



**Proposed Variation No 1 of the
Meath County Development Plan, 2007-2013**

Screening Report for submission to:

Environmental Protection Agency,
Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and
Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.

**Planning Department,
Meath County Council
Navan,
Co. Meath.**

July 2007

1. Introduction

The proposed variation relates to Chapter 6, Volume One of the Meath County Development Plan which outlines policies and objectives in respect of Rural Development. This Variation relates specifically to Section 6.7.3.1 'Persons who are an Intrinsic Part of the Rural Community.'

The existing policy is as follows:

'The Planning Authority recognises the interest of persons local to or linked to a rural area, who are not engaged in significant agricultural or rural resource related occupation, to live in rural areas. Certain special needs are also recognised in terms of tradespeople, persons with rural family linkages and social needs. For the purposes of this policy section, persons local to an area are considered to include:

- *Persons who have spent substantial periods of their lives, living in rural areas as members of the established rural community for a period in excess of ten years and who do not possess a dwelling or who have not possessed a dwelling in the past'*

The proposed variation seeks to replace the existing policy as follows:

'The Planning Authority recognises the interest of persons local to or linked to a rural area, who are not engaged in significant agricultural or rural resource related occupation, to live in rural areas. Certain special needs are also recognised in terms of tradespeople, persons with rural family linkages and social needs. For the purposes of this policy section, persons local to an area are considered to include:

- *Persons who have spent substantial periods of their lives, living in rural areas as members of the established rural community for a period in excess of Five years and who do not possess a dwelling or who have not possessed a dwelling in the past'*

In summary the variation seeks to reduce the time period required to reside in a rural area for the purposes of establishing a local housing need from 10 years to 5 years.

As it is proposed to vary a development plan, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening (i.e the process for deciding whether a particular plan other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental affects, and would thus warrant SEA), is required in accordance with the Planning and Development Regulations 2001- 2004.

The purpose of this report is to determine if the proposed variation requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment as set out in the Guidelines for Regional and Planning Authorities. In preparing this report reference was made to the Guidelines for the Implementation of the SEA Directive as prepared by the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government (2004) and in particular Schedule 2A of SI 436 OF 2004.

2. Location

The proposed variation does not relate to a specific location but relates to all rural areas where it is a requirement to establish a local housing need when seeking planning permission to construct a one off rural dwelling in the countryside.

3. Characteristics of the Proposed Variation

The proposed variation is being prepared in accordance with Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act and in making the variation the Members of the Planning Authority shall be restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which the development plan relates, the statutory obligations of any Local Authority in the area and any relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or any Minister of the Government.

4. Characteristics of the effects of the area likely to be affected by the proposed variation.

In assessing planning applications for individual dwellings in the countryside, the presence of environmental designations, national monuments, protected structures, architectural conservation areas, tree preservation orders or Sites and Monument register entries specific to the site are all taken into account. The proposed variation will not have any impact in this regard. The variation will reduce the time period for establishing residency locally for the purposes of local need. All other qualifying criteria including site requirements remain unaltered. Over the life of the Development Plan it is unlikely that the variation will result in a significance increase in approvals for individual dwellings in the countryside. The previous Meath County Development Plan 2001 which was replaced on 2nd March 2007 by the current County Development Plan had 5 years as the time period required to establish residence.

Development of individual dwellings in the countryside will result in impacts on wider environmental resources, locally to the site, and more widely in both the construction phase and over the full life cycle of any development arising. These environmental impacts will result from a range of processes including the following: Traffic generation, Waste generation, Water supply, Sewerage disposal, Surface water drainage, Consumption of energy, Consumption of raw materials and increase in artificial land surface cover. These issues are common to all developments, quantification of significance can only be based on site specific issues.

Conclusion

Based on this screening process it is considered that an SEA will not be required for the proposed variation No 1 of the Meath County Development Plan, 2007-2013.