

DRAFT VARIATION No.5 OF MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021 – 2027

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING AND NATURA IMPACT REPORT

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Environmental Assessment **Built Environment**

Client:

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 22 September 2021 and came into effect on the 03 November 2021 (hereafter the Meath CDP). The CDP is divided into four volumes. Volume 1 of the CDP sets out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for the development of the County over the plan period 2021-2027. Volume 2 of the CDP includes written statements and accompanying maps for all settlements within the county and sets out development and land use zoning objectives for each area. Volume 3 of the CDP includes a book of maps for the county. Volume 4 includes Environmental Assessments. The CDP has been varied a number of times since its adoption in 2021.

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.

In accordance with Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the County Development Plan is mandated to be consistent with the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Accordingly, **Draft Variation 5 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027** (hereafter known as **Variation No. 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.

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 selected settlements:

- Athboy
- Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East and Donacarney (East Meath)
- Carlanstown
- Duleek
- Dunboyne, Clonee and Pace
- Dunshaughlin
- Enfield

- Kilcock (Environs)
- Navan
- South Environs of Drogheda
- Stamullen

While the environmental assessments focus on these settlements, given their distribution the assessments will have regard to the whole of the county where appropriate.

As set out in this NIR (see Section 3) Variation No. 5 has been screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992¹), Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended and Part 6 of the Planning and Development Act 2024² (and SI 452 of 2025). It has been concluded that the potential for effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt, requiring the preparation of a Natura Impact Report (NIR) (see Sections 4). Therefore, in accordance with Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08³ Variation No.5 is also required to undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment⁴ (known as the SEA Directive).

Brady Shipman Martin (BSM) has been appointed by Meath County Council to prepare the reports for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (in accordance with S.I. 456/2025 – European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) in respect of Variation No.5.

This document comprises an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) and Natura Impact Report (NIR), prepared in order to support the Appropriate Assessment of Variation No. 5) in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive and Article 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended (the Habitats regulations).

The potential impacts on European sites (also known as Natura 2000 sites), both as a result of Variation No.5 and in-combination with other plans and projects, are appraised in this report.

This report should be read in conjunction with Draft Variation No. 5 itself as well as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – Environmental Report prepared by Brady Shipman Martin (2026) and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Screening, prepared by JBA Consulting (2026).

1.2 Expertise and Qualifications

This Report has been prepared by Namrata Kaile, Ecologist and Environmental Consultant with Brady Shipman Martin. She holds a Bachelor's Degree (BSc) in Life Sciences from University of Delhi and a Master's Degree (MSc) with distinction in Environmental Sciences from Trinity College Dublin. She is a full member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) and has been working professionally in the field of environmental consultancy for the last six years. Namrata is experienced in drafting and reviewing AA Screening Reports, EIA Screening Reports as well as in

¹ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive_en

²

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/7817fc9b/PDA_2024_Commencement_Circular_No._2025_04_Partial_commencement_of_Parts_3_an.pdf

³ Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08

⁴ DIRECTIVE 2001/42/EC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

coordination of EIARs. She is also experienced in undertaking baseline ecological surveys and preparing Ecological Impact Assessments Reports (EclA).

A technical review of this document has been completed by Senior Ecologist and Associate, Matthew Hague BSc MSc Adv. Dip. Plan. & Env. Law CEnv MCIEEM. Matthew is a highly experienced and qualified ecologist, with a master's degree in Ecosystem Conservation and Landscape Management. He has over 20 years of experience in ecological and environmental consultancy, across a wide range of sectors. Matthew is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM). Matthew has also completed an Advanced Diploma in Planning and Environmental Law, at King's Inns and is a member of the Irish Environmental Law Association (IELA).

1.3 Legal requirement for Appropriate Assessment

European sites make up a network of sites designated for nature conservation under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the "Habitats Directive") and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (the "Birds Directive"). The requirements for Appropriate Assessment are set out under *Article 6 of the Habitats Directive*, transposed into Irish law by the *European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)* (the "Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations") and the *Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)* (the "Planning Acts").

European sites are also known as Natura 2000 Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)). As defined in section 177R of the Planning Acts "European site" means:

- (a) a candidate site of Community importance,
- (b) a site of Community importance,
- (ba) a candidate special area of conservation,
- (c) a special area of conservation,
- (d) a candidate special protection area and
- (e) a special protection area.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that:

"(3) Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public."

The first test is to establish whether, in relation to a particular plan or project, appropriate assessment is required. Article 42(1) of the Habitats Regulations requires that the AA screening test must be applied to the Plan, as follows:

42. (1) Subject to Regulation 42A, a screening for Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project for which an application for consent is received, or which a public authority wishes to undertake or adopt, and which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site, shall be carried out by the public authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the site, if that plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.

An appropriate assessment is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the development (plan or project), individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

1.3.1 Stages in the Appropriate Assessment Process

European Commission guidance (2021)⁵ sets out the principles on how to undertake decision making in applying the Habitats Directive. The requirements of the Habitats Directive comprise three distinct stages”:

Stage One: Screening - The first part of the procedure consists of a pre-assessment stage (‘screening’) to ascertain whether the plan or project is directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of a Natura 2000 site, and, if this is not the case, then whether it is likely to have a significant effect on the site (7) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) in view of the site’s conservation objectives. Stage one is governed by the first part of the first sentence of Article 6(3).

Stage Two: The Appropriate Assessment - If likely significant effects cannot be excluded, the next stage of the procedure involves assessing the impact of the plan or project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) against the site’s conservation objectives, and ascertaining whether it will affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 site, taking into account any mitigation measures. It will be for the competent authorities to decide whether or not to approve the plan or project in light of the findings of the appropriate assessment. Stage two is governed by the second part of the first sentence and the second sentence of Article 6(3).

Stage Three: Derogation from Article 6(3) under certain conditions - The third stage of the procedure governed by Article 6(4). It only comes into play if, despite a negative assessment, the developer considers that the plan or project should still be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest. This is only possible if there are no alternative solutions, the imperative reasons of overriding public interest are duly justified, and if suitable compensatory measures are adopted to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected.

1.4 Baseline data collection

This report takes the following guidance documents into account:

- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine, September 2018, updated in September 2019 (V1.1), April 2022 (V1.2 and September 2024 (V1.3).

⁵ [Assessment of Plans and Projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6\(3\) and \(4\) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC \(European Commission Environment Directorate-General, September 2021\)](#)

- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) (2010a). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- DoEHLG (2010b). Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10: Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- European Commission (2021). Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites- Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2018). Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- Directorate – General for Environment (European Commission), (2021). Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community Interest under the Habitats Directive.
- National Roads Authority (NRA)⁶ (2009). Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes.
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) (2021). Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.
- National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) (2021). Guidance for Public authorities on the Application of Articles 12 and 16 of the EU Habitats Directive to development/works undertaken by or on behalf of a Public Authority.

Information was collated from the organisations and websites listed below:

- Data on European sites and rare and protected plant and animal species contained in the following databases:
 - The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (www.NPWS.ie).
 - The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NDBC) (www.biodiversityireland.ie).
 - BirdWatch Ireland (www.birdwatchireland.ie).
 - Bat Conservation Ireland (www.batconservationireland.org).
- Information on land-use zoning from the online mapping of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (<http://www.myplan.ie/en/index.html>).
- Recent and historical OSi mapping and aerial photography, including www.geohive.ie.
- Information on local watercourses from www.catchments.ie.
- Information on water quality in the area (www.epa.ie).
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area (www.gsi.ie).
- Information on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (Article 17 report) (NPWS, December 2025).
- Ireland’s 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2024).
- Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (as varied) and the accompanying reports.

The report takes full account of the details of Variation No.5 and a detailed examination of all relevant elements was undertaken. The Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report (Brady Shipman Martin, 2026) was also reviewed in the preparation of this report.

⁶ Now Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

A desk-based assessment of the receiving environment was undertaken and this focussed on habitats and species that are listed as Qualifying Interests (QI) (in the case of SACs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCI) (in the case of SPAs) for European sites. An assessment of habitat suitability for species with links to European sites was undertaken, in order to appraise the potential for *ex-situ* effects on European sites.

A site visit was also carried out, on 20 March 2026, by ecologist and ornithologist Siddharth Sonny of Brady Shipman Martin. The purpose of the site visit was to validate the desk study, by providing a preliminary biodiversity assessment of selected sites, specifically an appraisal for their suitability to be used by wintering birds – species listed as SCI species associated with the SPAs within the zone of influence:

- Athboy
- Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East and Donacarney (East Meath)⁷
- Dunboyne
- Duleek
- Navan
- South Environs of Drogheda
- Stamullen

The following sites were not visited, either due to their remoteness from any European sites and a clear lack of any suitable *ex situ* habitat, based on the review of recent aerial photography.

- Carlanstown
- Dunshaughlin
- Enfield
- Kilcock⁸ (noting that there is a potential pathway from the subject site at Kilcock and the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC, via the River Rye)

⁷ the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in its scoping submission on the proposed variation, recommended that *the AA of Draft Variation No. 5 should include evaluation of 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.*

⁸ the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in its scoping submission on the proposed variation, recommended that *the AA of Variation No. 5 should include 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. The Department also proposes a mitigation measure to ensure the Variation should have no adverse effects on the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC, that surface water drainage systems to be installed in any developments on lands in the Kilcock area rezoned as part of Variation No. 5 should incorporate swales and open water attenuation basins in line with the recommendations set out in the 'Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainfall and Surface Water runoff in Urban Areas-Interim Guidance Document' published by the Department in 2022, and that the inclusion of underground attenuation tanks in the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to be installed in such developments shall not be acceptable.*

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

2.1 Introduction

Delivery of Draft Variation No.5 is 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**.

In accordance with the above, Meath County Council is now preparing Variation No.5 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, having reviewed the adequacy of existing zoned lands to cater for the Housing Growth Requirement figures and the potential for 'additional provision' for the full duration of the current adopted development plan, 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.

The review and the detailed analysis of the current core strategy and settlement strategy resulted in the proposed variation, which will include potential updates to the 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.

Local Authority	Existing Annual 2020 Housing Requirement (Housing Supply Target)	Adopted Development Plan - Annual Housing Requirement (Housing Supply Target)	2025 to 2034	2035 to 2040
			New Annual New Housing Growth Requirement to 2034	New Annual New Housing Growth Requirement 2035 to 2040
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
Meath County Council	1,090	2,826	2,942	1,362
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
Total	33,059	48,484	55,598	41,312

Figure 2.1 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

2.2 Purpose of Variation No. 5

The purpose of Variation No. 5 is to give effect 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.

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.

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.

2.3 Site selection

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.

A total of 11 settlements have been identified for rezoning as follows:

Dunboyne, Clonee & Pace

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential

Southern Environs of Drogheda

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from WL – Whitelands to A2 – New Residential
 - Rezoning of land from WL – Whitelands to G1 – Community Infrastructure
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from WL – Whitelands to A2 – New Residential

Navan

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 03
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 04
 - Rezoning of land from E1/E3 – Strategic Employment Zones to A2 Phasing – Post 2027
- Proposed Amendment 05
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to E1/E3 – Strategic Employment Zones

Kilcock Environs

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential

Dunshaughlin

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential

Enfield

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential

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

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from WL – White Lands to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 03

- Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to G1 – Community Infrastructure

Duleek

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 03
 - Rezoning of land from A2 – New Residential to WL – White Lands

Stamullen

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential

Athboy

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 – New Residential to G1 – Community Infrastructure
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from A2 – New Residential to G1 – Community Infrastructure
- Proposed Amendment 03
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential

Carlanstown

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential

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 2.1.

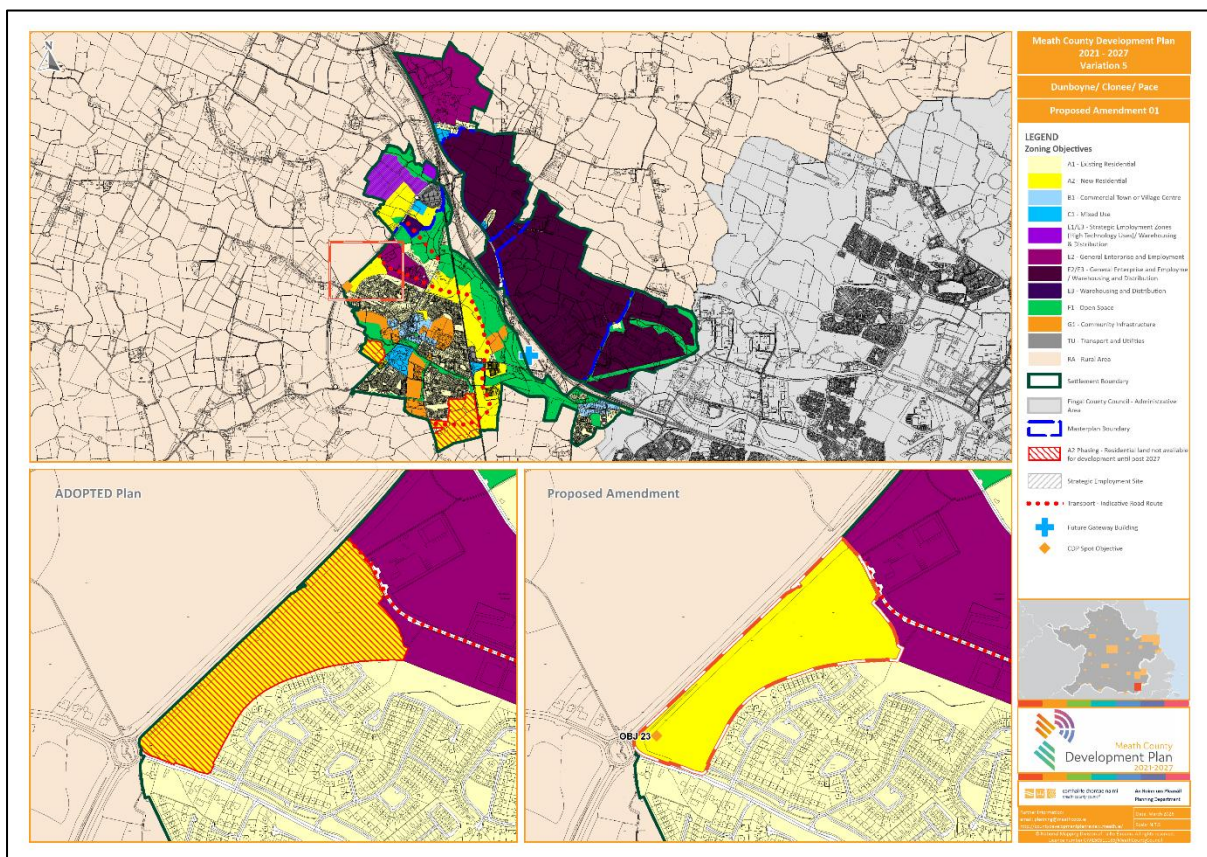
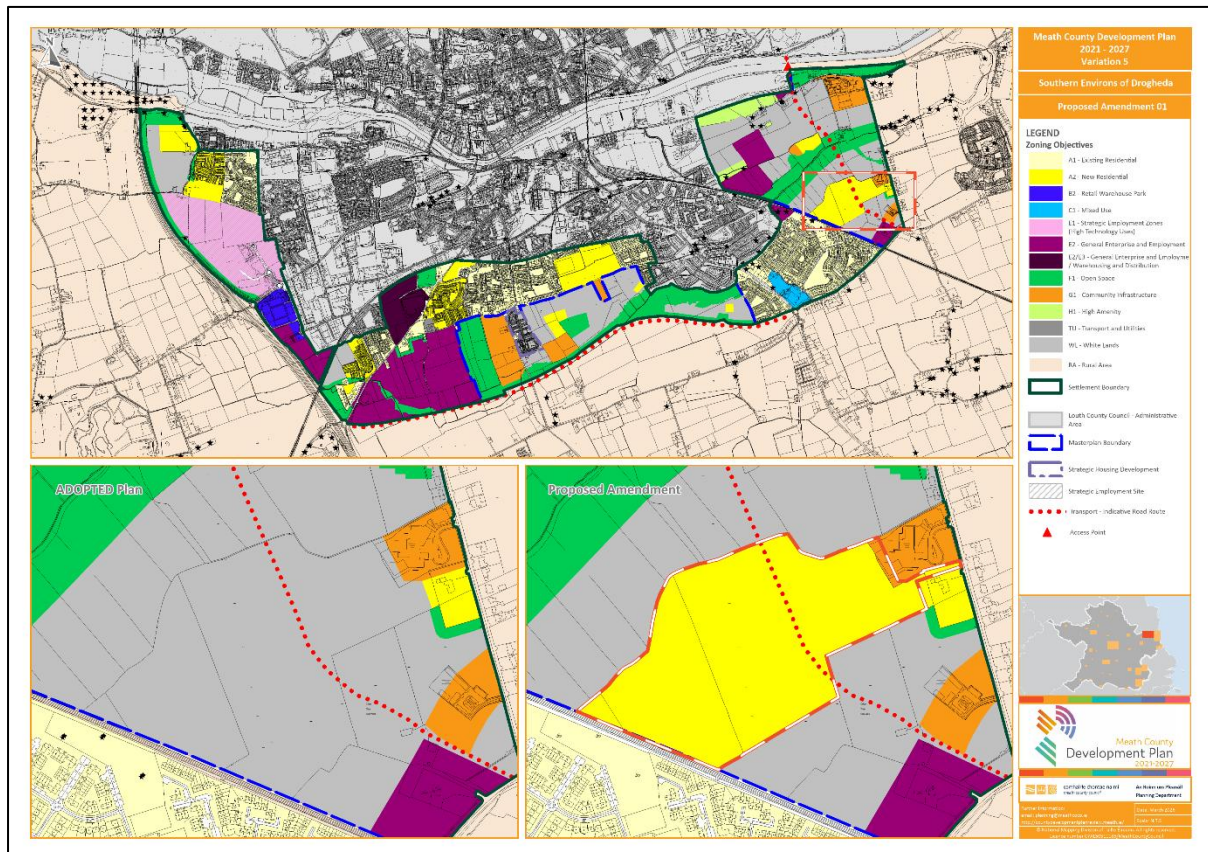


Figure 2.1 Current Zoning Map for Dunboyne as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

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 2.2 (a, b).



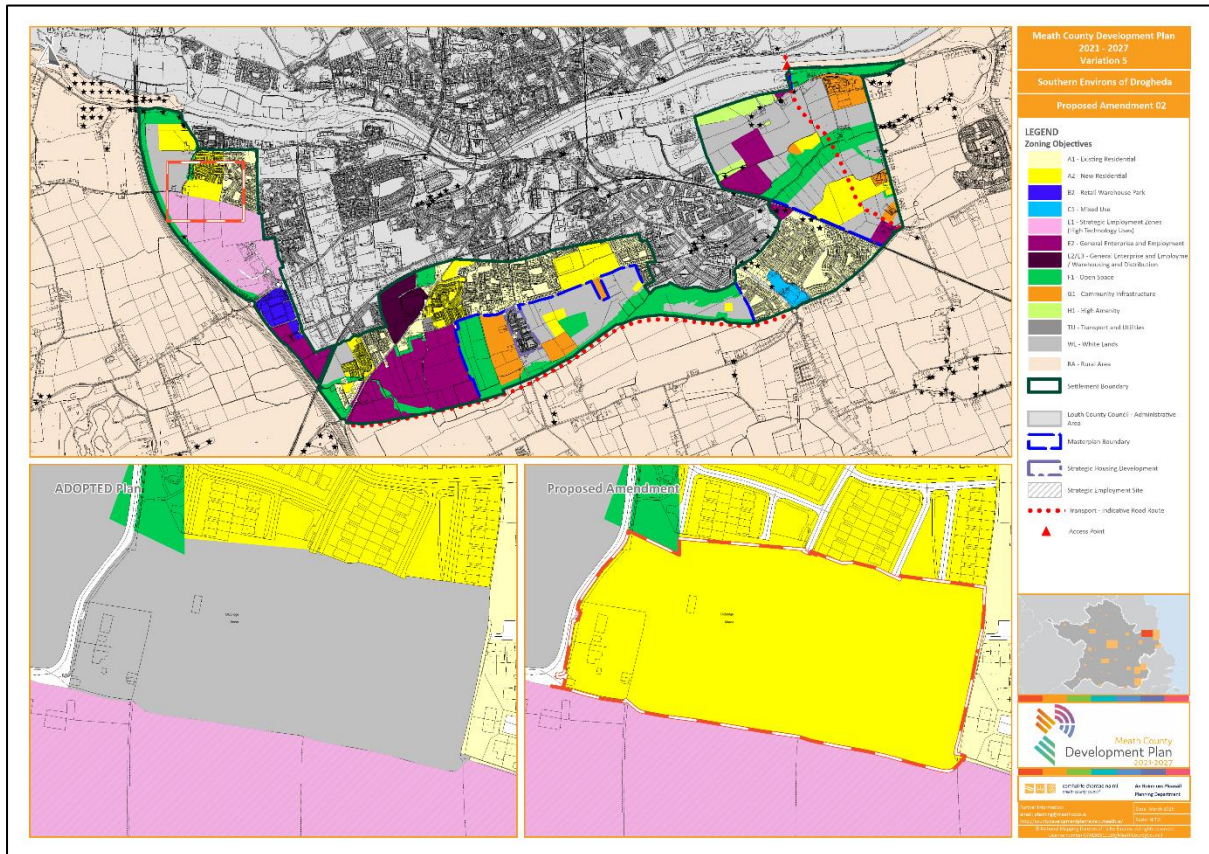
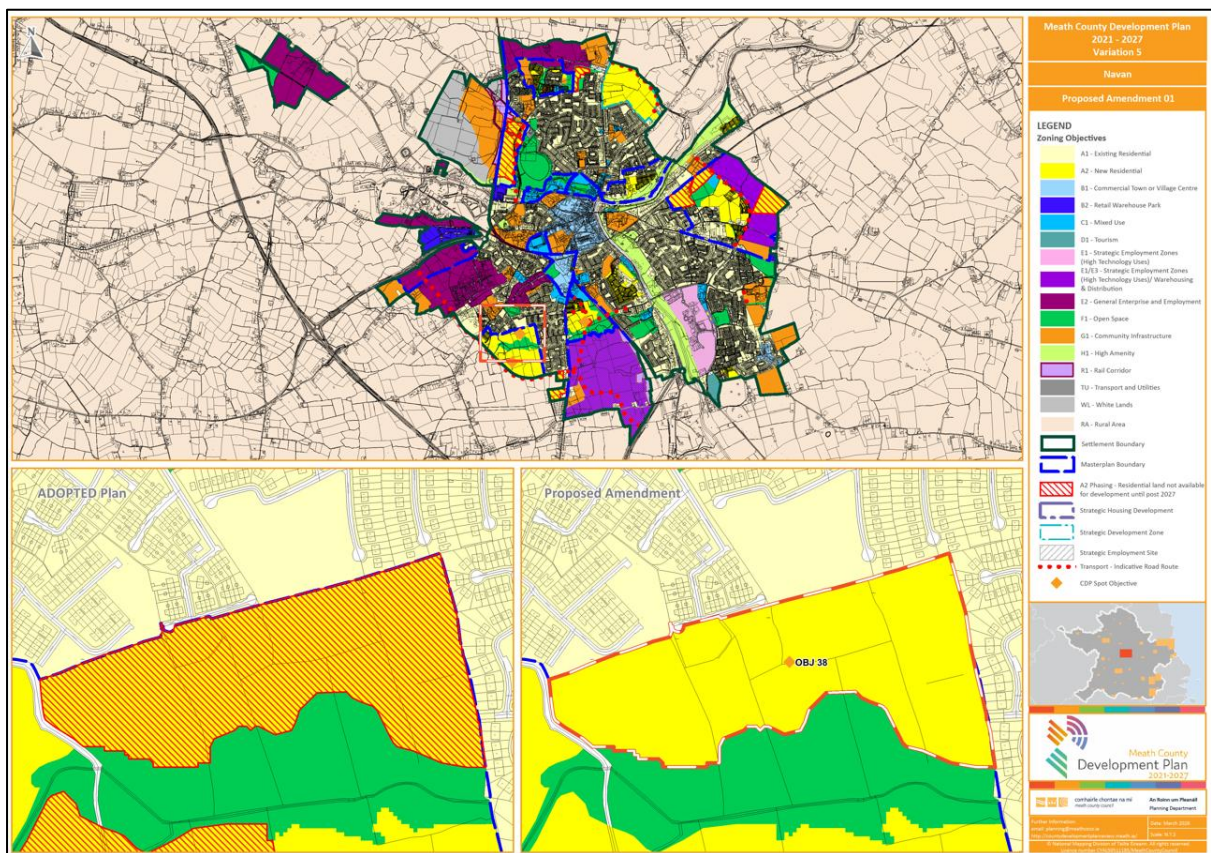


Figure 2.2 (a, b) Current Zoning Map for South Drogheda as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

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 (a, b, c).



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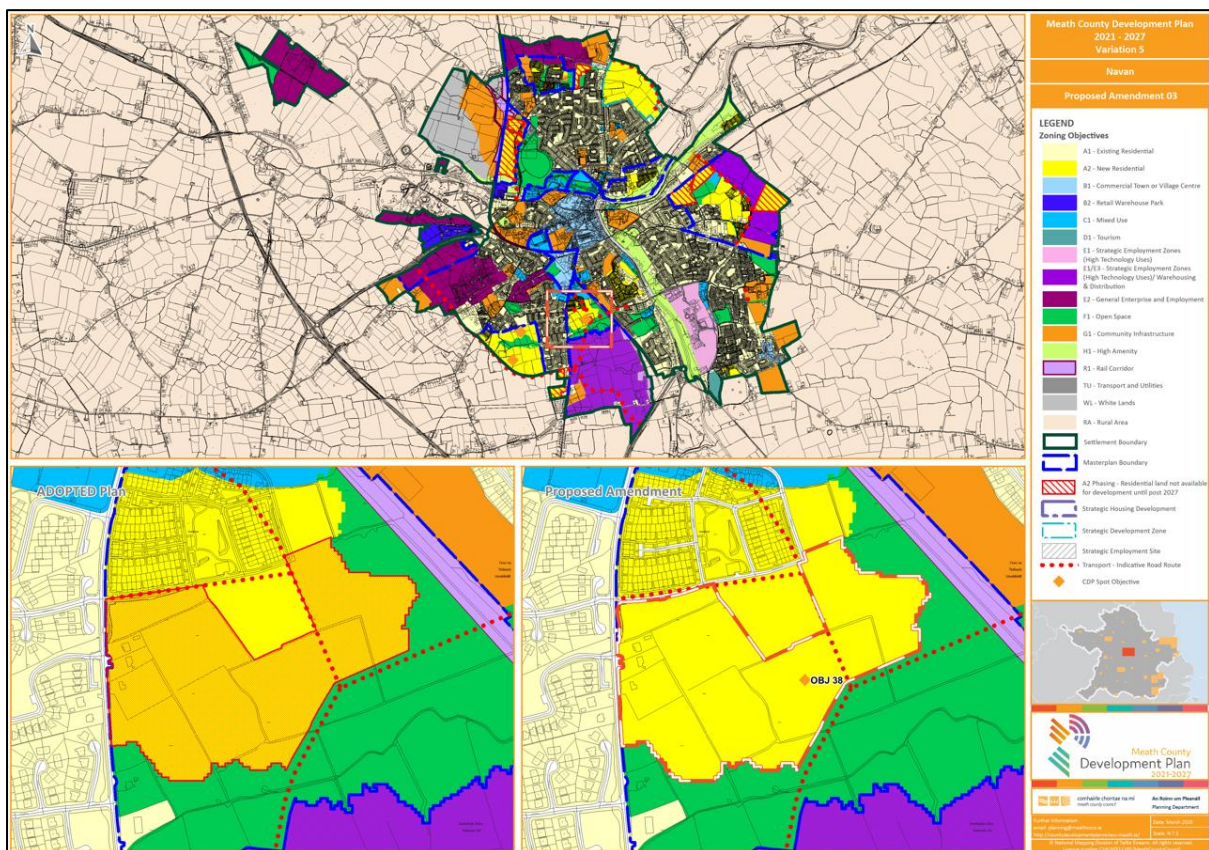


Figure 2.3 (a, b, c) Current Zoning Map for Navan as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning (Tier 1 lands)

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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 2.4 (a, b).

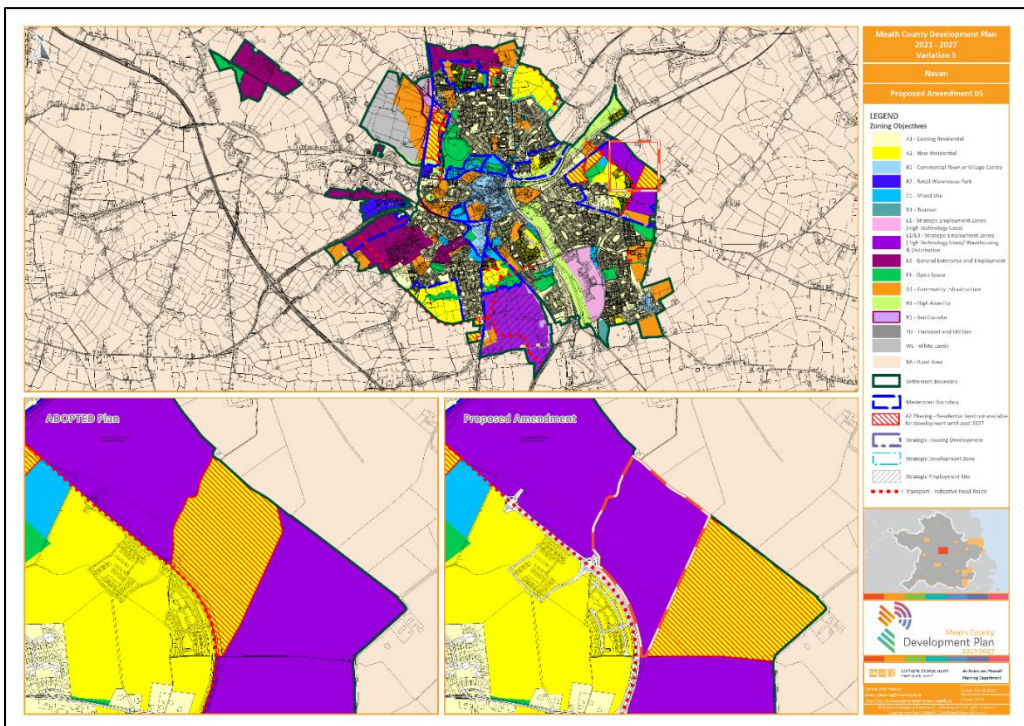


Figure 2.4 (a, b) Current Zoning Map for Navan as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning (Farganstown)

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 2.5.

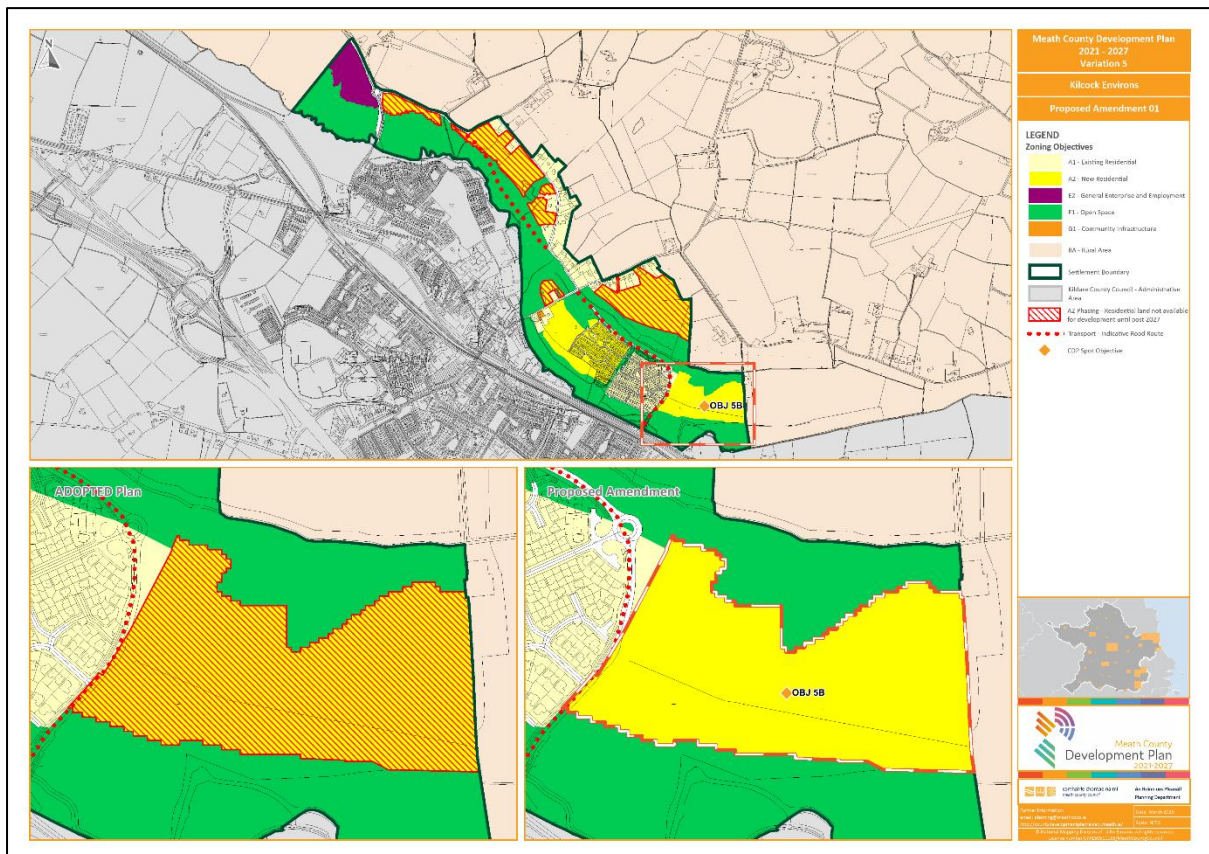


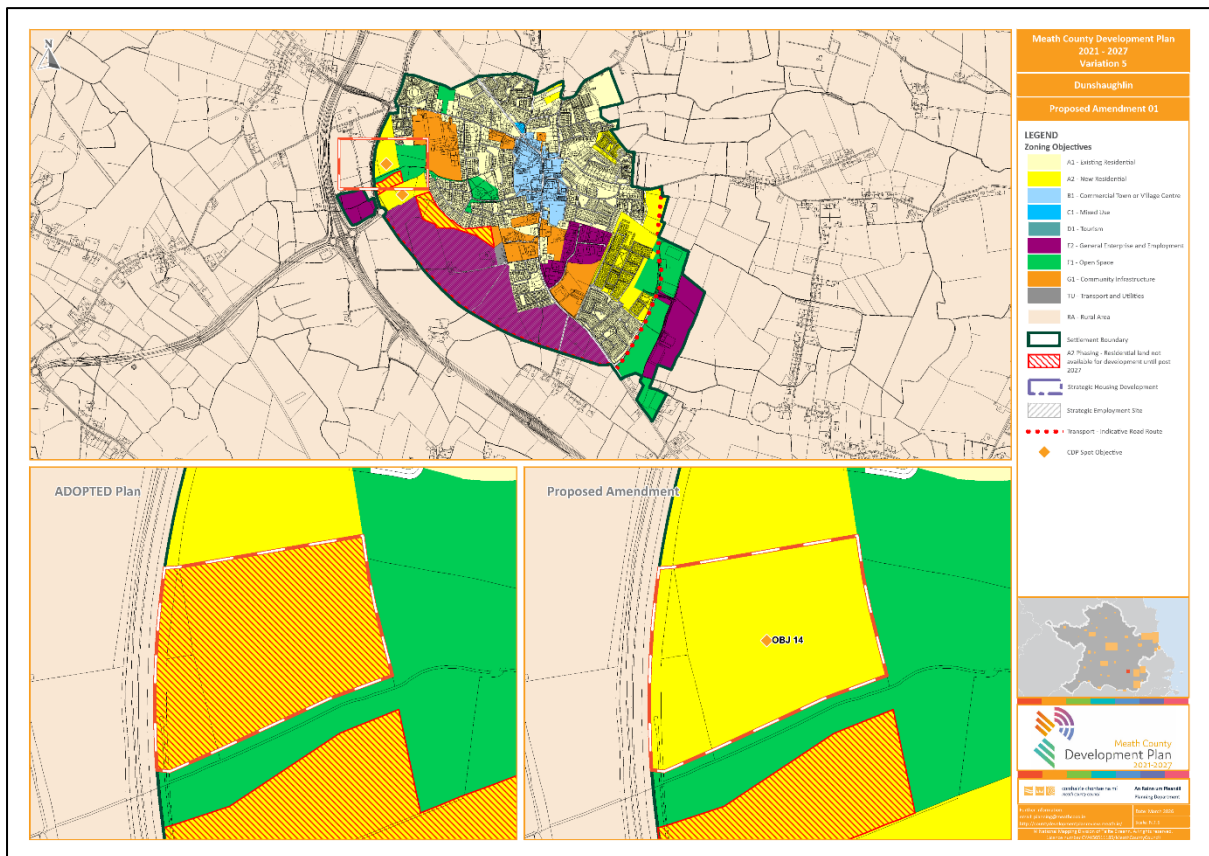
Figure 2.5 Current Zoning Map for Kilcock as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

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 2.6 (a, b).



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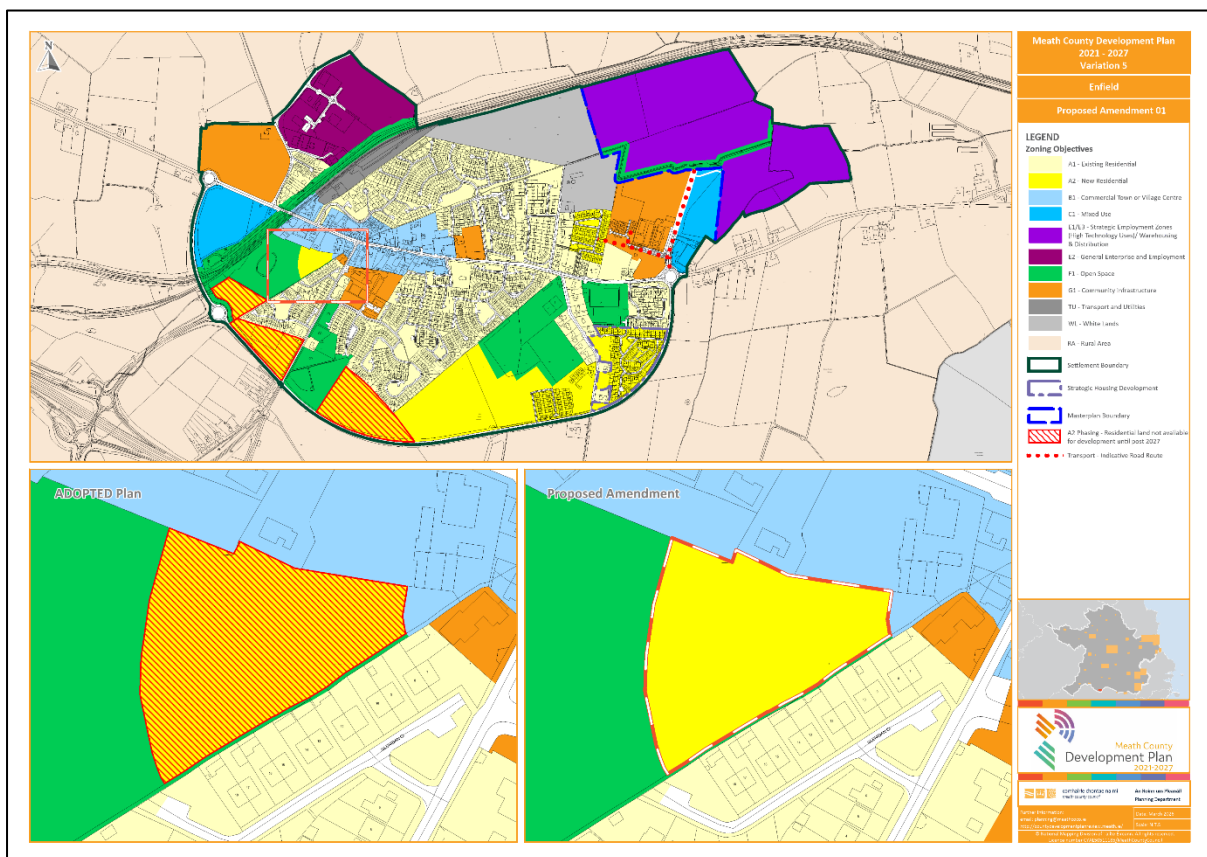


Figure 2.6 (a, b) Current Zoning Map for Dunshaughlin as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

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 2.7 (a, b).



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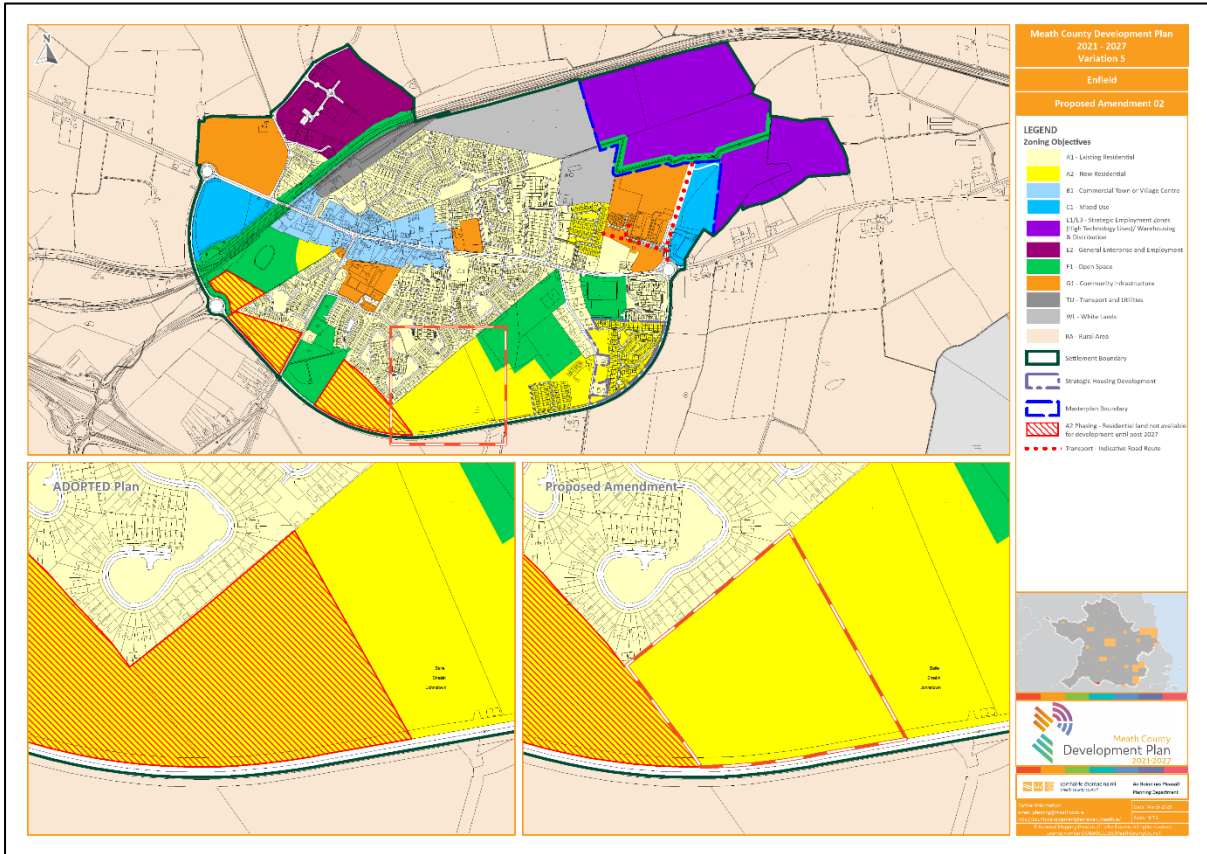


Figure 2.7 (a, b) Current Zoning Map for Enfield as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

2.3.7 East Meath (Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarnev)

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 2.8**.

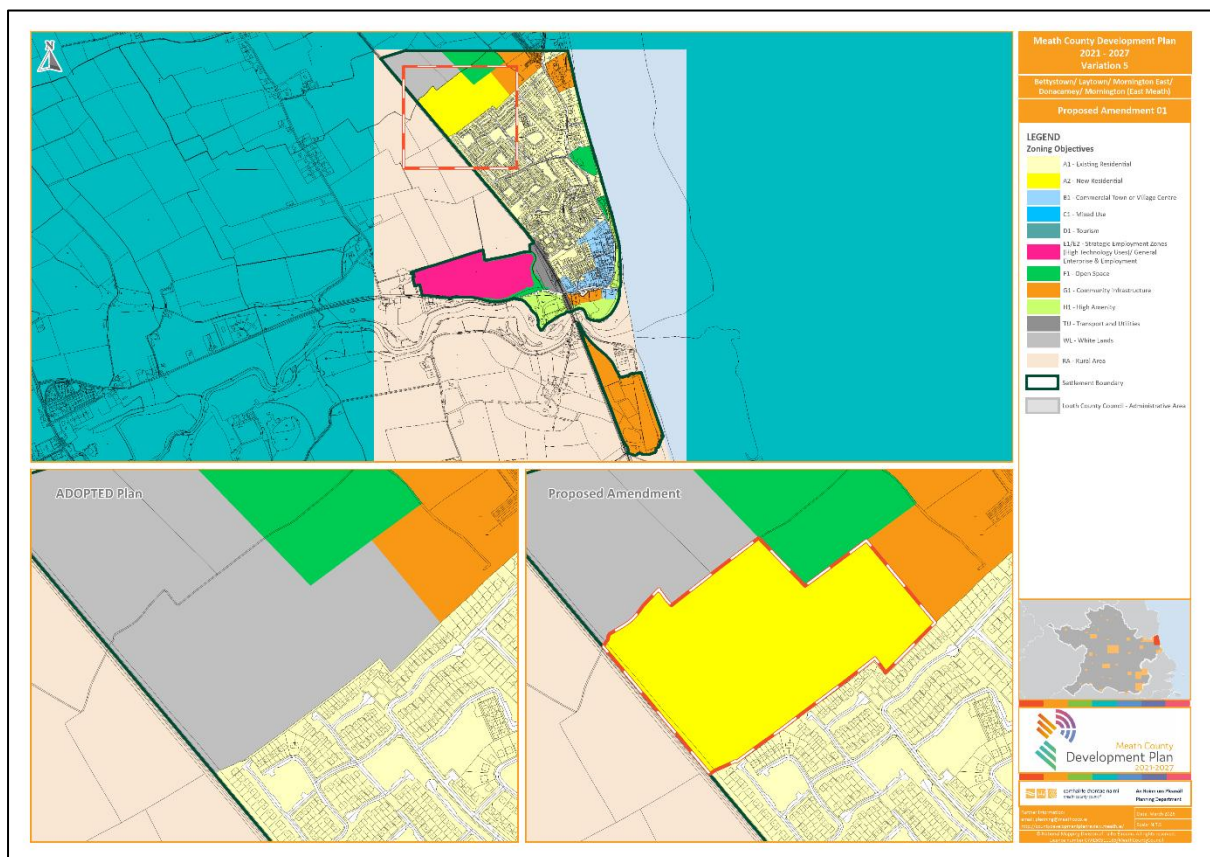


Figure 2.8 Current Zoning Map for Bettystown-Laytown as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

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Approximately 9.7ha of lands zoned RA – Rural Area located to the west of Donacarney 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 2.9.

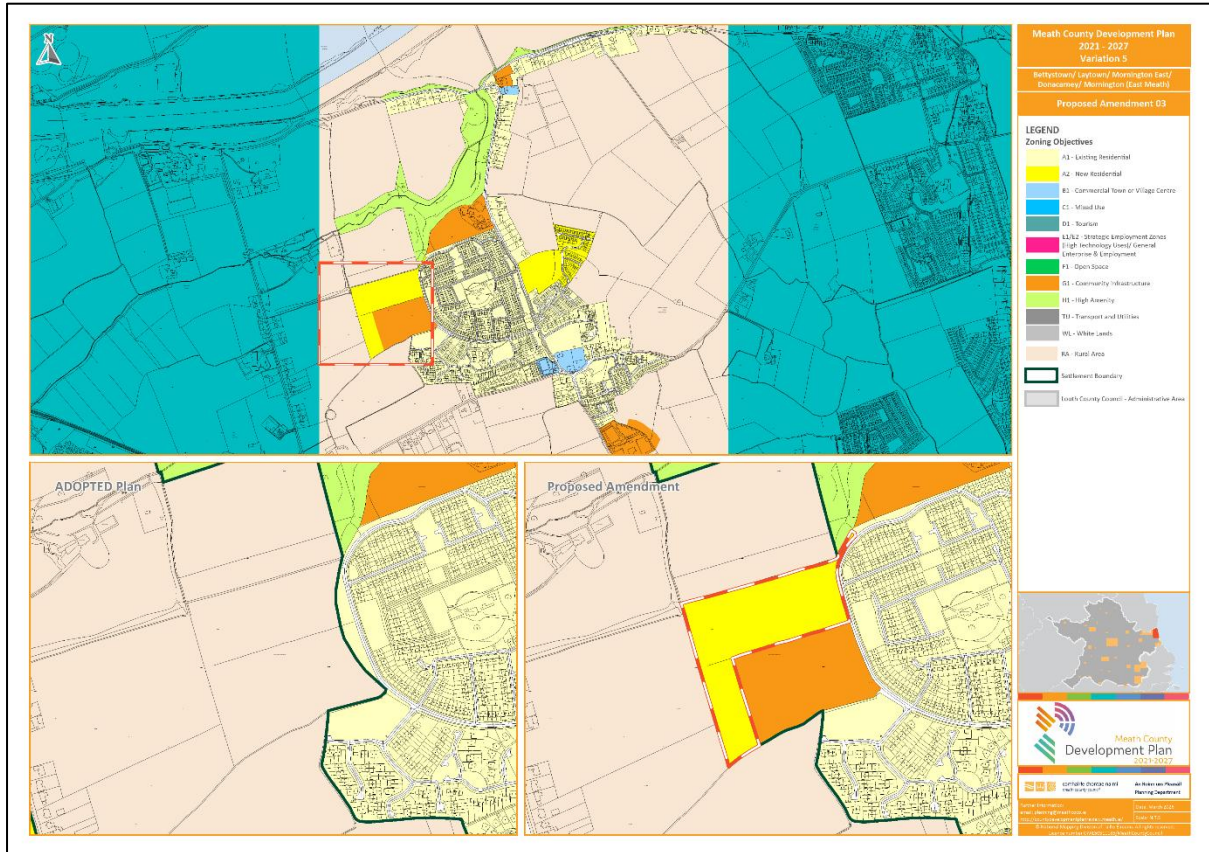


Figure 2.9 Current Zoning Map for Donacarney as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning (to A2)

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It is also proposed to zone 3ha of RA lands to G1 – Community to facilitate the delivery of community of community uses in tandem with new residential development.

See Figure 2.10.

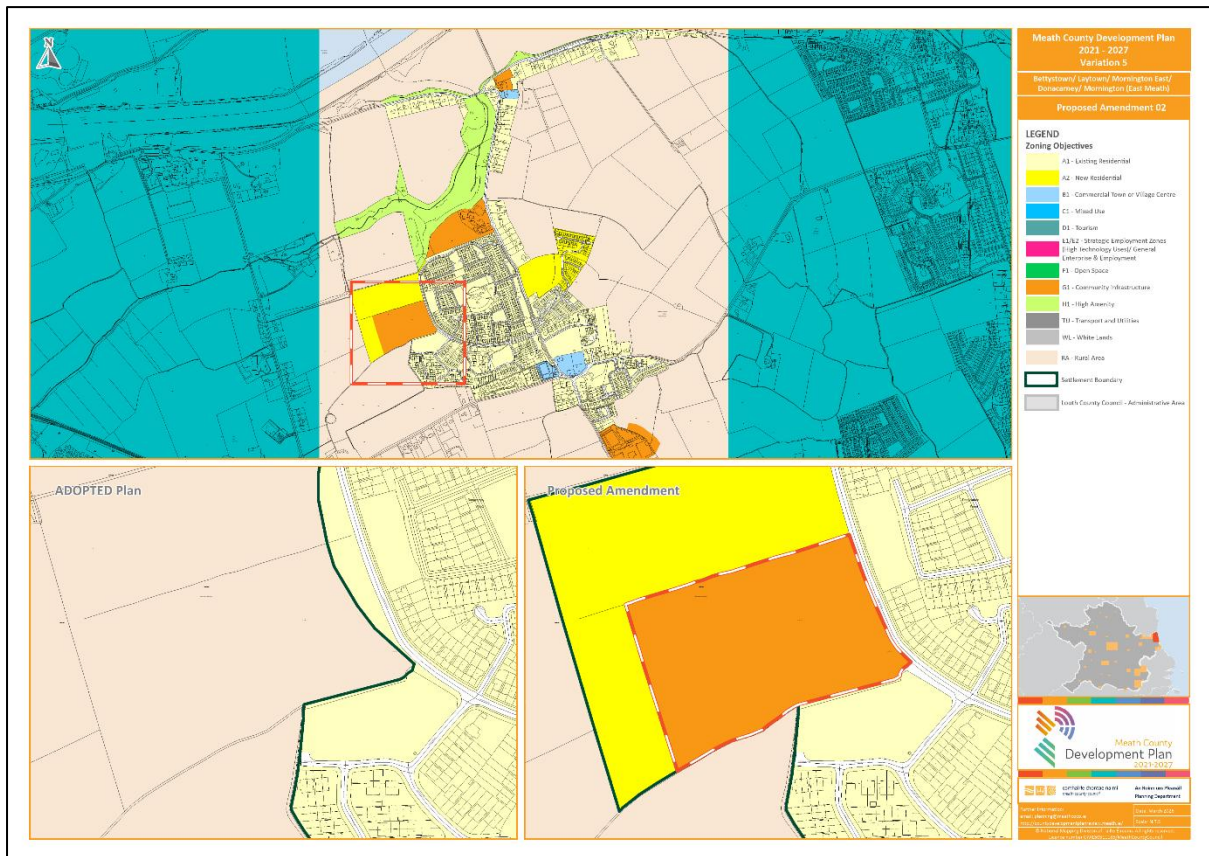


Figure 2.10 Current Zoning Map for Donacarney as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning (to G1)

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. The lands are fully serviced with no known infrastructural constraints and are capable of delivering approximately 80 housing units. See **Figure 2.11 (a, b)**.

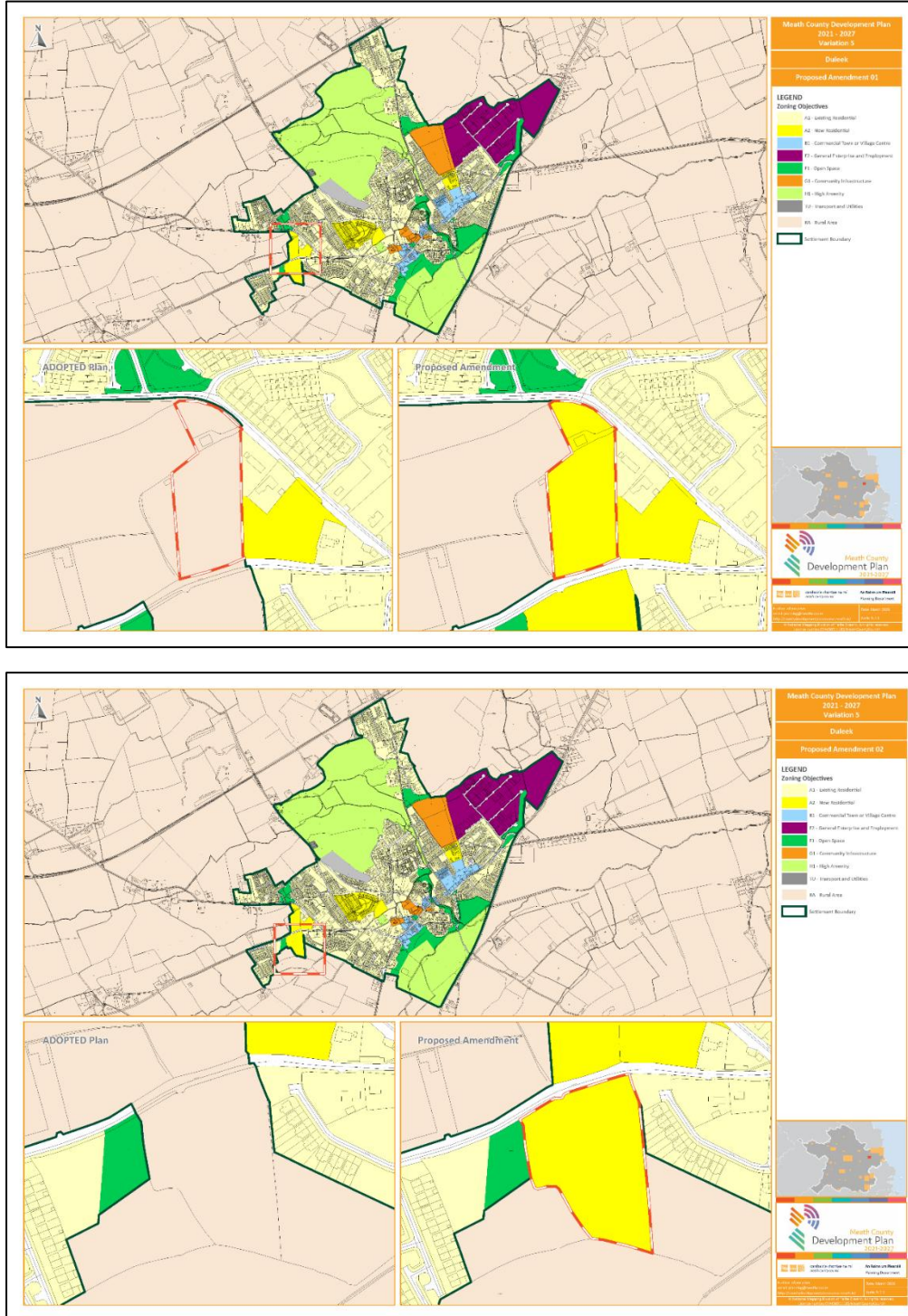


Figure 2.11 (a, b) Current Zoning Map for Duleek as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

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 2.12**.

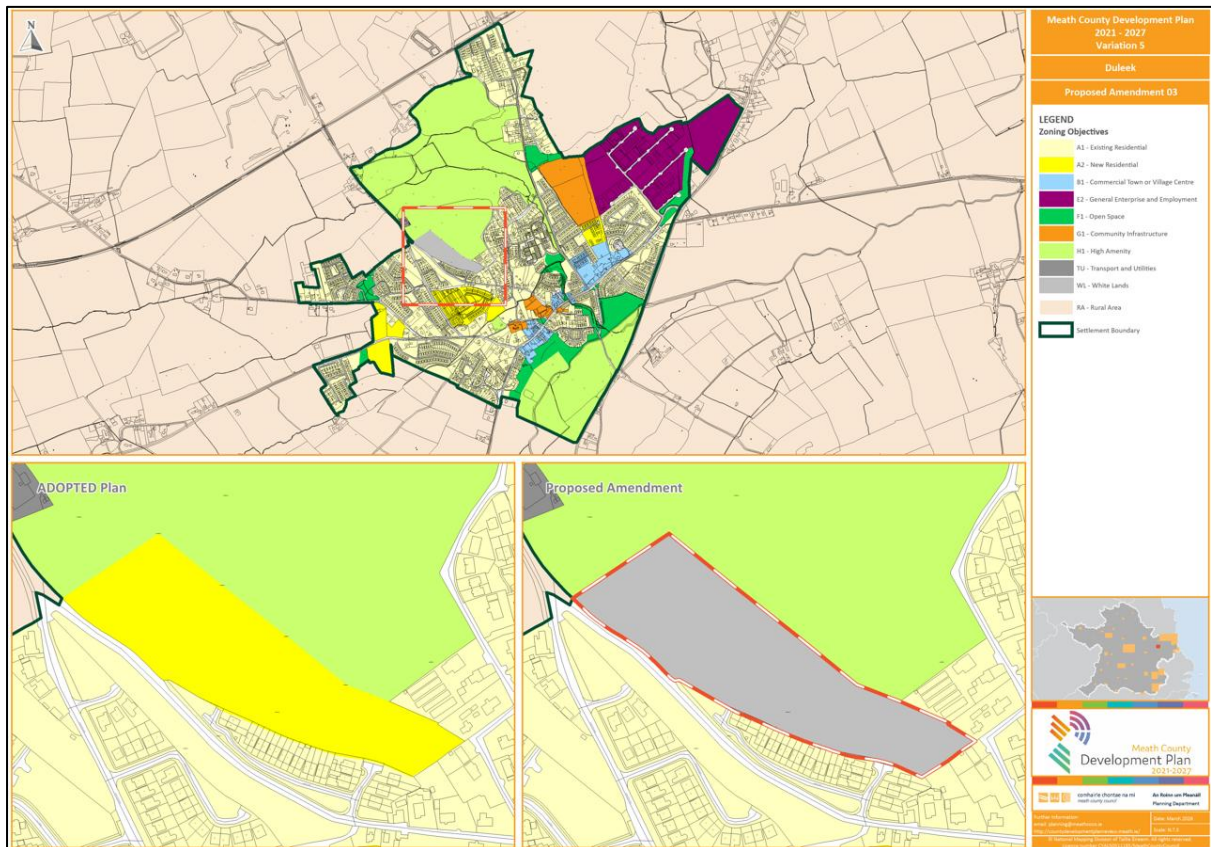


Figure 2.12 Current Zoning Map for Duleek as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning (to White Lands)

2.3.9 Stamullen

A Tier 1 site comprising approximately 5.11ha of RA – Rural Area zoned land is proposed to be rezoned to A2 – New Residential as part of this variation. The lands are located to the west of the settlement and immediately adjacent to existing residential development. The lands are capable of accommodating approximately 143 housing units which will contribute to addressing the limited remaining undeveloped residential zoned land in the area and the limited units in the planning pipeline.

See Figure 2.13.

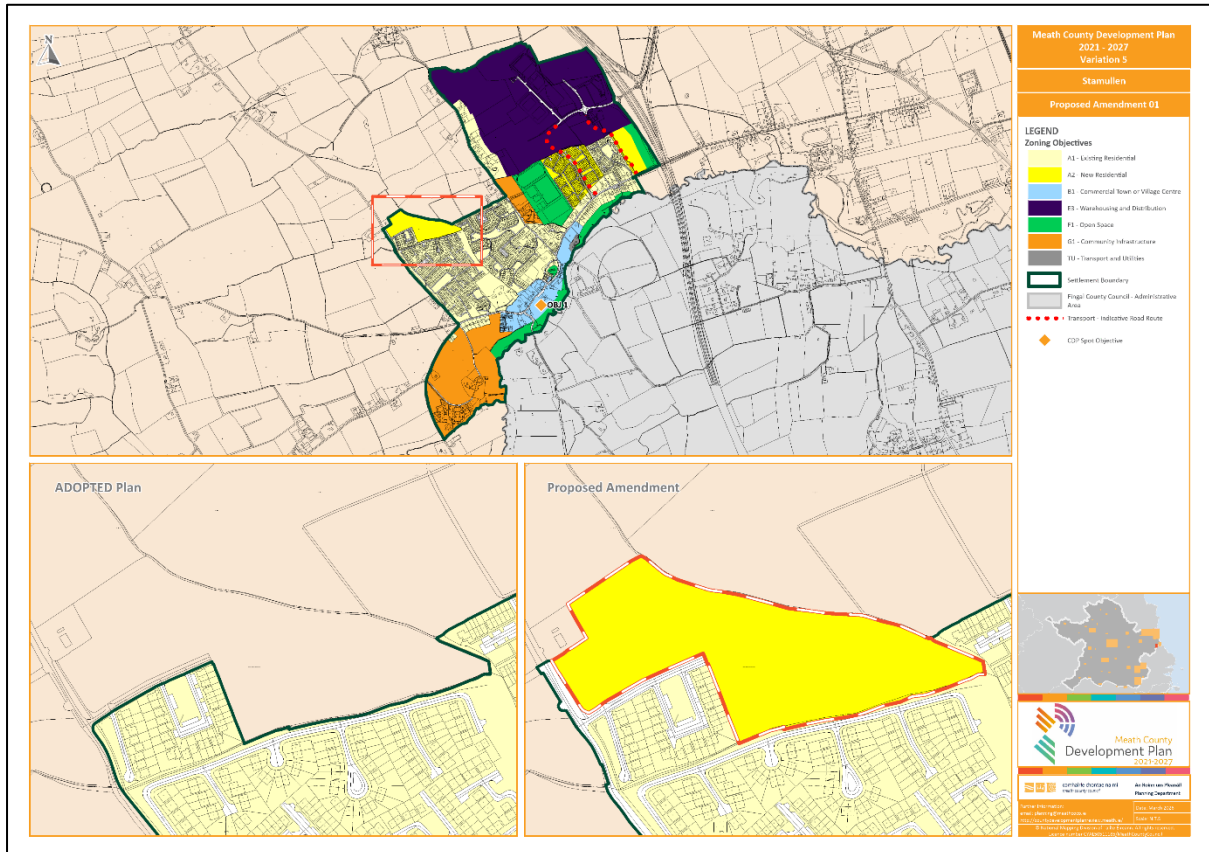


Figure 2.13 Current Zoning Map for Stamullen as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

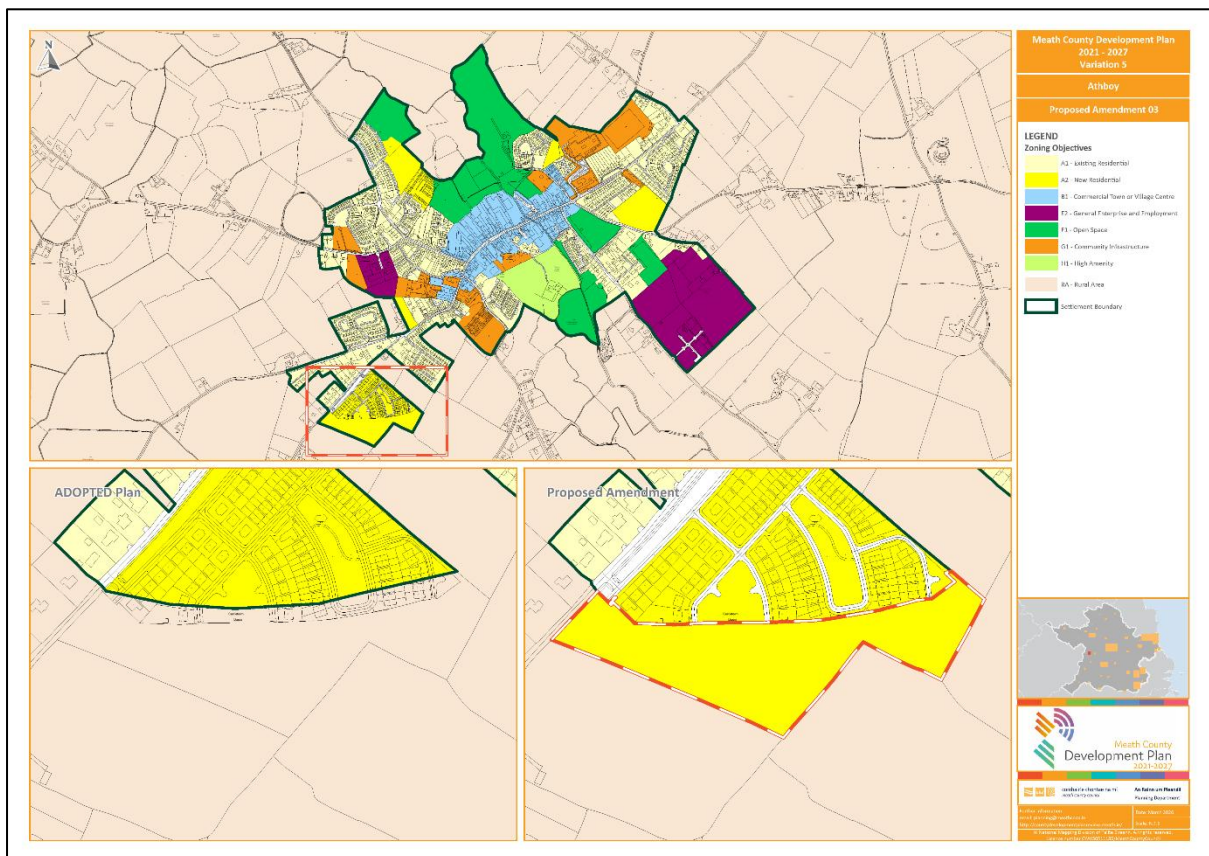
2.3.10 Athboy

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 2.14** (a, b, c).



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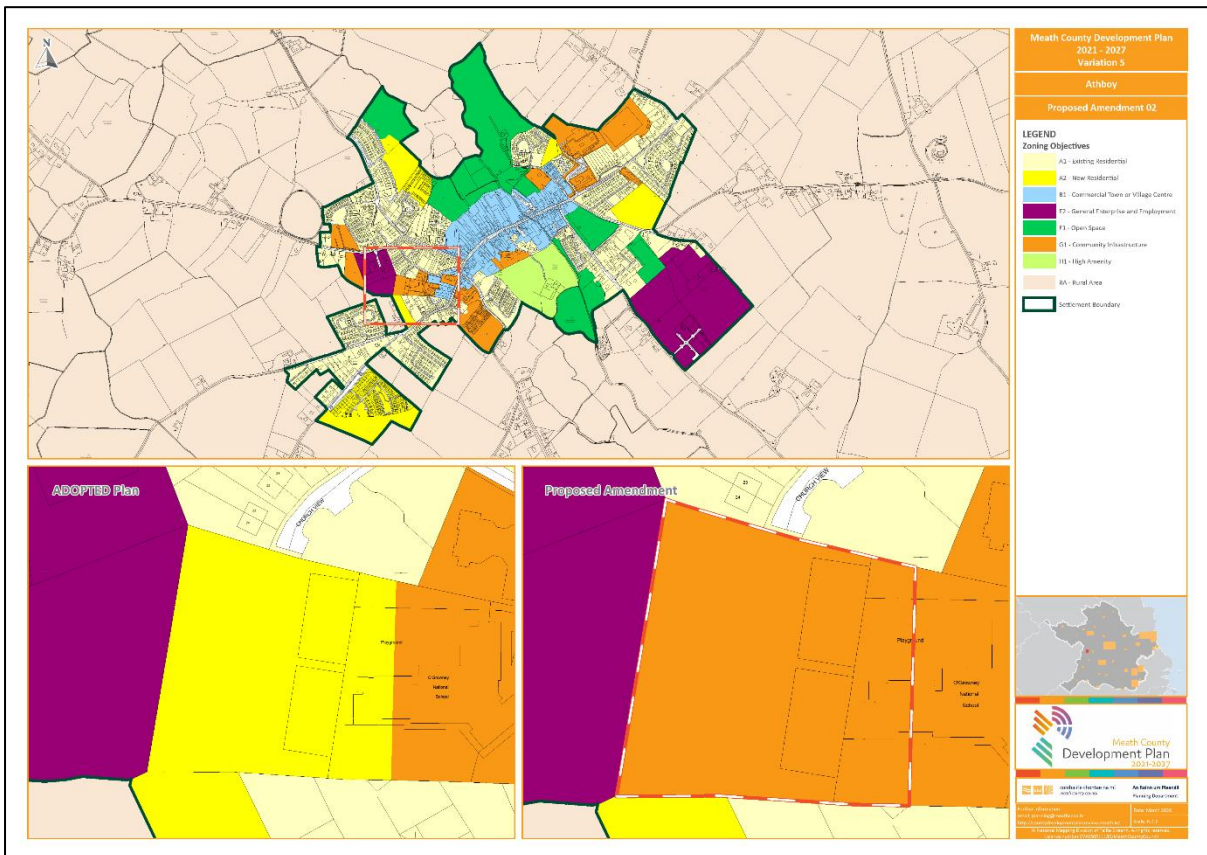
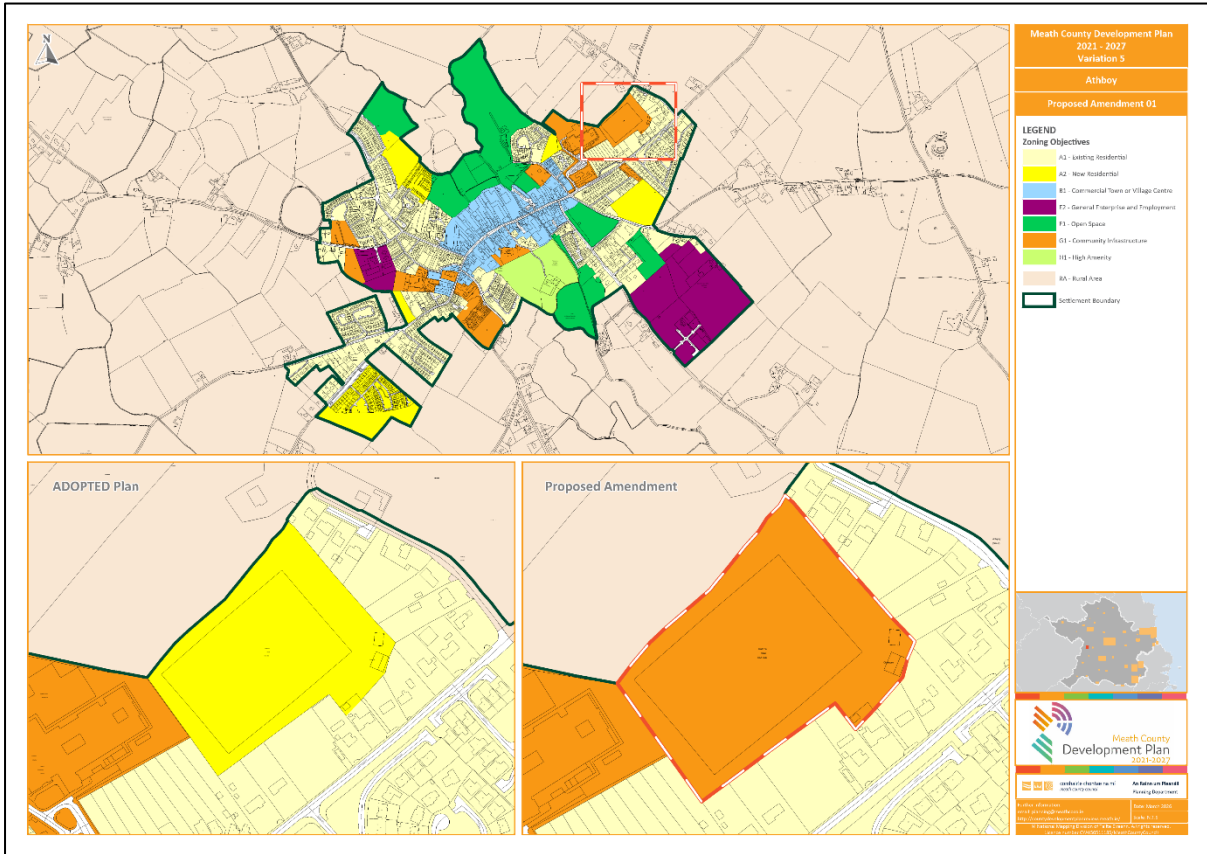


Figure 2.14 (a, b, c) Current Zoning Map for Athboy as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

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 and are capable of accommodating approximately 20 housing units.

See Figure 2.15.

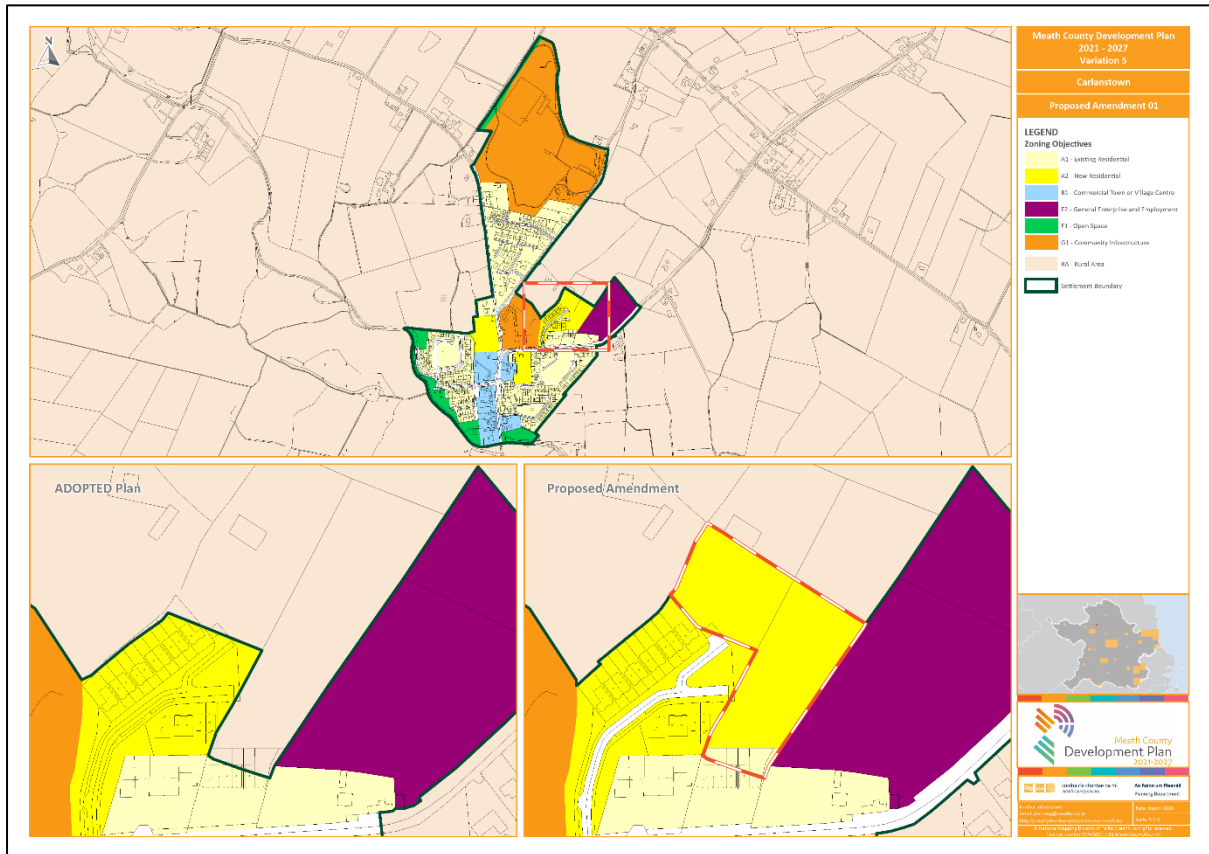


Figure 2.15 Current Zoning Map for Carlanstown as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 showing lands identified for rezoning

3 Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment

3.1 Introduction

The first part of the Appropriate Assessment process is the Screening phase. Screening identifies the likely effects of Variation No.5 on European sites that could arise, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and considers whether these impacts are likely to have a significant effect on the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

As per Section 1.3 and in accordance with Article 42 of the Habitats regulations, screening for appropriate assessment must be carried out. Screening must be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation and it is in this context that this AA Screening Report has been prepared.

Following screening therefore, if there is a possibility of there being a significant effect on a European site, this will generate the need for an appropriate assessment for the purposes of compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. This means that if the conclusions at the end of the screening exercise are that significant effects on any European sites, as a result of Variation No.5, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, are likely, uncertain or unknown, then an Appropriate Assessment must be carried out. This is in accordance with established precedent and case law.

3.2 Potential Zone of Influence

This assessment is based on the source-pathway-receptor model, which dictates that, for an effect to occur, there must be a 'source' (such as a construction site); a 'receptor' (such as a designated site for nature conservation); and a 'pathway' between the two (such as a watercourse). A construction site or completed development may also create a barrier to movement, for example, by preventing the migration of fauna along a river corridor, or by obstructing the migration of birds.

Identification of a potential effect means that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the potential effect and the characteristics of the receptor. Although there may be a risk of an impact, it may not necessarily occur, and if it does occur, it may not be significant.

There are no set recommended distances for projects to consider European sites as being relevant for assessment. DoEHLG (2010a, pp. 31 – 32) states that:

“The approach to screening is likely to differ somewhat for plans and projects, depending on scale and on the likely effects, but the following should be included:

- 1. Any Natura 2000 sites within or adjacent to the plan or project area*
- 2. Any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of impact of the plan or project. A distance of 15km is currently recommended in the case of plans, and derives from UK guidance (Scott Wilson et al., 2006). For projects, the distance could be much less than 15km, and in some cases less than 100m, but this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in combination effects*
- 3. Natura 2000 sites that are more than 15km from the plan or project area depending on the likely impacts of the plan or project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, bearing in mind the precautionary principle. In the cases of sites with water dependent habitats or species,*

and a plan or project that could affect water quality or quantity, for example, it may be necessary to consider the full extent of the upstream and/or downstream catchment.”

The 2021 OPR guidelines, *Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management*, state that the Zone of Influence “*should be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor framework and not by arbitrary distances (such as 15 km)*” (p. 8).

Therefore, considering the nature, scale and location(s) of Variation No.5, and in accordance with the source-pathway-receptor model, the potential Zone of Influence for Variation No.5 includes any site to which there is a potential for impacts, as set out in the following sections.

3.3 Description of the Receiving Environment and the Potential Zone of Influence

The description of the receiving environment presented in this section has been based on a desktop study of relevant available information, supported by a field visit, with relevant references cited in the text.

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.

Much of the habitat biodiversity (in the context of Appropriate Assessment) 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. Other key sites include lakes and bogs, such as Lough Sheelin and Mount Hevey, Girley and Killyconny Bogs, as well as the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC in the south of the county. Protecting and conserving these habitats is critically important, not just to the residents of the County but also in a national and international context.

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 (Fossitt⁹ habitat category 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 waterways including the River Boyne, River Blackwater, River Nanny, River Inny, River Delvin, River Tolka, River Broadmeadow, River Rye and the Royal Canal.

Article 10 of the EU 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 watercourses and hedgerow network are critical ecological infrastructure in this context.

⁹ <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/A%20Guide%20to%20Habitats%20in%20Ireland%20-%20Fossitt.pdf>

3.3.1 Designated European Sites

Within the County Meath boundary, 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 3.1** and shown in **Figure 3.1** below.

There are a further 13 SPAs and 19 SACs within the potential Zol (Zol) of Variation No. 5, as listed in **Table 3.1**. These sites (a total of 46 including sites internal and external to the county boundary) are the sites located within the potential zone of influence of the of the sites selected for rezoning and include coastal sites as well as bogs and wetlands in adjacent counties.

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 website¹⁰.

Table 3.1 European sites located in County Meath and within the potential Zone of Influence of the County Meath

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

¹⁰ NPWS website 2019: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives>

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

3.3.2 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 (but generally protected in the county development plan. However, under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000) NHAs are legally protected from damage from the date they are formally proposed for designation¹¹.

Refer to **Table 3.2** and **Figure 3.2** below for the NHAs and pNHAs located in County Meath and within the zone of influence of the county boundary.

Table 3.2 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

¹¹ NPWS website 2019: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/nha>

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		001592	Boyne Woods
		000553	Crewbane Marsh
		001591	Slane Riverbank
		001589	Rossnaree 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
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

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	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
	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	

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	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

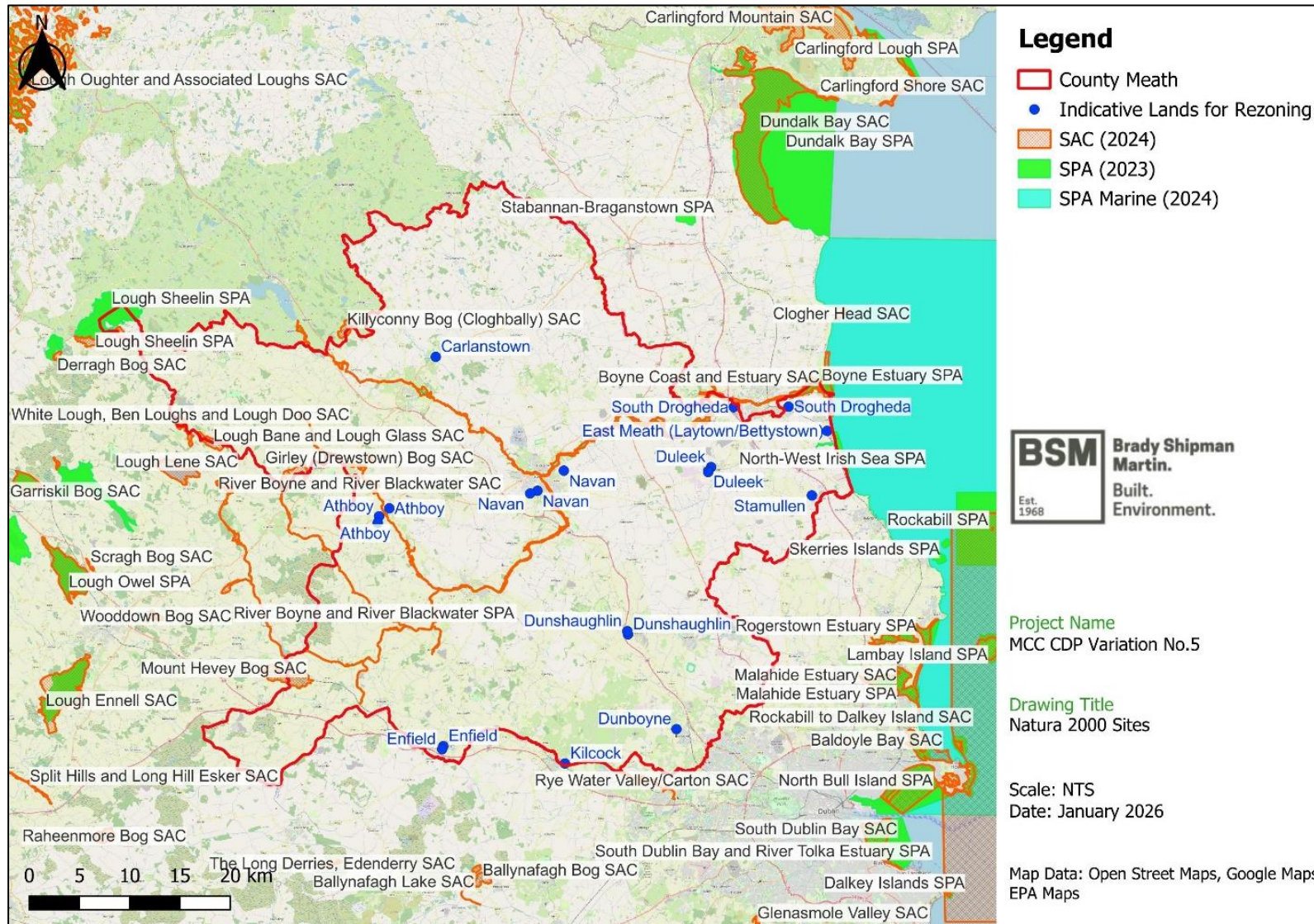


Figure 3.1 European Sites in County Meath and in the surrounding zone of influence

3.3.3 Hydrology

The latest *Water Quality in Ireland* report 2019-2025¹² 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) that are designated as WFD operational monitoring lakes.

The Water Quality in Ireland report 2019-2025, 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 to the north, 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’¹³ water quality status and a small section near southern environs of Drogheda is the Boyne Estuary Plume Zone which has a ‘moderate’ water quality. The Boyne Estuary transitional waterbody has a ‘poor’ status and Nanny Estuary has a ‘moderate’ status.

Table 3.3 below has a list of the **WFD Catchments** and **WFD Sub-Catchments** in County Meath.

Table 3.3 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)

¹² Water Quality In Ireland 2019-2024 - <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/freshwater--marine/water-quality-in-ireland-2019-2024.php>

¹³ EPA 2025, Coastal Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/default>

Catchment (WFD Catchment Code)	Sub-catchment Name (WFD Sub-catchment Code)
	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)
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)

A number of protected areas are present within Meath and these are as follows:

- 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

3.3.3.1 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.

3.3.3.2 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* spp.) 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.

3.3.4 Other Designations

3.3.4.1 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.

3.3.4.2 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 45no. 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.

3.3.4.3 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 State¹⁴. Shooting of game birds is not allowed in these sanctuaries. The Boyne Estuary (part) (WFS-41) is located within Meath County.

3.3.4.4 *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.

3.3.5 Potential links between the selected sites and European sites

The site visit undertaken in the preparation of this report confirmed the following:

- **Dunboyne:** of the selected sites, this is the only site with *potential* to be a foraging resource for light-bellied Brent geese. It is at a significant distance (18.5km) from the nearest such SPA (South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA). Nevertheless it has been *screened in* (see Table 3.4 below). The site is also within 700m of the River Tolka. It is unlikely that there is a pathway to (and the possibility of significant effects on) European sites via water – however this is not certain and is also a reason these sites are screened in. None of the *habitats* present are however linked in any way to the QIs of any European site.
- **South Environs of Drogheda:** None of the sites visited at Drogheda were of any significant value for over wintering birds (SCI species) in their current condition. This includes golden plover, redshank, oystercatcher or lapwing – SCI species of a number of SPAs within the potential Zone of Influence including the River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA. It is unlikely that there is a pathway to (and the possibility of significant effects on) the European sites via water – however this is not certain and is the reason these sites are screened in. None of the habitats present are however linked in any way to the QIs of any European site.
- **Navan:** There is no realistic possibility that the selected sites in Navan could have value for internationally (or nationally) significant populations of SCI bird species (it is not of any value for kingfisher, the only SCI species listed in the nearby River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA, and is too far from any coastal site to be of any value for the species associated with these sites, given their location size and current condition). None of the habitats present are linked in any way to the QIs of any European site.
- **Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington-Donacarney (East Meath) Donacarney:** The site west of Donacarney has no significant value for over wintering birds (SCI species), and none of the habitats present are linked in any way to the QIs of any European site. The site at Bettystown/Laytown, in its current condition (bare ground) has only minimal value for overwintering birds including golden plover, redshank, oystercatcher or lapwing.

¹⁴ NPWS (2021).

- **Duleek:** Of the sites selected in Duleek only one site (the eastern site south of Duleek Commons) has any potential for use by small numbers of grazing birds (i.e. SCI species, associated with the coastal SPAs). However this site is being rezoned from A2 – New Residential zoned lands to WL – White Lands.
- **Stamullen:** There is no realistic possibility that the selected site in Stamullen could have value for internationally (or nationally) significant populations of SCI bird species. None of the habitats present are linked in any way to the QIs of any European site.
- **Athboy:** There is no realistic possibility that the selected sites in Athboy could have value for internationally (or nationally) significant populations of SCI bird species (it is not of any value for kingfisher, the only SCI species listed in the nearby River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA, and is too far from any coastal site to be of any value for the species associated with these sites., given their location size and current condition). None of the habitats present are linked in any way to the QIs of any European site.

Although the sites at **Dunshaughlin**, **Enfield** and **Carlanstown** were not visited, and there is no realistic pathway between these sites and any European sites that could result in a significant effect, a conservative approach, based on the precautionary principle, has been adopted in the preparation of this NIR.

The site at **Kilcock** was not visited. It has no value as an *ex-situ* site for SCI bird species, however there is a pathway between the selected site and the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC via the River Rye. This is considered further in the following sections.

3.4 Screening of Proposed Amendment No. 1

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.

This proposed amendment updates the Plan documentation, including for the following amended/new objectives:

- Updated objectives CS OBJ 3, CS OBJ 8 and CS OBJ 11
- Updated objectives SH OBJ 2, SH OBJ 7, SH OBJ 20
- New objective INF OBJ 25B (surface water)

This proposed amendment also provides for update as required to the text to the CDP Written Statement.

There is no possibility of a significant effect arising on European sites as a result of these amendments, and they are screened out for the requirement for Appropriate Assessment.

3.5 Screening of Proposed Amendment No. 2

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.

This proposed amendment updates the Plan documentation, including for the following amended/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)

This proposed amendment also provides for update as required to the text to the CDP Written Statement.

There is no possibility of a significant effect arising on European sites as a result of these amendments, and they are screened out for the requirement for Appropriate Assessment.

3.6 Screening of Proposed Amendment No. 3

In order to ensure consistency with the National Planning Framework – First Revision 2025 and to 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 relevant development boundary of that settlement.

The proposed rezonings for the relevant settlements are set out below and illustrated individually through updated land use zoning and heritage map sheets. The proposed variations are clearly marked on each sheet for clarity and legibility purposes. Where no zoning changes are proposed under this Variation, the current map sheets remain in effect.

A total of 11 settlements have been identified for rezoning as follows:

Dunboyne, Clonee & Pace

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential

Southern Environs of Drogheda

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from WL – Whitelands to A2 – New Residential
 - Rezoning of land from WL – Whitelands to G1 – Community Infrastructure
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from WL – Whitelands to A2 – New Residential

Navan

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 03
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 04
 - Rezoning of land from E1/E3 – Strategic Employment Zones to A2 Phasing – Post 2027
- Proposed Amendment 05
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to E1/E3 – Strategic Employment Zones

Kilcock Environs

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential

Dunshaughlin

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential

Enfield

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from A2 Phasing – Post 2027 to A2 – New Residential

Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarne-Mornington (East Meath)

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from WL – White Lands to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 03
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to G1 – Community Infrastructure

Duleek

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential
- Proposed Amendment 03
 - Rezoning of land from A2 – New Residential to WL – White Lands

Stamullen

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential

Athboy

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from A2 – New Residential to G1 – Community Infrastructure
- Proposed Amendment 02
 - Rezoning of land from A2 – New Residential to G1 – Community Infrastructure
- Proposed Amendment 03
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential

Carlanstown

- Proposed Amendment 01
 - Rezoning of land from RA – Rural Area to A2 – New Residential

The proposed rezonings are screened for appropriate assessment in **Table 3.4**.

Table 3.4 Potential for significant effects on designated sites in the potential Zone of Influence

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
European sites <i>within</i> Co. Meath			
River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code 004232), within County Meath	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A229 Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>) <p>According to the SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 02 July 2024), for the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable condition of the bird species listed.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 are in close proximity to the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA – specifically the sites at Athboy, Navan and Drogheda – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	Yes
Lough Sheelin SPA (site code 004065), within County Meath	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A005 Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) ■ A059 Pochard (<i>Aythya farina</i>) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A061 Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) ■ A067 Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) ■ A999 Wetlands <p>According to the SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 24 January 2025), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition of the bird species listed.</p>	<p>risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Lough Sheelin is a significant distance from the nearest of the selected sites (Carlanstown, some 25km to the east), and there is no pathway or any possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
<p>Boyne Estuary SPA (site code 004080), within County Meath</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) ■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) ■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) ■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) ■ A142 Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) ■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) ■ A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) ■ A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) ■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>) ■ A169 Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) ■ A195 Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) ■ A999 Wetlands 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 are in close proximity to the Boyne Estuary SPA – specifically the sites at Drogheda and Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington-Donacarne (east Meath) – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects</p>	<p>Yes</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<p>According to the SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 26 February, 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	
<p>River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (site code 004158), within County Meath</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) (wintering) ■ A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) (wintering) ■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) (wintering) ■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) (wintering) ■ A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) (wintering) ■ A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) (wintering) ■ A999 Wetlands <p>According to the SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 21 September 2012), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable condition, as</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 are in close proximity to the River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA – specifically the sites at Drogheda and Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington-Donacarney (east Meath) – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.		
North-West Irish Sea SPA (site code 004236), within County Meath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A065 Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) ■ A001 Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) ■ A003 Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>) ■ A009 Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) ■ A013 Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) ■ A018 Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) ■ A017 Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) ■ A177 Little Gull (<i>Larus minutus</i>) ■ A188 Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) ■ A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) ■ A182 Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) ■ A183 Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) ■ A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) ■ A187 Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>) ■ A195 Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) ■ A192 Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) ■ A193 Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) ■ A194 Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) ■ A204 Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 are in close proximity to the North West Irish Sea SPA – specifically the sites at Drogheda, Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington-Donacarne (east Meath) as well as Duleek and Stamullen – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	Yes

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A200 Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) ■ A199 Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1 - dated 19 September 2023), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the species for which the SPA has been selected.</p>		
<p>River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code 002299), within County Meath</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1099 River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) ■ 1106 Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) ■ 1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) ■ 7230 Alkaline fens ■ 91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* <p>According to the SAC’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 03 December 2021), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition, as</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 are in close proximity to the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC – specifically the sites at Athboy, Carlanstown, Navan, Drogheda and Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington-Donacarney (east Meath) – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects</p>	<p>Yes</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.	on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.	
Mount Hevey Bog SAC (site code 002342), within County Meath	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs* ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ■ 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives document for the SAC (Version 1, dated 21 March 2016), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Mount Hevey Bog is a significant distance from the nearest of the selected sites (Enfield, some 15km to the east), and there is no pathway or any possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	No
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally) SAC (site code 000006), within County Meath	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs* ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 1, dated 02 November 2015), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>One of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 is in relatively close proximity to Killyconny Bog SAC – the site at</p>	Yes

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.	<p>Carlanstown – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	
Moneybeg & Clareisland Bogs SAC (site code 002340), within County Meath	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs* ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ■ 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 1, dated 25 February 2016), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Moneybeg & Clareisland Bogs SAC is a significant distance from the nearest of the selected sites (Carlanstown, some 25km to the east), and there is no pathway or any possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	No
Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC (site code 002120), within County Meath	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1092 White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 1, dated 21 October 2021), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC is a significant distance from the nearest of the selected sites (Athboy, some 16km to the east), and there is no pathway or any possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
<p>Girley (Drewstown) Bog SAC (site code 002203), within County Meath</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 1, dated 19 July 2023), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>One of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 is in relatively close proximity to Girley Bog SAC – the site(s) at Athboy – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects</p>	<p>Yes</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
		<p>on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	
<p>Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (site code 001957), within County Meath</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1130 Estuaries ■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide ■ 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand ■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) ■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) ■ 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes ■ 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes') ■ 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes') <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 1, dated 31 October 2012), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 are in close proximity to the Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC – specifically the sites at Drogheda and Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington-Donacarney (east Meath) – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
<p>Rye Water Valley / Carton SAC (site code 001398), within County Meath</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1014 Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo angustior</i>) ■ 1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) ■ 7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)* <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 1, dated 22 December 2021), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 are in close proximity to the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC – specifically the site at Kilcock and, potentially, Enfield and Dunboyne – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p> <p>The selected site at Kilcock is of particular note. It is adjacent to the River Rye, approximately 6km upstream of the SAC, and there is the potential for a pollution event at the construction or operational stage of a development to have a significant effect on the Qis of this SAC.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>White Lough, Ben Loughs & Lough Doo SAC (site</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
code 001810), within County Meath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1092 White-clawed Crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> ■ 3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. <p>According to the SAC’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 21 October 2021), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, White Lough, Ben Loughs & Lough Doo SAC is a significant distance from the nearest of the selected sites (Athboy, some 16km to the east), and there is no pathway or any possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
European sites <i>outside</i> Co. Meath but potentially within the Zone of Influence of the County Boundary			
Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA (site code 004061), c. 4km north-west of the County boundary	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A059 Pochard (<i>Aythya farina</i>) ■ A061 Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) ■ A999 Wetlands <p>According to the SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 17 January 2025), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA, at 4km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
<p>Lough Derravarragh SPA (site code 004043), c. 11km to the west of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A038 Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) ■ A059 Pochard (<i>Aythya farina</i>) ■ A061 Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) ■ A125 Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) ■ A999 wetlands <p>According to the SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 16 July 2024), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Lough Derravarragh SPA, at 11km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Garriskill Bog SPA (site code 004102), c. 15.6km to the west of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A395 Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) <p>According to the SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 18 April 2025), for the listed SCI, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Garriskill Bog SPA, at over 15km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
<p>Lough Ennell SPA (site code 004044), c. 12km to the south-west of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A059 Pochard (<i>Aythya farina</i>) ■ A061 Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) ■ A125 Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) ■ A999 Wetlands <p>According to the SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 28 May 2024), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Lough Ennell SPA, at over 12km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006), c. 13km to the south-east of the County boundary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) ■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) ■ A052 Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) ■ A054 Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) ■ A056 Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) ■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) ■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) ■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) ■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) ■ A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) ■ A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 potentially linked to the European sites of Dublin Bay, including North Bull Island SPA, via the water pathway – specifically the Kilcock and Dunboyne sites – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) ■ A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) ■ A160 Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) ■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) ■ A169 Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) ■ A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) ■ A999 Wetland <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 9 March 2015), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	
<p>South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (site code 004024), c. 17km south-east of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) ■ A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) ■ A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) ■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) ■ A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) ■ A192 Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) ■ A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) ■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) ■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) ■ A194 Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) ■ A193 Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) ■ A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) ■ A999 Wetlands <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 9 March 2015), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 potentially linked to the European sites of Dublin Bay, specifically South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, via the water pathway – particularly the Kilcock and Dunboyne sites – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	
<p>Baldoyle Bay SPA (site code 004016), c. 14.7km to the east of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A046 Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) ■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) ■ A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) ■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) ■ A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) ■ A999 Wetlands <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1 - dated 27 February 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Baldoyle Bay SPA, at over 15km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
<p>Malahide Estuary SPA (site code 004025), c. 9.5km to the east of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A005 Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) ■ A046 Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) ■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) ■ A054 Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) ■ A067 Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) ■ A069 Red-breasted (<i>Merganser Mergus serrator</i>) ■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) ■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) ■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) ■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Malahide Estuary SPA, at almost 10km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>) ■ A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) ■ A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) ■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>) ■ A999 Wetlands <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 16 August 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>		
<p>Rogerstown Estuary SPA (site code 004015), c. 10km to the east of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A043 Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) ■ A046 Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) ■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) ■ A056 Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) ■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) ■ A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) ■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, at c.10km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) ■ A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>) ■ A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) ■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>) ■ A999 Wetlands <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1 - dated 20 May 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
<p>Skerries Islands SPA (site code 004122), c. 11.7km to the east of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A017 Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) ■ A018 Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) ■ A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) ■ A148 Purple Sandpiper (<i>Calidris maritima</i>) ■ A169 Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) ■ A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) <p>According to the SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 19 November 2024), for each of the listed SCIs,</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Skerries Islands SPA, at over 11km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<p>the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition.</p>		
<p>Rockabill SPA (site code 004014), c. 13.7km to the east of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A148 Purple Sandpiper (<i>Calidris maritima</i>) ■ A192 Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) ■ A193 Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) ■ A194 Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) <p>According to this SPA’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1 - dated 08 May 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Rockabill SPAA, at almost 14km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Stabannan-Braganstown SPA (site code 004091), c.11km to the north-east of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A043 Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SPA (dated 15 November 2022), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.	However, Stabannan-Braganstown SPA, at c.11km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.	
Dundalk Bay SPA (site code 004026), c. 14.8km to the north-east of the County boundary	<p>The Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A005 Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) (wintering) ■ A043 Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) (wintering) ■ A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) (wintering) ■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) (wintering) ■ A052 Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) (wintering) ■ A053 Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) (wintering) ■ A054 Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) (wintering) ■ A065 Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) (wintering) ■ A069 Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) (winterin) ■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) (wintering) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Dundalk Bay SPA, at almost 15km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) (wintering) ■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) (wintering) ■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) (wintering) ■ A142 Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) (wintering) ■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) (wintering) ■ A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) (wintering) ■ A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) (wintering) ■ A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) (wintering) ■ A160 Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) (wintering) ■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>) (wintering) ■ A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) (wintering) ■ A182 Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) (wintering) ■ A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) (wintering) 		

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A999 Wetlands & Waterbirds <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SPA (dated 19 July, 2011), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>		
<p>Derragh Bog SAC (site code 002201), c. 7km to the north-west of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs* ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (dated 19 July 2023), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Derragh Bog SPA, at c.7km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Lough Lene SAC (site code 002121), c. 3km to the west of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1092 White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (dated 21 October, 2021), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Lough Lene SAC, at c.3km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
Garriskil Bog SAC (site code 000679), c. 15.3km to the east of the County boundary	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs* ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ■ 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (dated 02 November 2015), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Garriskill Bog SAC, at over 15km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	No
Ardagullion Bog SAC (site code 002341), c. 16.5km to the north-east of the County boundary	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs* 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ■ 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (dated 06 November 2015), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Ardgullion Bog SAC, at over 16km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
<p>Wooddown Bog SAC (site code 002205), c. 16.2km to the east of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (dated 19 July 2023), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Wooddown Bog SAC, at over 16km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Raheenmore Bog SAC (site code 000582), c.</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
13km to the south-east of the County boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs* ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ■ 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (dated 02 November 2015), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Raheenmore Bog SAC, at c.13km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
Lough Ennell SAC (site code 000685), c. 13km to the south-east of the County boundary	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7230 Alkaline fens ■ 3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 2, dated 02 July 2024), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Lough Ennell SPA, at c.13km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
<p>The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC (site code 000925), c. 9.6km to the south of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (*important orchid sites) <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (dated 11 November 2021), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC, at almost 10km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Ballynafagh Bog SAC (site code 000391), c. 11km to the south of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs* ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ■ 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 1, dated 10 November 2015), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Ballynafagh Bog SAC, at c.11km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.		
Ballynafagh Lake SAC (site code 001387), c. 10.4km to the south of the County boundary	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) ■ 1065 Marsh Fritillary (<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>) ■ 7230 Alkaline fens <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 1, dated 10 December 2021), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Ballynafagh Lake SAC, at over 10km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	No
Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC (site code 001831), c. 16.8km to the south-east of the County boundary	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) <p>According to the site specific Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version1, dated 20 June 2018), for the listed QIs, the</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<p>Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>However, Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC, at almost 17km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
<p>North Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000206), c. 17.8km to the south-west of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide ■ 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines ■ 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand ■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) ■ 1395 Petalwort (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>) ■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) ■ 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes ■ 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) ■ 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* ■ 2190 Humid dune slacks <p><i>*indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive</i></p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 potentially linked to the European sites of Dublin Bay, including North Dublin Bay SAC, via the water pathway – particularly the Kilcock and Dunboyne sites.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<p>According to this SAC’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 06 November 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>		
<p>South Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000210), c. 17km to the south-west of the County boundary</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide <p>The following habitats are listed as Qualifying Interests on the NPWS website, but are not included in the Conservation Objectives document:</p> <p>(1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines</p> <p>1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand</p> <p>2110 Embryonic shifting dunes)</p> <p>According to this SAC’s site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 22 August 2013), for the listed QI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>A number of the sites selected for rezoning as part of Variation No.5 potentially linked to the European sites of Dublin Bay, specifically South Dublin Bay SAC, via the water pathway – particularly the Kilcock and Dunboyne sites – none of the other selected sites have a source-pathway-receptor link.</p> <p>Although the presence of a pathway does not automatically mean there is potential for significant effects, based on the precautionary principle and the uncertainty of significant effects on the SCIs of this European site arising as a result of this rezoning, further assessment is required.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	Annex I habitat for which the SAC has been selected.		
Baldoyle Bay SAC (site code 000199), c. 14.7km to the west of the County boundary	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide ■ 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand ■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) ■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 19 November 2012), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Baldoyle Bay SAC at almost 15km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	No
Malahide Estuary SAC (site code 000205), c. 9.5km to the west of the County boundary	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand ■ 1320 <i>Spartina</i> swards (<i>Spartinion maritimae</i>) ■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) ■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) ■ 2120 Shifting dunnes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) ■ 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* *indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 27 May 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Malahide Estuary SAC, at almost 10km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
<p>Rogerstown Estuary SAC (site code 000208), c.</p>	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1130 Estuaries 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat</p>	<p>No</p>

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
10km to the west of the County boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide ■ 1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand ■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) ■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) ■ 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) ■ 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* <p>*indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 14 August 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Rogerstown Estuary SAC, at c.10km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (site code 003000), c.	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1170 Reefs 	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
17.3km to the west of the County boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1351 Harbour Porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>) <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 07 May 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Rockabill to Dalke Island SAC, at over 17km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	
Clogher Head SAC (site code 001459), c. 7.5km to the north-west of the County boundary	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts ■ 4030 European dry heaths <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (Version 1, dated 27 January 2017), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Clogher Head SAC, at over 7km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	No
Dundalk Bay SAC (site code 000455), c. 14.8km	<p>The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this site are:</p>	<p>The sites selected for rezoning are scattered throughout County Meath and development works arising under Variation No.5 could have the potential to give rise to impacts on European</p>	No

European Site (Site Code)	Reasons for designation (information correct as of March 2026) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link and potential effects	Likely Significant Effect? (If yes, the site is Screened In)
to the north-west of the County boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1130 Estuaries ■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide ■ 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks ■ 1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonizing mud and sand ■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) ■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) <p>According to the site Conservation Objectives for the SAC (dated 19 July 2011), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable condition, as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.</p>	<p>sites, during construction or operation, via (<i>inter alia</i>) habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution of surface water, groundwater, air and, potential disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.</p> <p>However, Dundalk Bay SAC, at almost 15km from the County Meath boundary, and significantly further to the locations proposed for rezoning, has no pathway and there is no possibility of significant effects on this European site as a result of any element of the proposed variation.</p>	

3.7 Screening for Appropriate Assessment - Summary

According to the draft Guidance published by the European Commission (*Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, 21st November 2018) the “integrity of a site” relates to the site’s conservation objectives. For example, it is possible that a plan or project will adversely affect the site only in a visual sense or only affect habitat types or species other than those listed in Annex I or Annex II. In such cases, the effects do not amount to an adverse effect for the purposes of Article 6(3). If none of the habitat types or species for which the site has been designated is significantly affected then the site’s integrity cannot be considered to be adversely affected.

In addition, plans or projects or applications for developments which have “no appreciable effect” on the protected site are excluded from the requirement to proceed to appropriate assessment¹⁵ (Opinion of Advocate General Sharpston in *Sweetman*, para. 48).

In other words, if, following Screening, there is a possibility of there being a significant effect on a European site, this will generate the need for an appropriate assessment for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

European sites with no connection/pathway to Draft Variation No. 5 area can be screened out (Appropriate Assessment Screening) and they do not need to be considered in this report. By virtue of their locations, and the lack of potential pathways, of the 46 European sites listed in **Table 3.1 and Table 3.4**, a total of nine (9) European sites within County Meath and a total of four (4) European sites outside County Meath screen in, and this results in a requirement for an appropriate assessment for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

There is potential for significant effects (at least, the potential for significant effects cannot be excluded) as a result of:

- Habitat loss and/or fragmentation;
- Impacts to habitat structure
- Disturbance to species of conservation concern
- Mortality to species (such as roadkill)
- Noise pollution
- Emissions to air
- Emissions to water

There is the possibility that the rezoning and subsequent development of any of the sites listed in Section 2 of this report could result in significant effects on 13 European sites. Applying the precautionary principle therefore, and in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required.

¹⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A62011CC0258>

4 Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

4.1 Introduction

As set out in Section 3.4 the rezoning and subsequent development of any of the sites listed in Section 2 of this report could result in significant effects on 13 European sites. Applying the precautionary principle therefore, and in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required.

At this stage it is necessary to determine whether any elements of Variation No. 5 would result in *significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any European site* with respect to the site's structure, function, and/or conservation objectives.

These potential adverse effects may arise either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

Variation No. 5 aims to maintain the supply of suitable residential zoned lands for development in accordance with the revised NPF and recommends to re-zone a limited quantity of lands not currently zoned for residential development. It will be driven by local, regional, national, European and International plans and policy.

Nevertheless, as set out in the preceding sections, there is the potential that the implementation of this Variation could lead to impacts on these European sites.

There is the possibility of reduction of habitat area or loss of habitat within 13 European sites in the Zone of Influence as a result of the rezoning of the sites. Any development works adjacent to watercourses or the coast have the potential to cause habitat loss or a reduction in habitat / water quality, with indirect effects on the European sites themselves (including *ex situ* impacts). Similarly works in close proximity to any European sites could lead to fragmentation (breakup) of habitats, resulting in impacts on site integrity or causing degradation to habitats associated with European sites.

There is the possibility of disturbance to key species arising as a result of the rezoning of the sites. The Qualifying Interests (QIs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of the European sites are sensitive to disturbance from noise, light, vibration and other construction activities including inappropriately timed works, as well as from human disturbance. Rivers and estuarine sites are prone to contamination risk due to surface water runoff during construction. Any works near or within these sensitive sites could lead to disturbance of these species.

There is the possibility of changes to key indicators of conservation value arising as a result of the implementation of Variation No.5. This could arise via surface water or groundwater pollution, siltation or other run-off to watercourses that could ultimately discharge to the European sites. Any pollution-related impacts on the QIs/SCIs of any European site could adversely affect the integrity of the sites.

4.2 Potential impacts from Draft Variation No.5, including in-combination effects

4.2.1 Is Variation No.5 necessary for the management of European sites?

As set out in the Habitats Directive (Article 6(3)), plans that are directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site do not require Appropriate Assessment. Management in this context means management for nature conservation and the qualifying interests of the European site, specifically the conservation objectives – to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the habitats and species for which the site has been selected.

While Variation No.5 has been developed with sustainability as a core element its purpose is to maintain the supply of suitable residential zoned lands for development, and it recommends the re-zoning of a limited quantity of lands not currently zoned for residential development within the county. Therefore, Variation No.5 is not considered to be directly connected with or necessary to the management of European designated sites.

4.2.2 Are there elements of Variation No.5 with potential to give rise to significant effects on European sites

Any development works located within the potential zone of influence of any of the 13 European sites screened in have the potential to give rise to impacts on European sites, via construction, habitat loss/replacement (both temporary and permanent), increased risk of pollution to surface water and/or groundwater and, potentially, disturbance due to an increase in human activity in the vicinity of European sites.

Variation No.5, once implemented, will provide for an increased supply for residential zoned lands and will align with the Government's overall revised National Planning Framework.

Despite its positive intent overall, Variation No.5 has the potential to give rise to effects on European sites within its zone of influence under the following scenarios:

- Any development works that could directly or indirectly affect water quality, flow and/or morphology and potentially affect the European sites, protected habitats and species. This includes potential development at the selected sites at Kilcock, which is adjacent to the River Rye, circa 6km upstream of the Rye Water Valley/Cartron SAC.
- Any development works that could directly or indirectly increase risk of flooding and potentially affect the European sites, protected habitats and species.
- Any development works that could directly or indirectly affect groundwater quality or supply and potentially affect the European sites, protected habitats and species.
- Any risk of habitat loss, fragmentation or degradation to European sites or network supporting European sites, protected habitats and species – including on sites used as *ex situ* feeding/foraging/roosting sites by SCI bird species in coastal SPAs.
- Any potential for a risk of direct or indirect disturbance to European site habitats and/or species, e.g. development along river corridors/coastal sites, noise disturbance due to construction, light pollution etc.
- Any development works that could risk a reduction in ecological connectivity between European sites and/or the ecological networks supporting them.

- Any development works that could risk a reduction in air quality or impact the existing noise or vibration environment.
- Any development works that could result in light pollution or have a visual impact.
- Any development works could result in an increase in quantum of water supply, wastewater and waste generated.
- Any development works that could result in risk of spread of invasive species.

4.2.3 Appraisal of Variation No.5 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied

The details of the Variation are set out in summary in Section 2 of this report, and in the accompanying MCC Chief Executive's Report.

The rezoning of small areas of land in multiple sites across the county has the potential to result in adverse impacts on a total of 13 European sites within and outside County Meath, as set out in Section 3 of this report.

Where potential negative or uncertain effects on European sites have been identified appropriate mitigation has been provided. See **Section 4.4** of this Report.

4.2.4 Direct, indirect or secondary effects?

Potential adverse effects arising from residential development and associated infrastructure under Variation No.5 include disturbance effects, including disturbance to *ex situ* bird species, water pollution, light pollution, dust, and excessive noise. There is no reasonable likelihood of land take or habitat loss.

None of the elements of Variation No.5 require any land take from any European site, and there are no resource requirements from any European site as a result of any of the actions contained therein.

Nevertheless, any pollution event could adversely affect the habitats and species listed as qualifying interests in any of the European sites, many of which rely on good water quality. Also, during construction works there is potential for an increase in run-off due to compaction of the soil which will in turn reduce the infiltration capacity and increase the rate and volume of surface water run-off. This can increase surface water run-off and sediment loading which has potential to impact the local drainage and in turn on the European sites.

Additionally, construction works have the potential for indirect impacts on European sites and their qualifying features of interest. Potential impacts include habitat degradation as well as disturbance to habitats, species and ecosystem dynamics due to changes in water quality, sedimentation, changes in nutrient load, pH, etc. In addition, there is a potential risk to flora and fauna arising from dust deposition, which in extreme cases can inhibit photosynthesis in plants and can increase turbidity in watercourses.

This is particularly the case where the lands proposed to be rezoned are close to the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA, The Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC, the Boyne Estuary SPA, the River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA and the North-West Irish Sea SPA as well as the Rye Water Valley/Cartron SAC.

Any pollution could adversely affect the habitats and species listed as QIs/SCIs in any of the European sites, many of which rely on good water quality. Also, during construction works there is potential for

an increase in run-off due to compaction of the soil which will in turn reduce the infiltration capacity and increase the rate and volume of surface water run-off. This can increase surface water run-off and sediment loading which has potential to impact the local drainage and in turn on the European sites.

In addition to the habitats and species associated with the European sites, bird species, such as kingfisher (the sole SCI species associated with the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA) may be sensitive to disturbances arising as a result of any proposed development. Construction works have the potential for indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 sites and their qualifying features of interest. Potential impacts include habitat degradation as well as disturbance to habitats, species and ecosystem dynamics due to noise, vibration, air quality, and disturbance due to human activities. In addition there is a potential risk to flora and fauna arising from dust deposition, which in extreme cases can inhibit photosynthesis in plants and can increase turbidity in watercourses.

4.2.5 In-combination / Cumulative effects with other plans and programmes

It is a requirement of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive that when considering whether a plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of a European site the assessment must take into account in-combination effects with other current or reasonably foreseeable plans and projects.

If it can be clearly demonstrated that the plan or project will not result in any impact on the integrity of a European site then the plan or project should proceed without considering the in-combination test; further, if there are identified effects arising from the plan or project even if they are perceived as minor and not likely to have an impact on the integrity of a European site alone, then any such impacts must be considered 'in-combination' with the effects arising from other plans and projects.

The rezoning associated with Variation No.5 will be required to comply with the relevant international, national and regional policies, plans and programmes and also undertaken individual environmental assessments for Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and any other relevant processes as appropriate.

The current Development Plan, as varied, sets out policies and objectives for land use, settlement strategy, sustainable development, biodiversity protection and enhancement, environmental protection, and management, cultural heritage, climate change, etc. for the study area. Other higher-level international, national and regional plans are integrated within the current Plan and have been assessed as such. Variation No.5 will comply with the provisions set within the current Plan which itself has been subject to standalone environmental assessment (SEA, NIR, etc.).

Table 4.1 below lists the relevant plans and programmes that have potential for in-combination/cumulative effects with Variation No.5.

Table 4.1 In-combination / cumulative effects with other plans and programmes

Plan, Programme etc.	Potential Cumulative effect	Likely Cumulative Effect
<p>National Planning Framework (NPF) Project 2040 (First Revision April 2025)</p> <p>National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030 (<i>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</i>) including the National Development Plan Review 2025</p>	<p>The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the National Planning Framework 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.</p>	No
<p>Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022</p>	<p>The appropriate assessment undertaken for the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) concludes that subject to the mitigation proposed, there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European Sites as a result of the implementation of the RPG either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.</p>	No
<p>Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 for the Eastern Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA)</p>	<p>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.</p>	No
<p>National CFRAMS Programme</p> <p>Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study</p>	<p>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.</p>	No

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Plan, Programme etc.	Potential Cumulative effect	Likely Cumulative Effect
Greater Dublin Drainage Project	The Natura Impact Statement prepared for the Greater Dublin Drainage Project concludes that with the implementation of the mitigation measures the project will not result in direct, indirect or cumulative impacts which would have the potential to adversely affect the qualifying interests/special conservation interests of the Natura 2000 sites within the study area.	No
National 4 th 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 Natura Impact Statement prepared for the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042 concludes that with the implementation of the mitigation measures the Strategy will not result in direct, indirect or cumulative impacts which would have the potential to adversely affect the qualifying interests/special conservation interests of the Natura 2000 sites within the study area.	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 (Water Action Plan 2024)	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-	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 appropriate assessment and it has been concluded that with the inclusion of mitigation measures which will prioritise the avoidance of effects, and will reliably mitigate these effects where they cannot be avoided, no likely significant effects to the ecological integrity of European sites are predicted following implementation of the CDP.	No

Plan, Programme etc.	Potential Cumulative effect	Likely Cumulative Effect
2027, Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027, Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025)		

The assessment of in-combination / cumulative effects above focused on national, regional and local plans, programmes, strategy and policy documents that have the potential to affect the same European sites that could be affected by Variation No.5.

It concludes that the implementation of Variation No.5 will not result in direct, indirect or cumulative impacts which would have the potential to adversely affect the qualifying interests/special conservation interests of any European sites.

4.3 Conservation objectives, threats and vulnerabilities of the European Sites

A key aim of the Habitats Directive is to ‘maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest’. Site-specific conservation objectives aim to define favourable conservation condition for particular habitats or species within a European site. In the case of European sites for which site-specific conservation objectives have not yet been prepared, generic conservation objectives have been provided by NPWS.

The integrity of a site is the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, which enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified.

Site specific conservation objectives for each of the 13 European sites under appraisal in the NIS have been published by NPWS.

For every listed SAC the conservation objectives are to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of each of the Qualifying Interests (habitats), as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.

For every listed SPA the conservation objectives are to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of each of the Special Conservation Interests (the bird species and the wetland habitat), as defined by the range of attributes and targets set out.

4.4 Mitigation measures

The findings set out in **Section 4.2** of this Natura Impact Report confirm that, notwithstanding the positive intent and purpose of Variation No.5 in the provision of new zoned land for housing, if unmitigated, Variation No.5 has potential for adverse effects on the integrity of a total of 13 European sites.

Mitigation for these potential adverse effects will be achieved through the implementation of the detailed environmental protective policies and objectives as set out in the Meath County Development

Plan 2021-2027, as varied. The Development Plan provides for sustainable planning and management control of all development in County Meath – including any development or works deriving from the proposed rezonings.

The environmental protective policies and objectives of the Development Plan that specifically relate to European sites (and the protection of the habitats and species associated with European sites) are set out in **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2 Meath Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied (Protective Policies for European sites)

Theme	Protective Policies
Chapter 07: Community Building Strategy	
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>
Chapter 08: Cultural and Natural Heritage Strategy	
Protection of Habitats and Species, including European Sites	HER POL 31: <i>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	HER POL 32: <i>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 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>

Other environmental protective policies and objectives of the Development Plan that do not specifically relate to European sites (and the protection of the habitats and species associated with European sites), but which, through their implementation, will further ensure that there will be no adverse impacts on European sites (and biodiversity in general) are set out in **Table 4.3** and **Table 4.4**.

New text to be inserted as part of Variation No.5 is shown in *green text* in Objective INF OBJ 25 – Surface Water Management in **Table 4.4**. This will be INF OBJ 25B in the variation.

Table 4.3 Meath Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied (Additional Protective Policies for Environmental Receptors including European sites)

Theme	Protective Policies
Chapter 01: Introduction	
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>
Chapter 05: Movement Strategy	
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>
Chapter 06: Infrastructure Strategy	
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 GDSDS.</i>

Theme	Protective Policies
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>
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” (DoEHLG/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>
Chapter 07: Community Building Strategy	
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>
Chapter 08: Cultural and Natural Heritage Strategy	
Protection of Natural Heritage	HER POL 27: <i>To protect, conserve and enhance the County’s biodiversity where appropriate.</i>

Theme	Protective Policies
Protection of Natural Heritage	HER POL 28: <i>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	HER POL 31: <i>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	HER POL 32: <i>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 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>

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Theme	Protective Policies
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 and Geomorphological Features	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>
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>
Chapter 09: Rural Development Strategy	
Development Management Standards	RD POL 44: <i>To ensure that new development meets the highest standards in terms of environmental protection.</i>

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Theme	Protective Policies
and Environmental Protection	
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>
Chapter 10: Climate Change Strategy	
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.
Chapter 11: Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives	
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 4.4 Meath Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied (Key Protective Objectives for Environmental Receptors including European sites)

Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 Theme	Protective Objectives
Chapter 06: Infrastructure Strategy	
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>
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</i>

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Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 Theme	Protective Objectives
	<p><i>developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p>
Improve Water Quality	<p><i>INF OBJ 29: 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></p>
Protection of Natural Coastal Defences	<p><i>INF OBJ 30: 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></p>
Protection of Coastal Landscape and Visual Amenity	<p><i>INF OBJ 34: 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></p>
Protection of Groundwater	<p><i>INF OBJ 37: To implement the recommendations of the Meath Groundwater Protection Scheme(s).</i></p>
Protection of Riparian Corridors	<p><i>INF OBJ 38: 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></p>
Renewable Energy Sources and Protection of the Environment	<p><i>INF OBJ 39: 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></p>
Waste management and Protection of Human Health	<p><i>INF OBJ 59: 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></p>
Enhance Waste Recovery / Recycling	<p><i>INF OBJ 67: To require developers to prepare construction and demolition waste management plans for new construction projects</i></p>

Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 Theme	Protective Objectives
	<i>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>
Chapter 08 Cultural and Natural Heritage Strategy	
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 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>
Chapter 09: Rural Development Strategy	
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>

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Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 Theme	Protective Objectives
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>
Chapter 10: Climate Change Strategy	
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.
Chapter 11: Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives	
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>

4.5 Summary and Conclusion

This Natura Impact Report has considered the potential impacts of the implementation of Variation No.5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, as varied, on the integrity of the relevant European sites.

This report concludes on the best scientific evidence that it can be clearly demonstrated that no elements of Variation No.5 will result in any impact on the integrity or Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests of any relevant European site, either on their own or in-combination with other plans or projects, in light of their conservation objectives, provided appropriate mitigation measures are implemented.

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