

# **Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report**

**for**

## **Oldcastle Local Area Plan**



**December 2008**

## Introduction

In accordance with Strategic Objective 1 of the Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013 Meath County Council has proposed to prepare a Local Area Plan (LAP) for the town of Oldcastle, in the north-west of the County. The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 require that Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) be carried out in respect of LAPs for areas with a population of 10,000 people or more. In cases such as Oldcastle where the population of the area covered by an LAP is less than 10,000 people a SEA is not mandatory but may still be required in certain circumstances. In order to properly establish whether or not an SEA is required it is necessary to carry out a SEA screening exercise. An SEA screening exercise was applied to the Oldcastle LAP and the findings are presented in this SEA Screening Statement.

## Purpose of the Local Area Plan

The first function of the Oldcastle LAP is to provide for the ordered future development of Oldcastle. More specifically, in accordance with *Variation No. 2 (Order of Priority) Meath County Development Plan 2007 – 2013* the LAP will seek to promote the development of up to 200 residential units up to 2013 with priority for development going to town centre consolidation and 2.06 ha of existing undeveloped residentially zoned lands to the north of the town centre, dependant on the availability of water services infrastructure (see Appendix A).

In addition, the Oldcastle LAP will seek to provide for the improvement in transportation and parking in the Town, assist in protecting the built heritage of Oldcastle and provide for additional retail and employment uses within the existing town boundary.

## Result of Screening

In order to establish whether or not an SEA is required for the Oldcastle LAP it will be necessary to ascertain whether the Plan would be likely to have significant environmental effects. The criteria for determining the likely significance of the effects of the Plan are given in Annex 2 of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and are addressed individually here.

## Characteristics of the Plan

<b>Item 1</b>	The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	The Oldcastle LAP is to set out a development framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The Plan will provide a detailed and consistent framework for determining planning applications and will establish a basis for co-ordinating public and private development through prescribed development standards, policies and objectives as well as a land-use zoning matrix
<b>Item 2</b>	The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	The Oldcastle LAP must be in accordance with the Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013 and will not have a direct influence any other plan.
<b>Item 3</b>	The relevance of the Plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p>The Oldcastle LAP is being prepared in under the Planning and Development Act, 2007 and therefore must provide for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area with all policies and objectives informed by the principles of sustainable development.</p> <p>The LAP is also guided by the objectives of the Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013.</p> <p>INF POL 35 – To balance the requirement for an appropriate level of off-street car parking facilities against factors of accessibility to means of transport alternative to the private car applying at particular development locations, in the overall interest of sustainable land use practice.</p> <p>INFRA SO 4 – To secure the provision of water, wastewater treatment and waste management initiatives to accommodate the future sustainable economic and residential growth of the County, where necessary, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and adjoining Local Authorities.</p>

INF POL 72 –To require all new large scale developments in all designated settlements to provide ‘Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems’ (SuDS) as part of their development proposals. Compliance with the recommendations contained in Technical Guidance Document, Volume 2, Chapter 4 of the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study shall be required in all instances.

INF POL 79 – To support the development of recycling sites / waste disposal sites or transfer stations and associated developments in appropriate locations, subject to normal planning and environmental sustainability considerations. In assessing applications for these types of development, the Planning Authority will have regard to the Groundwater Protection Plan and appropriate response matrix.

INF POL 82 – To promote and facilitate communities to become involved in environmental awareness activities and community-based recycling initiatives or environmental management initiatives that will lead to local sustainable waste management practices.

INF POL 8989 – To attain high standards of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability in residential development, including the following;

- 1) Bio-climatic site design;
- 2) Water Conservation;
- 3) Ventilation;
- 4) Energy efficient strategies for housing design;
- 5) Daylight analysis, and;
- 6) High insulation standards.

HERITAGE SP 5 – To promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas identified as sensitive landscapes and other planning considerations.

Sustainability Statement - is required for all large scale industrial/commercial development above 5,000 sq. m.

<b>Item 4</b>	Environmental problems relevant to the Plan.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	The main environmental issues arising from the Plan are related to the development of a potential 200 residential units on the existing residentially zoned lands, with a timeline for their development given in Variation No. 2 of the Meath County

Development Plan, 2007 – 2013. The variation states that these 200 units are permitted to be developed up to 2013 with the remaining lands released in a second phase after that time.

Development of the Town's backlands area will ensure that these centrally located land resources are utilised to their full extent and thus the need for less sustainable out-of-centre development will be reduced.

Development of these currently Greenfield lands will have significant local effects on the environment. The development of houses on these lands will have a long term impact on the immediate environment but the extent of these effects is expected to be minimal considering the relatively small scale of the site and low biodiversity value of the area.

The current lack of capacity to treat additional waste water in Oldcastle's waste water treatment plant will prevent development occurring on much of the land in the LAP area. It will be necessary to address water services issues before this increase in population can be sustainably accommodated.

<b>Item 5</b>	The relevance of the Plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection).
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	This Plan is considered under the Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013 and therefore the relevance of the Plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment will not be addressed in this LAP.

## Characteristics of the Effects and of the Area Likely to be Affected

<b>Item 1</b>	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.		
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Policies/Objectives Proposed</b>	<b>Effect on Environment</b>
	Residential	To provide for residential development on previously zoned land to North of Town Centre	The change from agricultural to residential uses will have permanent impact on the environment.
	Town Centre	To consolidate the Town Centre	Conversion of backlands to Town Centre uses will properly utilise this important land resource and concentrate development in and around the existing centre where services and infrastructure are already in place. This will have a long term positive effect on the environment as it will ensure that less sustainable out of centre locations are not unnecessarily developed and that existing buildings are reused.
	Civil Amenity	To construct a waste water treatment facility	Ensures effective treatment of waste water and ensure that polluted water is not released into the environment.
	Employment	To facilitate additional employment generating land uses proximate to existing facilities.	Permanent change in land use from agriculture to employment. Details regarding discharges etc from new land uses will be controlled through the EIS process.
<b>Item 2</b>	The cumulative nature of effects		
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p>The current <u>area</u> of the town is 120ha. The LAP will not increase this area. Rather it will increase utilisation of land resources within the town boundary.</p> <p>According to Census 2006 figures the <u>population</u> of the LAP area was 1,316. The LAP expects to see the potential provision of a further 200 no. residential units in</p>		

	<p>Oldcastle up to 2013, with the potential for a further increase to 2015 in line with Variation No. 2 of the Development Plan and subject to infrastructure deficiencies being addressed. Given that there is an average of 2.9 persons per household in Oldcastle this should see an increase in the population of Oldcastle of approximately 580 people to 1,896. This represents a potential 44% increase in population to 2013, with enough zoned land potentially released after this time to accommodate a further increase in line with zoned land and infrastructure availability. The effect of this increase will only be significant in terms of water supply and waste water services and is not considered to have a significant direct effect on the environment.</p>
<b>Item 3</b>	The transboundary nature of the effects.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p>The settlement of Oldcastle sources its fresh water from Lough Bane which straddles the border of Counties Meath and Westmeath. Any change, either positive or negative, in the amount of water being taken from the Lough to meet the needs of Oldcastle would therefore have a transboundary effect. The Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013 suggests that the long term water supply for Oldcastle and its environs will be a combination of water from the Blackwater River and groundwater with a much reduced role (if any) for Lough Bane. This will reduce pressure on the Lough Bane ecosystem and in this respect the transboundary effects are likely to be positive.</p>
<b>Item 4</b>	The risk to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p>There are no SEVESO sites in or near the LAP area nor are there any aspects of the LAP that present a significant risk to either human health or to the environment.</p>
<b>Item 5</b>	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effect (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p>The total LAP area is <i>circa</i> 120ha. This is the same as the previous Oldcastle LAP area. The existing population is roughly 1,316 with the population up to 2013 expected to rise to 1,896 people.</p>
<b>Item 6 (a)</b>	<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,</p>

<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p><b>Protected Structures</b></p> <p>Oldcastle has 68 protected structures in total.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Area (LCA)</b></p> <p><u>Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills (Landscape Character Area 19)</u></p> <p>This area is of international importance, and is of exceptional value, both from a visual as well as heritage perspective but is not expected to be directly affected by the LAP.</p> <p><u>Lough Sheelin Uplands (Landscape Character Area 18)</u></p> <p>This area is of regional importance and is considered to be of high value but is not expected to be directly affected by the LAP.</p> <p><b>Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)</b></p> <p><u>Oldcastle Town Centre ACA Historical Development</u></p> <p>Oldcastle is a small market town in north County Meath just west of the great hill of Loughcrew, famous for its megalithic monuments. The town developed during the 18th Century as the largest yarn market in the country. The lands were then the property of the Naper family, whose improvements contributed much to its present appearance.</p> <p><i>Layout</i></p> <p>The Town Square, former Markethouse and Courthouse form the civic centre of Oldcastle and create a strong sense of enclosure and visual identity. The streets which radiate from the square accommodate a selection of buildings in various architectural styles. As a result Oldcastle presents itself as an historic market town.</p> <p><i>Built Form and Materials</i></p> <p>The architectural character the town is predominantly late Georgian, with two- and three-storey houses, some with stuccoed Victorian commercial facades. The buildings in Oldcastle ACA are characterised by a broad range of traditional materials with a number of quality shop fronts including 'Creans', 'Next Door Express' and 'Mullens' and formal buildings such as the former courthouse, market house and Banks.</p>
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**Objectives:**

1. To preserve the character of the town and its setting by requiring that the height, scale, design and materials of any proposed development within and adjoining the historic core of the town should complement its character and not diminish its distinctiveness of place.
2. To encourage the removal of visually intrusive elements such as overhead cables or inappropriate signage.
3. To require the preservation and re-instatement of traditional details and materials on existing buildings and the streetscape where improvements or maintenance works are being carried out.

**Protected Trees**

There are protected trees at eight different locations around Oldcastle.

**Natura 2000 Sites****Lough Sheelin SPA<sup>1</sup>**

Lough Sheelin, 9km to the west of the Oldcastle, is classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA). The lake is fed by the River Inny that rises near Oldcastle and passes c.1km to the south of the town. The lake is an important site for wintering waterfowl and also holds stocks of coarse fish, pike and trout. While this site lies outside of the LAP area it is of some importance as any major pollution event occurring on the Inny near to Oldcastle would have an effect on this SPA.

**Lough Bane and Lough Glass<sup>2</sup>**

Lough Bane and Lough Glass is a candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC) located *circa* 10km south of Oldcastle. This is a system of three lakes of which Lough Bane is by far the largest. The quality of the water in the Lough is of a good standard and the Lough Bane is an important angling lake. Water levels in the lake have been in decline over the last number of years.

In accordance with article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/42/EEC) Appropriate Assessment has been carried out to establish whether it is likely that the Oldcastle LAP would adversely affect any Natura 2000 sites. The Appropriate Assessment report is provided as an addendum to this document.

<sup>1</sup> Lough Sheelin SPA (Site Code: 004065)

<sup>2</sup> Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC (Site Code: 002120)

	<p><b>Protected Species</b></p> <p>The otter (<i>lutra lutra</i>) is protected under Annex IX of the EU Habitats Directive. The National Parks and Wildlife Service indicates that in the past otters have been recorded at Ballynacree although it is unclear whether otters are extant in the area. Ballynacree is located on the River Inny some 5km downstream of Oldcastle.</p>
<b>Item 6 (b)</b>	Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	It is not expected that certain environmental quality standards will be exceeded or that the value of vulnerable areas will be limited as result of this LAP.
<b>Item 6 (c)</b>	Intensive land use
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	It is not expected that the intensification of existing land uses in the Plan area will be such that vulnerable areas will be significantly affected.
<b>Item 7</b>	The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, European Union or international protection status.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p>Lough Sheelin, located 9km to the west of the LAP, is a site of national significance and any major pollution event on the River Inny near to Oldcastle would have a negative effect on this SPA. It is recorded that the River Inny is moderately polluted; however these recordings have been taking some distance from Oldcastle and are likely to be related to nutrient run off from agricultural lands rather than activity within the Town Boundary. If carried out in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and good development control practices, the proposals likely to be included in this LAP are not expected to produce any such events.</p> <p>The otter (<i>lutra lutra</i>) is protected under the EU Habitats Directive. If an otter population is extant on the River Inny at Ballynacree it could be affected by a major pollution event on the River Inny. As with the case of the Lough Sheelin SPA, the proposals likely to be included in this LAP are not expected to produce any such events.</p>

The settlement of Oldcastle sources its fresh water from Lough Bane and any change in the amount of water being taken from the Lough to meet the needs of Oldcastle would have an effect on the Lough Bane and Lough Glass candidate SAC. As described above, the long term water supply for Oldcastle and its environs is likely to be a combination of water from the Blackwater River and groundwater with a much reduced role (if any) for Lough Bane. This will reduce pressure on the Lough Bane ecosystem.

In drawing up a local area plan the planning authority is required to carry out Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening for the Plan in accordance with the Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/42/EEC). AA screening has been carried out for the Plan is attached as Appendix B of this document.

## Conclusion

SEA is not mandatory for the Oldcastle LAP as its current and proposed population is less than 10,000 people.

The Plan could potentially see a 44% increase on the Census 2006 population figures, although this is unlikely given the existing infrastructure constraints. This increase would be achieved through the provision of 200 residential units on previously zoned lands within the LAP area. The Plan will seek to provide an improvement in the traffic and transportation situation in Oldcastle. The Plan may also see additional retail and employment uses facilitated within the Town boundary. The natural and cultural heritage of the LAP area is well afforded by the protections currently in place including the ACA, LCA.

In light of the above it is concluded that the negative environmental effects of the LAP are unlikely to be significant and that an SEA will not be required for the Oldcastle Local Area Plan.

## **Appendix A**

- Meath County Development Plan 2001, Urban Detail Map 25
- Variation (Number 2), County Development Plan 2007 – 2013, based on urban detail map No. 25  
February 2008



# MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL



## OLDCASTLE



### County Development Plan 2001 Urban Detail Map 25

#### LAND USE ZONING OBJECTIVES

- A1** To protect and enhance the amenity of developed residential communities.
- A2** To provide for new residential communities and community facilities and to protect existing residential areas.
- A3** To conserve and protect the character and setting of traditional complexes and heritage buildings in residential redevelopment and infill proposals in accordance with action area planning approaches.
- A5** To provide for low density residential development in accordance with action area based planning and individual dwelling design.
- B1** To protect and enhance the special physical and social character of existing town and village centres and to provide for new and improved town centre facilities and uses.
- B2** To provide for major new town centre activities in accordance with approved action area plans and subject to the provision of necessary physical infrastructure.
- C1** To provide for suitable mixed residential and business uses in existing mixed use central business areas.
- E1** To provide for industrial and related uses subject to the provision of necessary physical infrastructure.
- F1** To provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities.
- G1** To provide for new community, recreational and educational facilities.

#### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- OC 1-12** Objective (see text)
- Access Points
- Trees to be preserved
- Pedestrian Walkways
- Major distributor / New Roads
- Development Area Boundary
- Burial ground
- Area of Archaeological Interest
- Area outside public car park
- Extent of OC 12 objective

Note: Details shown on this map are for information purposes only. Further details on any item should be clarified with Meath County Council.  
This map has been produced by Meath County Council with available Local Authority and Ordnance Survey base data.  
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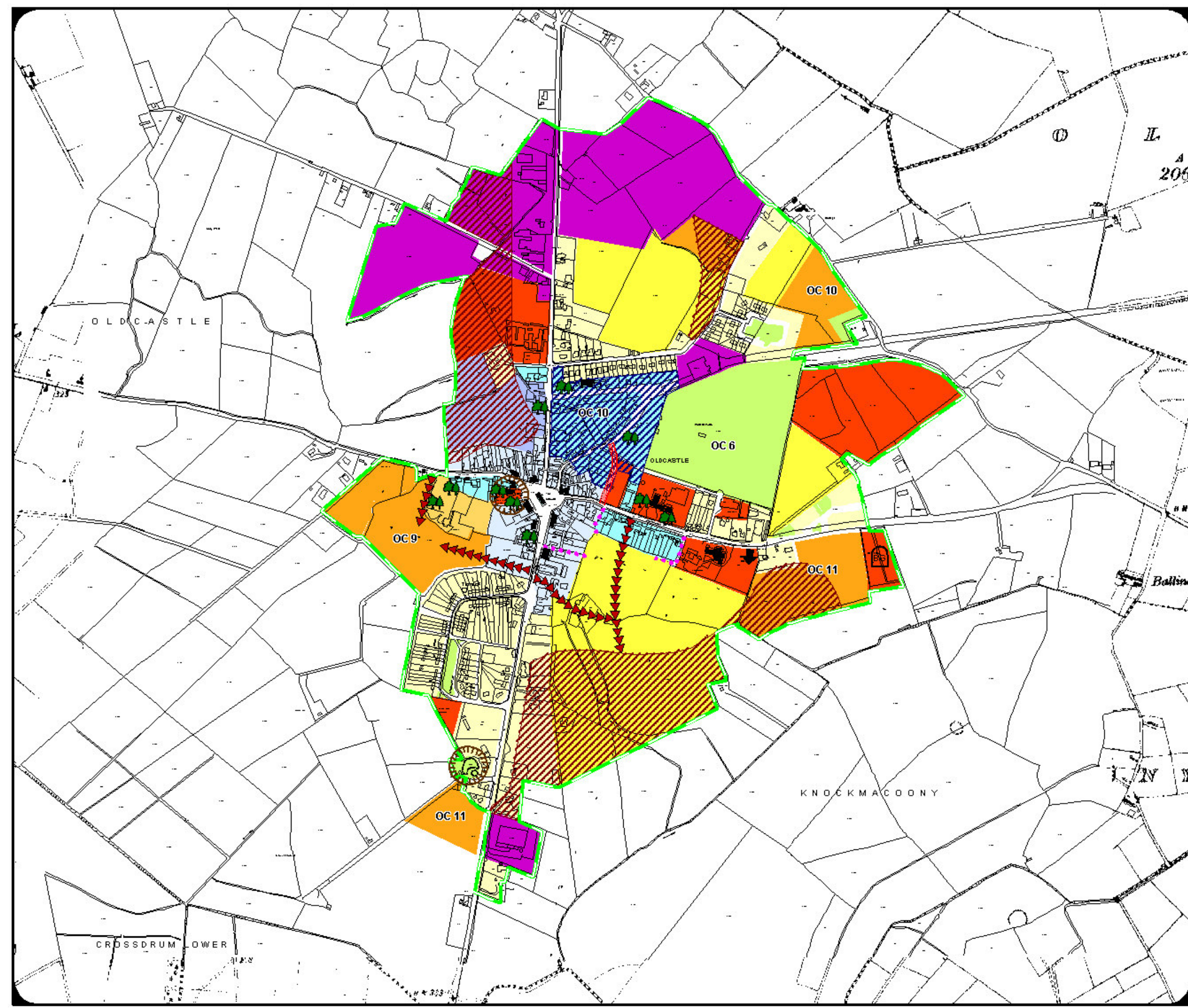
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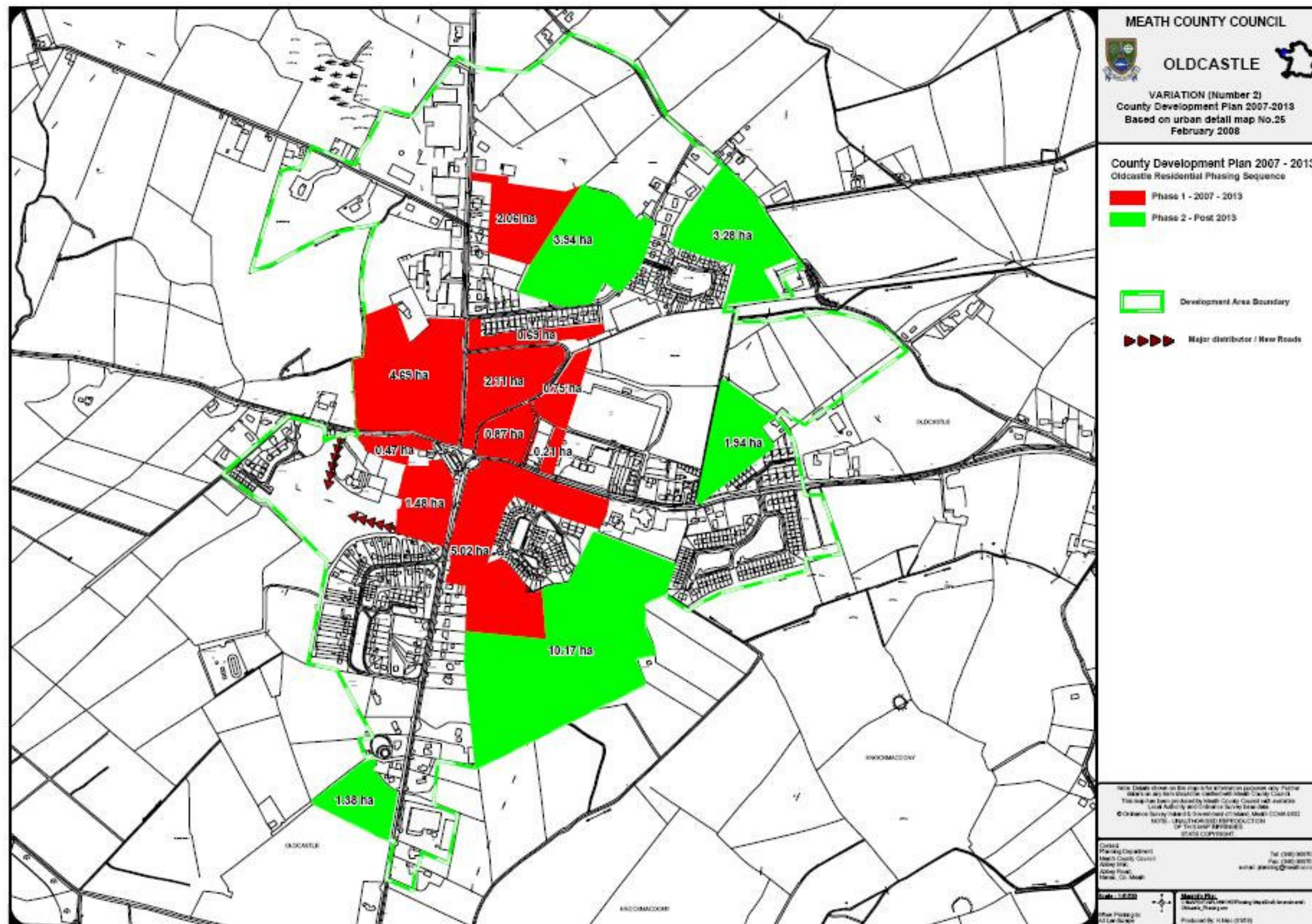
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When Printing to:  
A3 Landscape

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## Appendix B

# **Appropriate Assessment Screening**

**for**

## **Oldcastle Local Area Plan**



**Carried out under the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU**

**Habitats Directive**

**November 2008**



## Section 1 – Introduction

### Introduction

GVA Planning have been appointed by Meath County Council to produce a Local Area Plan for the town of Oldcastle, County Meath. As part of this process and in accordance with SEA Directive (Council Directive 2001/42/EC) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening was conducted for the Draft Oldcastle Local Area Plan, hereinafter the Draft LAP. In addition to carrying out SEA Screening, it is also required that an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening be carried out for the Plan in accordance with the Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/42/EEC).

This document is provided as an appendix to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Draft Oldcastle Local Area Plan but exists independently of it. While SEA Screening addresses the potential effects that the Draft LAP might have on the wider environment, AA Screening is specifically focused on the impact of the Draft LAP (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites in the area of the Draft LAP or that have the potential to be affected by it. The integrity of a Natura 2000 site relates to its ecological functions and the assessment of whether or not it might be adversely affected by the Draft LAP focuses on, and is limited to, the conservation objectives of the site.<sup>1</sup>

### Methodology

Insight for the appropriate methodology for this study has been gained from *Managing Natura 2000 Sites - The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*<sup>2</sup> and has accordingly drawn on the methodology envisaged by EIA Directive 85/337/EEC with further guidance provided by *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*.

Through this AA Screening the likely effects of the Draft LAP on Natura 2000 sites will be examined and it will be considered whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. This will involve:

1. determining whether the project or plan is directly connected with or to the necessary the management of a Natura 2000 site

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<sup>1</sup> Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/provision\\_of\\_art6\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/provision_of_art6_en.pdf)

2. describing the Draft LAP, and other plans or projects, that have the potential for having significant effects on Natura 2000 sites;
3. identifying the potential effects on Natura 2000 sites;
4. assessing the significance of any effects.

In the following section the Draft LAP will be assessed in terms of these four issues.

## Section 2 – Screening Matrix

The following Screening Matrix is guided by the worked example provided by the European Commission.<sup>3</sup>

### Brief Description of the Plan

The primary function of the Draft Oldcastle LAP is to provide for the ordered future development of Oldcastle for a duration of six years, from adoption in 2009 until 2015.

In accordance with *Variation No. 2 (Order of Priority) Meath County Development Plan 2007 – 2013* the Draft LAP will seek to promote the development of up to 200 residential units up to 2013 with priority for development going to town centre consolidation and 2.06 ha of existing undeveloped residentially zoned lands to the north of the town centre.

In addition, the Draft LAP will seek to provide for the improvement in transportation and parking in the Town, assist in protecting the built heritage of Oldcastle and provide for additional retail and employment uses within the existing town boundary.

### Brief Description of Natura 2000 Sites

There are two Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity of the Plan area that could potentially be affected by the Plan; namely Lough Sheelin Special Protection Area (SPA) and Lough Bane and Lough Glass candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC).

#### Lough Sheelin SPA

Lough Sheelin, 9km to the west of the Oldcastle, is classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA). The lake is fed by the River Inny that rises near Oldcastle and passes c.1km to the south of the town. The lake is an important site for wintering waterfowl and also holds stocks of course fish, pike and trout. While this site lies outside of the LAP area it is of some importance as any major pollution event occurring on the Inny near to Oldcastle would have an effect on this SPA.

#### Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC

Lough Bane and Lough Glass is a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) located *circa* 10km south of Oldcastle. This is a system of three lakes of which Lough Bane is by far the largest.

<sup>3</sup> Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, pp 22

The quality of the water in the Lough is of a good standard and the Lough Bane is an important angling lake. Water levels in the lake have been in decline over the last number of years. Water for Oldcastle is currently drawn from Lough Bane.

## Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria for Lough Sheelin SPA will be addressed in its entirety before addressing the assessment criteria for Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC.

### Assessment Criteria – Lough Sheelin SPA

**Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.**

Increase in intensity of land use within Oldcastle Town Boundary.

**Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of:**

- size and scale;  
None
- land-take;  
None
- distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;  
9km
- resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);  
None
- emissions (disposal to land, water or air);  
Any emissions to the River Inny to the south of Oldcastle could potentially have an indirect effect on Lough Sheelin SPA. However, development will not be permitted without proper waste treatment facilities in place.
- excavation requirements;  
None
- transportation requirements;  
None
- duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;  
N/A

- other

None

**Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:**

- reduction of habitat area:

None

- disturbance to key species;

None

- habitat or species fragmentation;

None

- reduction in species density;

None

- changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);

None

- climate change.

None

**Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:**

- interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;

None

- interference with key relationships that define the function of the site.

None

Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:

- loss;

n/a

- fragmentation;

n/a

- disruption;

n/a

- disturbance;

n/a

- change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.).

n/a

**Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.**

None

## Assessment Criteria – Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC

**Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.**

Increase in intensity of land use within Oldcastle Town Boundary.

**Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of:**

- size and scale;  
None
- land-take;  
None
- distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;  
10 km
- resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);  
Potable water for Oldcastle is currently sourced from Lough Bane. An increase in water abstraction from the lake would have a negative impact on Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC. However, it is proposed that water to serve Oldcastle and will instead be sourced from the Blackwater River and groundwater with a much reduced role (if any) for Lough Bane. Therefore, the rate of water abstraction from the cSAC will be reduced.
- emissions (disposal to land, water or air);  
None
- excavation requirements;  
None
- transportation requirements;  
None
- duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;  
N/A
- other  
None

**Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:**

- reduction of habitat area:  
None
- disturbance to key species;

None

- habitat or species fragmentation;

None

- reduction in species density;

None

- changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);

None

- climate change.

None

**Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:**

- interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;

None

- interference with key relationships that define the function of the site.

None

Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:

- loss;

n/a

- fragmentation;

n/a

- disruption;

n/a

- disturbance;

n/a

- change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.).

n/a

**Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.**

None



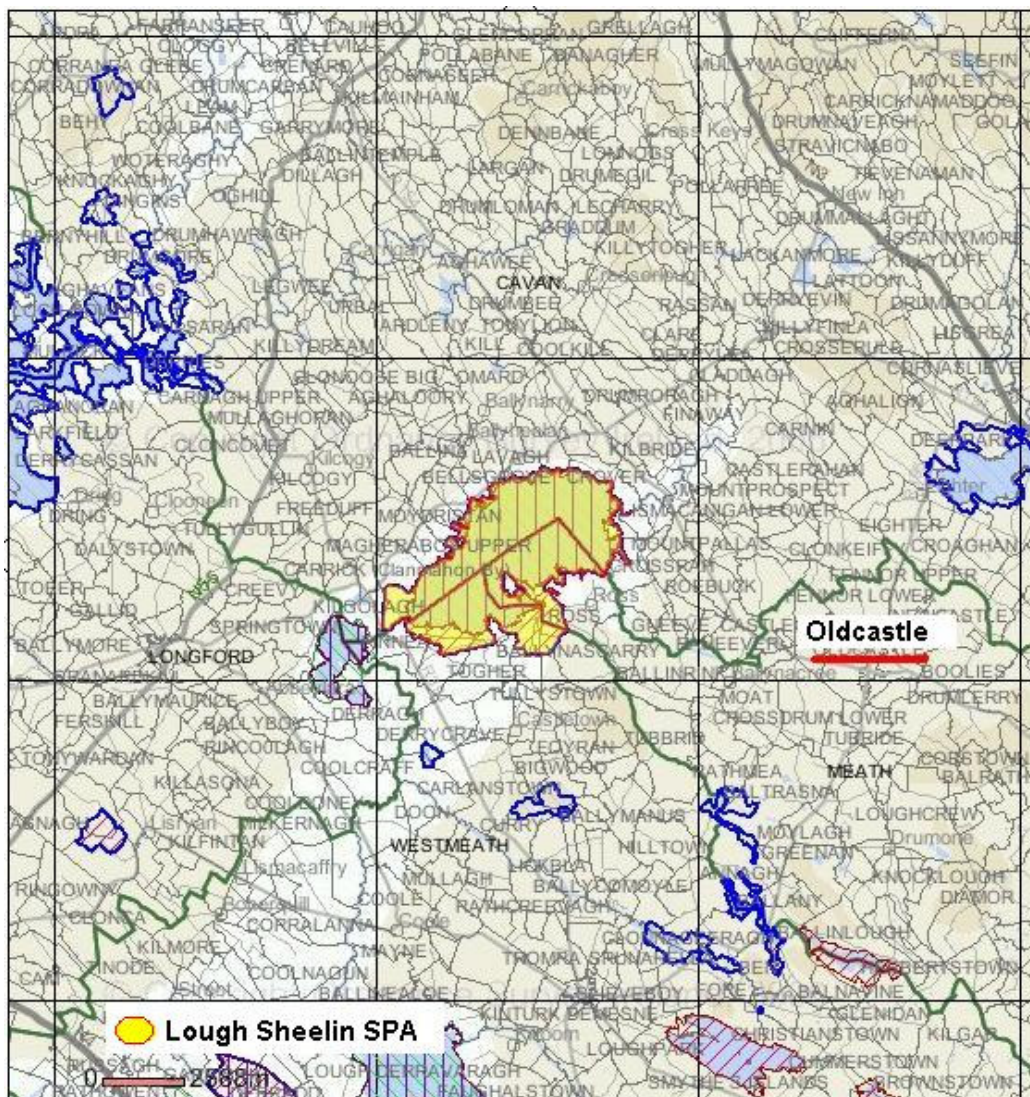
## Section 3 – Finding of No Significant Effects

The following section records the finding of no significant effects and is guided by the worked example provided by the European Commission.<sup>4</sup> As in the previous section Lough Sheelin SPA will be covered in its entirety before Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC is covered.

### Oldcastle Local Area Plan

#### Name and location of Natura 2000 site

Lough Sheelin SPA (Site Code: 004065) is situated on the border of counties Meath, Westmeath and Cavan.



<sup>4</sup> Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, pp 23

### **Description of the Plan**

The primary function of the Draft LAP is to provide for the ordered future development of Oldcastle for a duration of six years, from adoption in 2009 until 2015.

In accordance with *Variation No. 2 (Order of Priority) Meath County Development Plan 2007 – 2013* the LAP will seek to promote the development of up to 200 residential units with priority for development going to town centre consolidation and 2.06 ha of existing undeveloped residentially zoned lands to the north of the town centre and further phased release thereafter.

In addition, the Draft LAP will seek to provide for the improvement in transportation and parking in the Town, assist in protecting the built heritage of Oldcastle and provide for additional retail and employment uses within the existing town boundary.

### **Is the Plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?**

No

### **Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?**

No

### **The assessment of significance of effects**

#### **Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.**

Not likely to affect the sites

#### **Explain why these effects are not considered significant.**

n/a

### **List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address.**

### **Response to consultation**

### **Data collected to carry out the assessment**

#### **Who carried out the assessment?**

GVA Planning carried out this assessment on behalf of Meath County Council .

### **Sources of data**

Existing Records.

### **Level of assessment completed**

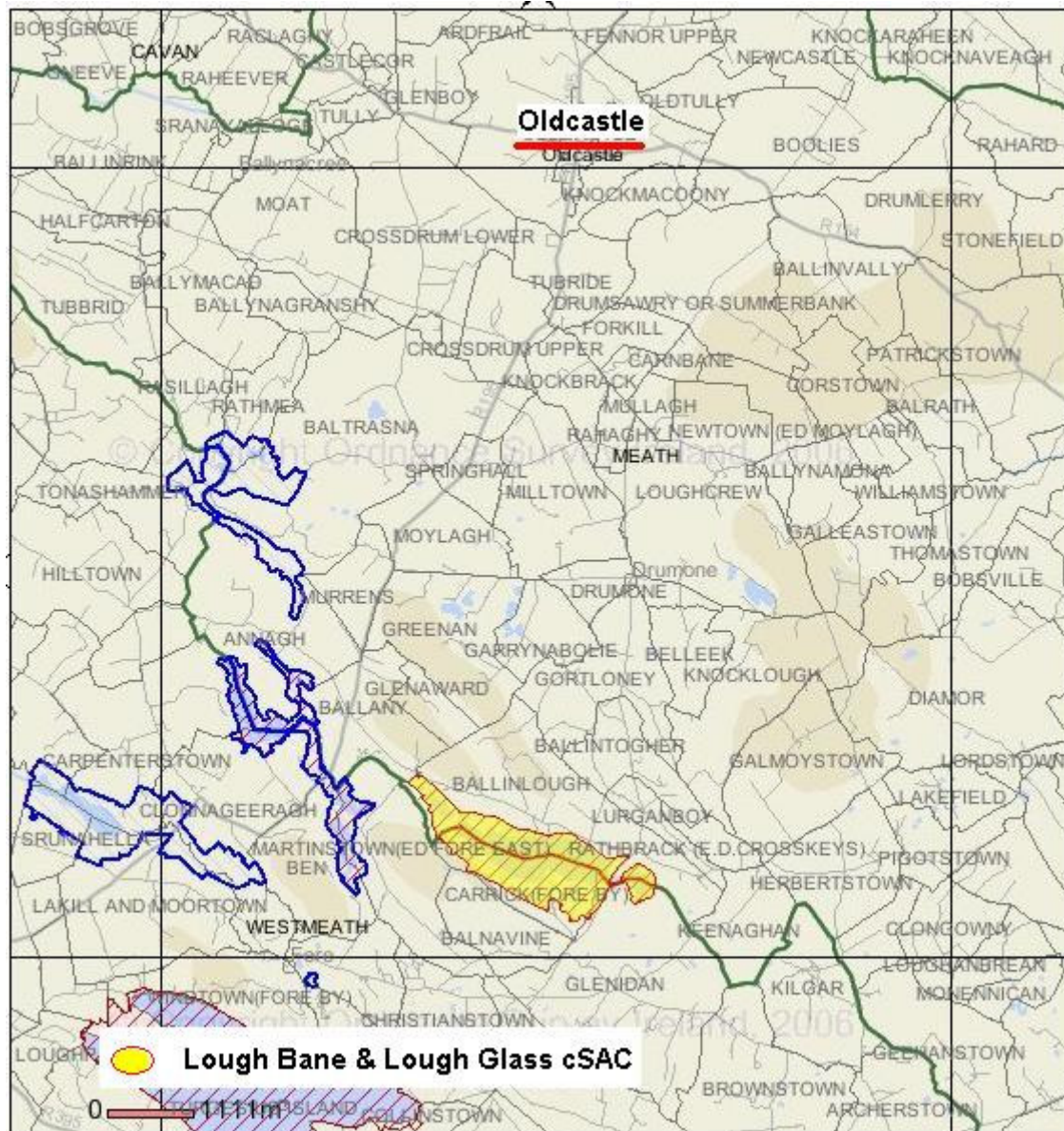
Desktop study

### **Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed**



### Name and location of Natura 2000 site

Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC (Site Code: 002120) is situated on the border of counties Meath, and Westmeath.



### Description of the Plan

The primary function of the Draft LAP is to provide for the ordered future development of Oldcastle for a duration of six years, from adoption in 2009 until 2015.

In accordance with *Variation No. 2 (Order of Priority) Meath County Development Plan 2007 – 2013* the LAP will seek to promote the development of up to 200 residential units with priority for development going to town centre consolidation and 2.06 ha of existing undeveloped residentially zoned lands to the north of the town centre and further phased release thereafter.

In addition, the Draft LAP will seek to provide for the improvement in transportation and parking in the Town, assist in protecting the built heritage of Oldcastle and provide for additional retail and employment uses within the existing town boundary.

**Is the Plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?**

No

**Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?**

No

**The assessment of significance of effects**

**Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.**

Not likely to affect the sites

**Explain why these effects are not considered significant.**

n/a

**List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address.**

**Response to consultation**

**Data collected to carry out the assessment**

**Who carried out the assessment?**

GVA Planning carried out this assessment on behalf of Meath County Council .

**Sources of data**

Existing Records.

**Level of assessment completed**

Desktop study

**Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed**

## SEA Screening of the Proposed Material Amendments

The purpose of this Report is to determine whether the proposed material amendments to the Oldcastle Local Area Plan will have likely significant environmental effects, which would require Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

### CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

#### 1.0 Characteristics of the Proposed Material Amendments

Location	Characteristics
North East of the Town Centre	Rezoning of 0.40ha site from A2 <i>"To provide for new residential communities and community facilities and to protect existing residential areas"</i> to B3 <i>"To protect, provide and improve local shopping facilities in order to create and retain a vibrant and sustainable neighbourhood centre to serve primarily local needs."</i>
South East of the Town Centre	To zone a 1.04ha site currently outside the development boundary as A2 <i>"To provide for new residential communities and community facilities and to protect existing residential areas."</i>

#### 2.0 Characteristics of any Effects

The effects of the proposed material amendments have been considered having regard to the appropriate criteria which were also utilised for the purposes of carrying out the SEA Screening of the Draft Oldcastle Local Area Plan. The results are provided below for each proposed material amendment in turn:

## 2.1 Proposed Material Amendment No. 1

<b>Item 1</b>	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.		
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Policies/Objectives Proposed</b>	<b>Effect on Environment</b>
	Local Shopping Facilities	To provide for local shopping facilities on land previously zoned for residential development to the North East of the Town Centre.	The change from residential zoned land to land zoned for local shopping facilities will ensure that the basic service requirements of the existing and future population of this area can be met locally. This will have a long term positive effect on the environment as it will eliminate the need to travel to the Town Centre for basic retail requirements promoting sustainability.
<b>Item 2</b>	The cumulative nature of effects		
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p>The Draft LAP did not increase the <u>area</u> of the Town, at 120 ha, as the forecast requirement of 200 no. residential units up to 2013 with the potential for a further increase to 2015 in line with Variation No. 2 of the Development Plan could be accommodated on the existing zoned land.</p> <p>The rezoning of the subject site from A2, Phase 2 lands due to be developed post-2013, to B3 will not be significant due to the size of the area of land to be rezoned, the positive environmental effect at a local level and the zoning of land for residential development under material amendment no. 2.</p>		

<b>Item 3</b>	The transboundary nature of the effects.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	The transboundary effect of the proposed rezoning results from the sourcing of Oldcastle's fresh water from Lough Bane which straddles the border of Counties Meath and Westmeath. Any change, either positive or negative, in the amount of water being taken from the Lough to meet the needs of Oldcastle would therefore have a transboundary effect. In the current case the rezoning of land from A2, residential use, to B3, local shopping facilities, would involve a negligible change in the quantity of water required. The Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013 indicates that the long term water supply for Oldcastle and its environs will be a combination of water from the Blackwater River and groundwater with a much reduced role (if any) for Lough Bane. This will reduce pressure on the Lough Bane ecosystem and in this respect the transboundary effects are likely to be positive.
<b>Item 4</b>	The risk to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	There are no SEVESO sites in or near the subject land to be rezoned nor is there any aspects of the rezoned land that present a significant risk to either human health or to the environment.
<b>Item 5</b>	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effect (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	The area of the site is 0.40ha. At a density of 25 units per hectare as provided in Variation no. 2 of the County Development Plan, this would yield a total of 10 no. residential units which at 2.9 persons per household equates to a decrease of 29 no. people.
<b>Item 6 (a)</b>	The area likely to be affected and its value and vulnerability due to: Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<b>The Area</b> The proposed material amendment will not only affect the land (0.40ha) subject to the rezoning but will also have a wider effect on the surrounding area. The rezoning will allow for the provision of local shopping facilities in



this area which will provide a service both to existing residents and also future residents of the A2 zoned lands immediately north and to the east.

The effect of this amendment will be positive as it will aid in the achievement of a sustainable neighbourhood. However, as the zoning restricts the shopping provision to local facilities this ensures that there will not be a negative impact on the Town Centre.

### **Protected Structures**

The subject lands do not contain any of Oldcastle's 68 protected structures.

### **Landscape Character Area (LCA)**

#### Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills (Landscape Character Area 19)

This area is of international importance, and is of exceptional value, both from a visual as well as heritage perspective but is not expected to be directly affected by this proposed amendment.

#### Lough Sheelin Uplands (Landscape Character Area 18)

This area is of regional importance and is considered to be of high value but is not expected to be directly affected by this proposed amendment..

### **Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)**

#### Oldcastle Town Centre ACA Historical Development

The Oldcastle ACA will not be impacted on as the subject lands are located north of the ACA on lands which are currently undeveloped.

### **Protected Trees**

The subject lands do not contain any protected trees.

### **Natura 2000 Sites**

#### Lough Sheelin SPA<sup>1</sup>

Due to the location of the site and the type and scale of uses permitted under the B3 zoning it is not envisaged that the proposed amendment will have an effect on this Special Protection Areas ( thereafter SPA).

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<sup>1</sup> Lough Sheelin SPA (Site Code: 004065)  
May 2009

	<p><u>Lough Bane and Lough Glass<sup>2</sup></u></p> <p>Due to the location of the site and the type and scale of uses permitted under the B3 zoning it is not envisaged that the proposed amendment will have an effect on this candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC).</p> <p>In accordance with article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/42/EEC) Appropriate Assessment has been carried out to establish whether it is likely that this material amendment would adversely affect any Natura 2000 sites. The Appropriate Assessment report is provided as Appendix B.</p> <p><b>Protected Species</b></p> <p>Due to the location of the site and the type and scale of uses permitted under the B3 zoning it is not envisaged that the proposed amendment will have an effect on any protected species.</p>
<b>Item 6 (b)</b>	Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	It is not expected that certain environmental quality standards will be exceeded or that the value of vulnerable areas will be limited as result of this amendment.
<b>Item 6 (c)</b>	Intensive land use
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	It is not expected that the amendment represents an intensification of land use to that of residential and would not be such that vulnerable areas will be significantly affected.
<b>Item 7</b>	The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, European Union or international protection status.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	Due to the location of the site and the type and scale of uses permitted under the B3 zoning it is not envisaged that the proposed amendment will have an effect on the Lough Sheelin SPA if carried out in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and good

<sup>2</sup> Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC (Site Code: 002120)

development control practices.

The proposed rezoning is not expected to produce any event which would affect the River Inny having a resultant effect on the possible extant otter population on the River at Ballynacree

The proposed change from A2 zoning to B3 zoning is envisaged as having a negligible effect on fresh water requirement from Lough Bane. As stated above, the long term water supply for Oldcastle and its environs is likely to be a combination of water from the Blackwater River and groundwater with a much reduced role (if any) for Lough Bane. This will reduce pressure on the Lough Bane ecosystem.

## 2.2 Proposed Material Amendment No. 2

<b>Item 1</b>	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.		
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Policies/Objectives Proposed</b>	<b>Effect on Environment</b>
	Residential	To provide for residential development on previously unzoned land to the South East of the Town Centre.	The change from agricultural to residential uses will have a permanent impact on the environment.
<b>Item 2</b>	The cumulative nature of effects		
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p>The Draft LAP did not increase the area of the Town, 120 ha, however, the proposed amendment will alter the development boundary, increasing the area zoned for development by 1.01 ha. While the forecast requirement of 200 no. residential units up to 2013 can be accommodated on the existing zoned land the potential for a further increase to 2015 is recognised in the Draft LAP in line with Variation No. 2 of the County Development Plan.</p> <p>Having regard to the rezoning of 0.4 ha of residentially zoned land for local shopping facilities to the north east of the Town Centre under proposed</p>		

	material amendment no.1, zoning the subject lands A2 will result in a net increase of 15 residential units within the development boundary, based on a density of 25 units per hectare. The effect of this small net increase of 0.61 ha of residentially zoned land will only be significant in terms of water supply and waste water services and is not considered to have a significant direct effect on the environment.
<b>Item 3</b>	The transboundary nature of the effects.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	The transboundary effect of the proposed zoning results from the sourcing of Oldcastle's fresh water from Lough Bane which straddles the border of Counties Meath and Westmeath. Any change, either positive or negative, in the amount of water being taken from the Lough to meet the needs of Oldcastle would therefore have a transboundary effect. In the current case the zoning of agricultural land for residential and community facilities would involve an increase in the quantity of fresh water required. The Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013 indicates that the long term water supply for Oldcastle and its environs will be a combination of water from the Blackwater River and groundwater with a much reduced role (if any) for Lough Bane. This will reduce pressure on the Lough Bane ecosystem and in this respect the transboundary effects are likely to be positive.
<b>Item 4</b>	The risk to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	There are no SEVESO sites in or near the subject land nor are there any aspects of the proposed zoning that present a significant risk to either human health or to the environment.
<b>Item 5</b>	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effect (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	The area of the site is 1.01ha. At a density of 25 units per hectare as provided in Variation no. 2 of the County Development Plan, this would yield a total of 25 no. residential units which at 2.9 persons per household equates to an increase in population of 73 no. people. However, taking amendment no. 1 into consideration the net increase in housing can be

	estimated as 15 residential units or 44 persons.
<b>Item 6 (a)</b>	The area likely to be affected and its value and vulnerability due to: Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p><b>The Area</b></p> <p>The proposed amendment relates to a 1.01 ha area of land outside the Draft LAP development boundary which is currently agricultural in nature. The proposed zoning of this land is A2 “<i>To provide for new residential communities and community facilities and to protect existing residential areas</i>” which will not just affect the site itself but will also affect the surrounding land uses which include the unzoned agricultural land to the south, east and west.</p> <p><b>Protected Structures</b></p> <p>The subject lands do not contain any of Oldcastle’s 68 protected structures.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Area (LCA)</b></p> <p><u>Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills (Landscape Character Area 19)</u></p> <p>This area is of international importance, and is of exceptional value, both from a visual as well as heritage perspective but is not expected to be directly affected by the proposed zoning.</p> <p><u>Lough Sheelin Uplands (Landscape Character Area 18)</u></p> <p>This area is of regional importance and is considered to be of high value but is not expected to be directly affected by the proposed zoning.</p> <p><b>Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)</b></p> <p><u>Oldcastle Town Centre ACA Historical Development</u></p> <p>The Oldcastle ACA will not be impacted on as the subject lands are located east of the ACA on lands which are currently undeveloped.</p> <p><b>Protected Trees</b></p> <p>The subject lands do not contain any protected trees.</p>

	<p><b>Natura 2000 Sites</b></p> <p><u>Lough Sheelin SPA<sup>3</sup></u></p> <p>Due to the location and extent of the land to be zoned A2 it is not envisaged that the proposed amendment will have an effect on this Special Protection Areas (thereinafter SPA).</p> <p><u>Lough Bane and Lough Glass<sup>4</sup></u></p> <p>Due to the location and extent of the land to be zoned A2 it is not envisaged that the proposed amendment will have an effect on this candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC).</p> <p>In accordance with article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/42/EEC) Appropriate Assessment has been carried out to establish whether it is likely that this material amendment would adversely affect any Natura 2000 sites. The Appropriate Assessment report is provided as Appendix B.</p> <p><b>Protected Species</b></p> <p>Due to the location and extent of the land to be zoned A2 it is not envisaged that the proposed amendment will have an effect on any protected species.</p>
<b>Item 6 (b)</b>	Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	It is not expected that certain environmental quality standards will be exceeded or that the value of vulnerable areas will be limited as result of the proposed amendment.
<b>Item 6 (c)</b>	Intensive land use
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	Notwithstanding that the proposed amendment will result in an intensification of existing land uses this intensification will not be such that vulnerable areas will be significantly affected.

<sup>3</sup> Lough Sheelin SPA (Site Code: 004065)

<sup>4</sup> Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC (Site Code: 002120)

<b>Item 7</b>	The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, European Union or international protection status.
<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<p>Due to the location and area of land proposed for zoning it is not envisaged that the proposed amendment will have an effect on the Lough Sheelin Special Protection Areas (hereinafter SPA) if carried out in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and good development control practices.</p> <p>The proposed zoning is not expected to produce any major pollution event which would affect the River Inny having a resultant effect on the possible extant otter population on the River at Ballynacree</p> <p>The proposed A2 zoning of these agricultural lands is envisaged as having a minor effect on fresh water requirement from Lough Bane. As stated above, the long term water supply for Oldcastle and its environs is likely to be a combination of water from the Blackwater River and groundwater with a much reduced role (if any) for Lough Bane. This will reduce pressure on the Lough Bane ecosystem.</p>

### 3.0 Significance of Effects

As outlined in the document *“Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites, Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC”* issued by the European Commission, DG Environment assessment is the process of evaluating the importance or significance of project/plan impacts (both adverse and beneficial). This is essentially a judgment, built up from a number of factors, but it may also be made more objective with the use of criteria and standards. The assessment of significance will be based upon factors such as the following<sup>5</sup>:

<sup>5</sup> Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites, Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, pg. 63.

- The character and perceived value of the affected environment;
- The magnitude, spatial extent and duration of anticipated change;
- The resilience of the environment to cope with change;
- Confidence in the accuracy of predictions of change;
- The existence of policies, programmes, plans, etc. which can be used as criteria;
- The existence of environmental standards against which a proposal can be assessed (e.g. air quality standards, water quality standards);
- The degree of public interest and concern in the environmental resources concerned and the issues associated with a proposed project;
- Scope for mitigation, sustainability and reversibility.

Having regard to these factors and the identified likely impacts set out above, it is considered that the significant likely effects on the environment are as follows:

- Proposed Material Amendment no. 1 will have a positive effect on the environment as it will promote a sustainable neighbourhood.
- Proposed Material Amendment no. 2 may have an impact on Lough Bane a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as a direct result of increased fresh water demand. However, this impact is considered to be minor having regard to the minimal net increase in residential zoning. This issue may be resolved in the long term through a combination of water from the Blackwater River and groundwater with a much reduced role (if any) for Lough Bane as outlined in the Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013.



## **Appendix B**

### **Appropriate Assessment Screening of Proposed Material Amendments and Textual Amendments**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

As stated in the Environmental Heritage and Local Government Circular Letter, SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08, dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008, on “*Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans*”, Appropriate Assessment (AA) means an assessment, based on best scientific knowledge, of the potential impacts of a Plan on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site<sup>1</sup> and the development where necessary of measures to preclude negative effects. The impacts assessment must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of approving the Plan, considered with any current or proposed activities, development or policies impacting on the site. All plans and projects should aim to identify any possible impacts early in the plan making process and then either alter the Plan to avoid them or introduce mitigation measures to the point where no adverse impacts remain.

Screening is the technique applied to determine whether a particular Plan would be likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site and would thus warrant an AA. The key indicator that will determine if an AA of a Plan is required is the determination of whether they are likely to have significant environmental effects on a Natura 2000 site or not. Appropriate assessment is an assessment carried out under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

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<sup>1</sup> Natura 2000 sites are sites subject to European designations, normally known as SAC (Special Area of Conservation) and SPA (Special Protection Area). These are protected under the Habitats Directive of 1992 (EU directive 92/43/EEC).

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

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a 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 the 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.

**Article 6(4) states:**

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

## 2.0 SCREENING MATRIX

The following Screening Matrix is guided by the worked example provided by the European Commission<sup>2</sup>.

### 2.1 Brief Description of the Proposed Amendments

There are two proposed Material Amendments and several Textual Amendments to the Oldcastle Local Area Plan that have to be screened in order to determine their effect, if any, on the two Natura 200 sites discussed in detail below.

#### 2.1.1 Proposed Material Amendment No. 1

This material amendment is located to the north east of the Town Centre and relates to 0.40 ha of land zoned A2 - *“To provide for new residential communities and community facilities and to protect existing residential areas”* under the Draft LAP. The proposed amendment is to change this zoning to B3 *“To protect, provide and improve local shopping facilities in order to create and retain a vibrant and sustainable neighbourhood centre to serve primarily local needs”*.

#### 2.1.2 Proposed Material Amendment No. 2

This material amendment is located to the south east of the Town, south of Cluain Loinn Housing Estate and relates to unzoned lands outside the development boundary. The subject lands totals 1.01 ha and it is proposed to zone these lands A2 - *“To provide for new residential communities and community facilities and to protect existing residential areas”*.

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<sup>2</sup> Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, pg. 22.

### **2.1.3 Text Amendments**

A number of minor Textual Amendments are also proposed to the Draft Oldcastle Local Area Plan. The Textual Amendments proposed are contained in Sections 4.3.2, 4.6.2, 5.8, 6.1.2, 7.3, Chapter 6 and Appendix D.

## **2.2 Brief Description of Natura 2000 Sites**

There are two Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity of the Plan area that could potentially be affected by the proposed Material Amendments and Textual Amendments; namely Lough Sheelin Special Protection Area (SPA) and Lough Bane and Lough Glass candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC).

### **2.2.1 Lough Sheelin Special Protection Area (SITE CODE: 004065)**

Lough Sheelin is located 9 km to the west of the Oldcastle and is classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA). The lake is a large lough fringed with lowland raised bogs and is fed by the River Inny that rises near Oldcastle and passes c.1km to the south of the Town. The lake is an important site for wintering waterfowl and also holds stocks of course fish, pike and trout. While this site lies outside of the LAP area it is of some importance as any major pollution event occurring on the Inny near to Oldcastle would have an effect on this SPA.

### **2.2.2 Lough Bane and Lough Glass Special Area of Conservation (SITE CODE: 002120)**

Lough Bane and Lough Glass is a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) located c. 10km south of Oldcastle. This is a system of three lakes of which Lough Bane is by far the largest. The quality of the water in the Lough is of a good standard and the Lough Bane is an important angling lake. Water levels in the lake have been in decline over the last number of years. Water for Oldcastle is currently drawn from Lough Bane.

## 2.3 Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria for Lough Sheelin SPA will be addressed in its entirety before addressing the assessment criteria for Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC. This assessment addresses each proposed Material Amendment and the Textual Amendments in turn.

### 2.3.1 Assessment Criteria – Lough Sheelin SPA

**Describe the individual elements of the project<sup>3</sup> (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.**

**Material Amendment No. 1:** None

**Material Amendment No. 2:** Marginal increase in intensity of land use through the extension of the Oldcastle Town Boundary.

**Textual Amendments:** None

**Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of:**

- Size and Scale;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Land-take;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** c. 9 km  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** c. 9 km  
**Textual Amendments:** c. 9 km

<sup>3</sup> In this context the word “project” is referring to the proposed Material Amendments.  
 May 2009

- Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Emissions (disposal to land, water or air);  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** Any emissions to the River Inny to the south of Oldcastle could potentially have an indirect affect Lough Sheelin SPA. However, development will not be permitted without proper waste treatment facilities in place (Policies INF 6 and 7).  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Excavation requirements;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Transportation requirements;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A
- Other  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None

**Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:**

- Reduction of habitat area:  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None

- Disturbance to key species;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Habitat or species fragmentation;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Reduction in species density;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Climate change.  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None

**Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:**

- Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site.  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:
  - Loss;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A

- Fragmentation;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A
- Disruption;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A
- Disturbance;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A
- Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.).  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A

Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.

**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A

**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A

**Textual Amendments:** N/A

### 2.3.2 Assessment Criteria – Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

**Material Amendment No. 1:** None

**Material Amendment No. 2:** Marginal increase in intensity of land use through the extension of the Oldcastle Town Boundary.

**Textual Amendments:** None



**Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project<sup>4</sup> (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of:**

- Size and Scale;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Land-take;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** c. 10 km  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** c. 10 km  
**Textual Amendments:** c. 10 km
- Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** Potable water for Oldcastle is currently sourced from Lough Bane. An increase in water abstraction from the lake would have a negative impact on Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC. However, it is proposed that water to serve Oldcastle will instead be sourced from the Blackwater River and groundwater with a much reduced role (if any) for Lough Bane. Therefore, the rate of water abstraction from the cSAC will be reduced.  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Emissions (disposal to land, water or air);  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Excavation requirements;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None

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<sup>4</sup> In this context the word "project" is referring to the proposed Material Amendments.

- Transportation requirements;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A
- Other  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None

**Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:**

- Reduction of habitat area:  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Disturbance to key species;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Habitat or species fragmentation;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Reduction in species density;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None

- Climate change.  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None

**Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:**

- Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site.  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** None  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** None  
**Textual Amendments:** None
- Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:
  - Loss;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A
  - Fragmentation;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A
  - Disruption;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A
  - Disturbance;  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A

Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.).  
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A  
**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A  
**Textual Amendments:** N/A

**Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.**

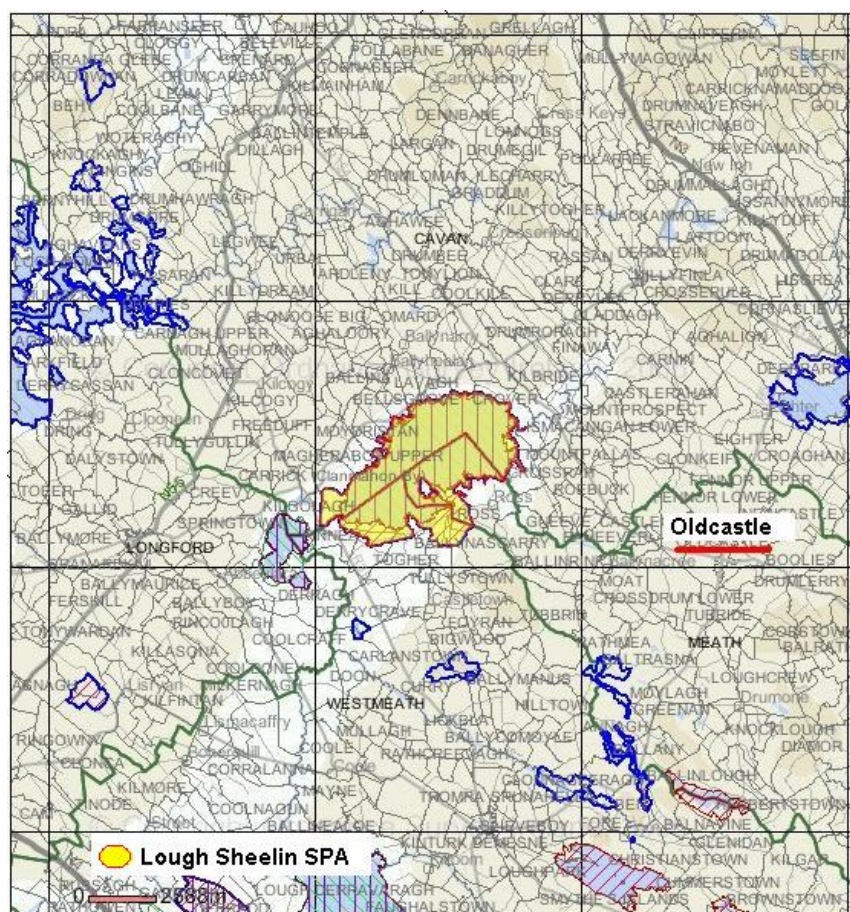
**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A

**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A

**Textual Amendments:** N/A

The following section records the finding of **no significant effects** and is guided by the worked example provided by the European Commission<sup>5</sup>. As in the previous section Lough Sheelin SPA will be covered in its entirety before Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC is covered with each material amendment addressed in turn.

Lough Sheelin SPA (Site Code: 004065) is situated on the border of counties Meath, Westmeath and Cavan.



**Are the Amendments directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?**

**Material Amendment No. 1:** No

**Material Amendment No. 2:** No

**Textual Amendments:** No

**Are there other projects or plans that together with the Amendments being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?**

**Material Amendment No. 1:** No

**Material Amendment No. 2:** No

**Textual Amendments:** No

### **3.1.1 The Assessment of Significance of Effects**

**Describe how the Amendments (alone or in combination) are likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.**

**Material Amendment No. 1:** Not likely to affect the sites

**Material Amendment No. 2:** Not likely to affect the sites

**Textual Amendments:** Not likely to affect the sites

**Explain why these effects are not considered significant.**

**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A

**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A

**Textual Amendments:** N/A

**Consultation.**

The Appropriate Assessment of the Draft Oldcastle Local Area Plan was included as an appendix to the Plan which was issued to the relevant persons/bodies that had to be informed under the statutory process.

## Response to consultation

Submissions were received on the Draft Plan from the following bodies:

- **The Office of Public Works** – Provides information on the National Flood Hazard mapping and outlines the Boyne Arterial Drainage Scheme channels and lands that would benefit from Arterial Drainage Works.
- **Shannon Regional Fisheries Board** – The submission highlights the importance of flood plains in terms of storage, prevention of siltation and as a habitat. The submission makes the following proposed alterations to the Draft Oldcastle Local Area Plan:
  - To address the pollution of waters caused by water drainage and measures that could be implied to reduce or eliminate such risks.
  - To reword policy no. POL INF 10 with additional detail on what flood risk is acceptable and to do so possibly on an area basis.
  - To include the Upper River Inny, located outside the town boundary, ensuring existing access for members of the public and anglers. In order to achieve this riverside walks and a riparian zone(s) is proposed and their benefits highlighted.
- **Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government** – This submission incorrectly states that an Appropriate Assessment has not been carried out. Despite this failure to examine the AA screening the submission makes a number of comments in relation to built and architectural heritage.

### 3.1.2 Data Collected to carry out the Assessment

#### Who carried out the Assessment?

GVA Planning carried out this assessment on behalf of Meath County Council.

#### Sources of Data

Existing Records.



### Level of assessment completed

## Desktop study

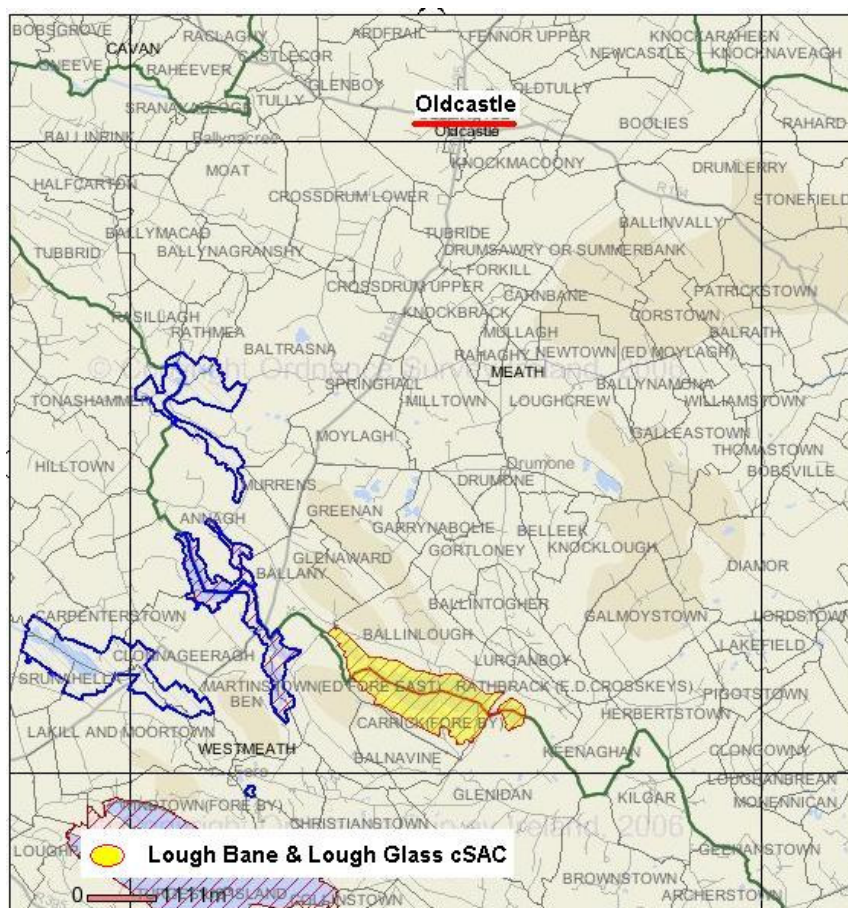
**Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed**

The results of the full Appropriate Assessment Screening undertaken on the Draft Oldcastle LAP are included as Appendix B of the Draft Plan.

### 3.2 Proposed Material Amendments Lough Bane and Lough Glass

## Name and location of Natura 2000 site

Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC (Site Code: 002120) is situated on the border of counties Meath, and Westmeath.





**Are the Amendments directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?**

**Material Amendment No. 1:** No

**Material Amendment No. 2:** No

**Textual Amendments:** No

**Are there other projects or plans that together with the Amendments being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?**

**Material Amendment No. 1:** No

**Material Amendment No. 2:** No

**Textual Amendments:** No

### **3.2.1 The Assessment of Significance of Effects**

**Describe how the Amendments (alone or in combination) are likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.**

**Material Amendment No. 1:** Not likely to affect the sites

**Material Amendment No. 2:** Not likely to affect the sites

**Textual Amendments:** Not likely to affect the sites

**Explain why these effects are not considered significant.**

**Material Amendment No. 1:** N/A

**Material Amendment No. 2:** N/A

**Textual Amendments:** N/A

#### **Consultation.**

The Appropriate Assessment of the Draft Oldcastle Local Area Plan was included as an appendix to the Plan which was issued to the relevant persons/bodies that had to be informed under the statutory process.

### Response to Consultation.

Submissions were received on the Draft Plan from the following bodies:

- **The Office of Public Works** – Provides information on the National Flood Hazard mapping and outlines the Boyne Arterial Drainage Scheme channels and lands that would benefit from Arterial Drainage Works.
- **Shannon Regional Fisheries Board** – The submission highlights the importance of flood plains in terms of storage, prevention of siltation and as a habitat. The submission makes the following proposed alterations to the Draft Oldcastle Local Area Plan:
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  - To reword policy no. POL INF 10 with additional detail on what flood risk is acceptable and to do so possibly on an area basis.
  - To include the Upper River Inny, located outside the town boundary, ensuring existing access for members of the public and anglers. In order to achieve this riverside walks and a riparian zone(s) is proposed and their benefits highlighted.
- **Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government** – This submission incorrectly states that an Appropriate Assessment has not been carried out. Despite this failure to examine the AA screening the submission makes a number of comments in relation to built and architectural heritage.

### 3.2.2 Data Collected to carry out the Assessment

#### Who carried out the Assessment?

GVA Planning carried out this assessment on behalf of Meath County Council.

#### Sources of Data

Existing Records.

**Level of assessment completed**

Desktop study

**Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed**

The results of the full Appropriate Assessment Screening undertaken on the Draft Oldcastle LAP are included as Appendix B of the Draft Plan.