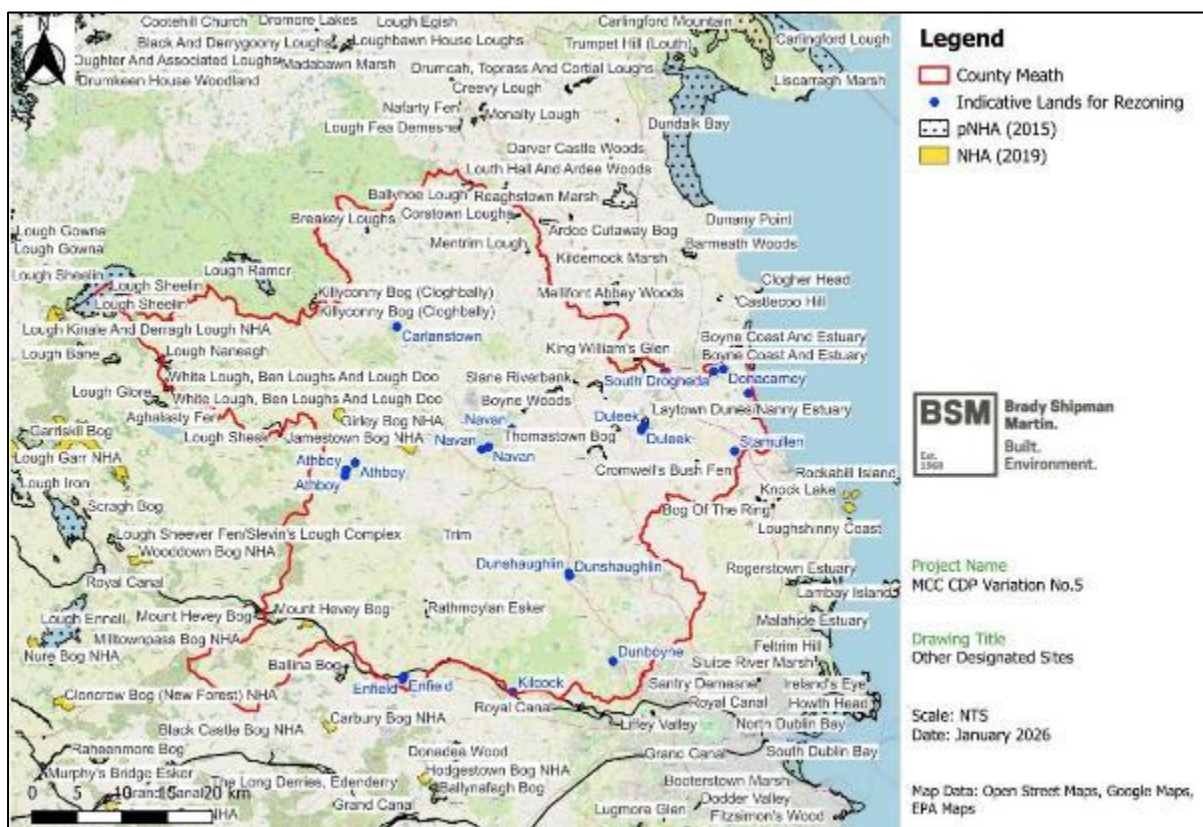


Figure 5.2 Natural Heritage Areas in the study area and within potential zone of influence

### 5.2.5 Water Framework Directive (WFD) Register of Protected Area

Under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) a number of waterbodies (or parts of) must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by people and by wildlife have been listed on Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs). This register is split into five categories as outlined by the EPA:

- Areas designated for the abstraction of water intended for human consumption under Article 7;
- Areas designated for the protection of economically significant aquatic species (i.e. shellfish);
- Bodies of water designated as recreational waters, including areas designated as bathing waters under Directive 76/160/EEC;
- Nutrient-sensitive areas, including areas designated as vulnerable zones under Directive 91/676/EEC and areas designated as sensitive areas under Directive 91/271/EEC; and
- Areas designated for the protection of habitats or species where the maintenance or improvement of the status of water is an important factor in their protection, including relevant European sites (Natura 2000) designated under Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 79/409/EEC.

A number of these protected areas are present within the study area or in immediate vicinity and these are:

- The entire ground waterbody beneath the county is included on the Drinking Water - Ground Waterbody.
- WFD RPA Nutrient Sensitive Areas (Lake, Coastal & Transitional waterbodies) – Boyne Estuary.
- WFD RPA Nutrient Sensitive Areas (Rivers) - River Boyne.
- WFD RPA Recreational Waters – Bettystown bathing water

- WFD RPA Shellfish Areas - Balbriggan \ Skerries Shellfish Area.
- Salmonid Rivers – River Boyne.

### 5.2.6 Designated Shellfish Waters

The EU Shellfish Waters Directive (2006/113/EC) aims to protect and improve shellfish waters in order to support shellfish life and growth.

Pollution reduction programmes are in operation for these areas. The identified pressures on these designated waters include urban wastewater systems, on-site wastewater treatment systems and port activities. The coastal waters provide an important resource, supporting and generating employment and recreational activities and must be protected.

There is one area of Shellfish waters - Balbriggan / Skerries (IE\_EA\_020\_0000) off the Meath coast and c. 3.7km to the east of the study area, designated as Shellfish Waters pursuant to the Shellfish Directive and Section 6 of the Quality of Shellfish Waters Regulations (S.I. No. 268 of 2006) require the development of Pollution Reduction Programmes (PRPs) for designated shellfish areas in order to support shellfish life and growth and to contribute to the high quality of directly edible shellfish products. Shellfish PRPs relate to bivalve and gastropod molluscs, including oysters, mussels, cockles, scallops and clams. They do not cover shellfish crustaceans such as crabs, crayfish and lobsters.

### 5.2.7 Salmonid Waters

The *Salmonid Regulations* (S.I. No. 293 of 1988) designate the waters capable of supporting salmon (*Salmo salar*), trout (*Salmo trutta*), char (*Salvelinus*) and whitefish (*Coregonus*) as protected. Thirty-four rivers, tributaries and lakes are listed and protected under these Regulations that prescribe quality standards for salmonid waters, sampling programmes and methods of analysis and inspection to be used by local authorities to determine compliance with the standards.

The River Boyne in County Meath is a designated Salmonid Water under the EU Freshwater Fish Directive.

### 5.2.8 Other Designations

#### 5.2.8.1 Statutory Nature Reserves

Other nature conservation designations are *Statutory Nature Reserves*, which are protected under Ministerial order. There are no nature reserves within the study area. The closest nature reserve is the Rogerstown Estuary Nature Reserve, c. 14km to the east of the County Meath boundary.

In January 2019 the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht published notice of making Statutory Instrument (S.I. No. 602 of 2018) under section 16 of the Wildlife Act established the first Nature Reserve (private) in County Meath at Newcastle Lough. The lake has excellent water quality with a high diversity of aquatic invertebrates and it contains stocks of coarse fish, pike and brown trout. The site has a diverse range of habitats including reedbeds, wet grassland and wet woodland and an associated variety of plant and animal species. Otter, badger, pine marten and six species of bat have been recorded at the site. Other noteworthy species include kingfisher and crayfish.

#### 5.2.8.2 Ramsar Sites

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention. Wetlands are important ecosystems, which improve water quality, provide storm protection, flood

mitigation, stabilise shorelines, maintain biodiversity, and provide natural products such as fish and shellfish. Ireland presently has 45 no. RAMSAR sites. Relevant authorities are expected to manage their Ramsar Sites so as to maintain their ecological character and retain their essential functions and values for future generations. There are no Ramsar sites located in County Meath. The nearest Ramsar Site to County Meath is Lough Derravaragh, <10km west of the County boundary in County Westmeath.

#### 5.2.8.3 Wildfowl Sanctuaries

Wildfowl sanctuaries are areas that have been excluded from the 'Open Season Order' so that game birds can rest and feed undisturbed. There are 68 no. sanctuaries in the State<sup>16</sup>. Shooting of game birds is not allowed in these sanctuaries. The Boyne Estuary (part) (WFS-41) is located within Meath County.

#### 5.2.8.4 *Margaritifera* Sensitive Area

Freshwater pearl mussel is a globally threatened, long-lived and extremely sensitive species that can be impacted by many forms of pollution, particularly sediment and nutrient pollution and by hydrological and morphological changes, which may arise from developments, activities or changes in any part of the catchment. There are two species of freshwater pearl mussel in Ireland (*Margaritifera margaritifera* and *Margaritifera durrovensis*) and both are protected under Annex II and Annex V of the EU Habitats Directive. There are no *Margaritifera* sensitive area within the study area or in immediate vicinity.

#### 5.2.9 Invasive Species

Invasive species constitute a threat to biodiversity and eco-systems and can have economic costs. In Ireland, there are currently 377 recorded non-native species and 342 non-native '*potential Invaders*', 66% are considered to have a low impact risk, 21% to have a medium impact risk and 13% have a high impact risk. The majority of invasive species in Ireland are plants, however, there is potential for rising trends of invasive vertebrate and invertebrate species<sup>17</sup>.

In Meath, c. 350 species of alien vascular plant, accounting for around one third of the county's total vascular plant species, though only a handful of these cause problems. The most destructive of these species are Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), usually occasionally found along watercourses, completely taking over areas of the riverbank. Landowners are responsible for preventing the spread of Japanese Knotweed on their own land.

To date, an invasive species audits have been carried out along the Boyne, and it is an objective of the Meath Biodiversity Action Plan to continue to monitor alien invasive species in the County and ensure adequate training is carried out to contain, manage and effectively dispose of such species.

#### 5.2.10 Biodiversity Issues

Ireland is currently experiencing a decline in floral and faunal populations. Implementation of measures to achieve the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the objectives of the WFD are likely to benefit protected sites in the future.

Certain developments and activities associated with agricultural activities, afforestation, urban developments, windfarms, quarries, tourism and recreation, peat extraction, commercial fishing, ports, coastal and fluvial flood defence schemes as well as a wide range of infrastructural works (including road

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<sup>16</sup> NPWS (2021).

<sup>17</sup> O'Flynn, C., Kelly, J. and Lysaght, L. (2014). Ireland's invasive and non-native species—trends in introductions. National Biodiversity Data Centre Series No. 2.

works, water abstraction and wastewater disposal) that are located within, or close to, ecologically sensitive sites can give rise to significant environmental pressures. Within Meath, the protection of waterways, wetlands and coastal areas and the avoidance of the spread of invasive species are major issues.

Plants species such as Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), can be found in several locations in Meath. Problems associated with these species include:

- loss of biodiversity as native species are shaded out;
- increased erosion as it stops plant growth beneath it in the summer and dies back in winter leaving bare river banks open to erosion;
- infrastructure damage since it can grow through tarmac, walls, pipework and even concrete;
- expensive and time consuming to eradicate;
- Giant Hogweed is a health hazard; and
- reduced access to riverbanks.

Existing biodiversity issues / pressures and threats on Ireland's habitats and species, which are also relevant to the County Meath, include:

- Direct habitat Loss within European Sites (e.g. roads and other development occurring on undeveloped sites, coastal protection works).
- Indirect effects on the ecological networks supporting European Sites (e.g. roads and other linear developments forming barriers to movements of mobile species or loss of sites that support an overall population of species).
- Indirect threat to water quality including changes to surface and groundwater quality and volumes (e.g. wastewater treatment plants, septic tanks, changes to agricultural drainage, changes to flood regime).
- Direct / indirect disturbance of sensitive habitats / species (e.g. recreation at coastal sites, riverside walkways etc.).
- Direct / indirect threats to European Sites by invasive species. (e.g. landscaping, forestry, urbanization).
- Direct / indirect threats to native flora and fauna from pathogens / diseases.
- Land Management - conversion of land / sites and sealing of soils can release CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere and further reduce areas of 'carbon sinks'.
- Invasive Species and problematic species - continued control and management of invasive species. For example, the loss of biodiversity as native species are shaded out, but also diseases and pathogens.
- Mixed source pollution - For example emissions from transport, heating homes, leachate from landfills, water pollution from wastewater treatment systems, eutrophication and acidification from forestry.

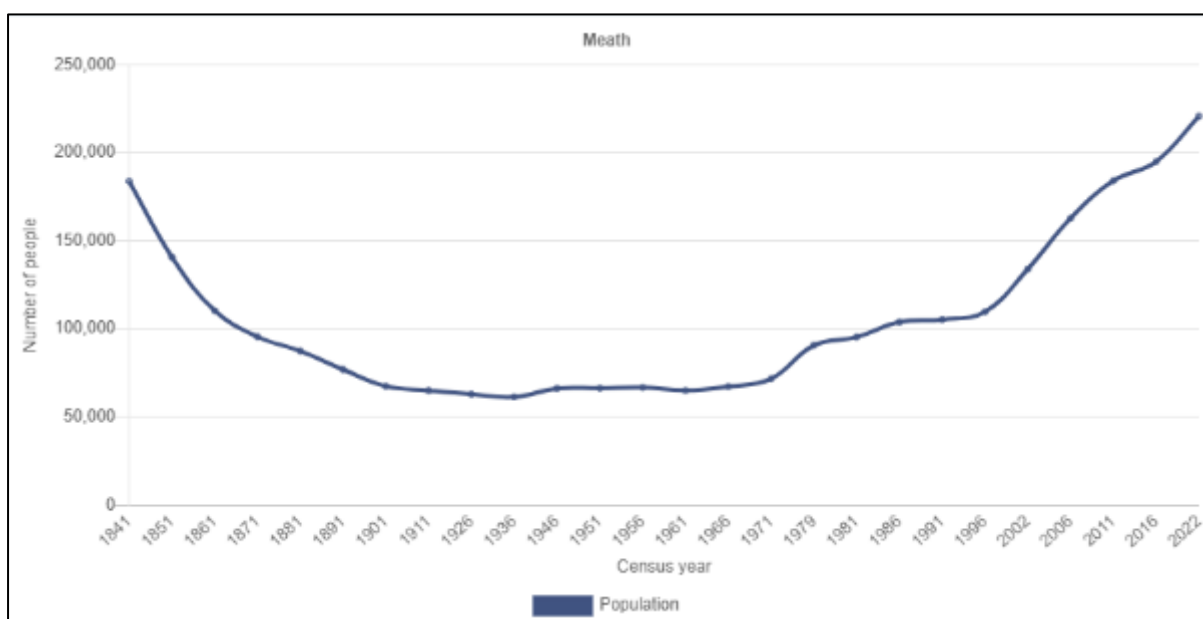
## 5.3 Population & Human Health

### 5.3.1 Population

The administrative area of Meath covers an area of over 230,000 hectares (ha) and is the second largest county in Leinster. It shares its boundary with counties, Dublin, Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly and Kildare. The 2022 Census results showed that the population for County Meath was 220,

826<sup>18</sup> persons, an increase of 13.2% from the 2016 census (195, 044 persons)<sup>19</sup>. The 2016 Census showed that the population of Meath was an increase of 5.9% from the 2011 census (184, 135 persons)<sup>20</sup>.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) outlines that by 2040 there will be roughly an extra one million people living in Ireland. The population of Meath is growing at a slightly faster rate than both the region as a whole and the Eastern Strategic Planning Area. There was a rapid growth in population in Meath between 2006-11 when the population increased by 13% with 5.9% increase during the following five-year period (2011-2016). Over the 10-year period between 2006-16 the population increase was 20%. Between 2016-2027 it is projected that the population of Meath will increase by 17.3% (Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027). Refer to **Figure 5.3** below.



**Figure 5.3 Population changes for County Meath, 1841 to 2022<sup>21</sup>**

Population density measures the number of persons occupying a geographical area in proportion to the size of that area. In Census 2022, the population density of the State was 73 people per km<sup>2</sup>. **Figure 5.4** below indicates the population density per square kilometre (km<sup>2</sup>) within the study area.

<sup>18</sup> 2022 Census - <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/censusofpopulation2022/>

<sup>19</sup> 2016 Census - <https://visual.cso.ie/?body=entity/ima/cop/2016&boundary=C03849V04599&guid=2ae19629-1494-13a3-e055-000000000001>

<sup>20</sup> 2011 Census - <https://visual.cso.ie/?body=entity/ima/cop/2011&boundary=C03994V04752&guid=C11>

<sup>21</sup> 2022 Census : Population Distribution and Movements - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp1/censusofpopulation2022profile1-populationdistributionandmovements/populationdistribution/>



Figure 5.4 Population Density (persons per sq km) within County Meath<sup>22</sup>

### 5.3.1.1 Age Profile

The age structure of a population is influenced by patterns of natural increase and migration. The age dependency ratio is the proportion of population in the young (0-14 years) and old (65 years and above) cohorts to the working population cohort (15-64 years). The age structure of the population of County Meath reflects the future housing requirements, school requirements and community services.

The age structure of the population indicates that the County in 2022 has a relatively young and working population (42 years and 11 years in 2022) and corresponds to that of the State (41 years).

Child dependency<sup>23</sup> in County Meath is high with 22.7% of the population under the age of 14 in comparison to an average of 19.65% for the State. Old age dependency<sup>24</sup> in the County has an average of 15% for the State, while for County Meath is 12.25%. The working population (15-64 years) for County Meath is 64.9% and corresponds to that for the State (65.02%).

The increased numbers in the young population (0-14 years) reflects a more immediate requirements for additional childcare and schools for the younger population. The slight increase in the older populations (65 years and above) will also have long-term implications relating to healthcare, social services and transport.

Figure 5.5 below shows the population by age distribution for County Meath.

<sup>22</sup> CSO Census 2022: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp1/censusofpopulation2022profile1-populationdistributionandmovements/populationdistribution/>

<sup>23</sup> CSO Census 2022: Persons aged 0-14

<sup>24</sup> CSO Census 2022: Persons aged 65+

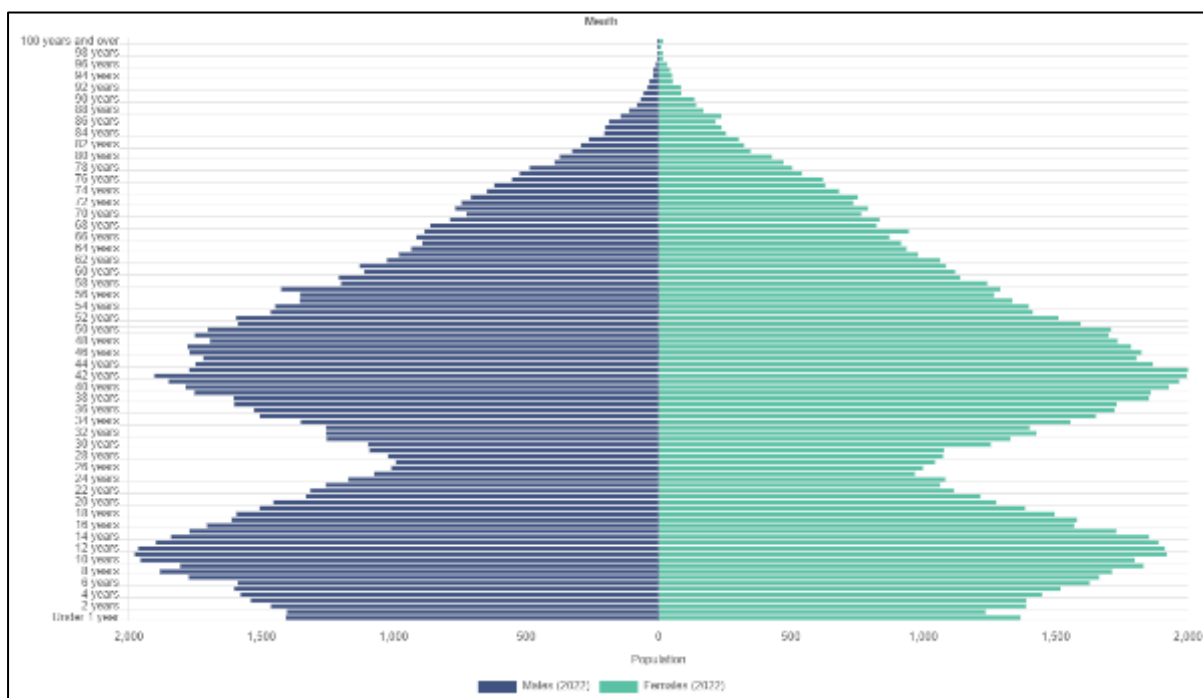


Figure 5.5 Population by age distribution for County Meath 2022<sup>25</sup>

### 5.3.1.2 Housing

As per 2022 Census, the total stock of habitable permanent housing in Census 2022 was 2,112,121, over 5% higher than in Census 2016. County Meath (housing stock 2022 - 78,759) has one of the fastest growth in housing stock, c. 11.48% higher than 2016 census (housing stock 2016 – 70,649). The population for County Meath has grown at a similar rate to that of the housing stock and the increase in housing stock in this area is mainly driven by increase of new dwelling completion in these areas.

In recent years, Meath has experienced significant pressure in the rural area for one-off rural housing which has resulted in the open rural character of many areas being eroded by piecemeal housing development. It is a necessity to manage future rural housing development in County Meath and to facilitate the provision of more sustainable housing options for rural communities, through building up capacity of rural villages and rural nodes to absorb more residential development which will sustain their futures.

It is essential to promote and facilitate the development of sustainable communities in the County by managing the level of growth in each settlement to ensure future growth is in accordance with the Core Strategy and County Settlement Hierarchy in order to deliver compact urban areas and sustainable rural communities. Placemaking, compact growth, active land management, and addressing the impact of climate change are some of the key themes of the growth strategy in both the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Settlement and Housing Strategy is closely aligned with the Core Strategy in that the future housing need is based on the population and household projections outlined in the Core Strategy. The Strategy includes an analysis of housing requirements in the context of

<sup>25</sup> Census 2022 Population by age - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp1/censusofpopulation2022profile1-populationdistributionandmovements/populationdistribution/>

affordability and addresses the need to ensure that housing is available for persons with different levels of income.

#### 5.3.1.3 Tourism

Tourism has been identified as one of the country's most important economic sectors and is credited with playing a significant role in the economic recovery in recent years. Tourism is particularly important in that it can assist in providing business and employment opportunities across regions and leads to jobs across the spectrum of skills requirements.

The quality and diversity of Meath's tourism offer is particularly strong in relation to its rich heritage, quality rural landscape and many towns and villages, meaning the County has a lot to offer as a tourist destination.

The Boyne Valley is identified as the birthplace of Ireland's Ancient East and Meath in particular is the gateway to this destination. Meath has a unique collection of pre-historic sites and monuments in particular the Brú na Bóinne, UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Hill of Tara, Trim Castle, Newgrange, Knowth and Hill of Slane are all significant tourism attractions in the Meath with excellent visitor numbers.

Meath also has a number of annual festivals and events such as Hinterland book festival, Kells type trail and Guth Gafa film festival all located in Kells, Nobber Harp festival, Spirits of Meath throughout the County and many more, which attract domestic and overseas visitors each year. Family attractions such as Emerald Park provides a new tourist attraction into Meath, deviating from the traditional heritage and cultural attraction. Slane Distillery also provides a form of tourism diversification within the County which attracts a different target market not previously captured by the County.

#### 5.3.1.4 Employment & Economy

The Dublin – Belfast Economic corridor is acknowledged within the NPF as the *'largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland'*. This corridor is the national entry point to the island, and it is a policy of the NPF to support and *'promote the economic potential of the corridor and develop it as a distinct spatial area'*.

The RSES sets out the function and role of a Regional Growth Centre, which is to act as a focal point for population growth and economic development and to enhance national and regional growth.

The designation of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre in the NPF is a recognition of the strategic location of the settlement along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and its potential to attract jobs and investment. Its connectivity with Dublin and Belfast in addition to Dundalk and Newry highlights the opportunities there are to develop synergies and economic links along this corridor.

The RSES also acknowledges the potential of lands in the Southern Environs of Drogheda to accommodate economic investment where it states that support is given to *"the sustainable development of existing zoned lands in the Northern and Southern Environs of the town with particular emphasis on the promotion of the IDA Business Park as a location for economic investment."*

### 5.3.2 Human Health

Human health has the potential to be impacted upon by environmental factors such as air, water or soil through which contaminants could accumulate and have potential to cause harm through contact with human beings. Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise due to exposure to these vectors, for

example arising from incompatible adjacent land uses. The impact of development on human health is also influenced by the extent to which new development is accompanied by appropriate infrastructure and the maintenance of the quality of water, air and soil.

#### 5.3.2.1 Infrastructure / Amenity and Human Health

Sporting, leisure and recreational facilities are essential to promoting good health, social cohesion, a sense of community and enhancing quality of life and well-being. Nationally there has been, in recent years, an increased focus on fitness, sports and recreation generally.

Sport is an important contributor to the life of the citizens of Meath, with facilities ranging from GAA facilities, horse racing courses, equestrian centres, golf courses, walking routes, beaches, public swimming pools as well as private facilities in hotels, all of which play an important role in the tourism economy. The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 has objectives for delivery of several greenways and upgrade of towpaths in the County.

The presence of beaches, watercourses, equestrian and related activities, along with golfing facilities and swimming pools etc., has a growing and an important role to play in the tourism economy.

Public open space has an important function and serves a variety of purposes. Accessible, useable, dedicated open spaces and recreational facilities to meet both passive and active recreational needs are vital for residential and recreational amenity. The Council will encourage, where possible, the development of open spaces as an accessible recreation amenity.

#### 5.3.2.2 Radon & Human Health

Radon is a radioactive gas, which is naturally produced in the ground from the uranium present in small quantities in all rocks and soils. Tiny radioactive particles are produced by the gas which when inhaled can cause lung cancer. The risk of contracting lung cancer as a result of Radon depends on how much Radon a person has been exposed to over a period of time. Radon levels in the County have been collated from the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland and are shown in **Figure 5.6** below.

Areas in red are most at risk from radon and are called High Radon Areas, the areas of the map in orange and yellow are areas of medium and low risk respectively. However, a high radon level can be found in any home in any part of the Country.

#### 5.3.2.3 Dublin Airport

Dublin International Airport is located within Fingal and while being of national and strategic significance, it is also a significant source of noise for County Fingal. Parts of the County Meath are located within the noise zones B & C and the outer public safety zone for Dublin Airport and planning restrictions are in place for these zones. Refer to **Figure 5.7**.

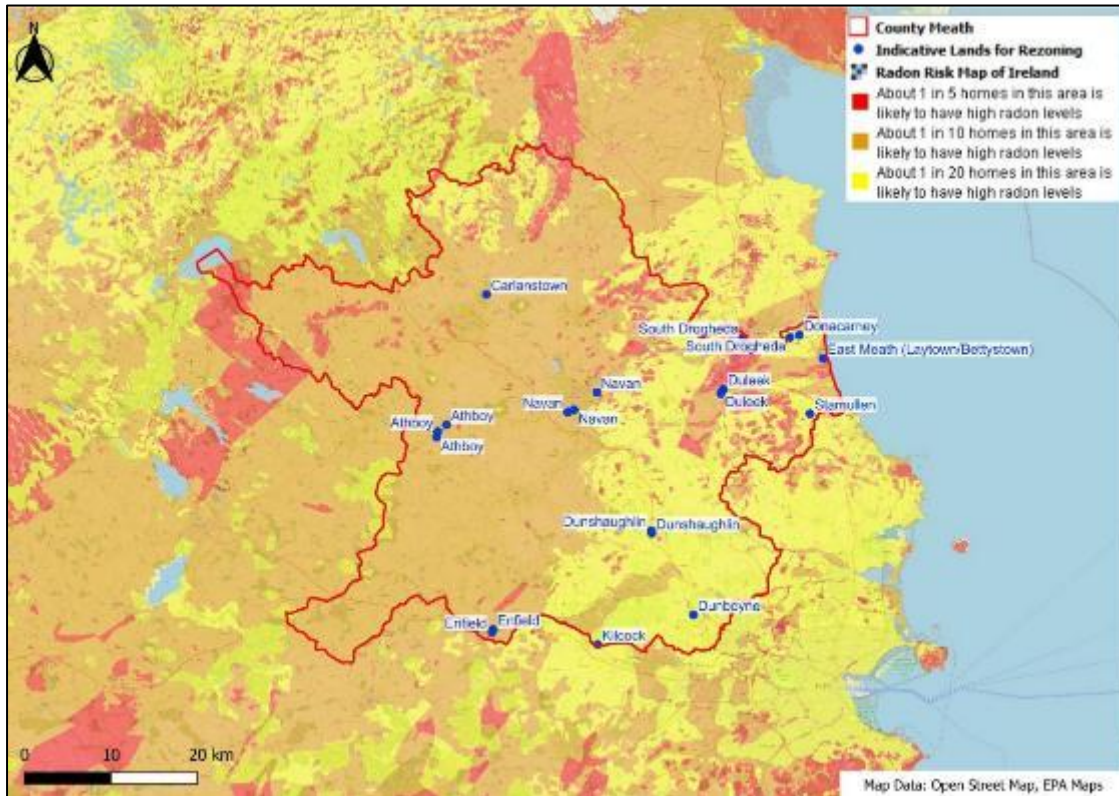


Figure 5.6 Radon Risk map for County Meath<sup>26</sup>

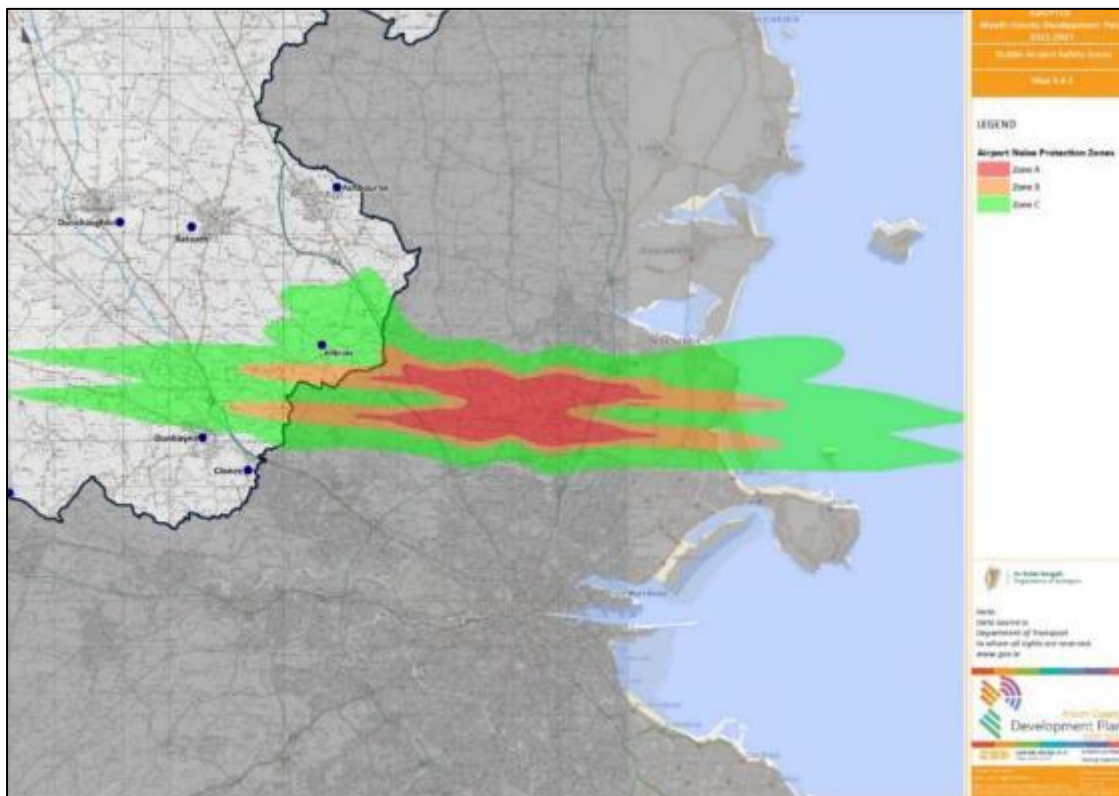


Figure 5.7 Airport Noise Protection Zones extending into County Meath (Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027)

<sup>26</sup> Radon Risk Map of Ireland- [https://gis.epa.ie/geonetwork/srv/eng/catalog\\_search#/metadata/3b2e9226-c40a-44c9-b4f0-7234c0810769](https://gis.epa.ie/geonetwork/srv/eng/catalog_search#/metadata/3b2e9226-c40a-44c9-b4f0-7234c0810769)

### 5.3.3 Population & Human Health Issues

A focus on residential development in sustainable locations, accessible to public transport infrastructure utilising brownfield lands in our existing settlements is essential to deliver a reduction in emissions. Furthermore, provision of surface water and flood risk management measures throughout developments is essential to climate-proof any future developments.

Existing population and human health issues / pressures on the population of the Meath administrative area, include:

- Population / Households - there is an increasing demand for housing units in the county.
- Health and Well-being - continue the development of recreation and leisure facilities.
- Flooding - Over the past number of years there have been significant instances where flooding has occurred in areas of the County causing damage to homes and businesses. However, relative to other counties the extent of flooding in the County has been low.
- Radon - Radon risk map levels in the County have been collated from the EPA Radon Risk Map of Ireland, refer to Figure 5.6.
- Climate Change - potential impacts of climate change on human health from changes to local weather, including prolonged periods of hot or cold weather - which can lead to heat and cold stresses and their associated effects.
- Airport / Noise - potential adverse impacts from noise levels associated with exposure to undesirable noise levels from aircraft / flight paths. Health impacts include cardiovascular disease, effects on sleep / sleep patterns, cognitive impairment, becoming or increasingly disturbed or bothered by noise, impacts on quality of life and mental health, hearing impairment and tinnitus.
- Information on the status of drinking water, wastewater climate change are provided in other sections of this report.

## 5.4 Land, Soils & Geology

Soil is composed of mineral particles, organic matter, water, air and living organisms. Land degradation is a global problem, often caused by a combination of factors such as poor land management and unsustainable development. Land degradation may exacerbate the impacts of natural disasters.

### 5.4.1 Land

#### 5.4.1.1 Agriculture

County Meath's rich pasturelands support a wide variety of farming types. Agriculture has been the most important contributor to the rural economy of County Meath and it plays an important role in environmental management and landscape protection.

Land use patterns from agriculture to uses for residential developments, business parks and light industry can result in the loss of hedgerow boundaries and alteration or culverting of stream channels. The loss of agricultural and soil resources close to the metropolitan area of Dublin also increases dependency on imported food produce with corresponding increased 'food miles' and higher carbon emissions.

## 5.4.2 Soils

Soil is a non-renewable resource that performs many vital functions: food and other biomass production, storage, filtration and transformation of many substances including water, carbon, and nitrogen. Soil has a role as a habitat and gene pool, serves as a platform for human activities, landscape and heritage and acts as a provider of raw materials. Such functions of soil are worthy of protection because of their socio-economic as well as environmental importance.

The Irish Soil Information System (SIS) concludes a 5-year programme, supported by the EPA and Teagasc, to develop a 1:250,000 scale national soil map. The Irish Soil Information System adopted a unique methodology combining digital soil mapping techniques with traditional soil survey application.

County Meath contains a range of soils that support various habitats and land uses and provide valuable mineral resource potential. Fertile soils also provide the basis for a thriving agricultural and food sector. The soils in County Meath are mainly derived from a mixture of calcareous, non- calcareous, mineral alluvium and cutaway / cutover peat materials. The soils in Meath range from mineral poorly drained (mainly basic) (BminPD), mineral poorly drained (mainly acidic) (AminPD), deep well drained mineral (mainly basic) (BminDW), deep well drained mineral (mainly acidic) (AminDW) to shallow well drained mineral (mainly acidic) (BminSW)<sup>27</sup>. The soil types within the study area are shown in **Figure 5.8**.

These soils can be impacted upon by development, land use changes and water quality.

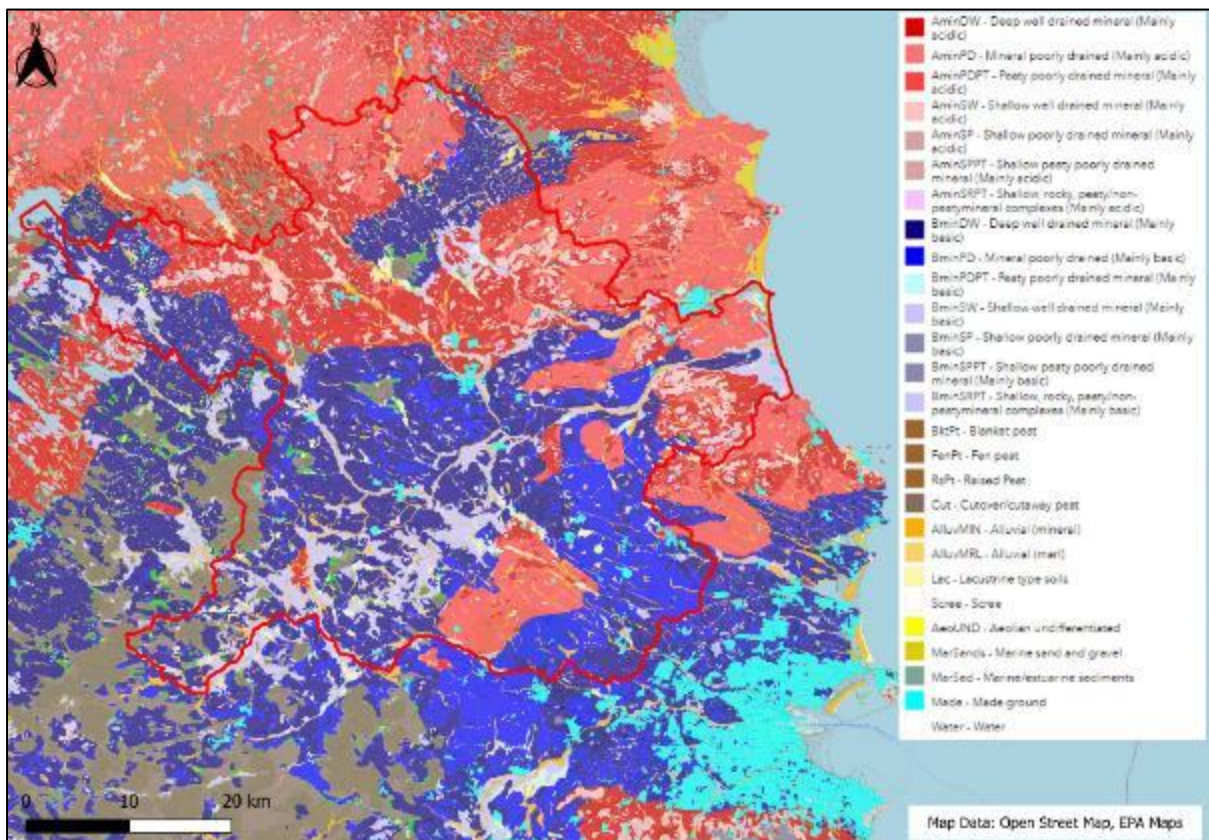


Figure 5.8 Teagasc Subsoils Map for County Meath<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> GSI, Online Map Viewer 2019: <https://dcnr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aac3c228>

<sup>28</sup> EPA Maps - <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

#### 5.4.2.1 Seveso sites

The *Seveso III Directive* (European Directive 2012/18/EU) and the *European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations, 2000* (S.I. No. 476 of 2000) apply to companies where dangerous substances are present in quantities equal to or above specified thresholds. There are two thresholds, a lower one of 50 tonnes ('lower tier sites') and a higher one of 200 tonnes ('upper tier sites'). Lower tier sites are required to have a *Major Accidents Prevention Policy* and a *Safe Work Systems Plan*. Upper tier sites are required to carry out, in conjunction with the local competent authority (which includes the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Local Authority and An Garda Síochána) a *Major Accidents External Emergency Plan*.

Emergency Plans must take full account of objectives established for nearby waters in river basin plans. The legislation deals with the prevention of major accidents. At present there are 3no. Seveso III sites in the County. In addition, there are 6no. Seveso III sites in neighbouring counties Louth, Fingal and Kildare where the 'Seveso Consultation Distance' extends into the County or whose consultation distance overlaps with the consultation distance of adjoining sites which extend into the County. Refer to **Table 5.3**.

**Table 5.3 Seveso Sites in the Meath Administrative Area or Sites where Consultation Distances extend into the County<sup>29</sup>**

Upper Tier Seveso Sites		
Site Name	Address	Consultation radius distance from the facility
Boliden Tara Mines DAC	Knockumber Road, Navan, Co. Meath	1,000m
Flogas Ire. Ltd.	Marsh Drogheda Road	600m
Irish Industrial Explosives Limited	Clonagh, Enfield	1,000m
Chemco (Ireland) Limited	Macetown, North Damastown Industrial Estate, Mullhuddart	1,000m
Guerbet Ireland ULC	Damastown Industrial Mullhuddart Estate	1,000m
Lower Tier Seveso Sites		
Xtratherm Limited	Liscarton Industrial Estate, Kells Road, Navan	1,000m
Grassland Fertilizers Limited	The Pound Sane Road	700m
Clarochem Ireland Ltd	Damastown, Mullhuddart	1,000m
Aestellas Ireland Co. Ltd	Damastown Industrial Mullhuddart Park	1,000m

#### 5.4.2.2 Landslides

Meath has a low landslide risk as much of the county is low-lying ground. According to Geological Survey, Ireland landslide susceptibility mapping, the vast majority of the county has been rated as having 'low' landslide susceptibility, with the risk rising to 'moderately low' in isolated patches throughout the county. Refer to **Figure 5.9**. There are four recorded landslide within County Meath.

<sup>29</sup> Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

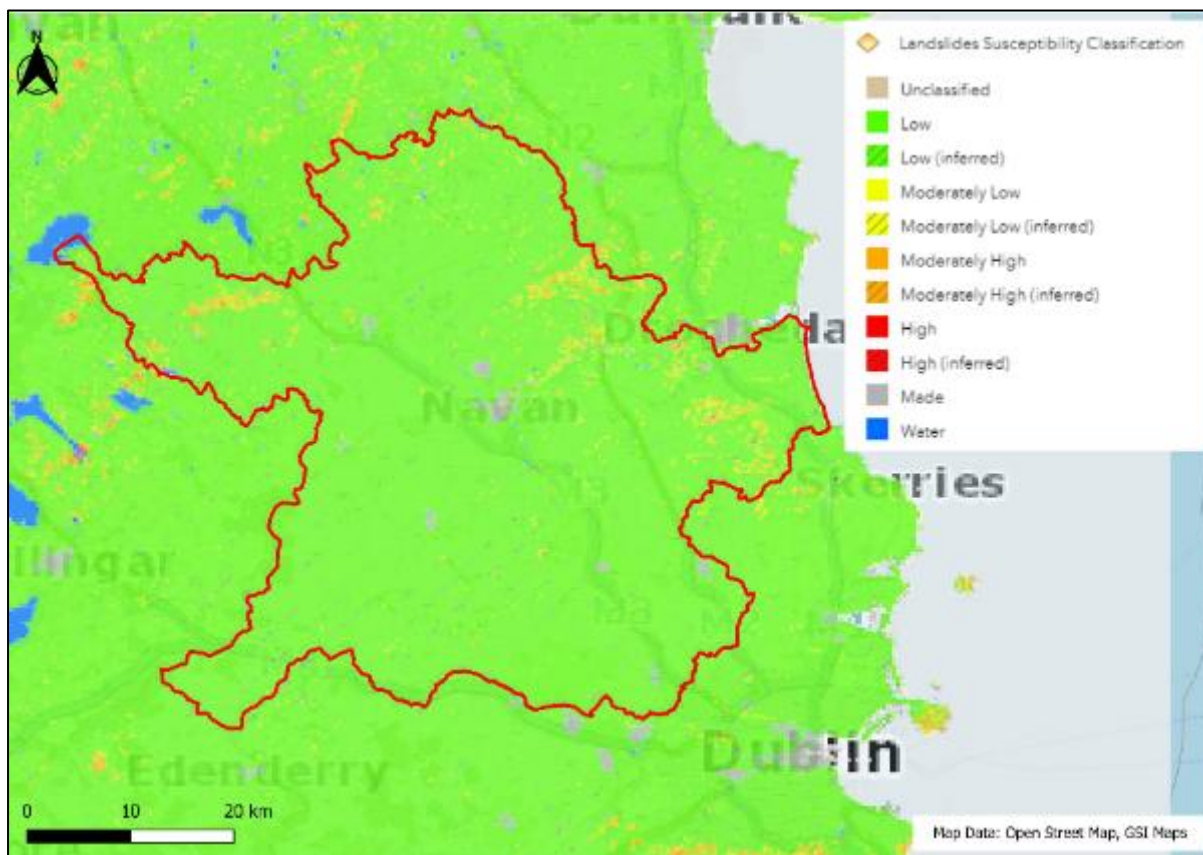


Figure 5.9 GSI Landslide Susceptibility for County Meath<sup>30</sup>

### 5.4.3 Geology

#### 5.4.3.1 Geological Heritage

The *Geological Survey of Ireland* (GSI) provides information available on bedrock, subsoil, aquifer classifications and vulnerability. County Meath is a place with a subtle but distinctive landscape compared to other parts of Ireland. The bedrock foundation, with hundreds of millions of years in the formation and shaping, and the more recent history of geomorphological processes involving river channels and glaciers are what have created the underlying geological diversity, or geodiversity. Geological understanding and interpretation is best achieved on the ground at sites where rocks and landforms are displayed. County Meath has a range of such natural and man-made sites.

County Meath is underlain by several different rock formations. To the north by the Clontail Formation (Calcareous red-mica greywacke), the Fingal Group (Dark limestone, shale and micrite) and the Rathkenny Formation (Black mudstone, siltstone, greywacke) to the west and centre by the Lucan Formation (Dark limestone & shale), the south by Waulsortian Limestones Formation (massive unbedded lime-mudstone) and the east by the Loughshinny Formation (Dark micrite & calcarenite, shale)<sup>31</sup>.

The GSI has identified 31no. geological sites in Meath which are important Irish Geological Heritage (IGH) sites, see **Table 5.4** below. Geological Sites do not receive statutory protection like Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) but receive an effective protection from their inclusion in the planning system.

<sup>30</sup> GSI Spatial Resources - <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228>

<sup>31</sup> OSI, GSI 2019: <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=de7012a99d2748ea9106e7ee1b6ab8d5&scale=0>

Table 5.4 Geological Heritage Sites in Meath or in vicinity of the study area<sup>32</sup>

IGH <sup>33</sup> Theme	Site Name	Site Code	Description
IGH 3	Poulmore Scarp	MH007	Swallow hole cliff section, which may also be a disused quarry
IGH 3	Barley Hill Quarry	MH005	A working quarry
IGH 7	Mullaghmore	MH013	Gravel pits and agricultural land
IGH 9	Carrickleck (Silica Sand)	MH025	A working quarry
IGH 3	Cregg	MH006	Natural rock outcrops
IGH 8	Altmush Stream	MH018	Natural rock outcrops along the banks of a stream over a distance of 1.5km
IGH 8	Nobber	MH022	Natural rock outcrops along the banks of the river dee over a distance of 360m
IGH 8	Kilbride Quarry	MH021	A disused quarry
IGH 7	Blackwater Valley	MH010	River Valley and outwash plain
IGH 8	Rockwood Cliffs	MH024	Cliff section along the River Boyne
IGH 1	St. Keeran's Well	MH002	Natural rock outcrop and springs
IGH 7	Rathkenny	MH015	Hummocky topography with gravel pit
IGH 7	Murrens	MH014	Wooded ridge - esker and hummocky ground including grave pit
IGH 1	Gibstown Castle	MH001	Natural rock outcrop and spring
IGH 2	Grangegeeth	MH004	An overgrown depression which may have been quarried or maybe a natural head of stream gully and waterfall
IGH 7	Boyne Valley	MH011	River valley
IGH 8	Painestown Quarry	MH023	A disused quarry now heavily vegetated
IGH 8	Duleek Quarry	MH020	A working quarry
IGH 2	Bellewstown	MH003	Working quarry and natural exposures in agricultural fields with rock close to the surface beneath soil
IGH 7	Laytown to Gormanston	MH008	Coastal plain, including sea cliffs
IGH 14	Boyne River, Trim	MH027	A section of the Boyne River
IGH 8	Bray Hill	MH019	A working quarry
IGH 7	Trim Esker	MH017	A 6km long section of a predominantly wooded esker ridge
IGH 7	Galtrim Moraine	MH012	Partially wooded, much quarried moraine ridge
IGH 12	Dunshaughlin	MH026	This site is unexposed at the surface
IGH 7	Rathmolyon Esker	MH016	Remnant face in former sand & gravel quarry
IGH 7	Benhead	MH009	A high coastal cliff face

<sup>32</sup> GSI, Online Map Viewer 2024: <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aac3c228>

<sup>33</sup> Irish Geological Heritage Sites

IGH <sup>33</sup> Theme	Site Name	Site Code	Description
IGH 16	St. Gorman's Spring	MH028	Warm spring
IGH1	Mell Quarry	LH023	This is a complex of disused quarries adjacent to and northwest of the town of Drogheda
IGH1	Waterunderbridge-Dry Bridge	LH032	The site is mostly in a narrow, shallow gorge with the sometimes-dry streambed in it
IGH7	King William's Glen	LH021	This is a deep, almost 2km-long nw-se stream channel cut into till and bedrock

#### 5.4.4 Quarries

Meath contains a variety of natural resources such as building raw materials in the form of sand, gravel, stone reserves including high purity limestones and shale used in cement and magnesia manufacture and base metal deposits. The potential of these resources to underpin construction output and provide employment and economic growth in the local and regional economy is recognised as is the need to exploit such resources in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner.

However, extractive industries by their nature can give rise to detrimental environmental and residential amenity effects including traffic generation, vibration, dust, noise, water pollution, visual intrusion and loss of groundwater supplies. There are 63 No. operators on the Extractive Industries Register in County Meath<sup>34</sup>.

Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Quarries and Ancillary Activities published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) in 2004 and a number of other guidelines relating to quarrying have been produced by various bodies for example '*Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry*'<sup>35</sup>, '*Guidelines for the Preparation of Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology Chapters of Environmental Impact Statements*'<sup>36</sup> and '*Wildlife, Habitats and the Extractive Industry*'<sup>37</sup> to provide guidance to MCC on the management of extractive industries.

#### 5.4.5 Soils and Geology Issues

The development of green field sites resulting from urban expansion and population growth is a significant issue facing Meath. This places pressure on the agricultural potential and food production potential of soil. Soil is lost annually through the development of agricultural land. The challenge is to manage future population growth within Meath whilst minimising impacts on surrounding agricultural production and maintaining production levels.

Existing land, soil and geology issues / pressures with environmental considerations include:

- Soil - the loss / damage of soil from the construction of greenfield sites for development.
- Soil - contamination can occur from unauthorised waste-related activities, leakages and accidental spillages of chemicals. Technical and financial constraints on development and the threat contaminated soils pose to the health of the population.

<sup>34</sup> EPA Enforcement, 2019: <http://www.epa.ie/enforcement/extractiveindustriesregister/>

<sup>35</sup> GSI, 2008: <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/publications/Pages/Geological-Heritage-Guidelines-for-the-Extractive-Industry1023-1213.aspx>

<sup>36</sup> GSI, 2013: <https://www.gsi.ie/documents/IGI%20EIS%20guide%202013.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Notice Nature: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/business/assets/pdf/resources-center/Irish-notice\\_nature\\_biodiversity\\_guidelines.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/business/assets/pdf/resources-center/Irish-notice_nature_biodiversity_guidelines.pdf)

- Soil - erosion of soils in the county from intensive agricultural / forestry practices, quarrying activities and major infrastructural projects.
- Soil - disturbance of contaminated soils could result in potential for water pollution and potential further land contamination.
- Pressure on soil - from land-use change, intensification of agriculture, erosion, overgrazing, disposal of organic wastes to soils, afforestation, industry and urbanisation.
- Land Management - conversion of land / sites can release CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere and further reduce areas of 'carbon sinks'.
- Geological Heritage - the protection of sites of geological importance within the county.
- Climate change - carbon stored in soils plays an important role in maintaining soil functionality, in water and air quality and in climate change. Proper land use management is essential to prevent carbon stored in soil from being released into the atmosphere.
- Groundwater - rock types in the county that provides for a productive groundwater aquifer.
- Quarries - pose a potential impact on the level of water tables and potential exposure of water table and contaminant to water tables.

## 5.5 Water Quality

Water is fundamental to all life; for humans, plants and animals alike. It is also critical in economic terms in generating and sustaining wealth in a number of key areas such as agriculture, fishing, power generation, industry, transport and tourism. However, it is also a fragile resource requiring continued protection. In general terms Ireland's waters are of good quality, however preserving the high standard of water is essential for human health and the natural environment.

For the purposes of this section, the water environment is taken to include natural features such as lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater waterbodies. In addition, flooding is also dealt with in this section. Meath has a rich and extensive aquatic environment consisting of coastline, rivers, streams, lakes and estuarine waters (surface waters) and ground waters.

Wastewater treatment and drinking water are discussed under Material Assets in Section 5.7 below.

### 5.5.1 The Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The *EU Water Framework Directive* (WFD) (2000/60/EC) establishes a framework for the protection of both surface water and groundwater waterbodies. Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the WFD 2000/60/EC, which was transposed into Irish law under the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003). This legislation requires governments to take a holistic approach to managing all their water resources based on natural geographic boundaries, *i.e.* the river catchment or basin. The WFD establishes a common framework for the sustainable and integrated management of all waters covering groundwater, inland surface waters, transitional waters and coastal waters. The WFD requires Member States to manage all of their waters and ensure that they achieve at least '*good status*' by 2015 and beyond. The ultimate deadline for Member States for achievement of '*good*' status is 2027 at the latest.

### 5.5.2 Surface Waterbodies

For the purpose of implementing the WFD, Ireland was divided into eight River Basin Districts (RBDs) or areas of land that are drained by a large river or number of rivers and the adjacent estuarine / coastal areas. The first cycle of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) ran from 2009-2015, where the eight RBDs devised separate plans with the objective of achieving at least '*good*' status for all waters by 2015.

The second cycle of the RBMP 2018-2021 merged all eight RBDs to form one national RBD. The RBMP sets out the actions that Ireland will take to improve water quality and achieve ‘good’ ecological status in waterbodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) by 2027. The third cycle of the RBMP 2022-2027 prepared by Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) in line with the *EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC)* describes programmes of measures which will be implemented to deliver water quality improvements.

Water quality data is also collected by the EPA to provide an overall status of water quality. The monitoring programme, as part of the WFD, assesses water quality but also water trends of rivers in relation to ecological and physico-chemical quality. The WFD status of rivers ranges from ‘high’ to ‘bad’. The EPA also undertakes water quality surveys for transitional and coastal waterbodies.

Water quality in Ireland has deteriorated over the past two decades. Overall, the water quality is declining and the number of water bodies in satisfactory condition (high or good status) across rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwaters has decreased under the last WFD monitoring cycle 2019-2024 as compared to the previous assessment which covered the period 2016-2021.

**Table 5.5** below has a full list of the **WFD Catchments** and **WFD Sub-Catchments** in County Meath.

**Table 5.5 WFD Catchments and Sub-Catchments in County Meath**

Catchment (WFD Catchment Code)	Sub-catchment Name (WFD Sub-catchment Code)
Newry, Fane, Glyde and Dee Catchment (06)	Glyde_SC_010 (06_7)
	Dee_SC_010 (06_3)
	Dee_SC_020 (06_1)
	Dee_SC_030 (06_4)
Boyne Catchment (07)	Moynalty_SC_010 (07_14)
	Blackwater[Kells]_SC_020 (07_10)
	Blackwater[Kells]_SC_030 (07_8)
	Boyne_SC_070 (07_13)
	Boyne_SC_050 (07_12)
	Boyne_SC_100 (07_18)
	Boyne_SC_120 (07_15)
	Boyne_SC_130 (07_17)
	Boyne_SC_110 (07_1)
	Boyne_SC_080 (07_3)
	Boyne_SC_060 (07_20)
	Boyne_SC_090 (07_19)
	Boyne_SC_040 (07_9)
	Boyne_SC_030 (07_2)
	Boyne_SC_010 (07_4)
	Boyne_SC_020 (07_16)
	Blackwater[Longwood]_SC_10 (07_6)
Deel[Raharney]_SC_010 (07_7)	
Yellow[Castlejordan]_SC_010 (07_11)	

Catchment (WFD Catchment Code)	Sub-catchment Name (WFD Sub-catchment Code)
Upper Shannon Catchment (26F)	Inny[Shannon]_SC_010 (26F_6)
	Mountnugent_SC_010 (26F_3)
	Inny[Shannon]_SC_020 (26F_7)
Nanny-Delvin (08)	Nanny[Meath]_SC_020 (08_5)
	Nanny[Meath]_SC_010 (08_4)
	Delvin_SC_010 (08_1)
	Broadmeadow_SC_010 (08_3)
Liffey and Dublin Bay (09)	Tolka_SC_010 (09_10)
	Liffey_SC_080 (09_5)
	Liffey_SC_100 (09_1)
	RyeWater_SC_010 (09_3)

### 5.5.3 Surface Water Quality

The latest *Water Quality in Ireland* report 2019-2024<sup>38</sup> was published by the EPA in October 2025. This report provides an assessment of the condition of Ireland’s waters (rivers, lakes, canals, groundwaters, transitional (estuaries) and coastal waters) against the objectives and standards set out in the Water Framework Directive and Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan (Water Action Plan 2024). The assessments are made using data collected from over 4000 surface water bodies and 514 ground water bodies between 2019 and 2024. Comparisons are made between the results from this period and those before to give insight into trends in the condition of our waters over time.

The status of the river waterbodies in County Meath range from ‘poor’ to ‘high’, however the majority of the major river waterbodies range from ‘poor’ to ‘moderate’. EPA data, on the biological quality of watercourses, based on monitoring up to 2024, indicates that 1no. river achieved ‘high’ status; 16no. of monitored river waterbodies in County Meath achieved a ‘good’ status; 37no. achieved a ‘moderate’ status; and 29no. were ‘poor’. There are 8no. lakes in County Meath (Lough Sheelin, Lough Doo, Lough Ben, Lough Glass, Lough Ervey, Lough Bracken, Lough Bane, Annagh-White Lake) which are designated WFD operational monitoring lakes.

The Water Quality in Ireland report 2016-2021, reports that the water quality in Annagh / White lake was classified as ‘high’ status, Lough Bane, Lough Ben, Lough Glass and Lough Doo were classified as being of ‘good’ status, Lough Sheelin and Lough Bracken were both classified with a ‘moderate’ status and Lough Ervey was classified as ‘Poor’.

The Meath coastline extends for a distance of c.10km and stretches from the mouth of the River Boyne at Mornington, bordering County Louth to Gormanston at the mouth of the River Delvin, bordering County Dublin. The coastal waterbody of County Meath is the Northwestern Irish Sea (IE\_EA\_020\_0000) waterbody which has a ‘good’<sup>39</sup> water quality status and a small section near southern environs of Drogheda is the Boyne Estuary Plume Zone which has a ‘moderate’ water quality.

<sup>38</sup> Water Quality In Ireland 2019-2024 - <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/freshwater--marine/water-quality-in-ireland-2019-2024.php>

<sup>39</sup> EPA 2025, Coastal Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/default>

The Boyne Estuary transitional waterbody has a ‘poor’ status and Nanny Estuary has a ‘moderate’ status.

The WFD water quality status of the waterbodies in the Meath area is shown in Figure 5.10 below.

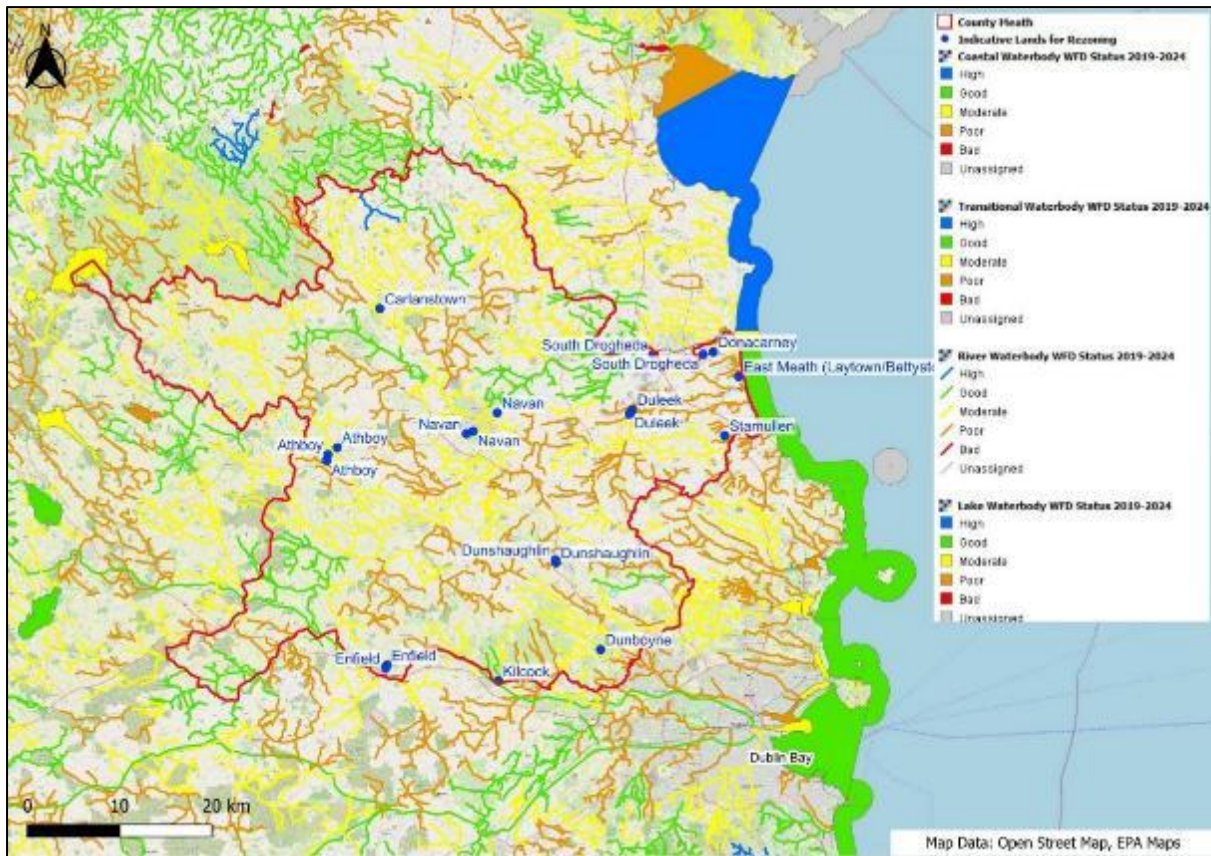


Figure 5.10 WFD Waterbody Status 2019-2024<sup>40</sup>

#### 5.5.4 Groundwater Quality

The EU Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC) uses a holistic approach to groundwater by addressing the relationships between groundwater, surface water and ecological receptors.

Groundwater aquifers form important sources of drinking water both locally and regionally, which provides between 20% and 25% of drinking water supplies in County Meath. In rural areas that are not served by public or group water schemes, groundwater is usually the only source of supply. Much of the summer seasonal flow in many rivers is also derived from groundwater sources. To maintain high quality water resources within the County, it is important that development is controlled and managed appropriately, in particular in areas of high groundwater vulnerability to avoid transmission of pollutants into important aquifers.

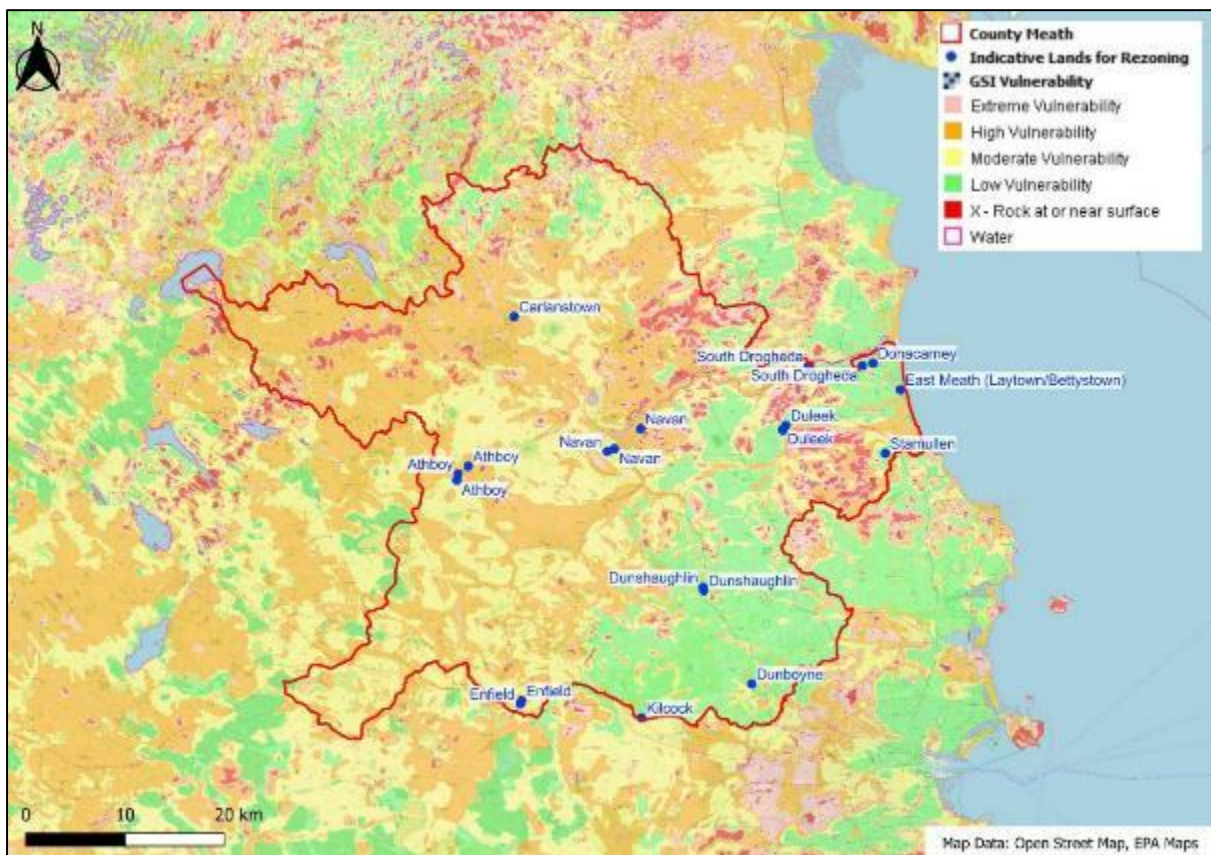
Groundwater Quality Status between 2019 and 2024 was generally ‘good’<sup>41</sup>, across 46no. groundwater bodies in County Meath, with the exception of three groundwater bodies. These are the Bettystown (IE\_EA\_G\_016), the Wilkinstown (IE\_EA\_G\_010) and the Inny (IE\_SH\_G\_110) groundwater bodies which have a status of ‘poor’.

<sup>40</sup> EPA, 2025: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

<sup>41</sup> Water Quality in Ireland 2019-2024: <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/freshwater--marine/water-quality-in-ireland-2019-2024.php>

The groundwater vulnerability of County Meath is a mixture of 'low' to 'extreme'. The GSI rates aquifers according to both their productivity and vulnerability to pollution. The groundwater vulnerability of County Meath is shown in **Figure 5.11** below.

Groundwater aquifers form important sources of drinking water both locally and regionally, which provides between 20% and 25% of drinking water supplies in County Meath. In rural areas that are not served by public or group water schemes, groundwater is usually the only source of supply. Much of the summer seasonal flow in many rivers is also derived from groundwater sources. To maintain high quality water resources within the County, it is important that development is controlled and managed appropriately, in particular in areas of high groundwater vulnerability to avoid transmission of pollutants into important aquifers. Aquifer vulnerability is the ease with which pollutants of various kinds can enter underground water. Meath is underlain mainly with '*regionally important aquifer*', '*locally important aquifer - bedrock which is moderately productive only in local zones*' and with a '*poor aquifer - bedrock which is generally unproductive*', and locally important gravel aquifer. Refer to **Figure 5.12**.



**Figure 5.11 Groundwater Vulnerability within County Meath**<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> GSI Groundwater Maps and Data 2025: <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps/Pages/Groundwater.aspx#Vulnerability>



Figure 5.12 Bedrock and Gravel Aquifer – County Meath<sup>43</sup>

### 5.5.5 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Surface water on all new development sites should be managed through Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in accordance with the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. SuDS aims to reduce the rate and quantity of surface water runoff and improve water quality from the site. On large developments, SuDS may provide an opportunity to enhance biodiversity and amenity.

The objective of SuDS in new developments is to replicate, as closely as possible, the surface water drainage regime to the predevelopment ‘greenfield’ situation. This is achieved through the use of surface water source control and site control measures. Source control measures include rainwater harvesting, natural infiltration, infiltration trenches, filter drains, filter strips, swales and permeable paving. Site control measures include attenuation by means of tanks or retention ponds. The surface water runoff rate from the site must be limited to the ‘greenfield’ runoff rate to reduce the risk of flooding.

### 5.5.6 Flooding and Flood Risk

The underlying causes of flooding, heavy rain and high sea levels are, essentially uncontrollable. Floods are usually caused by a combination of events including overflowing riverbanks, heavy rains, coastal storms or blocked or overloaded drainage systems and an increase in development and impermeable surfacing. Numerous severe floods have occurred throughout the County in the last decade causing significant damage to and loss of property.

<sup>43</sup> Geological Survey Ireland Spatial Resources-  
<https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228>

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is the lead State body for flood risk management. MCC in partnership with Fingal County Council (FCC) and the OPW completed a catchment-based flood risk assessment and management study of 19 No. rivers and streams in the Fingal and East Meath area, the *Fingal East Meath Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (FEM-FRAMS)*. The FEM-FRAMS was completed in 2012 and covered the east of the County including inter alia the Broadmeadow, Mosney, Delvin, Mayne and Nanny rivers. In 2018, the OPW launched 'Flood Maps' to provide information on the likelihood of flood risk and the extent of flooding across Ireland.

As part of the preparation of the *Meath CDP 2021-2027*, Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan 2021-2027 has been prepared. Over the past number of years there have been significant instances where flooding has occurred in areas of the County causing damage to homes and businesses. However, relative to other counties the extent of flooding in the County has been low.

#### 5.5.6.1 Coastal Waters - Bathing & Designated Shellfish Areas

Coastal Waters are important for tourism, for bathing locations and for supporting marine wildlife. The process for monitoring and assessing bathing water quality is set out in the *EU Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC)* and transposed into Irish Legislation as the *Bathing Water Regulations S.I. No. 79 of 2008*. The most recent report on bathing water quality '*Bathing Water Quality in Ireland in 2024*'<sup>44</sup> sets out the status of Irish Seawater and Freshwater Bathing areas.

Bathing water information is compiled by the EPA from data submitted from local authorities. Bathing water is assessed for compliance with two sets of EU standards, as specified in the Directive (2006/7/EC), minimum quality standards (EU mandatory values) and more stringent quality targets (EU guide values).

The coastal zone of Meath contains important resources that provide economic, recreational, aesthetic and conservation benefits. The coastline of the County is classified as a soft coast and stretches between the Boyne Estuary in the north and the River Delvin in the south. The coastline is home to a variety of natural habitats and there are several species of flora and fauna, reflected in the SAC, SPA, and pNHA designations that cover much of the area.

The bathing water quality of the coastal waters adjacent to the County Meath are monitored by the EPA at Laytown / Bettytown (IEEABWC020\_0000\_0700)<sup>45</sup>. The latest bathing quality (2023) for these waters is currently '*excellent*'.

There is one designated shellfish area off the coast of County Meath, Balbriggan / Skerries (IE\_EA\_020\_0000). Since 2012, *Pollution Reduction Programmes (PRPs)* have been put in place for shellfish waters, to protect and improve the water quality in these areas. The PRPs are to ensure shellfish waters compliance with the standards and objectives that were established in the *Quality of Shellfish Waters Regulations 2006* and the *EU Directive 2006/113/EC* on the quality required for shellfish waters.

<sup>44</sup> Bathing Water Quality in Ireland in 2024. EPA, 2025: <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/freshwater--marine/bathing-water-quality-in-ireland-in-2024.php>

<sup>45</sup> Bathing Water Quality EPA, 2025: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

### 5.5.7 Water Quality Issues

The principal threat to water is pollution which can adversely impact on all parts of the water cycle from groundwater to rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters. Any development as part of the Variation No.5 can have the potential to impact waterbody status, water usage, flood risk and generate wastewater. The Plan must comply with the requirements of the WFD and the Groundwater Directive and aim to drive improvement to water quality in both the short and long-term. Existing water quality issues / pressures with environmental considerations include:

- Water - the surface waterbodies in Meath need to be improved to achieve 'good' ecological status in waterbodies by 2027.
- Water - pressure on water sources include excessive nutrient enrichment which leads to eutrophication; agriculture and municipal sources are the most important suspected causes of pollution to rivers.
- Water - pressure on water sources also comes from land-use changes, intensification of agriculture, erosion, afforestation, industry and urbanisation.
- Water - water contamination arising through poor working practices, leakages or accidental spillage of materials if efficient pollution control measures are not fully implemented and maintained.
- Surface, ground & coastal waters - are at risk of pollution from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems in the vicinity of waterbodies, potential pressures and impacts on water body status, water usage and flood risk from the construction projects i.e. increased sedimentation, groundwater recharge and accidental spillages.
- Coastal - the coastal zone is subject to growing pressures from increasing population and increasing and sometimes conflicting social, economic and recreational uses.
- Flooding - flood risk to be considered as a key environmental criteria.

## 5.6 Air Quality, Noise & Climate

### 5.6.1 Air Quality

Air quality legislation<sup>46</sup> in Ireland highlights the need 'to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole'. In addition, it requires that Local Authorities where appropriate 'shall promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development'.

EU legislation on air quality requires that Member States divide their territory into zones for the assessment and management of air quality. The EPA manages the national ambient air quality monitoring network and measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants. The current trends in air quality in Ireland are reported in the EPA publication 'Air Quality in Ireland 2024'<sup>47</sup> which is currently the most up to date analysis of air quality data for Ireland. Four national air quality zones have been designated in Ireland, these are:

- Zone A is the Dublin conurbation;
- Zone B is the Cork conurbation;
- Zone C comprises of 23 large towns in Ireland with a population of >15,000; and
- Zone D is the remaining area of Ireland.

<sup>46</sup> S.I. No. 739/2022 – Ambient Air Quality Standards Regulations 2022 - <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2022/si/739/made/en/print> and Directive (EU) 2024/2881 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (recast) - [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L\\_202402881](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L_202402881)

<sup>47</sup> EPA, 2025: Air Quality in Ireland, 2024 - <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/air/air-quality-in-ireland-2024.php>

County Meath is located within Zone D, within the 'Rural Ireland' zone and Drogheda and its southern environs and Navan are located within Zone C in the 'other cities and large towns' zone<sup>48</sup>. The designated zones have been defined to meet the criteria for air quality monitoring, assessment and management as defined in the aforementioned regulations. The air quality monitoring site in County Meath is located at Navan (Station 68).

The air quality index for health (AQIH) regions are calculated on an hourly basis at various locations around Ireland. The AQIH is based on measurements of air pollutants which can harm health. The five pollutants are:

- Ozone gas;
- Nitrogen dioxide gas;
- Sulphur dioxide gas;
- PM<sub>2.5</sub> particles; and
- PM<sub>10</sub> particles.

Air Quality Map show whether air quality is 'good', 'fair', 'poor' or 'very poor' in each region. The current air quality across County Meath is 'good'. Monitoring is done using continuous monitors for ozone and nitrogen oxides in various locations around Ireland. The pollutants of most concern are those whose main source is traffic such as Particulate Matter (PM) and Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>). There is need to protect and improve (as appropriate), air quality in County Meath, particularly in areas zoned for increased urban and transport related development.

### 5.6.2 Noise

The objectives of EU and Irish noise legislation is 'to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole', and this includes noise nuisance. The Noise Directive - Environmental Noise Directive (END) 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise - is part of an EU strategy setting out to reduce the number of people affected by noise in the longer term and to provide a framework for developing existing community policy on noise reduction from source. The Directive requires competent authorities in Member States to:

- draw up strategic noise maps for major roads, railways, airports and agglomerations, using harmonised noise indicators and use these maps to assess the number of people which may be impacted upon as a result of excessive noise levels; and
- draw up action plans to reduce noise where necessary and maintain environmental noise quality where it is good; and inform and consult the public about noise exposure, its effects, and the measures considered to address noise.

The Directive does not set any limit value, nor does it prescribe the measures to be used in the action plans, which remain at the discretion of the competent authorities.

In accordance with *Environmental Noise Regulations (S.I. No.549/2018, as amended)*, *County Meath Noise Action Plan 2024-2028* was prepared by MCC (2024). This *Noise Action Plan* is aimed at managing environmental noise from road, rail and industrial sources within Meath.

*Noise Strategic Maps* from EPA (2022) are presented below in **Figure 5.13**. These strategic noise maps are to be used to identify priorities (Important Areas and Priority Important Areas) for noise action

<sup>48</sup> EPA, 2024: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/default> (OpenStreet Maps)

plans, which are to be made or revised every 5 years by designated action planning authorities. They can also be used to identify potential quiet areas in the three noise agglomerations.

During the implementation of the Variation No.5, consideration should be given to protect, where relevant, any designated quiet areas in open country.

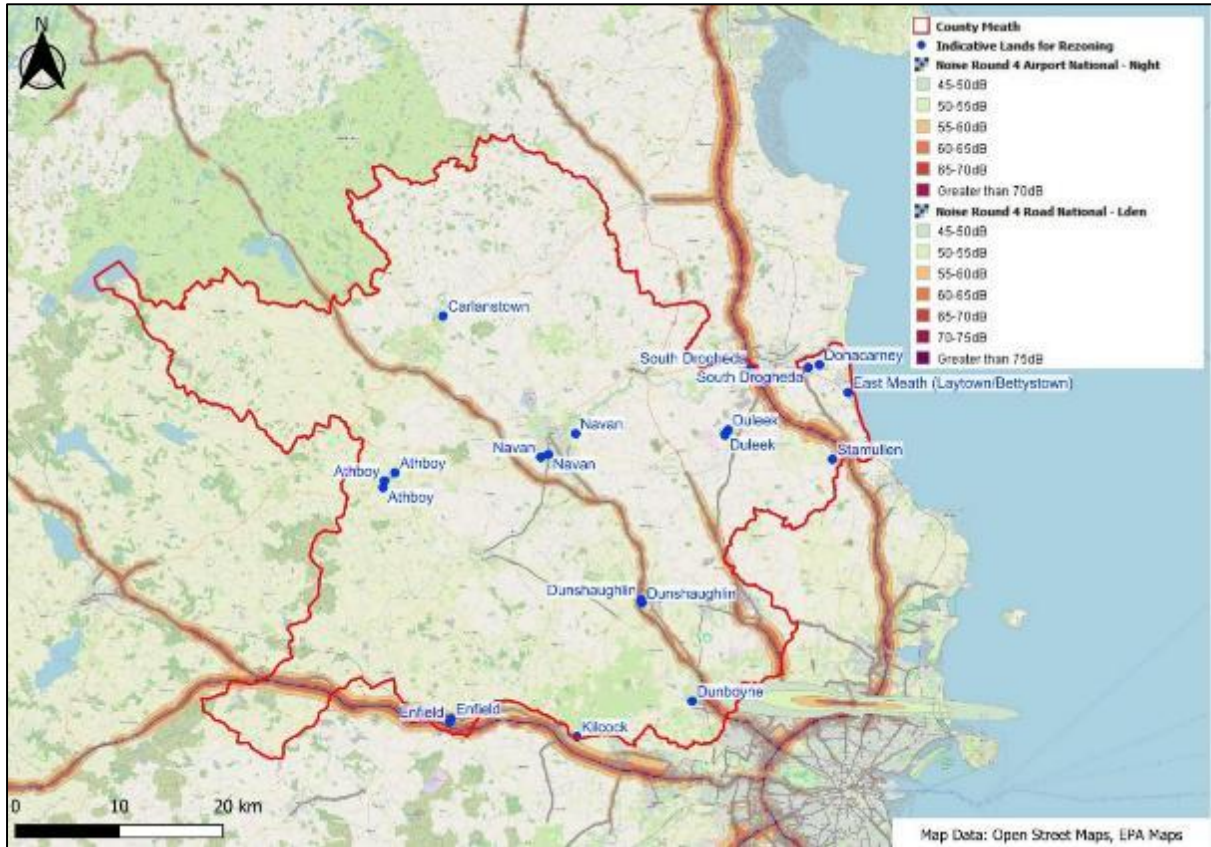


Figure 5.13 EPA Noise Map for County Meath for National Road (Lden) and Airport (Night)<sup>49</sup>

### 5.6.3 Climate Change

Climate Change is a phenomenon that has widespread economic, health and safety, food production, security, and other dimensions. Climate change refers to a long-term, large-scale change in global or regional climate patterns. In recent years, global temperatures have been rising. Urgent action is needed to address climate change and to move Ireland towards a low carbon, climate resilient economy and society.

The ever-increasing rate of carbon dioxide combustion, and the emission of other greenhouse gases (GHG) such as methane and nitrous oxide since the industrial revolution, has resulted in the 'greenhouse affect'. Most greenhouse gases emissions are related to the energy generation, transport, agriculture, and industry sectors.

In Ireland, the expected effects of Climate Change are increased frequency of extreme weather events within the next century. This will include a 20%-30% increase in precipitation, greater rainfall intensity coupled with flash floods and an average annual temperature increase of ~2°C. The potential impacts

<sup>49</sup> EPA, 2025: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/default>

of Climate Change could have serious consequences for both people and infrastructure along Ireland's coastal areas as well as its rivers<sup>50</sup>.

The recent *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021* was established to provide for the approval of plans by the Government in relation to climate change. This aims at pursuing the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich and climate neutral economy by no later than the end of the year 2050. Ireland's *Climate Action Plan 2025* sets out Ireland's national and sectoral targets in this regard. The purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to lay out a roadmap of actions which will ultimately lead us to meeting our national climate objective of pursuing and achieving, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022.<sup>51</sup>

Ireland has annual GHG targets which are set at an EU level and need to be complied with in order to reduce the impact of climate change. These targets set out by the EU under *Regulation (EU) 2018/842 on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions by Member States from 2021 to 2030 contributing to climate action to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement and amending Regulation (EU) No. 525/2013*, have set a target of a 42% reduction in non-ETS (emissions trading scheme) sector GHG emissions by 2030 relative to 2005 levels. In order to help Ireland achieve these EU targets and the eventual goal of net zero by 2050 the Irish government has set national targets and carbon budgets. Impacts to climate as a result of GHG emissions are assessed against the relevant carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings as set out in CAP25.

As per the EU guidance document *Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Environmental Impact Assessment* (European Commission, 2013) the climate baseline is first established with reference to EPA data on annual GHG emissions

Future changes in climate and associated impacts on sea level, rainfall patterns/intensity and river flow will influence flooding frequency and extent in the future. Local Authorities in compliance with the *Regional Planning Guidelines* are attempting to adopt sustainable flood risk strategies in areas likely to be at risk of flooding in the future in the context of climate change and changing weather patterns. Changes to climate could lead to an increase in flooding events in Ireland. The OPW has undertaken a number of *Flood Risk Management Studies* for different River Basin Districts (RBDs) in Ireland. These studies have identified the areas which are most at risk and future management plans have been advised; these are adopted by the OPW. In some cases, mitigation measures will involve the construction of physical flood defences.

The MCC *Climate Action Plan 2024-2029* identifies actions to decarbonise electricity generation, the built environment and transport and to move towards carbon neutrality for agriculture, forest and land use sectors.

#### 5.6.4 Air Quality, Noise & Climate Change Issues

Agriculture, transport and industrial emissions are the greatest source of air pollution. In urban areas, concern has clearly shifted to a range of pollutants associated with road traffic which may be considered

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<sup>50</sup> GOI (2019).

<sup>51</sup> Climate Action Plan 2025- <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/>

relatively new in the context of air quality control. The most important of these pollutants are NO<sub>2</sub>, particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM<sub>10</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO) and a wide variety of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), including carcinogens such as benzene. Advances in engine technology and fuel development will, it is predicted, offset rises in tail pipe emissions from increased car usage due to an increased population. Therefore, it is important that a good quality road infrastructure is provided and alternatives to the private car are encouraged as much as possible. Any new construction projects have potential during construction phase to result in temporary negative impacts on air quality and create noise pollution.

The potential effects of Climate Change resulting in an increase in the frequency and severity of flooding events from rainfall must also be considered. Severe rainfall events as a result of Climate Change could adversely impact upon towns in Meath leading to water shortages, residential flooding and disruption to infrastructure. Towns and villages along the coast will become increasingly vulnerable to rises in the sea level and coastal erosion.

## 5.7 Material Assets

Material assets are resources that are valued and intrinsic to a development and the surrounding area. Material assets may be of either natural or human origin and the value may arise for economic or cultural reasons. Material assets include water supply, wastewater treatment infrastructure, waste disposal including recycling, transport infrastructure (road, rail, airports and ports), energy and supply networks and telecom services. Material assets also include economic assets such as coastal and water resources which support fisheries and aquaculture. The sustainable growth of the County is dependent on the provision of services and infrastructure.

### 5.7.1 Water Supply and Wastewater services

#### 5.7.1.1 Water Services and Water Supply

The sustainable growth of the County is dependent on the provision of services and infrastructure. A Plan led approach, in accordance with the County's Core Settlement and Housing Strategy is required for the delivery of such services in order to ensure there is adequate capacity to support the future development of the County.

There have been significant changes in responsibilities for water supply and wastewater treatment services. As of January 2014, Uisce Éireann (formerly known as Irish Water) replaced local authorities as a single provider of water supply and wastewater services. Uisce Éireann have prepared the Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP), '*A Plan for the Future of Water Services*' and it provides for the first time at national level an opportunity to consider the way water services are delivered in Ireland. The WSSP sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services up to 2040.

Uisce Éireann is responsible for providing and developing public water services; and ensuring drinking water quality meets the standards in the Drinking Water Regulations. The EPA is the drinking water quality regulator, responsible for enforcing the Drinking Water Regulations. Private bored wells used as a source of water supply to single dwellings are the responsibility of the householder and are therefore not regulated and Uisce Éireann has no regulatory function in this regard.

The latest *Drinking Water Quality in Public Supplies 2024*<sup>52</sup> was published by the EPA in 2025. The report outlines the most important issues which should be addressed on a national level, to protect and improve public drinking water supplies.

Practical water conservation measures including active leakage detection, demand management and pressure management played and will continue to play a major role in reducing the demand for potable water, thus facilitating additional development and improving the level of service to existing consumers in the County through the existing watermain networks.

Irish Water have prepared the Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP), 'A Plan for the Future of Water Services' and it provides for the first time at national level an opportunity to consider the way water services are delivered in Ireland. The WSSP sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services over the next 25 years up to 2040. The Plan details current and future challenges affecting the provision of water services and identifies priorities to be dealt with over the short to medium term. The Plan is to be reviewed on a five-year basis. A new draft Water Services Strategic Plan 2050 is out for public consultation and sets out objectives and significant challenges likely to be faced over the next 25 years.

#### 5.7.1.2 Wastewater Services

The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) aims to protect the environment from the adverse effects of wastewater discharges by ensuring that wastewater is appropriately treated before it is discharged to the environment. Such treatment is essential in order to meet the requirements of the WFD.

There are c. 40 No. Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs) and more than 1,000kms of sewer network in County Meath. These include Ardcath, Athboy, Ballinabrackey, Ballivor, Batterstown, Bellewstown, Bohermeen, Carncross, Casteltown, Clonalvey, Cortown, Crossakeel, Donore, Drumconrath, Duleek, Dunderry, Dunshaughlin, Enfield, Hill of Tara, Kells, Kentstown, Kilberry, Kilcloon, Kildalkey, Kilmainhamwood, Lloyd, Kells, Lobinstown, Longwood, Moynalty, Navan, Nobber, Oldcastle, Rathmolyan, Robinstown, Skreen, Slane, Stamullen, Summerhill, and Trim.

Uisce Éireann currently collects and treats the wastewater from the majority of the counties' urban centres. Wastewater from a number of these centres is discharged to and treated in WWTPs outside the County as follows:

- Wastewater from Ashbourne, Ratoath, Kilbride, Dunboyne and Clonee is discharged into Dublin where it is treated in Ringsend WWTP;
- Wastewater from the Kilcock Environs is discharged into the Leixlip WWTP; and
- Wastewater from the Southern Environs of Drogheda, Bettystown / Laytown / Mornington / Donacarney and Julianstown discharge to the Drogheda WWTP.

MCC will continue to work with Uisce Éireann to advance and realise capital expansions and upgrades of wastewater infrastructure for the continued sustainable growth of the County.

In un-serviced areas and outside the main settlements, the main method of sewage disposal is by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary wastewater treatment systems. The requirements for these

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<sup>52</sup> EPA Drinking Water Quality in Public Supplies 2024- <https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/annual-drinking-water-reports/drinking-water-quality-in-public-supplies-2024.php>

systems are set out in the EPA *Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment Systems and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses*<sup>53</sup>.

### 5.7.2 Waste Management

Waste management in Ireland is regulated by the Waste Management Acts, 1996 (as amended), which require Local Authorities to prepare detailed plans for the management of waste. Under the Waste Management Acts, a Development Plan is deemed to include the objectives of the Waste Management Plan (WMP) for its area.

EU and National waste management policy can be summarised by the waste hierarchy of prevention, recycling, energy recovery and disposal. For the purposes of waste management planning, Ireland is now divided into three regions: Southern, Eastern-Midlands and Connacht-Ulster. The study area is located within the Eastern-Midlands region. The Regional Waste Management Planning Offices have issued the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy (NWMPCE) 2024 - 2030 in March 2024, which supersedes the regional waste management plans. The NWMPCE does not however dissolve the three regional waste areas. The NWMPCE sets the ambition of the plan to have a 0% total waste growth per person over the life of the Plan with an emphasis on non-household wastes including waste from commercial activities and the construction and demolition sector.

The European Commission's Circular Economy Action Plan: A New Circular Economy Action Plan for a Cleaner More Competitive Europe, March 2020, forms one of the main blocks of the European Green Deal. A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy<sup>54</sup> was published in 2020 and outlines Ireland's National Waste Policy for 2020-2025.

The Council will continue to promote awareness of and promote an increase in the amount of waste that is re-used and recycled to reflect the objectives of the waste hierarchy.

Meath and Louth are both well served with a wide range of waste facilities from:

- waste transfer stations,
- Waste to Energy facility, landfill,
- a Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste facility and
- a network of recycling facilities supported by the MCC.

Recycling is a key component of sustainable waste management. Navan, Trim, Kells and Dunboyne are served by recycling centres. Drogheda town in Co. Louth is also served by recycling centre. The remainder of the County is served by a network of bring banks which accept a broad diversity of materials. The Council will continue to promote awareness of and promote an increase in the amount of waste that is re-used and recycled to reflect the objectives of the waste hierarchy. The Indaver Waste to Energy (WtE) facility in Duleek is a privately owned recovery facility.

### 5.7.3 Transport

The maintenance and delivery of an efficient, integrated and coherent transport network in line with national and regional policy is essential to the future economic, social and physical development of the

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<sup>53</sup> EPA, 2010: <https://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/water/wastewater/code%20of%20practice%20for%20single%20houses/>

<sup>54</sup> DCCA (2020).

County. Land-use planning and transport planning are inextricably linked and their proper integration is a key determinant to sustainable development.

*National Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan 2022-2025* is a national document which seeks to achieve a shift to more sustainable means of transport by setting actions and timeline for Modal Change. This policy sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions.

The Policy aims to improve the delivery of sustainable mobility by –

- *Implementing the accompanying action plan to 2025 and a reviewed and updated action plan for 2026 to 2030.*
- *Establishing a Leadership Group to oversee and drive implementation of the Policy and delivery of the action plan, and agree a programme of “pathfinder” projects at local level.*
- *Introducing a new annual National Household Travel Survey to measure progress against the Policy's targets.*
- *Convening a new National Sustainable Mobility Forum to provide a platform for collaborative engagement with national, regional and local stakeholders.*
- *Increasing public engagement around the benefits of sustainable mobility and raising awareness of the availability of alternative options to the private car.*
- *Establishing a new National Transport Authority Advisory Council to engage with the NTA around the discharge of its functions.*
- *Developing a transport research network to support existing research programmes and draw on the sustainable mobility expertise available across academia and industry, both in Ireland and internationally.*

#### 5.7.3.1 Road

The study area is strategically placed within the Greater Dublin Area between the cities of Dublin and Belfast. As a result, the area is well served by a high quality Motorway, National, Regional and local road network. The residents of Drogheda rely heavily on the use of private cars for transport and towns nearest Dublin have the highest number of commuters. A fully operational road network is therefore essential to the efficient functioning of the region.

The Motorways, National primary and secondary roads play a central role in providing ready access to all regions of the Country. They connect the County with the adjoining regions, provide direct access to Dublin City, to Dublin and Belfast International Airports and to the regional rail network and ports.

Meath is serviced by the national road network with the M1 Dublin - Belfast, the N2 Dublin - Derry, M3 Cavan Dublin, and M4 Dublin - Galway, Castlebar and Sligo, all traversing through the County linking the Dublin metropolitan area to the regions. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) recognises the importance of maintaining, improving and protecting the strategic function of the key transport corridors including the imperative to improve and protect the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast International road corridor, which forms part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) core network. The national secondary roads, N51 and N52, are medium distance through-routes connecting important towns. The N52 is a particularly important infrastructural development and strategic route, linking Dundalk and Mullingar-Athlone-Tullamore. The County is very reliant on its road infrastructure for intra and inter county movement and access.

Although responsibility for National Roads comes under the auspices of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), MCC in conjunction with TII carries out major upgrading and improvements to National Roads in

the County. Regional and local roads serve an important economic, social and community function and account for 81% of the Country's roads.

#### 5.7.3.2 Rail

At present, rail services are available at stations located in Dunboyne, Pace (M3 Parkway), Enfield, and a limited service provided from Gormanston Village. There are rail stations located immediately adjoining the County which are also used by Meath residents, these are Maynooth, Kilcock, Clonsilla, Drogheda and Balbriggan.

At present, there is no rail service from Navan to Dublin, putting it at a competitive disadvantage. The delivery of the Navan Rail Line Phase II infrastructure will strengthen the transport links in the County and will significantly improve the County's economic competitiveness as well as having a meaningful improvement on the quality of life of the County's residents. The delivery of the Navan Rail Line is in accordance with the Transport Strategy for the GDA 2022-2042.

MCC is committed to working with Irish Rail to review the operation of the Short Hop Zone (SHZ) rail prices, as currently the pricing discrepancy is having an undesirable impact on user behaviour. It is diverting rail users to a considerable extent to utilise stations outside of the County in order to avail of cheaper fares thereby creating more congestion at certain locations.

#### 5.7.3.3 Bus

Meath has already seen significant improvements to the quality and frequency of bus services to and from the urban centres of the County to Dublin and to other regional centres. Bus Éireann currently operates commuter and / or Expressway services to and from all major employment centres in Meath to Dublin. Bus Éireann also provides public transport services linking population centres in Meath and adjoining counties such as Drogheda to Navan, Navan to Kells and Navan to Trim. There are also a number of private services which serves the population centres in East Meath and play an important role in meeting the overall demand for transport services.

The National Roads Authority (NTA), as part of the transport strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), have identified significant routes that require investment in order to minimise delays. Improvements will include, enhanced bus lane provision on these corridors, removing current delays on the bus network in the relevant locations and enabling bus services to provide a faster alternative to car traffic along these routes.

As part of the Core Bus Network, three bus corridors pass through County Meath and include;

- M1, via Dublin Port Tunnel
  - Serves long distance bus routes from Belfast, Dundalk, Derry, Monaghan and Drogheda; and
  - Serves other regional bus routes from Balbriggan, Skerries and East Meath.
- M2, via Dublin Port Tunnel
  - Serves regional bus routes from Ashbourne and Slane.
- M3 / N3, via the Navan Road
  - Serves regional bus routes from Cavan, Navan, Trim and Dunshaughlin.

#### 5.7.3.4 Cycling & Walking Infrastructure

Cycling and walking is environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient and a healthy mode of transport to work, school, shopping and for recreational purposes. Cycling and walking are considered an efficient, fast and relatively inexpensive form of transport and its promotion is in line with the principles of sustainable development and promotion of healthy lifestyles.

The NTA's strategy for Transport in the GDA emphasises the need for additional walking and cycling infrastructure in the region and outlines a number of improvements required to encourage more people to walk which includes improvements to the existing environment for people with mobility, visual and hearing impairments.

Planning can encourage walking to become the principal method of movement for shorter journeys by utilising good urban design. Providing a network of safe, well-lit and convenient footpaths (both road-side and segregated) within new residential areas with links to schools, local neighbourhood centres, public transport stops and workplaces will encourage people to walk more.

MCC will continue to improve walking facilities in the County in conjunction with the NTA.

#### 5.7.4 Energy

The Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) is responsible for the development of Ireland's energy and climate policies. Ireland's long-term energy policy framework is set out in the 2015 Energy White Paper, Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030. The Paper sets out a framework to guide Irish energy policy in the period up to 2030 and sets out a vision for a transformation of Ireland's energy systems. This includes:

- moving to lower emissions fuels and ultimately towards a lower reliance on fossil fuels;
- significantly increasing renewable generation;
- achieving a step change in energy efficiency performance;
- implementing smart and interconnected energy systems;
- strong regulatory structures and markets to underpin these changes; and
- repositioning energy consumers to have a more active role within the energy sector.

Ireland is committed to a range of renewable energy and efficiency targets. In 2014 the European Council adopted a new framework, the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework, which includes EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period from 2021 to 2030. The 2030 framework proposes new targets and measures to make the EU's economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable<sup>55</sup>.

The built environment accounted for 12.7% of Ireland's greenhouse gases in 2017. It is important that we improve the energy efficiency of our buildings, including our homes, workplaces and schools, by meeting higher energy performance standards and by increasing retrofit activity. This will reduce Ireland's dependence on fossil fuels, but will also improve our living standards by making our buildings healthier, safer, and less costly to heat.

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<sup>55</sup> European Council (2017).

The National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030<sup>56</sup> takes into account energy and climate policies developed to date, demographic and economic growth (outlined in Project 2040) and includes all of the climate and energy measures set out in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027.

MCC has a critical and overarching role in progressing a sustainable energy future for Meath by recognising the central role of land use planning in promoting a low carbon society and mitigating the impacts of Climate Change.

The two main energy sources currently serving the County are electricity and gas. The RSES (Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA)) highlights the importance of reducing energy consumption from fossil fuel sources and promotes the use of more sustainable sources (wind, wave solar and biomass), as the overreliance on non-indigenous supplies of energy is still a major issue for the region. The RSES (EMRA) also outlines the need to identify 'Strategic Energy Zones' as areas suitable for larger energy generating projects, the role of community and micro energy production in urban and rural settings and the potential for renewable energy within industrial areas. A regional landscape strategy should be developed to support the delivery of projects within 'Strategic Energy Zones'. Furthermore, the use of smart technology systems and the recognition that buildings can act as both generators and consumers of energy and the promotion of electric vehicles will all place greater pressure on the national electricity grid.

Renewable energy potential feasible options, in line with the National Planning Framework (NPF) for Ireland, for Meath include, but are not limited to, a balanced mix of:

- Bioenergy - crops, forestry;
- Biomass - anaerobic digestion, combined heat and power (CHP);
- Geothermal - hot dry rock reservoirs, groundwater aquifers;
- Hydro energy - small and micro hydro systems;
- Solar - passive solar heating, active solar heating;
- Waste - landfill methane gas collection;
- Wave - wave action; and
- Wind - onshore wind, offshore wind (single turbines and groups).

MCC seeks to ensure that all new developments contribute positively towards reducing energy consumption and the associated carbon footprint. The Council will promote and facilitate new and innovative technologies seeking to provide renewable energies. The Council will also ensure a balance is achieved between the development of renewable energy sources and the protection of the natural heritage, visual amenity, biodiversity and food producing lands.

Local community engagement will form a key part of the Council's future energy strategy, and this engagement could be developed through the Public Participation Network (PPN) which could be used to inform people of the economic, environmental and social benefits of moving away from solid/fossil fuels towards a low carbon economy.

The Council will endeavour:

- To promote the rational uses of energy;
- To promote renewable energy;
- To promote and disseminate energy information;

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<sup>56</sup> DCCA (2019).

- To protect the environment;
- To reduce energy waste in all sectors of society; and
- To encourage the replacement of imported fossil fuels with regionally generated renewable energy in an effort to ensure security of energy supply, where it is feasible.

### 5.7.5 Telecommunications

High-speed broadband and telecommunications is core to competitiveness. The National Broadband Plan 2020<sup>57</sup> (NBP) sets out the strategy to deliver high speed broadband throughout Ireland. Ireland has made significant progress in recent years in terms of broadband connectivity at all levels: international connectivity, backhaul networks, Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) and local access networks. Since its publication, significant investment has been made in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of broadband and telecommunications services, with significant additional investment expected over the coming years. The *'Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework'* (2022) is intended to assist Ireland in maximising the socio-economic benefits from the digitisation trend.

County Meath has reasonably good access to the broadband network. MCC further seek to promote enhancement of broadband delivery in County Meath in the period of the Development Plan in accordance with National policy in order to:

- promote the attractiveness of regional locations outside of the main urban centres for economic development both indigenous and FDI;
- facilitate more flexible working arrangements such as working from home; and
- reduce social isolation.

### 5.7.6 Utilities

Gas and electricity are the energy utilities which have traditionally supported homes and businesses across the Country.

ESB Networks and EirGrid are the utility providers responsible for the electricity distribution and transmission systems. EirGrid manages the higher capacity electricity network which supplies power to industry and businesses that use large amounts of energy and electricity, whilst the ESB manages and operates the distribution network supplying electricity to homes, businesses, schools and institutions. EirGrid has a number of ongoing and planned projects in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) for the purpose of reinforcing the transmission and distribution networks.

Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) are the utility provider responsible for the supply, transmission and distribution of natural gas. GNI operates and maintains a modern gas network in Meath whilst Ervia is responsible for the delivery of gas infrastructure and services through GNI.

Public lighting is an important component of placemaking and is essential for the operation of the town. While the town is generally an illuminated area, excessive light pollution can arise when external lighting is not properly designed or managed. Insensitive lighting can cause light pollution. Light pollution can have a negative impact on biodiversity by affecting the normal diurnal patterns of plants and animals.

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<sup>57</sup> DECC, 2020: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c1b0c9-national-broadband-plan/>

### 5.7.7 Material Assets Issues

The increased growth at the County level will result in increasing demand for water, wastewater treatment, waste management, utilities, transport infrastructure / links and energy and telecommunications services.

Existing material assets issues / pressures within County Meath, include:

- Water Supply – new developments (including housing, offices and retail development), will generate pressure on existing water sources to meet demands and provide a suitable, safe and secure quantity and quality of drinking water supply.
- Water Supply - on-going investment in water conservation / leak detection and fixing.
- Water Supply and Wastewater Services - new developments (including housing, offices and retail development), will generate pressure on existing water and wastewater sources to meet demands. Inadequate infrastructure, including inadequate capacity, contribute to the contamination of receiving surface water and groundwater waterbodies.
- Wastewater Services - new developments, should only be permitted where there is adequate capacity in the wastewater infrastructure in accordance with urban wastewater treatment disposal requirements and standards. Currently, municipal wastewater discharges are creating significant pressure on the receiving waterbodies.
- Energy - there is a need to phase out the reliance on fossil fuels, with a shift to renewable energy resources, however, renewable energy will require large scale investment (public and private) in energy efficiency and innovative systems. Identifying and enabling indigenous renewable energy will also support Ireland's energy security. New developments and large developments require excellent energy and power services which create direct and indirect emissions, particularly CO<sub>2</sub>, methane and dioxins.
- Telecommunications - the rollout of connectivity in the urban environment can be complex. Lack of coordination between infrastructure and utility providers can lead to the spatially inefficient and uncoordinated provision of utilities and connectivity infrastructure.
- Transport - the movement of people is key to the success of new development and areas, where adequate transport infrastructure (i.e. road, rail, cycle and pedestrian routes) to these developments and accessibility throughout the development / area (safe footpath and cycle paths) is fundamental to the development of Meath. The development of road infrastructure services has major implications for biodiversity, landscape and air quality, as it causes habitat and landscape fragmentation and has Climate Change implications. There is a need to encourage a shift away from private cars usage and provide more reliable and connected modes of public transport. Promoting public transport, cycling and pedestrian activity, through the provision of quality and integrated public transport networks and infrastructure, can ensure traffic volumes and congestion on local road networks are minimised.
- Waste - population growth and development, and challenges in providing sustainable recycling infrastructure continues to put pressures on the local authorities to provide better waste management and access to waste services.
- Light Pollution - can arise when external lighting is not properly designed or managed which can in turn lead to inappropriate or excessive light spillage.
- Utilities - provision, protect and maintenance of adequate utilities to support existing and envisaged development.

## 5.8 Cultural Heritage

The physical traces left in the landscape by previous generations in archaeological monuments and sites and in historic buildings, townscapes and vernacular structures forms part of the tangible cultural heritage linking the past and present. County Meath is intrinsically linked to its cultural heritage, and is central to how individuals, communities and the County see themselves. MCC recognises the importance of identifying, valuing and safeguarding the archaeological and architectural heritage of Meath for future generations which can be achieved through the proper management, sensitive enhancement and / or appropriate development of this resource.

Meath's wealth of archaeological and built heritage makes it exceptional in Ireland. It includes the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the seat of the High Kings of Ireland at Tara, the passage tombs of Loughcrew, the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Europe at Trim, the historic towns and villages (Navan, Trim, Kells and Slane), great country houses, demesne landscapes, and a significant industrial heritage of canals and mills. Meath's natural heritage includes scenic river valleys, rolling farmland, a network of mature hedgerows and diverse coastal habitats.

A positive approach to heritage management enhances quality of life and environmental sustainability and ensures that the cultural and natural heritage is a resource that helps the County to compete as a cultural tourism destination.

MCC has prepared a Heritage Plan 2015-2020 which aims to identify priorities for action, establish a framework for the management of heritage at local level and increase awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of their heritage for all. The County Meath Heritage Forum, facilitated by the Heritage Office of MCC, has prepared a Draft Meath Heritage Strategy 2023-2030. The aim of the strategy is to identify key priorities and increase awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of the built, natural and cultural heritage of Meath for all.

Furthermore, there are approximately 1,600 archaeological recorded monuments in the RMP for County Meath.

### 5.8.1 Archaeological Heritage

The archaeological heritage of an area includes structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, moveable objects, monuments of other types as well as their context, whether situated on or under land or water.

The National Monuments Acts 1930-2014 provide for the protection of archaeological heritage. The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) was established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 and structures, features, objects or sites listed in this Record are known as Recorded Monuments.

Nationally there are over 1,000 monuments in State Care. In Meath there are 53 No. archaeological national monuments in guardianship and ownership of the State<sup>58</sup>. The wealth of archaeological sites ranges from passage tombs, churches, enclosures and ringforts to castles and round towers.

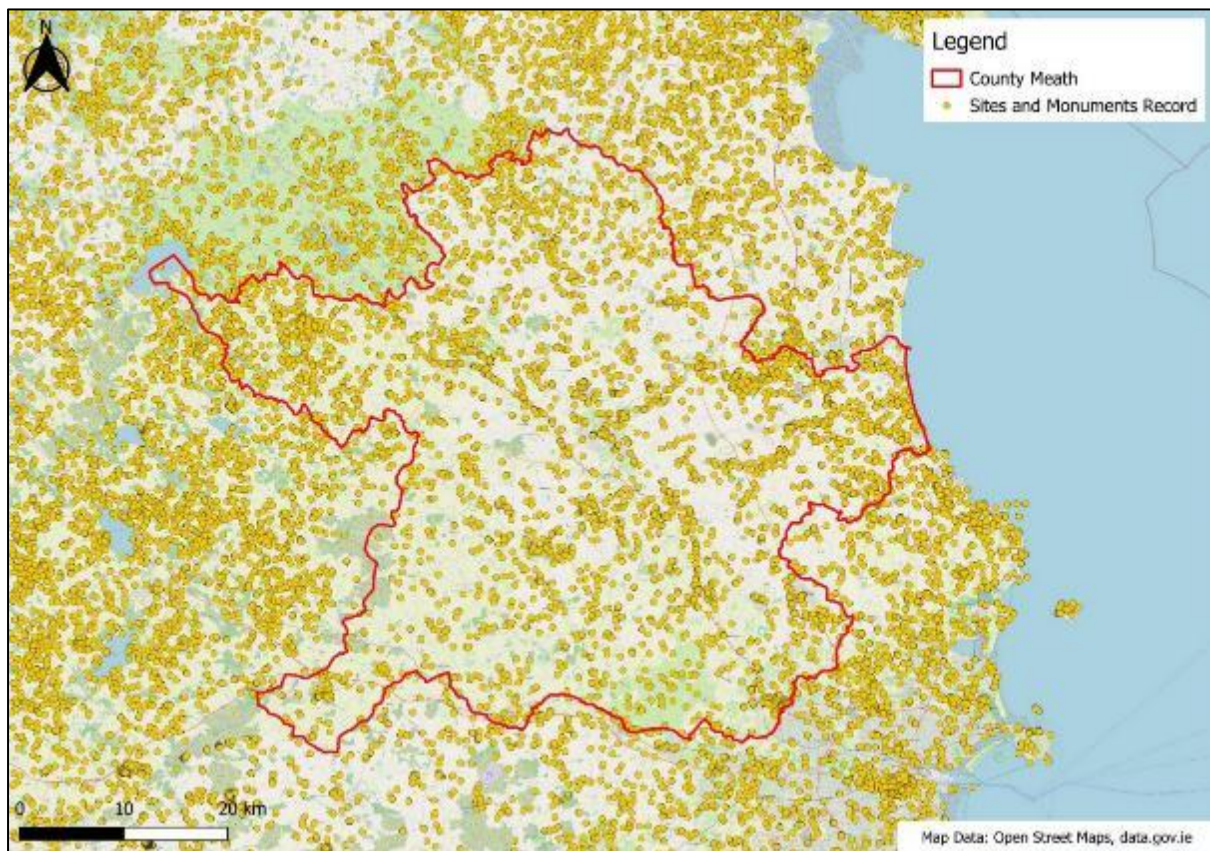
Monuments on the Register of Historic Monuments are established under the Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment Act) 1987. Under the provisions of Section 5(8) of the National Monuments

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<sup>58</sup> National Monuments in State Care, 2009: <https://www.archaeology.ie/sites/default/files/media/pdf/monuments-in-state-care-meath.pdf>

(Amendment) Act 1987, any person who plans to carry work in the vicinity of a monument recorded on the Register of Historic Monuments must give two months' notice to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Owners of lands on which a monument listed on the Register of Historic Monuments is situated have been notified of the presence of the monument and the legal protection which applies. There are 110 No. historical monuments recorded in Meath. The monuments within the study area or in the immediate vicinity are shown in **Figure 5.14** below.

The discovery of unrecorded monuments can often occur during excavations. Section 26 of the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended) requires that excavations for archaeological purposes must be carried out by archaeologists acting under an excavation licence. The Database of Irish Excavation<sup>59</sup> contains summary accounts of excavations carried out in Ireland from 1969 to the present year.



**Figure 5.14 Map of the Sites and Monuments Record within County Meath<sup>60</sup>**

#### 5.8.1.1 UNESCO World Heritage Site

In December 1993 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) inscribed Brú na Bóinne as a World Heritage Site. Brú na Bóinne contains many outstanding archaeological features, including the largest assemblage of megalithic art in Europe, large and varied grouping of monuments, and evidence of continuous settlement and activity in the area for some 7,000 years. The international significance of Brú na Bóinne has gradually been revealed through an ongoing process of discovery and research which began 300 years ago. MCC is committed to the protection and conservation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne. MCC acknowledges the need for additional bed spaces and other tourist facilities to enable the local community to benefit from the area's World Heritage Site status.

<sup>59</sup> Irish Excavation Ireland website: <http://www.excavations.ie/>

<sup>60</sup> Historic Environment Viewer, 2024: <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>

### 5.8.1.2 World Heritage Tentative List

The protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage is of importance for present and future generations. A Tentative List is an inventory of those properties which a country intends to consider for nomination to the World Heritage List. The 2022 Tentative List consists of Tara, County Meath (a serial transboundary nomination to include Emain Macha/Navan Fort, County Armagh) under the Royal Sites of Ireland<sup>61</sup>.

### 5.8.2 Architectural Heritage

The term architectural heritage is defined in the *Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act 1999* as meaning all structures and buildings together with their settings and attendant grounds, fixtures and fittings; groups of structures and buildings; and, sites which are of technical, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest.

The architectural heritage of Meath contributes to its unique sense of place. The Council wishes to ensure that those buildings, streetscapes and features which are of merit are protected and managed so that they retain their character and special interest.

In 2019, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht published the *Built & Archaeological Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan* (Prepared under the National Adaptation Framework). The adaptation strategy and accompanying action plan presented in the document aim to:

- Build adaptive capacity within the sector
- Reduce the vulnerability of built and archaeological heritage to climate change
- Identify and capitalise on the various potential opportunities for the sector

#### 5.8.2.1 Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

A *Protected Structure*, unless otherwise stated in the RPS, includes:

- the interior of the structure;
- the land lying within its curtilage;
- any other structures within the curtilage, and their interiors; and
- all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any of these structures.

Owners or occupiers of a protected structure may request the Council to issue a declaration as to the type of works, which may or may not be permitted in their structure.

Locations/properties recorded on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) within the study area are presented in **Figure 5.15**.

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<sup>61</sup> UNESCO World Heritage in Ireland Tentative List - <https://www.worldheritageireland.ie/the-tentative-list/2019-2022-tentative-list-review-process/>

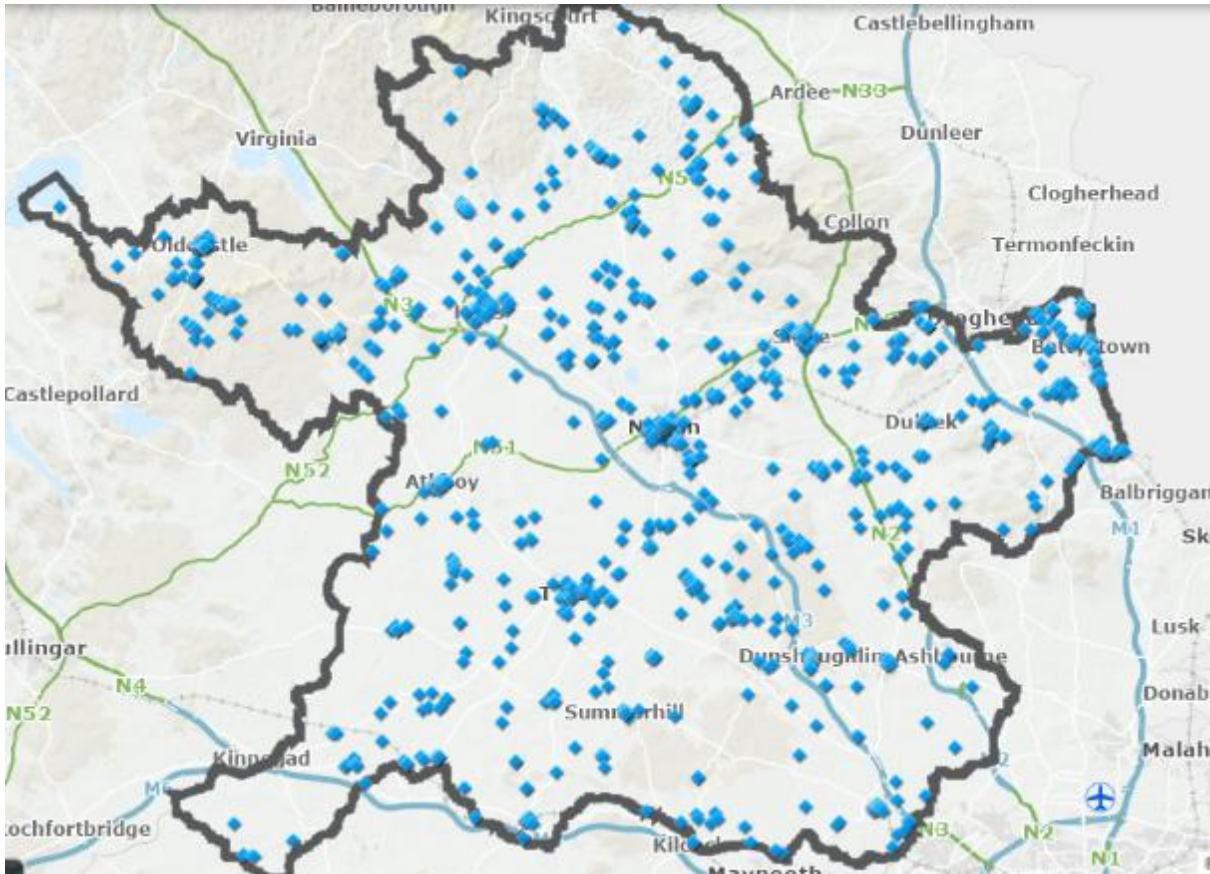


Figure 5.15 Map of the Record of Protected Structures within County Meath<sup>62</sup>

### 5.8.2.2 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)

Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) are of great importance for the protection and enjoyment of our heritage. In considering an application for permission for development in relation to land situated in an ACA, a planning authority, or the Board on appeal, must take into account the material effect that a development proposal would be likely to have on the character of the ACA. Planning permission is required to substantially or completely demolish any building within an ACA. Generally, there is a presumption in favour of retaining buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of an ACA. This does not prevent alterations, extensions or new development within the area but seeks to ensure that any new development is compatible with the special character of the area.

There are 23no. areas designated as ACAs in Meath which are listed in **Table 5.6** below.

**Table 5.6 Architectural Conservation Areas in County Meath**

Architectural Conservation Area	Architectural Conservation Area
Ardbraccan Demesne	Navan Historic Core
Athboy	Oldbridge Demesne
Dunboyne	Oldcastle
Dunsany Castle Demesne	Slane

<sup>62</sup> <https://meathcoco.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/portfolio/index.html?appid=b51bd55e879b4c81a23868755bea5978>

Architectural Conservation Area	Architectural Conservation Area
Headfort Demesne	Slane Castle Demesne
Julianstown	Slane Mill Complex
Kells Historic Core	Somerville Demesne
Kells – Headfort Place	Stackallen Demesne
Kilmessan	Summerhill
Laytown – Netterville and Victoria Terrace	Trim Historic Core
Longwood	Trim Porch Fields
Moynalty	

### 5.8.3 Cultural Heritage Issues

Construction activities have the potential for direct negative impacts on heritage features and their setting. Development of infrastructure, in addition to development resulting from economic growth and increasing population, can potentially impact on the integrity of sites or features of architectural, archaeological or cultural heritage interest. This could directly impact upon the cultural amenity resource and tourism potential of Meath.

Existing cultural heritage issues / pressures include:

- Development of infrastructure - development resulting from economic growth and increasing population, can potentially impact on the integrity of sites or features and their views to / from architectural, archaeological or cultural heritage interest.
- Development - in close proximity to sites and areas of cultural heritage may adversely impact upon the cultural landscape setting.
- Development - development has the potential to impact archaeological heritage which is sub-surface. This includes the insertion of services (e.g. cycleways), landscaping works, ground levelling and tree planting.
- Architecture - impact on heritage streetscapes of regional and local importance.
- Archaeology - impact on archaeological monuments and their settings including undiscovered sites / features.
- Climate change - the direct effects of climate change on heritage may be immediate or cumulative. Potential impacts are flooding, storm damage, coastal erosion, soil movement, changing burial-preservation conditions, pest and mould and maladaptation.
- Risk - protection of built and archaeological heritage to identify the heritage assets at risk

## 5.9 Landscape & Visual

The concept of landscape encompasses all that can be seen by looking across an area of land, *i.e.* it is the visible environment in its entirety. Landscape is the context in which all change takes place and helps to create a unique sense of place or identity within an area. The landscape supports a wide range of ecological habitats despite growth in its resident population. The interaction of all of these elements influences landscape character for future generations.

A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025<sup>63</sup> was published, in line with Ireland’s obligations under the European Landscape Convention. The key objectives of this Strategy are the recognition of landscape in law and the provision of a policy framework to put measures in place for the management and protection of landscape, the production of a national Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) through data gathering and an evidence-based description of character assessment, raising awareness and public consultation.

### 5.9.1 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process that describes maps and classifies landscapes. Landscape character is defined as '*a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse*'. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual landscape elements and the processes that may alter landscape character in the future. The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be divorced from its physical and visual characteristics, so all of these elements are considered.

### 5.9.2 Landscape Character Types

Landscape Character Types (LCT) are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character and are generic in nature in that they may occur in different localities throughout the country. Nonetheless, where they do occur, they commonly share similar combinations of geology, topography, land cover and historical land use, e.g. Hills and Upland Areas.

The LCA for Meath divides the county into four main LCTs, see **Table 5.7** below. These LCTs are further sub-divided into 20no. geographically specific Landscape Character Areas. The LCA includes recommendations that would, if implemented, to seek to protect and enhance the landscape character, and facilitate and guide sensitively designed development. The location of these areas are shown in **Figure 5.16** below. The LCT for the study area is Coastal Landscape and the LCA is Coastal Plains.

### 5.9.3 Landscape Character Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the Landscape Character Areas is defined as its overall resilience to sustain its character in the face of change and its ability to recover from loss or damage to its components. Sensitivity is evaluated using criteria ranging from ‘High’ to ‘Low’ and is based on the interaction of individual components such as landform, amount of evident historical features (time depth) and distribution of viewers. A highly sensitive landscape is likely to be vulnerable, fragile and susceptible to change whereas a landscape with low sensitivity is likely to be more robust and / or tolerant of change.

**Table 5.7 Landscape Character Types (LCT) in County Meath**

Landscape Character Types (LCTs)	Landscape Value	Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Character Types (LCTs) Sub-division
Hills and Upland Areas	High	Moderate	Teervurcher Uplands
	Moderate	Low	North Meath Lakelands
	Very High	High	Rathkenny Hills
	Very High	Moderate	Bellewstown Hills
	Exceptional	High	Tara Skryne Hills

<sup>63</sup> National Landscape Strategy: <https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/N-Landscape-Strategy-english-Web.pdf>

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Landscape Character Types (LCTs)	Landscape Value	Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Character Types (LCTs) Sub-division
	High	High	Lough Sheelin Uplands
	Exceptional	High	Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills
Lowland Areas	Moderate	Moderate	North Navan Lowlands
	High	Moderate	Central Lowlands
	Low	High	The Ward Lowlands
	Very High	Moderate	South East Lowlands
	High	High	Rathmoylan Lowlands
	High	High	South West Lowlands
	Moderate	Moderate	West Navan Lowlands
River Corridors and Estuaries	Moderate	Moderate	South West Kells Lowlands
	Very High	High	Nanny Valley
	High	Moderate	Royal Canal
	Exceptional	High	Boyne Valley
	Very High	High	Blackwater Valley
Coastal Areas	Moderate	High	Coastal Plain

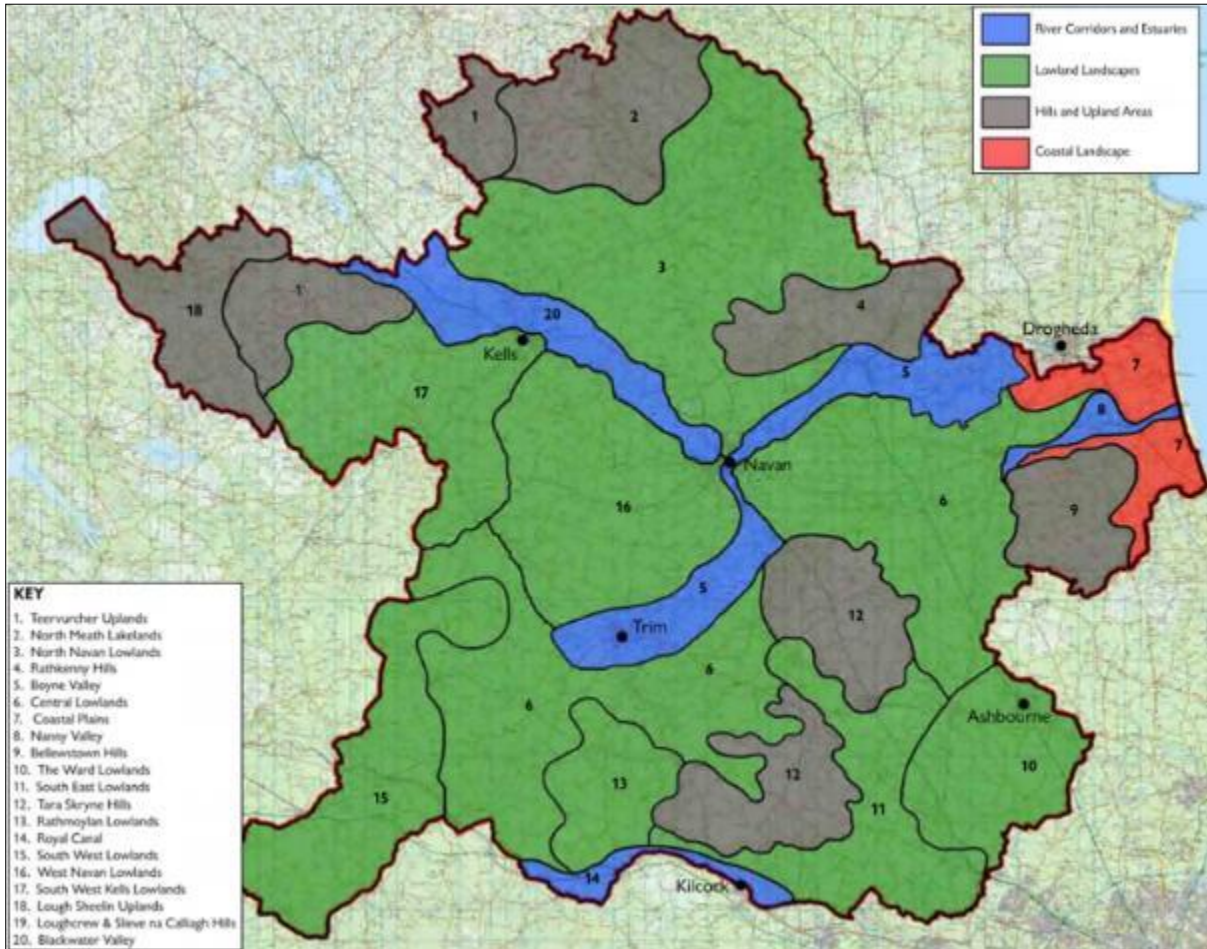


Figure 5.15 Landscape Character Types in County Meath<sup>64</sup>

#### 5.9.4 Protected Views & Prospects

Landscape objectives of the current Development Plan aims to preserve the views and prospects and to protect views from development which would interfere unduly with the visual amenity and character of the landscape, so far as practically possible.

The landscape of the County has many vantage points which offer attractive views from hilltops and upland areas, along river valleys and the coast. Many of these views are associated with heritage and tourism sites and provide vantage points over high quality landscapes. These scenic views are of an amenity and tourism value and contribute to our quality of life.

Within the County Meath, c.94no. views and prospects have been identified. Refer to **Figure 5.17** below.

<sup>64</sup> Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027 Appendix 5



Figure 5.16 Views and Prospects for County Meath<sup>65</sup>

### 5.9.5 Habitats and Landscape Features of Importance for Biodiversity

Many important and significant biodiversity areas occur outside sites that are subject to legal protection under EU and National legislations. There are many habitats and important features that are of particular importance for biodiversity throughout Ireland, including County Meath. Such areas include, hedgerows, woodlands and other field boundary types such as stone walls and ditches, rivers, streams, canals, wetlands, salt marshes and sand dunes. It is important that these areas are protected and enhanced where possible, as these landscape features and habitats cannot be sustained in isolation from one another as they provide ecological ‘corridors’ that support the movements of species necessary to maintain biodiversity.

### 5.9.6 Landscape & Visual Issues

Landscape can be considered a dynamic rather than static asset. It is constantly changing, and its changes are driven by nature itself, by direct human intervention, and indirectly through the consequences of human activity, notably Climate Change, all physical development undertaken by human impacts on the landscape. At the same time, human activity, especially farming, does much to maintain the landscape.

Areas of a highly sensitive landscape have a low capacity to absorb new development, and this can be a challenge to locate new development in these areas without it becoming unduly obtrusive.

<sup>65</sup> Protected Views and Prospects – Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027: <https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/meath-adopted-county-development-plan/chapter/a10-protected-views-and-prospects>

Development arising from the Variation No.5 where feasible should seek to conserve and enhance natural habitats and ecosystems to protect and improve biodiversity.

- Existing landscape and visual issues / pressures include:
- Development - development having adverse and visual impacts on the landscape.
- Green Infrastructure - protecting the existing green infrastructure network from fragmentation and loss due to pressures of urban development within and adjoining the network.
- Ecosystem Services - recognising and promoting the value of ecosystem services that the green infrastructure network provides to the County.
- Coastal – new developments along the coast are having visual impacts on the coastline.

### **5.10 Interactions and Cumulative Impacts**

The environment is both complex and dynamic and the various elements of the environment interact in an equally complex and dynamic manner. The permutations can be numerous, however, at a basic level the principal interactions can be either qualified or quantified in most instances. Interactions between various elements of the variation are considered in the SEA Environmental Report. Equally, an assessment of cumulative impacts arising from measures in the Variation No.5 is included in the Environmental Report.

## 6 Strategic Environmental Objectives

The SEA Directive requires that *'the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.'*

A series of Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) have been prepared based on the SEOs in the Environmental Report for the existing Development Plan revised in line with current guidance for Variation No.5 (refer to **Table 6.1**). The SEOs provide a basis for the assessment of the environmental effects of the Variation No.5 and are framed in such a manner as to enable the Variation No.5 to be fully assessed in environmental terms.

SEOs are distinct from the objectives within the CDP, although they often overlap and are developed from international, national and regional policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives. These high-level SEOs are paired with specific targets which can be monitored using indicators (see Section 10 of this Report).

**Table 6.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) for Variation No.5 to the MCC CDP**

Theme	Objective
<b>Biodiversity (Flora &amp; Fauna) (B)</b>	<b>(B_1)</b> Ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annex habitats and species and no adverse impact on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function.
	<b>(B_2)</b> Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.
	<b>(B_3)</b> Ensure the Plan does not contradict biodiversity protection, restoration and rehabilitation objectives in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027
<b>Population &amp; Human Health (PHH)</b>	<b>(PHH_1)</b> Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.
	<b>(PHH_2)</b> Protect human health and well-being.
<b>Soils &amp; Geology (SG)</b>	<b>(SG_1)</b> Safeguard land and soil resources from pollution and degradation.
<b>Water Quality (W)</b>	<b>(WQ_1)</b> Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.
	<b>(WQ_2)</b> Implement and comply with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management and Sustainable Drainage Systems Guidelines to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.
<b>Air Quality, Noise &amp; Climate (AN)</b>	<b>(AN_1)</b> Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality and noise emissions through the reduction of emissions.
	<b>(AN_2)</b> Contribute towards climate adaptation and mitigation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with National targets, including Ireland's commitment to realising a climate neutral economy by 2050.
<b>Material Assets (MA)</b>	<b>(MA_1)</b> Make best use of existing infrastructure, contribute towards the protection of public assets and infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population. Ensure new developments are served with adequate and appropriate critical

	<p>infrastructure with sufficient capacity (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) that does not present a danger to human health.</p> <p><b>(MA_2)</b> Promote sustainable waste management, minimisation and recovery</p> <p><b>(MA_3)</b> Promote sustainable transportation including increased use of public transport and active travel measures.</p>
<b>Cultural Heritage (CH)</b>	<p><b>(CH_1)</b> Protect, conserve and avoid impact on places, features and landscapes of cultural and archaeological importance, including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).</p> <p><b>(CH_2)</b> Protect, conserve and avoid impact on places, features, buildings and landscapes of architectural heritage, (including entries to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAHs)).</p>
<b>Landscape &amp; Visual (LV)</b>	<p><b>(LV_1)</b> Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath, minimise the loss of historic landscape features such as mature trees and hedgerows and scenic views.</p> <p><b>(LV_2)</b> Avoid impacts on the statutory landscape &amp; visual designations as identified in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p>

## 7 Assessment of Alternatives

### 7.1 Overview

Article 5(1) of the SEA Directive requires the Environmental Report to consider reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme and the significant environmental effects of the alternatives selected.

Alternatives put forward should be reasonable, realistic and capable of implementation. They should also be in line with the appropriate strategic level at which the plan will be implemented within the national planning hierarchy.

In April 2025 the *National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision* was adopted to address evolving challenges in relation to climate change, housing, regional development and population growth. In July 2025 following the approval of the Revised NPF, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published the *NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines* in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The *NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines* will replace the *Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, published in December 2020.

Local authorities are now required to update development plans to reflect on the national targets given by the Department. *The NPF Housing Growth Requirement Guidelines* requires sufficient zoning in County Meath to deliver 2,942 units annually up to 2035. This figure reduces to 1,362 from 2035 to 2040. The County Development Plan is mandated to be consistent with the *National Planning Framework* and the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy*. Accordingly, Variation 5 is required to integrate the updated housing figures into the Core Strategy to ensure consistency with the planning hierarchy. Therefore, a 'do-nothing' scenario is not viable alternative.

As required by Section 3.0 of the NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines, local authorities must initially assess the current adopted development plan and review the Core Strategy, related settlement strategies and zoning objectives against the objectives of the NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines.

The approach taken in the preparation of Variation No.5 involved an initial assessment to determine the remaining lands zoned for residential use to cater for the new housing figures, with the potential for an additional supply over the remaining duration of the development plan to be evaluated, focusing specifically on the identification of land suitable for residential development.

Thereafter a 3 phase assessment was followed

- The first phase considered lands that have been built out, the planning history of zoned lands and activation sites, and the availability of/or potential for servicing.
- The second phase was a quantitative and qualitative assessment that considered aspects to ensure that lands zoned can and will deliver the target of 2,942 units annually.

This second phase of assessment focused on the granular detail of land parcels insofar as:

- Whether the land parcels identified in Stage 1 of this assessment are fully serviced from a water, sewerage, transport and power perspective to be built out in their entirety;

- Whether the lands identified as part of the Stage 1 of this assessment included landowners with fully serviced zoned lands for extended periods of time that have not attempted to develop their lands for residential purposes and have not engaged with the Local Authority in the previous or existing development plan period;
  - Whether any landowners of the parcels identified in Phase 1 have expressed their desire to have their land re-zoned for other purposes as part of the RZLT consultation process, and therefore do not intend to develop their land;
  - The percentage of existing planning permissions that are likely to translate to delivered units over the next two years;
  - Housing delivery trends in settlements over the past 5 years.
- The third phase of this assessment identified the quantum of additional lands required to be zoned as part of this variation in order to increase the likelihood of delivering 2,942 units. The assessment was guided by the NPF Housing Growth Requirements to ensure that zoning for an additional provision of up to 50% was factored into the land zoning identification process.

Having regard to the above reasonable alternatives are assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) (refer to Section 6 of this Report), established for the assessment of Variation No.5 against the baseline environment. The purpose is to determine if the reasonable alternatives result in positive, negative, neutral or uncertain environmental outcomes. This assessment process can result in mixed-effects outcomes.

## 7.2 Assessment of Alternatives

Two reasonable alternatives for the objectives of Variation No.5 have been identified and assessed as set out in Table 7.1. The potential effects of the reasonable alternatives on the SEOs categorised as follows:

- Potential Positive Environmental Impact (indicated by '+')
- Potential Negative Environmental Impact (indicated by '-')
- Potential Positive and Negative Environmental Impacts (indicated by '+/-').
- Uncertain Environmental Impact ((indicated by '?').
- Neutral, No or Insignificant Environmental Impact (indicated by '0')

## 7.3 Reasoning for Selection of the Preferred Alternative

Alternative 2 is selected as the preferred approach as it has the greatest potential to deliver the required residential units in a sustainable manner throughout the county, making best use of existing and planned infrastructure, and which for the most part most-part expands on existing, emerging and planned development in the settlements.

Alternative 2 allows for selection of the most suitable lands and places a balanced emphasis environmental factors, minimising likely significant effects.

Table 7.1 Assessment of Alternatives for Variation No.5

Reasonable Alternative Description	SEO	Environmental Assessment	Environmental Evaluation
<p><b>Alternative 1</b></p> <p>Restricted Delivery of Units</p> <p>This alternative could achieve the required residential units by limiting delivery within Tier 1 Settlements only.</p> <p>This would entail additional zoning of existing rural areas or whitelands</p>	B_1	0	<p>This alternative will lead to some positive environmental effects especially in terms of growth within the main settlements and making best use of existing infrastructure.</p> <p>This alternative will restrict growth in other settlements, where there is equal requirement for residential units and where there are some better placed and better serviced lands than in the additional zoned lands that would be required in the Tier 1 settlements.</p> <p>With the required zoning of additional lands in restricted areas, this alternative would likely have a negative impact on local diversity, land / soils, and have uncertain impacts on water, air quality / climate, heritage and the landscape.</p>
	B_2	-	
	B_3	-	
	PHH_1	+	
	PHH_2	+/-	
	LSG_1	-	
	WQ_1	-	
	WQ_2	+/-	
	AN_1	+/-	
	AN_2	+/-	
	MA_1	+	
	MA_2	+	
	MA_3	+	
CH_1	+/-		
CH_2	+/-		
LV_1	+/-		
LV_2	+/-		
<p><b>Alternative 2</b></p> <p>Distributed Delivery of Units</p> <p>This alternative could achieve the required residential units by distributing the delivery within a wider range of settlements.</p> <p>This would minimise additional zoning of existing rural areas or whitelands.</p>	B_1	0	<p>This alternative will lead to positive environmental effects especially in terms of distributed growth on the best sites within settlements.</p> <p>This alternative will distribute growth across a wide range of settlements in the county – thereby making use of the best placed and best serviced lands available for consideration.</p> <p>With required zoning of some additional lands, this alternative would likely have uncertain impacts on lands / soils, water, air quality / climate, and heritage, and neutral impacts on protected features and the landscape.</p>
	B_2	-	
	B_3	-	
	PHH_1	+	
	PHH_2	+	
	LSG_1	+/-	
	WQ_1	+/-	
	WQ_2	+/-	
	AN_1	+/-	
	AN_2	+/-	
	MA_1	+	
	MA_2	+	
	MA_3	+	
CH_1	0		
CH_2	+/-		
LV_1	0		
LV_2	0		

## 8 Assessment of Effects of the Variation No.5

### 8.1 Introduction

The Variation No.5 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 has been subject to an assessment for potential effects arising from the implementation of the Variation on the baseline environment as characterised and described in **Section 5** of this Report. The assessment is carried out having regard to the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) established for the aspects of the baseline environment which have potential to be impacted. These SEOs are detailed in **Section 6** of this Report.

### 8.2 Environmental Assessment of the Proposed Amendments set out in Draft Variation No.5

The provisions of Draft Variation No.5 have been subject to environmental assessment as set out in **Table 8.1**. Where potential for likely significant environmental effects arise these provisions have been identified for mitigation measures. It is noted that some provisions have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and these are discussed in further detail in the Natura Impact Report (NIR). Likewise it is noted that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) identified flood considerations on a number of lands (refer to Section 3.5 of this report) and again these are referenced in the following table and in the SRFA.

In the following table deleted text is shown in ~~strikethrough~~ and new is shown in blue.

**Table 8.1 Environmental Assessment of Draft Variation No.5**

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
<p><b>Proposed Amendment No. 1: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Volume 1 - Written Statement</b></p> <p>To update the County Development Plan to take account of the new housing targets set out in the National Planning Framework Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in July 2025 and issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.</p>	<p>Provides for update of text and tables in the development plan in accordance with the requirements of higher level plans, including the National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision and the NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines.</p> <p>No environmental assessment is required.</p>	
<p>In addition to updates as required to the text to the CDP Written Statement, Amendment 1 provides for the following updated/new objectives:</p> <p>Updated objective CS OBJ 3</p> <p>To ensure the implementation of the population, housing growth and household allocation set out in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy, in so far as practicable. Meath County Council will monitor</p>	<p>Provides for update of reference to higher level plans.</p>	No

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
<p>the number of units that are permitted and delivered as part of the implementation of this objective, in compliance with the Development Plan Guidelines 2022 and the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines 2025</p>	<p>No environmental assessment is required.</p>	
<p>Updated objective CS OBJ 8</p> <p>The existing Southern Environs of Drogheda Local Area Plan 2009 (The LAP) shall remain the statutory plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda until such a time as it is replaced with a Joint Urban Plan for Drogheda in conjunction with Louth County Council having regard to the requirements of the Report of the Drogheda Boundary Review Committee (February 2017), the National Planning Framework, and the Eastern and Midland Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. This plan shall be read together with the County Development Plan 2020-2026 2021-2027. The County Development Plan 2020-2026 2021-2027 shall take precedence if a conflict arises between the Plans and the conflicting provision of the LAP shall cease to have effect.</p>	<p>Provides for correct of date reference.</p> <p>No environmental assessment is required.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Updated objective CS OBJ 11</p> <p><del>To support the implementation of the policies and objectives set out within the Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025 – 2031 as prepare, as a priority, a Joint Vision and Local Area Plan for Maynooth in partnership with Kildare County Council within the lifetime of this Plan in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.35 of the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region. As part of the preparation of this Plan, a detailed infrastructure assessment, consistent with the Consolidated Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (incl. V1, V2 &amp; V3) Chapter 2 methodology for a Tiered Approach to Zoning under Appendix 3 of the NPF will be undertaken.</del></p>	<p>Provides support for the implementation of the adopted Maynooth Local Area Plan. This plan was subject to SEA and AA during the plan-making process.</p> <p>No environmental assessment is required.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Updated objective SH OBJ 2</p> <p>To ensure the implementation of the population and housing growth allocations set out in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy and in accordance with the NPF Implementation Housing</p>	<p>Provides for update of reference to higher level plans.</p>	<p>No</p>

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
<a href="#">Growth Requirements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2025).</a>	No environmental assessment is required.	
Updated objective SH OBJ 7 <del>To prepare a Joint Vision and Local Area Plan for Maynooth in partnership with Kildare County Council within the lifetime of this Plan in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.35 of the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region</del> <a href="#">To support the implementation of the policies and objectives set out within the Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025 – 2031</a>	Provides support for the implementation of the adopted Maynooth Local Area Plan. This plan was subject to SEA and AA during the plan-making process.  No environmental assessment is required.	No
Updated objective SH OBJ 20  To promote the development of vacant residential and regeneration sites in all development centres in the County, as appropriate, <del>in accordance with the requirements of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (as amended).</del>	Provides for update to references within the objective.  No environmental assessment is required.	No
New Objective INF OBJ 25B <a href="#">Planning applications for new developments in the potential Zone of Influence of a European site shall submit details of surface water management plans for construction and operation to ensure compliance with the water quality standards and to protect the water quality and flow regime of surface and groundwater resources.</a>	Provides for environmental positive new surface water management measure (in accordance with SEA Scoping recommendation from Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage).  No environmental assessment is required.	No
<b>Proposed Amendment No. 2: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Volume 2 - Written Statement for Settlements</b>  In order to ensure consistency with the Written Statement of the Development Plan (Volume 1) and the revised housing targets, the Written Statements for the settlements that contain lands proposed for rezoning are required to be amended as part of this variation. The amendments primarily relate to adjustments to the household allocation for the relevant areas and projected population growth having regard to Census 2022 data and the new annual housing growth requirements for the county as set out in the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines 2025.	Provides for update of text and tables in the development plan in accordance with the requirements of higher level plans, including the National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision and the NPF Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines.  No environmental assessment is required.	No

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
<p>In addition to updates as required to the text to the CDP Written Statement, Amendment 1 provides for the following new objectives:</p> <p><b>New Objective DCE OBJ 23 (Dunboyne)</b>            Planning applications for development proposals on the lands that are subject to Spot Objective DCE OBJ 23 shall be accompanied by a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out in accordance with the requirements of the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.”</p>	<p>Provides for environmental positive new flood risk management measure.</p> <p>No environmental assessment is required.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>New Objective DNS OBJ 14 (Dunshaughlin)</b>            Planning applications for development proposals on the lands that are subject to Spot Objective DNS OBJ 14 shall incorporate a minimum 10m wide riparian buffer strip measured from the top of the bank either side of the water course running through the lands to protect future development from flood related impacts.</p>	<p>Provides for environmental positive new flood risk management measure.</p> <p>No environmental assessment is required.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>New Objective KIL OBJ 5B (Kilcock)</b>            Planning applications for development proposals on the lands that are subject to Spot Objective KIL OBJ 5B shall be accompanied by a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out in accordance with the requirements of the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.” Lands that are impacted by Flood Zone B and Climate Change shall be reserved for storage areas only and kept free from vulnerable land uses.</p>	<p>Provides for environmental positive new flood risk management measure.</p> <p>No environmental assessment is required.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>New Objective NAV OBJ 38 (Navan)</b>            Planning applications for development proposals on the lands that are subject to Spot Objective NAV OBJ 38 shall be accompanied by a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out in accordance with the requirements of the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.”</p>	<p>Provides for environmental positive new flood risk management measure.</p> <p>No environmental assessment is required.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>Proposed Amendment No.3: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Volume 2 - Maps for Settlements</b></p>		<p>Yes</p>

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
<p>In order to ensure consistency with the National Planning Framework and accommodate revised housing targets for the County, it is proposed to amend land use zonings as shown on the County Development Plan Map Sheets. It is also proposed to amend the development / settlement boundaries accordingly to ensure any lands that have been identified for development within the lifetime of the Plan fall within the development boundary of the relevant settlement.</p> <p>The proposed rezonings are summarised below with details provided as to the existing and proposed land use zoning objectives for each individual area. The proposed rezonings are illustrated individually through updated land use zoning map sheets for the relevant settlements / areas with the proposed variations clearly marked on each sheet. Where no zoning changes are proposed in settlements under this Variation, the current map sheets remain in effect.</p> <p>Lands in 11 settlements have been identified for rezoning.</p>		
<p><b>Dunboyne, Clonee &amp; Pace</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>These serviced lands were identified for A2 Residential Development post 2027 in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands adjoin existing residential development and the proposed amendment is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than potentially in relation to flood risk.</p> <p>Potential Flood Risk has been identified in the south-western portion of the site.</p> <p>The lands have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and are addressed further in the Natura Impact Report (NIR).</p>	Yes
<p><b>Southern Environs of Drogheda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from WL – Whitelands to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The Amendment 01 lands adjoin existing schools and the Dublin – Drogheda railway corridor. An indicative road route, which traverses</p>	Yes

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from WL – Whitelands to G1 – Community Infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 02</li> <li>○ Rezoning of land from WL – Whitelands to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul>	<p>the lands as included in the existing County Development Plan, remains unchanged.</p> <p>The Amendment 01 is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than potentially on local biodiversity and in terms of the local landscape.</p> <p>The Amendment 02 lands adjoin existing residential development and other zoned lands and do not give to likely significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The Amendment 01 and 02 lands have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and are addressed further in the Natura Impact Report (NIR).</p>	
<p><b>Navan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 02 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 03 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 04 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from E1/E3 – Strategic Employment Zones to A2 Phasing – Post 2027</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 05 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to E1/E3 – Strategic Employment Zones</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>These serviced lands were identified for A2 Residential Development post 2027 in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands adjoin existing residential lands and the proposed amendments 01-03 are not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than potentially in relation to local biodiversity, surface water and potential flood risk.</p> <p>Amendments 04 &amp; 05 relate to a switch of land use zoning on 2 adjoining areas of land (from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to E1/E3 – Strategic Employment Zones and vice versa) and do not give to likely significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The Amendment 01 to 05 lands have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and are addressed</p>	<p>Yes</p>

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
	further in the Natura Impact Report (NIR).	
<p><b>Kilcock Environs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>These serviced lands were identified for A2 Residential Development post 2027 in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands adjoin existing residential lands and the proposed amendment is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than potentially in relation to local biodiversity, surface water and potential flood risk.</p> <p>The lands have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and are addressed further in the Natura Impact Report (NIR).</p>	Yes
<p><b>Dunshaughlin</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 02           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>These serviced lands were identified for A2 Residential Development post 2027 in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands adjoin existing residential development and other zoned lands, and the proposed amendments are not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than potentially in relation to local surface water and flood risk.</p>	Yes
<p><b>Enfield</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 02           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>These serviced lands were identified for A2 Residential Development post 2027 in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands adjoin existing residential development and other zoned lands, and the proposed amendments are not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than</p>	Yes

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
	potentially in relation to local surface water and flood risk.	
<p><b>Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney-Mornington (East Meath)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from WL – White Lands to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 02 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area o A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 03 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to G1 – Community Infrastructure</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The Amendment 01 lands are serviced lands that were identified as Whitelands in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands adjoin existing residential development and other zoned lands, and are well located close to public transport options. The proposed amendment is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The Amendment 02/03 lands are serviced lands that are identified as RA – Rural Area in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. The lands adjoin existing residential areas in the settlement and are not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than potentially on local biodiversity.</p> <p>The lands have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and are addressed further in the Natura Impact Report (NIR).</p>	Yes
<p><b>Duleek</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 02 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 03 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 – New Residential to WL – White Lands</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Amendment 01 and 02 are serviced lands are identified as RA – Rural in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands directly adjoin existing residential development and other zoned lands, and are well located close to public transport options. The proposed amendment is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.</p> <p>Amendment 03 lands are identified as A2 – New Residential in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027</p>	Yes

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
	<p>and it is proposed that these lands are re-zoned to Whitelands – and therefore, no environmental effects arise – including potentially on Duleek Commons pNHA.</p> <p>The lands have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and are addressed further in the Natura Impact Report (NIR).</p>	
<p><b>Stamullen</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The Amendment 01 are serviced lands that were identified as RA-Rural Area in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands directly adjoin existing residential development. The proposed amendment is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than the lands have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and are addressed further in the Natura Impact Report (NIR).</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>Athboy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 – New Residential to G1 – Community Infrastructure</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 02 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from A2 – New Residential to G1 – Community Infrastructure</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 03 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The Amendment 01 and 02 lands are identified as A2 – New Residential in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. It is proposed to change the zonings to G1 – Community to reflect the established use. These proposed amendments are not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than a positive effects in securing essential recreational facilities for the local population.</p> <p>The Amendment 03 are serviced lands that were identified as RA-Rural Area in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands directly adjoin existing residential development. The</p>	<p>Yes</p>

Draft Variation Amendment	Assessment of Environmental Effects	Mitigation Required or Not
	<p>proposed amendment is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The lands have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and are addressed further in the Natura Impact Report (NIR).</p>	
<p><b>Carlanstown</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed Amendment 01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The Amendment 01 are serviced lands that were identified as RA-Rural Area in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>The lands directly adjoin existing residential development in the settlement. The proposed amendment is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects – other than the lands have screened in for Appropriate Assessment and are addressed further in the Natura Impact Report (NIR).</p>	<p>Yes</p>

### 8.3 Interactions

An overview of the key and minor / no interaction between environmental factors with potential for effects arising from Variation No.5 are set out in the matrix in **Table 8.2**.

Actions that give rise to positive or negative environmental effects for one environmental component also have the potential to generate positive or negative environmental effects for inter-related environmental components – e.g. negative effect on soils can have a negative effect on biodiversity, water, and / or landscape. Likewise, actions supporting the delivery of SuDS will improve water quality, which in turn can have a positive effect on aquatic ecology.

An assessment of impact inter-relationships and interactions is already embedded in the evaluation of environmental effects that has been carried out in this environmental report. This ensures that there is adequate coverage of all potential environmental effects associated with the implementation of plan actions. In addition, the mitigation measures set out in **Section 9.0** of this Report.

**Table 8.2 Potential Significant Interrelationships between Environmental Factors**

Component \ Effect	Biodiversity	Population & Human Health	Land, Soils & Geology	Water Quality	Air Quality, Noise and Climate	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape & Visual
Biodiversity		☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Population & Human Health	☑		☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Land, Soils & Geology	☑	☑		☑	☒	☑	☑	☑
Water Quality	☑	☑	☑		☒	☑	☒	☑
Air Quality, Noise and Climate	☑	☑	☒	☒		☑	☑	☒
Material Assets	☒	☑	☑	☑	☑		☒	☒
Cultural Heritage	☒	☑	☑	☒	☑	☑		☑
Landscape & Visual	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	

Legend: Key Interaction ☑ Minor/No Interaction ☒

### 8.4 Potential Cumulative Effects

The Variation No.5 could have a relationship with other plans and programmes. However, these plans and programmes will also have been subject to environmental assessment, including SEA and AA, for the purpose of preventing and mitigating potential negative environmental effects. **Table 8.5** lists the relevant plans and programmes that have potential for cumulative effects.

**Table 8.5 Potential Cumulative Effects with other Plans and Programmes**

Plan, Programme etc.	Potential Cumulative effect	Likely Cumulative Effect
National Planning Framework (NPF) Project 2040 and National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision  National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030 (As part of Project Ireland 2040 the National Development Plan sets out the Government's over-arching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030)	The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the National Planning Framework and the Revised NPF have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the plan have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Plan, Programme etc.	Potential Cumulative effect	Likely Cumulative Effect
National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision led to the publication of the <i>NPF Implementation; Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines</i> – which gives rise to the requirement for Variation No.5		
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 for the Eastern Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA)	The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the RSES have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the RSES have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
Climate Action Plan 2025	Climate Action Plan 2025 is the most recent update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan 2019. This plan is prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050, as we committed to in the Programme for Government.	No
National CFRAMS Programme Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study	Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Studies and their product – Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) – are at the core of national policy for flood risk management and the strategy for its implementation. These studies are required by The Floods Directive [2007/60/EC], which is being implemented in Ireland through the European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 [S.I.122/2010]. Each FRMP is accompanied by an associated SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Statement. The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the FRMP have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the FRMP have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
Greater Dublin Drainage Project	The EIA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the Greater Dublin Drainage Project have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the project have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Plan, Programme etc.	Potential Cumulative effect	Likely Cumulative Effect
Ireland's 4 <sup>th</sup> National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030	The Biodiversity Action notes the requirements and purposes of AA and SEA and the vision of the plan to conserve and restored for the benefit of all sectors of society.	No
Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042	The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042 have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Strategy have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)	The policy sets a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by the end of this decade. The projects which will be implemented as a result of this national policy will be subject to their individual environmental impact assessment and appropriate assessment processes (as appropriate) and hence there would be no potential adverse effects on the overall receiving environment.	No
River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland 2022-2027	The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the RBMP have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Plan have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
County Development Plans (Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029, Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029, Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027, Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028, Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028, Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027, Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025)	The County Development Plan (CDP) provides the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area over the statutory time period of the plan. Each of the CDP with Zone of Influence of County Meath has been subject to SEA and AA processes to ensure that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Plan have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No

The assessment of cumulative effects above focused on national, regional and local plans, programmes, strategy and policy documents that have the potential to affect the same receiving environment that could be affected by the Variation.

The existing Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out policies and objectives for land use, settlement strategy, sustainable development, transport, infrastructure, environmental protection and management, climate change, land use etc. for County Meath. Other higher-level international, national and regional plans are integrated within the Meath County Development Plan and have been assessed as such. The Variation complies with the provisions set within the Meath County Development Plan which itself has been subject to standalone environmental assessment (SEA, NIR, etc.).

The assessment of cumulative effects concludes that the implementation of the Variation No.5 will not result in direct, indirect or cumulative impacts which would have the potential to adversely affect the environment.

## 8.5 Environmental Assessment of the Modifications set out Adopted Variation No.5

Variation No. 5 to the Meath County Development Plan was adopted by the Elected Members of the council on 8 June 2026. The adopted Variation includes the following minor (not material) modifications.

**Note:** Deleted text contains a ~~strike through~~. Further proposed modifications to the text arising from submissions to the Variation No.5 are underlined and italicised in green.

The following body text is inserted above Table 12.2B Core Strategy Supplementary Table:

*For the purposes of calculating the projected number of units that may be achieved on the newly zoned A2 New Residential lands, a net development area of 80% of the site area was used to account for unknown site constraints and the need to provide non-residential space as part of future development proposals. It should be noted that the potential number of units listed in the table per settlement are indicative only and should not be viewed as a de-facto cap or unit target for the lands.*

Correct the typographical error for the Area of Adjusted Lands (Column B) for Drogheda as follows:

~~11.03~~ 20.66

Minor modification to insert an asterisk and footnote to the existing Core Strategy Table 2.12

An asterisk and footnote has been inserted adjacent to the 11 relevant settlements in the existing Core Strategy Table 2.12 to clarify for readers of the Core Strategy Table that the Core Strategy Supplementary Table (Table 12.2B) provides for the inclusion of additional zoning quantum to facilitate the delivery of the NPF Housing Growth Targets 2025. The footnote will read as follows;

*\*Additional Zoning Quantum to accommodate the revised housing growth requirements as set out in the NPF Housing Growth Requirements: Implementation Guidelines (2025) is included in Table 2.12B Core Strategy Supplementary Table.*

In addition to the minor changes to the Variation, as noted above, the following minor clarifications are included in the final SFRA to address the items raised in both the OPR and OPW submissions:

1. The SFRA has been updated to include additional GSI SAR historic mapped extents under Section 2.2.
2. The SFRA has been updated to include a clarification regarding the ongoing OPW Map Review in Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace and Kilcock.
3. In relation to Stamullen, the SFRA has been updated accordingly to reflect the best available and most up to date flood mapping including consideration of climate change impacts on the site.
4. For Enfield PA 02, additional historic flood information has been incorporated into the final SFRA.
5. The SFRA will be updated to incorporate historic flood extents for Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace PA 01, as identified on FloodInfo.ie.
6. The SFRA Addendum has been updated to include some further guidance on SuDS and nature-based solutions guidance, referencing the OPW Best Practice Interim Guidance Document and the Implementation Guidance for Planners. The additional text will be:

*“In particular it is noted that the sites will offer opportunities to integrate nature-based solutions to reduce runoff and deliver benefits for both water quality and biodiversity. At development management stage applicants should implement the Best Practice Interim Guidance Document ‘Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas’, as well as the Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents ‘Implementation of Urban Nature-based Solutions’ wherever possible”.*

These clarifications do not result in any changes to the land-use zonings which form part of the Variation.

Having regard to Schedule 2 of S.I. 456 of 2025 European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025 the above modifications are minor in nature and provide for clarification. The modifications do not give rise to any significant effects on the environment either by means of the Characteristics of the plan or the Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected.

## 9 Mitigation Measures

### 9.1 Overview

The finding of the environmental assessment in **Section 8.0** of this Environmental Report is that, if unmitigated, a number of the provisions of the Variation No.5 have potential for uncertain or negative effects on aspects of the environment. These potential negative and / or uncertain effects, which derive from potential works resulting from the provisions of the Variation, focus primarily on biodiversity (including appropriate assessment), water (including flood risk), climate and landscape. This section of the Environmental Report identifies measures for the mitigation and avoidance of potential uncertain or negative environmental effects.

### 9.2 Mitigation Measures

The majority of the mitigation measures are achieved through the detailed environmental protective policies and objectives as set out in the existing Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. The Development Plan provides for sustainable planning and management control of all development in County Meath – including any development or works deriving from the Variation.

The environmental protective policies and objectives of the Development Plan are detailed in **Tables 9.1A and 9.1B of Appendix 9.1** of this Environmental Report.

During the Variation-making process a number of potential environmental considerations were identified during the assessment process and specific mitigation measures were proposed and are included in the Variation. These include:

In relation to European sites and Surface Water Management during construction and operation for all new developments:

#### **INF OBJ 25B**

Planning applications for new developments in the potential Zone of Influence of a European site shall submit details of surface water management plans for construction and operation to ensure compliance with the water quality standards and to protect the water quality and flow regime of surface and groundwater resources.

In relation to Flood Risk Management on the Amendment 01 lands in Dunboyne:

#### **DCE OBJ 23**

Planning applications for development proposals on the lands that are subject to Spot Objective DCE OBJ 23 shall be accompanied by a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out in accordance with the requirements of the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.”

In relation to Flood Risk Management on the Amendment 01 lands in Dunshaughlin:

#### **DNS OBJ 14**

Planning applications for development proposals on the lands that are subject to Spot Objective DNS OBJ 14 shall incorporate a minimum 10m wide riparian buffer strip measured

from the top of the bank either side of the water course running through the lands to protect future development from flood related impacts.

In relation to Flooding on the Amendment lands in Kilcock:

**KIL OBJ 5B**

Planning applications for development proposals on the lands that are subject to Spot Objective KIL OBJ 5B shall be accompanied by a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out in accordance with the requirements of the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.” Lands that are impacted by Flood Zone B and Climate Change shall be reserved for storage areas only and kept free from vulnerable land uses.

In relation to Flooding on the Amendment lands in Navan:

**NAV OBJ 38**

Planning applications for development proposals on the lands that are subject to Spot Objective NAV OBJ 38 shall be accompanied by a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out in accordance with the requirements of the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.”

In addition to the above, the key environmental protective policies and objectives from the existing Meath County Development Plan, which will ensure avoidance and mitigation of potential uncertain and / or negative environmental effects are set out in **Table 9.1** (with details in **Tables 9.1A and 9.1B in Appendix 9.1**).

**Table 9.1 Mitigation Measures (i.e. Policies and Objectives from the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027) for Potential Negative and / or Uncertain Environmental Effects of Variation No.5**

(SEO Key: B – Biodiversity, PHH – Population & Human Health, LSG – Land, Soils & Geology, WQ – Water Quality, AN – Air Quality & Noise, CC – Climate Change, MA – Material Assets, CH – Cultural Heritage, LV – Landscape &

Provision	Potential Negative SEO Effects	Potential Uncertain SEO Effects	Potential Neutral / Positive SEO Effects	Mitigation Measures (Refer also to Tables 9.1A & 9.1 B in Appendix 9.1)
<b>Proposed Amendment No.3 (Proposed Zonings)</b>				
Lands in 11 settlements have been identified for rezoning as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Dunboyne</li> <li>■ Southern Environs of Drogheda</li> <li>■ Navan</li> <li>■ Kilcock</li> <li>■ Dunshaughlin</li> <li>■ Enfield</li> <li>■ Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East – Donacarney – Mornington (East Meath)</li> <li>■ Duleek</li> <li>■ Stamullen</li> <li>■ Athboy</li> <li>■ Carlanstown</li> </ul>	<b>B</b> (B1, B2, B3) <b>WQ</b> (WQ1, WQ2),	<b>SG</b> (SG1) <b>AN</b> (AN1, AN2) <b>CH</b> (CH1, CH2) <b>LV</b> (LV1, LV2)	<b>PHH</b> (PHH_1, PHH_2) <b>MA</b> (MA1, MA2, MA3)	<b>Policies</b> INF POL 7; INF POL 8; INF POL 12; INF POL 16; INF POL 17; INF POL 18; INF POL 20; INF POL 22; SOC POL 39; <b>Objectives</b> INF OBJ 7; INF OBJ 8; INF OBJ 11; INF OBJ 19; INF OBJ 20; INF OBJ 21; INF OBJ 25; INF OBJ 37; INF OBJ 38; HER OBJ 33; HER OBJ 34; HER OBJ 60; RUR DEV SO 2; DM OBJ 11;
				<b>Policies</b> INF POL 8; INF POL 22; HER POL 1; HER POL 3; HER POL 4; HER POL 14; HER POL 16; HER POL 17; HER POL 21; HER POL 26; HER POL 28; HER POL 32; HER POL 35; HER POL 37; HER POL 40; HER POL 46 HER POL 48; HER POL 50; <b>Objectives</b> HER OBJ 3; HER OBJ 22; HER OBJ 28; HER OBJ 29; HER OBJ 49; HER OBJ 56; DM OBJ 11
				N/A

### 9.3 Conclusion

The mitigation measures included with Variation No. 5, in combination with the development planning and control related environmental protection measures defined in the Meath County Development Plan will prevent and mitigate any potential negative environmental effects due to the implementation of the Variation. No further mitigation measures are required.

## 10 Monitoring Measures

Monitoring of the Variation and its implications on the environment is important to ensure that the environment is not adversely affected through the implementation of the Plan. In accordance with Article 10 of the SEA Directive, monitoring must be carried out of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the Plan *“in order to, inter alia, identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.”*

However, as a Variation to the County Development Plan, once adopted, monitoring will be undertaken as part of the on-going monitoring and review of the Meath County Development Plan.

Meath County Council is responsible for monitoring and the preparation of monitoring evaluation report(s), the publication of these reports and, if necessary, the carrying out of corrective action.

## 11 References

*Council Directive Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.*

*Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25)*

*Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts 2015, as amended*

Climate Change Advisory Council (2025). *Annual Review 2025*

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (2020). *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)*

Environment Director General of the European Commission (2003). *Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment.*

EPA (2025a). *SEA of Local Authority Land-Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources.*

EPA (2025ba). *Spatial Information Resources Inventory.*

EPA (2024a). *SEA Pack.*

EPA (2024b). *Ireland's State of the Environment Report.*

EPA (2015). *Strategic Environmental Assessment Resource Manual for Planning Authorities – Integration of SEA Legislation with Procedures for Land Use Plans.*

EPA (2013a). *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment – Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual.*

EPA (2013b). *SEA Process Checklist*

EPA (2003). *Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report.*

*European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2025 (S.I. No. 456/2025).*

European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025

Fossitt, J.A. (2000). *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland.* The Heritage Council: Kilkenny.

Geological Survey Ireland (GSI). *Data and Maps*

Government of Ireland (2018). *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework.*

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## Appendices

## Appendix 3.1: Screening of the Draft Variation for Requirement for SEA

The screening for the requirement for SEA has been conducted in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule 2 of S.I. No. 456 of 2025.

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 3.1A](#) and [3.1B](#), below, respectively.

**Table 3.1A: 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 sets a framework for projects and other activities within County Meath. The Plan was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as part of the plan making and adoption process.

The proposed Variation No. 5 to the County Development Plan (CDP) proposes a number of land use zoning amendments that reflect revised and new circumstances that have emerged since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The measures set out in the Variation primarily relate to the following amendments:

### **1. Proposed Amendment No. 1: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Volume 1 - Written Statement**

To update the County Development Plan to take account of the new housing targets set out in the National Planning Framework Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in July 2025 and issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

In addition to updates as required to the text to the CDP Written Statement the amendment provides for the following updated/new objectives:

- Updated objectives CS OBJ 3, CS OBJ 8 and CS OBJ 11 in Chapter 2 Core Strategy
- Updated objectives SH OBJ 2, SH OBJ 7 and SH OBJ 20 in Chapter 3 Settlement and Housing Strategy
- New objective INF OBJ 25B in Chapter 6 (in relation to Protection of Surface Waters)

### **2. Proposed Amendment No.2: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Volume 2 - Written Statement for Settlements**

In order to ensure consistency with the Written Statement of the Development Plan (Volume 1) and the revised housing targets, the Written Statements for the settlements that contain lands proposed for rezoning are required to be amended as part of this variation. The amendments primarily relate to adjustments to the household allocation for the relevant areas and projected population growth having regard to Census 2022 data and the new annual housing growth requirements for the county as set out in the NPF Implementation Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines 2025.

In addition to updates as required to the text to the CDP Written Statement for Settlements, the amendment provides for the following new objectives:

- New objective DCE OBJ 23 (Flood Risk Management) (Dunboyne)
- New objective DNS OBJ 14 (Flood Risk Management) (Dunshaughlin)
- New objective KIL OBJ 5B (Flooding) (Kilcock)

- New objective NAV OBJ 38 (Flood Risk Management) (Navan)

### 3. Proposed Amendment No.3: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Volume 2 - Maps for Settlements

In order to ensure consistency with the National Planning Framework and accommodate revised housing targets for the County, it is proposed to amend land use zonings as shown on the County Development Plan Map Sheets. It is also proposed to amend the development / settlement boundaries accordingly to ensure any lands that have been identified for development within the lifetime of the Plan fall within the development boundary of the relevant settlement.

The proposed rezonings are summarised below with details provided as to the existing and proposed land use zoning objectives for each individual area. The proposed rezonings are illustrated individually through updated land use zoning map sheets for the relevant settlements / areas with the proposed variations clearly marked on each sheet. Where no zoning changes are proposed in settlements under this Variation, the current map sheets remain in effect.

Lands in 11 settlements have been identified for rezoning as follows:

- Dunboyne
- Southern Environs of Drogheda
- Navan
- Kilcock
- Dunshaughlin
- Enfield
- Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney- Mornington(East Meath)
- Duleek
- Stamullen
- Athboy
- Carlanstown

All of the amendments, which refer to localised sites, are necessary to meet the mandated availability of zoned lands for residential development.

Therefore, the Draft Variation does set a framework through the County Development Plan for projects, mainly comprising additional residential development within existing settlements in County Meath.

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

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets a framework for projects and other activities within County Meath. The Plan was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as part of the plan making and adoption process.

The requirement for the Variation is as a result of the review of the higher level National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision and the issuing of the NPF Housing Growth Requirement Guidelines.

Therefore, the amendments, which refer to localised sites, are necessary to meet the mandated availability of zoned lands for residential development.

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

The *NPF Housing Growth Requirement Guidelines* requires sufficient zoning in County Meath to deliver 2,942 units annually up to 2035. This figure reduces to 1,362 from 2035 to 2040. Therefore, proposed Variation No. 5 to the County Development Plan (CDP) proposes a number of land use zoning amendments that reflect

<p>revised and new circumstances that have emerged since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>Nevertheless the Draft Variation must also have regard for integration of environmental considerations and for promoting sustainable development.</p>
<p><b><i>Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme</i></b></p>
<p>The environmental problems relevant to the County Meath are detailed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment prepared for the Plan.</p>
<p><b><i>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)</i></b></p>
<p>The Development Plan includes a wide range of policies and objectives in relation to implementation of European Union legislation on the environment. The Draft amendments do not include changes to policies and objectives in relation to the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment.</p>

**Table 3.1B: Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:**

<p><b><i>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</i></b></p>
<p>All of the amendments in the Draft Variation, which refer to localised sites, are necessary to meet the mandated availability of zoned lands for residential development.</p> <p>Draft Variation No. 5 requires provision of additional A2 (new residential) zoning, together with some other zoning changes and as such, the potential for some significant environmental impacts cannot be excluded. However, the probability, duration and frequency of any such effects are consider to be short-term and low. Some effects would be reversible, while others, e.g. change of land use to residential development in accordance with approved zoning and permission, would not be reversible.</p>
<p><b><i>The cumulative nature of the effects</i></b></p>
<p>Given the nature of the amendments and location of the new zonings, which refer to small, localised areas within existing settlements distributed across the county, no significant cumulative are likely to arise.</p>
<p><b><i>The trans-boundary nature of the effects</i></b></p>
<p>Transboundary effects do not arise</p>
<p><b><i>The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)</i></b></p>
<p>Given the nature of the amendments and location of the new zonings, which refer to small, localised areas within existing settlements distributed across the county, no significant risk to human health or the environment are likely to arise as a result of accidents.</p>
<p><b><i>The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)</i></b></p>
<p>Given the nature of the amendments and location of the new zonings, which refer to small areas within existing settlements distributed across the county, the magnitude and spatial extent of any effects would be very limited and localised.</p>

<b><i>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</i></b>
<b><i>(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</i></b>
While the proposed amendments / zonings are distributed in settlements across the county, for the most part, they do not affect areas of special natural characteristics or cultural heritage. It is noted that proposed new zoning at Duleek is close to Duleek Commons pNHA.
<b><i>(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values</i></b>
Exceedance of environmental quality standards or limit values are not expected to arise as a result of nature and limited extent of the Draft Variation.
<b><i>(c) Intensive land-use</i></b>
Draft Variation No.5 will result in lands being developed as residential, and related community uses, for the most part directly adjoining similar land uses in settlements throughout the county.
<b><i>The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status</i></b>
Draft Variation No. 5 requires provision of additional A2 (new residential) zoning, together with some other zoning changes and as such the potential for some significant environmental impacts cannot be excluded. In addition the Draft Variation has also been screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the <i>Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)</i> and Regulation 42 of the <i>European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011</i> , as amended. The AA Screening has concluded that potential for effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt and therefore appropriate assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Report (NIR) is required.  Therefore, Draft Variation No. 5 has been screened in to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with <i>Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment</i> <sup>66</sup> (the SEA Directive).

<sup>66</sup> DIRECTIVE 2001/42/EC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

## **Appendix 9.1: Protective Environmental Policies and Objectives from the Meath County Development Plan 2021 - 2027**

### Environmental Protective Policies and Objectives for the purposes of Mitigation

The following is a list of the key environmental protective policies (Table 9.1A) and objectives (Table 9.1B) included in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, which will ensure that any potential negative or uncertain environmental effects arising from the actions of the Meath Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 will be avoided or appropriately mitigated.

**Table 9.1A Key Environmental Protective Policies in the Meath Development Plan 2021-2027**

Theme	Protective Policies
<b>Chapter 01: Introduction</b>	
International Guidance	INT POL 1: <i>To promote the UNs Sustainable Development Goals within Meath County Council for our customers and stakeholders through the actions and policies taken by the organisation.</i>
<b>Chapter 05: Movement Strategy</b>	
Integration of Sustainable Land Use and Transport Planning	MOV POL 3: <i>To promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the County.</i>
Meath Road Safety Strategy	MOV POL 25: <i>To implement the actions of the Meath Road Safety Strategy and promote road and traffic safety measures in conjunction with Government Departments, the Road Safety Authority and other agencies.</i>
<b>Chapter 06: Infrastructure Strategy</b>	
Water Conservation	INF POL 7: <i>To continue to support Irish Water’s Water Conservation Programme.</i>
Water and Public Health	INF POL 8: <i>To continue to work with Irish Water to ensure the protection of public health through the ongoing provision of high-quality drinking water in compliance with drinking water standards.</i>
Protection of Water Resources	INF POL 10: <i>To liaise and work in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the protection and improvement of the County’s water resources.</i>
Wastewater Capacity & Access	INF POL 12: <i>To require that in the case of all developments where the public foul sewer network is available or likely to be available and has sufficient capacity, that development shall be connected to it.</i>
Surface Water Quality	INF POL 15: <i>To continue efforts to improve water quality under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977, as amended and by implementing the measures outlined under the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) and complying with the requirements of the European Communities Environment Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 and other relevant regulations.</i>
Surface Water Management	INF POL 16: <i>To ensure that all planning applications for new development have regard to the surface water management policies provided for in the GSDSDS.</i>
Surface Water Drainage and Flood Management	INF POL 17: <i>To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water in the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for surface water drainage and flood management, including the separation of foul and surface water drainage networks where feasible and undertake drainage network upgrades to help remove surface water misconnection and infiltration.</i>
Flood Risk Management	INF POL 18: <i>To implement the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoEHLG/OPW, 2009) through the use of the sequential approach and application of Justification Tests for Development Management and Development Plans, during the period of this Plan.</i>

Theme	Protective Policies
Flood Risk Assessment	INF POL 20: <i>To require that a Flood Risk Assessment is carried out for any development proposal, where flood risk may be an issue in accordance with the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoECLG/OPW, 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to and from the potential development and shall consider the impact of climate change.</i>
Surface Water Liaison	INF POL 21: <i>To consult with the Office of Public Works in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible.</i>
Riparian Corridor	INF POL 22: <i>To retain a strip of 10 metres on either side of all channels/flood defence embankments where required, to facilitate access thereto.</i>
River Basin Management and Groundwater Protection	INF POL 32: <i>To ensure, through the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan(s) and the associated Programmes of Measures and any other associated legislation or revised plans with all relevant stakeholders, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground waters throughout the County.</i>
Protection of Salmonid Water Courses	INF POL 33: <i>To protect recognised salmonid water courses (in conjunction with Inland Fisheries Ireland) such as the Boyne and Blackwater catchments, which are recognised to be exceptional in supporting salmonid fish species.</i>
Renewable Energy Sources and Protection of the Environment	INF POL 34: <i>To promote sustainable energy sources, locally based renewable energy alternatives, where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity, natural and built heritage, residential or local amenities.</i>
<b>Chapter 07: Community Building Strategy</b>	
Open space and Protection of Natura Sites	SOC POL 39: <i>To protect the integrity of Natura 2000 sites during the identification of suitable sites for recreation, in particular in terms of their design and use.</i>
<b>Chapter 08: Cultural and Natural Heritage Strategy</b>	
Protection of Sites, Monuments, Places, Areas or Objects of Archaeology Heritage Significance	HER POL 1: <i>To protect sites, monuments, places, areas or objects of the following categories:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sites and monuments included in the Sites and Monuments Record as maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht;</i></li> <li>• <i>Monuments and places included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under the National Monuments Acts;</i></li> <li>• <i>Historic monuments and archaeological areas included in the Register of Historic Monuments as established under the National Monuments Acts;</i></li> <li>• <i>National monuments subject to Preservation Orders under the National Monuments Acts and national monuments which are in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht or a local authority;</i></li> <li>• <i>Archaeological objects within the meaning of the National Monuments Acts; and Wrecks protected under the National Monuments Acts or otherwise included in the Shipwreck Inventory maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</i></li> </ul>
Protection of Archaeological Heritage	HER POL 3: <i>To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, for development in the vicinity of monuments or in</i>

Theme	Protective Policies
	<i>areas of archaeological potential. Where there are upstanding remains, a visual impact assessment may be required.</i>
Protection of Archaeological Heritage	<i>HER POL 4: To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, where development proposals involve ground clearance of more than half a hectare or for linear developments over one kilometre in length; or developments in proximity to areas with a density of known archaeological monuments and history of discovery as identified by a suitably qualified archaeologist.</i>
Protection of Architectural Heritage	<i>HER POL 13: To protect and preserve in situ all surviving elements of medieval town defences.</i>
Protection of Architectural Heritage	<i>HER POL 14: To protect and conserve the architectural heritage of the County and seek to prevent the demolition or inappropriate alteration of Protected Structures.</i>
Protection of Protected Structures	<i>HER POL 16: To protect the setting of Protected Structures and to refuse permission for development within the curtilage or adjacent to a protected structure which would adversely impact on the character and special interest of the structure, where appropriate.</i>
Protection of Protected Structures	<i>HER POL 17: To require that all planning applications relating to Protected Structures contain the appropriate accompanying documentation in accordance with the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) or any variation thereof, to enable the proper assessment of the proposed works.</i>
Protection of Architectural Conservation Areas	<i>HER POL 19: To protect the character of Architectural Conservation Areas in Meath.</i>
Protection of Architectural Heritage	<i>HER POL 21: To encourage the retention, sympathetic maintenance and sustainable re-use of historic buildings, including vernacular dwellings or farm buildings and the retention of historic streetscape character, fabric, detail and features.</i>
Protection of Landscape Heritage	<i>HER POL 26: To encourage the protection and enhancement of heritage gardens and demesne landscapes, and to support, in consultation with the owners, the provision of public access to these sites as appropriate.</i>
Protection of Natural Heritage	<i>HER POL 27: To protect, conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity where appropriate.</i>
Protection of Natural Heritage	<i>HER POL 28: To integrate in the development management process the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and landscape features wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats (whether designated or not) and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate.</i>
Protection of Habitats and Species, including European Sites	<i>HER POL 31: To ensure that the ecological impact of all development proposals on habitats and species are appropriately assessed by suitably qualified professional(s) in accordance with best practice guidelines – e.g. the preparation of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA), Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, Natura Impact Statement (NIS), species surveys etc. (as appropriate).</i>
Protection of European Sites	<i>HER POL 32: To permit development on or adjacent to designated Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Statutory Nature Reserves or those proposed to be designated over the period of the Plan, only where the development has been subject to the outcome of the</i>

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Theme	Protective Policies
	<i>Appropriate Assessment process and has been carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with National Parks and Wildlife.</i>
Liaison in relation to Protection of sites of European and National Designation	HER POL 33: <i>To have regard to the views and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of proposed development where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on a designated European or National site or a site proposed for such designation.</i>
Protection of Biodiversity	HER POL 35: <i>To ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites and to require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professional(s) to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.</i>
Liaison in relation to Protection of Protected Plants, Animals and Birds	HER POL 36: <i>To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and take account of their views and any licensing requirements, when undertaking, approving or authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.</i>
Protection of Woodlands, hedgerows and trees	HER POL 37: <i>To encourage the retention of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments in rural areas and prevent loss and fragmentation, where practically possible. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, mitigation by provision of the same type of boundary will be required.</i>
Planting of Native Species	HER POL 38: <i>To promote and encourage planting of native hedgerow species in new developments and as part of the Council's own landscaping works.</i>
Protection of Townland Boundary Heritage	HER POL 39: <i>To recognise the archaeological importance of townland boundaries including hedgerows and promote their protection and retention.</i>
Protection of Trees and Woodlands	HER POL 40: <i>To protect and encourage the effective management of native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees and to encourage the retention of mature trees and the use of tree surgery rather than felling, where possible, when undertaking, approving or authorising development.</i>
Control of Invasive Species	HER POL 43: <i>To promote best practice in the control of invasive species in the carrying out its functions in association with relevant authorities including TII and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.</i>
Management of Invasive Species	HER POL 44: <i>To require all development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.</i>
Protection of Geological Sites and Heritage	HER POL 46: <i>To maintain the geological and geomorphological heritage values of County Geological Sites listed in Table 8.7 (of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027) and, through consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland, protect them from inappropriate development.</i>
Protection of Waterways and Associated Towpaths and Wetlands	HER POL 47: <i>To protect the ecological, recreational, educational, amenity and flood alleviation potential of navigational and non-navigational waterways within the County, towpaths and adjacent wetlands.</i>
Protection of Wetlands	HER POL 48: <i>To manage, enhance and protect the wetlands of the County having regard to the 'County Meath Wetland Survey 2010' and ensure that there is an appropriate level of assessment in relation to proposals which would involve draining, reclaiming or infilling of wetland habitats.</i>

Theme	Protective Policies
Protection of Coastal Zones	HER POL 49: <i>To protect the character, visual, recreational, ecological and amenity value of the coast and provisions for public access, in assessing proposals for development.</i>
Protection of Natural Coastal Defences	HER POL 50: <i>To ensure that the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, coastal wetlands and estuaries are not compromised by inappropriate works or development.</i>
Protection of Landscape and Landscape Character	HER POL 52: <i>To protect and enhance the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the landscapes of the County in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the recommendations of the Meath Landscape Character Assessment (2007) in Appendix 5, to ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.</i>
<b>Chapter 09: Rural Development Strategy</b>	
Development Management Standards and Environmental Protection	RD POL 44: <i>To ensure that new development meets the highest standards in terms of environmental protection.</i>
Protection of Groundwater	RD POL 45: <i>To utilise a "Groundwater Protection Response Matrix" to assist in deciding the appropriateness of various categories of development to areas that have different levels of vulnerability in terms of groundwater contamination. This approach will support the proper input of information into planning decision-making processes.</i>
<b>Chapter 10: Climate Change Strategy</b>	
Environmental Protection	This chapter includes policies listed in other chapters of the Development Plan, including the following, which are also highlighted in this table: MOV POL 3; INF POL 20; INF POL 34; HER POL 43; and HER POL 44.
<b>Chapter 11: Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives</b>	
Protection of Field Boundaries	DM POL 9: <i>To support the retention of field boundaries for their ecological/habitat significance, as demonstrated by a suitably qualified professional. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, mitigation by provision of the same boundary type will be required.</i>

Table 9.1B Key Environmental Protective Objectives in the Meath Development Plan 2021-2027

Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 Theme	Protective Objectives
<b>Chapter 06: Infrastructure Strategy</b>	
Sustainable Water and Drainage	INF OBJ 1: <i>To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water to promote the sustainable development of water supply and drainage infrastructure in the county and the region, in accordance with the objectives and recommendations set out in the Greater Dublin Drainage Study and Irish Water's Water Services Strategic Plan.</i>
Sustainable Water Conservation	INF OBJ 7: <i>To promote the sustainable use of water and water conservation in existing and new development within the County and encourage demand management measures among all water users.</i>
Sustainable Ground and Surface Water Protection	INF OBJ 8: <i>To protect both ground and surface water resources and work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment.</i>

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 Theme	Protective Objectives
Surface and Ground Water Protection	INF OBJ 11: <i>To ensure that all development shall connect to the public foul sewer network where available within the County.</i>
Surface and Ground Water Protection	INF OBJ 18: <i>To ensure that new developments provide for the separation of foul and surface water drainage networks within application site boundaries.</i>
Surface and Ground Water Protection	INF OBJ 19 : <i>To ensure that developments permitted by the Council which involve discharge of wastewater to surface waters or groundwaters comply with the requirements of the EU Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations and EU Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations.</i>
Flood Risk Management	INF OBJ 20: <i>To implement the Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG/OPW 2009) or any updated guidelines. A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment should be submitted where appropriate.</i>
Protection of Floodplains	INF OBJ 21: <i>To restrict new development within floodplains other than development which satisfies the Justification Test, as outlined in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities (or any updated guidelines).</i>
Protection of Floodplains, Wetlands and Coastal Areas	INF OBJ 23: <i>To protect and enhance the County's floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas subject to flooding as "green infrastructure" which provide space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, and ensure that development does not impact on important wetland sites within river/stream catchments.</i>
Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems	INF OBJ 25: <i>To require the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques where appropriate, for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.</i>
Improve Water Quality	INF OBJ 29: <i>To strive to achieve 'good status' in all water bodies in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and to cooperate with the implementation of the National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021.</i>
Protection of Natural Coastal Defences	INF OBJ 30: <i>To ensure the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands, are protected and are not compromised by inappropriate works or forms of development.</i>
Protection of Coastal Landscape and Visual Amenity	INF OBJ 34: <i>To strictly control the nature and pattern of development within coastal areas and ensure that it is designed and landscaped to the highest standards, and sited appropriately so as not to detract from the visual amenity of the area. Development shall be prohibited where the development poses a significant or potential threat to coastal habitats or features, and/or where the development is likely to result in altered patterns of erosion or deposition elsewhere along the coast.</i>
Protection of Groundwater	INF OBJ 37: <i>To implement the recommendations of the Meath Groundwater Protection Scheme(s).</i>
Protection of Riparian Corridors	INF OBJ 38: <i>To establish riparian corridors free from new development along all significant watercourses and streams in the County as follows: -A 10 metre wide riparian buffer strip measured from the top of the bank either side of all watercourses in urban areas; - A 30m wide riparian buffer strip from top of bank to either side of all watercourses is required as a minimum outside of urban areas.</i>

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 Theme	Protective Objectives
Renewable Energy Sources and Protection of the Environment	INF OBJ 39: <i>To support Ireland’s renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the development and exploitation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and bio-energy at suitable locations within the County where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity or local amenities so as to provide for further residential and enterprise development within the county.</i>
Waste management and Protection of Human Health	INF OBJ 59: <i>To seek to ensure, in cooperation with relevant authorities, that waste management facilities are appropriately managed and monitored according to best practice to maximise efficiencies to protect human health and the natural environment.</i>
Enhance Waste Recovery / Recycling	INF OBJ 67: <i>To require developers to prepare construction and demolition waste management plans for new construction projects over certain thresholds which shall meet the relevant recycling/recovery targets for such waste in accordance with the national legislation and national and regional waste management policy.</i>
Mitigation and Reduction of Adverse Noise Impacts	INF OBJ 73: <i>To support and facilitate the preparation of strategic noise maps and action plans, in conjunction with EMRA, that support proactive measures to avoid, mitigate and minimise noise, in all instances where it is likely to have adverse impacts.</i>
Mitigation and Reduce Light Pollution	INF OBJ 74: <i>To require that outdoor lighting proposals minimise the harmful effects of light pollution and to ensure that new street lighting is appropriate to a particular location and that environmentally sensitive areas are protected from inappropriate forms of illumination.</i>
<b>Chapter 08 Cultural and Natural Heritage Strategy</b>	
Protection of Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Potential	HER OBJ 2: <i>To ensure that development in the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Potential is sited and designed in a sensitive manner with a view to minimal detracting from the monument or its setting.</i>
Protection of Archaeological Landscape	HER OBJ 3: <i>To protect important archaeological landscapes from inappropriate development.</i>
Protection of Architectural Conservation Area	HER OBJ 17: <i>To promote best conservation practice and encourage the use of appropriately qualified professional advisors, tradesmen and craftsmen, with recognised conservation expertise, for works to protected structures or historic buildings in an Architectural Conservation Area.</i>
Protection of Architectural Conservation Area	HER OBJ 22: <i>To avoid the demolition of structures and the removal of features and street furniture which contribute to the character of an ACA. The Council will require that any planning application for demolition or alteration within an ACA be accompanied by a measured and photographic survey, condition report and architectural heritage assessment.</i>
Protection of Industrial Heritage	HER OBJ 26: <i>To require an architectural / archaeological assessment, as appropriate, which references the Meath Industrial Heritage Survey and other relevant sources, for all proposed developments on industrial heritage structures or sites.</i>
Protection of Heritage Landscape	HER OBJ 28: <i>To discourage development that would adversely affect the character, the principal components of, or the setting of historic parks, gardens and demesnes of heritage significance.</i>

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 Theme	Protective Objectives
Protection of Heritage Landscape	HER OBJ 29: <i>To require that proposals for development in designated landscapes and demesnes include an appraisal of the landscape, designed views and vistas, including a tree survey, where relevant, in order to inform site appropriate design proposals.</i>
Protection of European Sites	HER OBJ 33: <i>To ensure an Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) and in accordance with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009 and relevant EPA and European Commission guidance documents, is carried out in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site(s), either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, in view of the site’s conservation objectives.</i>
Protection of European and National Designated Sites	HER OBJ 34: <i>To protect and conserve the conservation value of candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas as identified by the Minister for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan in accordance with the provisions of the Habitats and Birds Directives and to permit development in or affecting same only in accordance with the provisions of those Directives as transposed into Irish Law.</i>
Protection of Protected Plants, Animals and Birds	HER OBJ 35: <i>To ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory avoidance or mitigation, on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.</i>
Protection of Landscape and Landscape Character	HER OBJ 49: <i>To ensure that the management of development will have regard to the value of the landscape, its character, importance, sensitivity and capacity to absorb change as outlined in Appendix 5 Meath Landscape Character Assessment and its recommendations.</i>
Protection of Protected Views and Prospects	HER OBJ 56: <i>To preserve the views and prospects listed in Appendix 10, in Volume 2 and on Map 8.6 (of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027) and to protect these views from inappropriate development which would interfere unduly with the character and visual amenity of the landscape.</i>
Protection of Features Important to Coherence of the Natura 2000 Network	HER OBJ 60: <i>To encourage, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.</i>
<b>Chapter 09: Rural Development Strategy</b>	
Protection of Aquifers and Water Sources	RUR DEV SO 2: <i>To identify and protect rural resources such as locally and regionally important aquifers and water sources from development which would prejudice their sustainable future usage.</i>
Protection of European Sites	RUR DEV SO 9: <i>To ensure that plans and projects associated with rural development will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment Screening and those plans or projects which could, either individually or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site (or sites) undergo a full Appropriate Assessment.</i>

Variation No. 5 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 Theme	Protective Objectives
<b>Chapter 10: Climate Change Strategy</b>	
Environmental Protection	This chapter includes objectives listed in other chapters of the Development Plan, including the following, which are also highlighted in this table: INF OBJ 19; INF OBJ 23; INF OBJ 25; INF OBJ 29; INF OBJ 30; INF OBJ 39; and RUR DEV SO 2.
<b>Chapter 11: Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives</b>	
Protection of Trees and Hedgerows	DM OBJ 11: <i>Existing trees and hedgerows of biodiversity and/or amenity value shall be retained, where possible</i>



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