

Cultural, Heritage & Landscape Protection

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

County Meath has a rich natural and built heritage, which includes scenic river valleys, rolling farmland, a network of mature hedgerows, diverse coastal habitats, an extensive array of protected structures, architectural conservation areas, heritage landscapes and towns, internationally important heritage sites and an enviable idealistic rural character, all of which are influenced by land use and management.

In the preparation and adoption of a Development Plan, there is a mandatory obligation on the Planning Authority to include objectives for, inter alia, the following;

- The conservation and protection of the environment, including, in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and the conservation and protection of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed for the purposes of this paragraph;
- The preservation of the character of the landscape where and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of beauty or interest;
- The protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific or technical interest, and;
- The preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas.
(Reference to Sections 10(2)(c)(e)(f) and (g), Planning & Development Act, 2000)

This chapter outlines the contextual information followed by policies and objectives in relation to the built and natural heritage and to the preservation of the landscape character which they give rise to. The Planning Authority has determined the necessary policy context as required by the proper planning and sustainable development of Co. Meath. It is also acknowledged that other chapters of this Plan deal also with such matters indirectly, striving to achieve the overriding aim of protecting the county's rich man made and natural heritage features. The Planning Authority has strived for consistency of approach throughout this Plan with regard to policy formulation and related objectives. The preparation of this chapter has been assisted by the commissioning of a Landscape Character Assessment which forms Appendix VI to the Development Plan.

8.2 NATURAL HERITAGE

8.2.1 Introduction & Context

In line with International, National and Regional guidance and legislation, Planning Authorities are required to adopt policies in line with the mandatory objectives in the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, to protect the natural heritage of their areas.

The Council strives to protect, conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity and natural heritage. This includes wildlife (flora & fauna), habitats, landscapes and / or landscape features of importance to wildlife or which play a key role in the conservation and management of natural resources such as water.

Natural Heritage, in particular focuses on designated and non-designated conservation areas, such as:

- Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) & (NHA);
- Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC);
- Special Protection Areas (SPA);
- The National Biodiversity Plan;
- Natura 2000 network;
- Protected Species under Flora Protection Order, 1999 (or other such Orders), Wildlife Acts, 1976-2000, etc.;
- Annex IV of the Habitats Directive, and those listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive;
- Peatlands;
- Candidate Sites of Geological Interest;
- Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows;
- Heritage Parks and Gardens;
- Inland Waterways and Wetlands;
- The EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC);
- River District Plans and the Nitrates Action Programme;
- Coastal Protection & Coastal Zone Management, and;
- Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive (estuaries, tidal mudflats, Salicornia mud, Atlantic salt meadows, Mediterranean salt meadows, embryonic shifting dunes, Marram dunes and fixed dunes).



Development throughout the County, where there is a potential or possible impact on the county's important natural heritage features shall be assessed against the Council's policies and objectives, contained within the plan, and in particular in this chapter, which seek to protect such valuable heritage assets.

County Meath has a rich natural heritage, which includes scenic river valleys, rolling farmland, a network of mature hedgerows, and diverse coastal habitats, all of which are influenced by land use and management. Identification of such landscapes, as well as enhancement and protection of same is considered in this chapter, however in respect of policy formulation and implementation of policy regard is had to the County's Landscape Character Assessment.

Under the Heritage Act, 1995, Natural Heritage is composed of native plants, animals and their habitats, geology, landscapes, seascapes and inland waterways.

Nature conservation has assumed greater importance in the latter part of the 20th century coinciding with an increased realisation of the vulnerability of the natural environment to inappropriate development and the consequences of the resulting environmental damage. A sustainable approach is needed to protect and conserve the natural heritage.



Furthermore and in tandem with the realisation that the environment and natural heritage are vulnerable and subject to permanent and unsustainable damage by inappropriate development, the socio-economic, tourist and amenity benefits associated with protecting and enhancing the natural heritage are now recognised.

Biodiversity is the variety of life, flora, fauna and wildlife habitats. The National Biodiversity Plan (2002) sets out aims for the conservation of Ireland's biological diversity and requires Local Authorities to prepare and implement Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

GOAL

To ensure that features of Meath's natural heritage are protected, that biodiversity is conserved and where possible enhanced, that watercourses are safeguarded from pollution, that landscapes are maintained and enriched, and that tourist and recreational uses are facilitated in a sensitive manner.

POLICY

HER POL 1

To protect, conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity and natural heritage including wildlife (flora & fauna), habitats, landscapes and / or landscape features of importance to wildlife or which play a key role in the conservation and management of natural resources such as water.

OBJECTIVE

HER OBJ 1

To prepare and implement, in partnership with the County Meath Heritage Forum, relevant stakeholders and the community, a Biodiversity Action Plan for Meath.

8.2.2 Heritage Plan



A key objective of the National Heritage Plan (2002) seeks to "place heritage at the heart of public life". The plan recognises that heritage is communal and we all share a responsibility to protect it. Protection of heritage must begin at local level enabling everybody to become actively involved in preserving and enhancing that which belongs to us all.

POLICY

HER POL 2	To promote education, knowledge and pride in the natural heritage of the county.
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OBJECTIVES

HER OBJ 2	To prepare and implement, in partnership with the County Meath Heritage Forum, relevant stakeholders and the community, a 5-Year County Heritage Plan, which will set out a range of actions to identify, protect, conserve, manage and interpret the heritage of County Meath.
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HER OBJ 3	To take into account and implement plans and projects that will be identified in the Meath Heritage Plan.
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8.2.3 Designated Areas

In its role as Planning Authority, Meath County Council is one of the key agencies responsible for the protection of the natural environment. Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) requires that a Development Plan include objectives relating to the conservation and protection of the environment, including, in particular, the natural heritage and the conservation of European sites and any other sites, which may be prescribed. The more important and unique habitats are subject to national and European Union designation as existing or proposed Natural Heritage Areas (NHA's) or (pNHAs), candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). In addition to those sites which are of national or international importance, County Meath has a range of natural and semi-natural habitats including several sites of geological and geomorphological interest which the Council will seek to protect from the adverse impacts of development.



Under the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 (S.I. 94/97), Local Authorities are required to ensure that an appropriate assessment of the implications of proposals on designated conservation sites is undertaken in respect of developments requiring planning permission. This applies to all development proposals, irrespective of location, likely to impact on these sites.

POLICY

HER POL 3	To require any planning application that proposes development within or adjacent to the area designated as a cSAC, SPA or NHA, pNHA illustrated on Map 8.3 to be accompanied by an ecological impact assessment, assessing the impact of the proposal on these areas with conservation designations. The Ecological Impact Assessment will be forwarded to the National Parks & Wildlife Section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government for their comments prior to the making of a decision by the Planning Authority.
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8.2.4 Natural Heritage Areas

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) encompass nationally-important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms and geomorphological features, wild plant and animal species or a diversity of these natural attributes. It is important that the conservation value of these areas, which are proposed from time to time by the DoEHLG, be maintained.

POLICIES

HER POL 4	To refer any application for development to the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG where there is a possibility that the proposed development may have an impact on proposed or designated Natural Heritage Areas.
HER POL 5	To permit development on a designated NHA or those proposed to be designated over the period of this plan, only where an assessment carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority and National Parks & Wildlife Service of DoEHLG, indicates that it will have no significant adverse effect (such as disturbance, pollution or deterioration of habitat quality) on the protected area.
HER POL 6	To support and co-operate with statutory authorities and others in support of measures taken to manage proposed or designated NHAs in order to achieve their conservation objectives.
HER POL 7	To promote areas for appropriate development, primarily for recreational or educational purposes, that would not conflict with the preservation of these sites in their natural state.

8.2.5 Candidate Special Areas of Conservation

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC) are areas of special importance to wildlife habitats and species which together with the Special Protection Areas (SPA's) form part of the Irish contribution to the EU Natura 2000 network. Natura 2000 is an EU network of ecologically important sites which Member States are required to establish under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The Directive lists priority habitats and species which must be conserved. Under the Habitats Directive, each EU Member is required to designate cSACs, because they support habitat and plant and animal species that are rare or threatened in Europe and that require particular measures, including the designation of protected sites to conserve them. While cSACs are fully protected under the EU Habitats Directive, the term 'candidate' refers to the fact that the sites are currently under consideration by the European Commission.

POLICIES

HER POL 8	To maintain, and where possible enhance, the conservation value of the cSACs, as identified by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan.
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HER POL 9 To have regard to the views and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG in respect of proposed development where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on candidate or designated Special Areas of Conservation.

HER POL 10 To permit development on a designated SAC or those proposed to be designated over the period of this plan, only where an assessment carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority and National Parks & Wildlife Service of DoEHLG, indicates that it will have no significant adverse effect (such as disturbance, pollution or deterioration of habitat quality) on the protected area.

HER POL 11 To prohibit any development that would be harmful or that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats and / or disturbance of species.

8.2.6 Special Protection Areas

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are areas of European importance, designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) by reason of the bird species and populations that they support. Under the Birds Directive, each EU Member State is required to designate SPAs for natural areas that support populations of particular bird species that are rare or threatened in Europe and that require particular measures, including the designation of protected areas to conserve them. All SPAs are also proposed / designated Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs).



POLICIES

HER POL 12 To have regard to the views and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG in respect of proposed developments where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on candidate or designated Special Areas of Conservation.

HER POL 13 To permit development on a designated SPA or those proposed to be designated over the period of this plan, only where an assessment carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority and National Parks & Wildlife Service of DoEHLG, indicates that it will have no significant adverse effect (such as disturbance, pollution or deterioration of habitat quality) on the protected area.

8.2.7 Habitats and Species Outside Designated Sites

The Planning Authority acknowledges that it is important to maintain and enhance the character and quality of the urban and rural environment in its entirety as wildlife heritage is not confined to statutory designated sites, but is found throughout the countryside and in built-up areas. Protecting

areas in isolation from each other with little regard to conservation in the wider countryside is neither appropriate nor effective. All development proposals should respect significant wildlife habitat areas and corridors so as to protect flora and fauna and to conserve and enhance their habitat. It is through the conservation of ecological infrastructure such as hedgerows and riparian corridors that we can develop a 'network of sites'. These allow for the migration and the exchange of species between conservation areas. To this end, and with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, the Planning Authority will encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora. Such features are those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems for the marking of field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. The provision of Green Belts between built up urban areas can also play a significant role within this ecological network.

POLICIES

HER POL 14	To recognise that nature conservation is not just confined to designated sites and to acknowledge the need to protect non-designated habitats and landscapes and to conserve the biological diversity of the County. The natural heritage of the County includes a variety of diverse habitats including lakes, rivers, streams, woodland, trees, hedgerows, stone walls, the coastline, estuaries and associated wildlife.
HER POL 15	To conserve, protect and enhance where possible wildlife habitats such as rivers, streams, canals, lakes, and associated wetlands including reed-beds and swamps, ponds, springs, bogs, fens, trees, woodlands and scrub, hedgerows and other boundary types such as stone walls and ditches which occur outside of designated areas providing a network of habitats and corridors essential for wildlife to flourish.

8.2.8 Protected Species

Certain plant, animal and bird species are protected by law. This includes plant species listed in the Flora Protection Order, 1999 (or other such Orders) and animals and birds listed in the Wildlife Act, 1976 & 2000 and subsequent statutory instruments, those listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive, and those listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. The planning process should seek to protect and enhance species protected by law and their habitats. Very often this can be done by minimising adverse impacts – for example, by requiring that development takes place outside the breeding season. In other cases, it may be appropriate to seek to ensure that individual members of a species survive by providing alternative roosts in the case of bats, for example. It may also be appropriate to seek to have an alternative area(s) of habitat provided.

POLICIES

HER POL 16	To ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory mitigation, on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.
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HER POL 17	To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG, and take account of any licensing requirements, when undertaking, approving or authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.
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8.2.9 Peatlands

County Meath represents the eastern limit of raised bogs in Ireland and the Council recognises the importance of raised bogland as a major natural and archaeological resource. The Council will promote a policy of seeking the conservation of a representative sample of peatlands and the protection of peatland habitats. The Council recognises the potential for utilisation of protected areas for tourism, amenity, educational and research purposes. The Council will liaise with the various government and non-government organisations involved in an effort to secure the conservation of the peatland areas.

POLICY

HER POL 18	To ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs or SACs are conserved and managed appropriately to conserve their ecological, archaeological, cultural and educational significance.
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8.2.10 Sites of Geological Interest

Existing nature conservation designations have not yet comprehensively covered sites of geological interest. The DoEHLG and Geological Survey of Ireland are currently drawing up a list of sites of national geological interest that will be proposed as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).



POLICIES

HER POL 19	Further to the designation of sites of geological and geomorphological interest within the County, it is the policy of the Council to protect and conserve such sites from inappropriate development that would detract from their heritage value and interpretation.
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HER POL 20	To ensure that where development is permitted, its effect on future designated sites of geological and geomorphological interest is minimised through appropriate conditions and retention of a buffer zone.
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HER POL 21	To require relevant planning applications to have regard to the Irish Geological Institute EIS guidelines.
HER POL 22	To consult with the Geological Survey of Ireland in advance of proposals where deemed appropriate.

Development Assessment Criteria

In assessing applications for new quarries or extensions to existing quarries the following will be considered:

- The impact of the proposed development on the quality of the landscape, particularly sensitive landscapes and protected views;
- The impact of the proposed development on the archaeological and architectural heritage;
- The impact of the proposed development on NHA's & pNHAs and cSACs;
- The suitability of the local road infrastructure and the impact of increased traffic on road safety;
- The impact on the amenities of the surrounding residents;
- Require that the development is phased and that each phase is rehabilitated before the next phase is developed / commenced, and;
- Applicants will submit a restoration programme with their application on the manner and timing of restoration.

8.2.11 Hedgerows

Meath County Council recognises the heritage and amenity importance of the county's hedgerow resource. Hedgerows provide a valuable ecological corridor for wildlife. There will be a presumption against removal of significant hedgerows during the course of developments.

POLICIES

HER POL 23	To protect and conserve ecological networks and prevent loss and fragmentation of ecological corridors where possible.
HER POL 24	To promote the protection and preservation of existing hedgerows and to encourage planting of native hedgerow species of local provenance.
HER POL 25	To encourage the retention, where possible, of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments in rural areas. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, provision of the same type of boundary will be required of similar length set back within the site. This shall also relate to Road Improvements and Realignment carried out by the Local Authorities or other agents on their behalf.

HER POL 26	To restrict the cutting of hedges during the bird-nesting season (1st March until 31st August), except in certain legally defined circumstances, in accordance with the provisions of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.
HER POL 27	To recognise the archaeological importance of townland boundaries including hedgerows and promote their protection and retention.
HER POL 28	To promote the environmentally sensitive management of hedgerows in the county in accordance with best practice guidelines issued by Teagasc and the Heritage Council.

8.2.12 Woodlands and Trees

Woodlands and individual trees contribute positively to the landscape and aesthetic beauty of Meath. (Please refer to Section 6.5 Tree Preservation in this regard)

POLICIES

HER POL 29	To seek to maintain and enhance the natural heritage amenity of the county by promoting the preservation and enhancement of native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees.
HER POL 30	To use native species wherever possible in Meath County Council's own landscaping work and on Council property.
HER POL 31	To discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development and to encourage tree surgery rather than felling where possible.
HER POL 32	To promote the NeighbourWood Scheme and other initiatives that aim to establish and enhance woodlands for recreational and wildlife benefits in partnership with local communities.

OBJECTIVES

HER OBJ 4	To continue to work in partnership with the Balrath Wood Steering Committee to develop and enhance Balrath Wood and its facilities under the auspices of the NeighbourWood Scheme.
HER OBJ 5	To carry out a tree survey of the County including those identified in the Tree Register of Ireland by the Tree Council of Ireland as Champion Trees in County Meath, and where appropriate propose measures for their protection.

8.2.13 Heritage Parks and Gardens

The Planning Authority recognises the landscape and historical importance of traditional and historic gardens, demesnes and parks within Meath and that they are often the important setting of a Protected Structure.

POLICIES

HER POL 33	To discourage development that would lead to a loss of, or cause damage to, the character, the principal components of, or the setting of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest.
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HER POL 34	To co-operate with the DoEHLG and other interested parties to facilitate the protection, promotion and enhancement of heritage gardens and parks in the county and support public awareness, enjoyment of and access to these sites.
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8.2.14 Heritage Objects

The 1995 Heritage Act defined heritage objects as "objects over 25 years old which are works of art or of industry (including books, documents and other records, including genealogical records) of cultural importance."

POLICY

HER POL 35	To ensure the protection of heritage objects and their settings as appropriate.
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8.2.15 Rural Tourism

It is the policy of Meath County Council to promote sustainable tourism in a way that maintains the quality of the rural landscape and rural townscapes, the quality of natural and man-made waterways, the county's scenic character, and the archaeological and architectural heritage of the county.

POLICY

HER POL 36	To promote, encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism industry through sustainable means, including the conservation, protection and enhancement of the built and natural heritage, and the protection of sensitive landscapes, cultural and community environments in order to maximise upon the economic benefits arising from the industry.
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8.2.16 Public Rights of Way

The Council will use its powers under the Planning Acts to preserve and maintain existing rights of way, to create new ones where appropriate and to promote their greater use in amenity areas.



POLICIES

HER POL 37	To preserve and protect for the common good all existing public rights of way which contribute to amenity.
HER POL 38	To create new rights of way or extend / enhance existing rights of way in the interest of amenity.

OBJECTIVE

HER OBJ 6	The Planning Authority shall engage with external bodies to seek to obtain internal and external resources to complete a list of existing public rights of way within two years of the adoption of this plan. This list will be accompanied by detailed mapping showing public rights of way and appropriate signage will be put in place.
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8.2.17 Inland Waterways and Wetlands

County Meath contains significant stretches of both operational and derelict waterways including stretches of the Royal Canal and Boyne Navigation Canal. Both the navigable and non-navigable waterways are of great importance, both as an amenity resource and a wildlife habitat. These waterways act as wildlife corridors by providing a unique ecological refuge for many species threatened by modern farming methods and changing land use practices. However, the true ecological value of the canals lies more in the diversity of species they support along their linear habitats than in the presence of rare species.



The EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) establishes a framework for action to achieve a sustainable water policy. The Directive covers all community waters, including surface waters (e.g. rivers and lakes), transitional water and groundwaters. A primary objective of the Directive is to ensure that no deterioration occurs in relation to the existing status of waters and that at least 'good status' is achieved for all waters by 2015.

The National Biodiversity Plan promotes a catchment approach to protecting and improving water quality and management in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Water quality is integral to the health of the inland aquatic environment, as well as affecting visitors and users. The attainment of good or high quality water status, and of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, as stated in the WFD and National Biodiversity Plan, should be attained through the support of the forthcoming River District Plans and the Nitrates Action Programme.

POLICIES

HER POL 39	To protect rivers and stream corridors and valleys by reserving land along their banks for ecological corridors and maintain them free from inappropriate development, and discourage culverting or realignment.
HER POL 40	To protect and enhance the built, natural heritage and the recreational potential of the Royal and Boyne Navigation Canals.
HER POL 41	To encourage and promote access to and understanding of the Royal and Boyne Navigation Canals.
HER POL 42	To ensure the retention of the County's floodplains and wetlands for their biodiversity and flood protection values.
HER POL 43	To encourage the creation, development and maintenance of ecological corridors, ecological stepping stones, green bridges, animal underpasses, eco-ducts and culverts, where appropriate.
HER POL 44	To protect and enhance the visual, recreational, natural heritage (flora, fauna, biodiversity) and special amenity value of the navigational and non-navigational waterways within the County, their towpaths and adjacent wetlands.
HER POL 45	To consult the Eastern Regional Fisheries Board and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG prior to undertaking, approving or authorising any works or development which may impact on rivers, streams and watercourses.
HER POL 46	To require that runoff from a developed area will not result in the deterioration of the quality of downstream watercourses or habitats.

8.2.18 The Coast

The coastal zone of County Meath is of great significance to the county, containing important resources that provide economic, recreational, aesthetic and conservation benefits. The coastline of County Meath is classified as a soft coast and stretches for approximately 10 km between the Boyne Estuary in the north and the River Delvin in the south. The coastline is home to a variety of natural habitats and there are several species of flora and fauna, reflected in the cSAC, pNHA and SPA designations that cover much of the Coastline. The Boyne Coast and Estuary cSAC is of considerable conservation value as a complex that supports good examples of eight habitats that

are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive (estuaries, tidal mudflats, Salicornia mud, Atlantic salt meadows, Mediterranean salt meadows, embryonic shifting dunes, Marram dunes and fixed dunes) and for the important bird populations that it supports.

While the coastline is of considerable intrinsic and special amenity and recreational value, it is also a finite resource that requires to be carefully planned and managed to ensure that its value is sustained for the future. The delicate sand dune eco-systems can be seriously affected when subject to unmanaged access and can experience severe vegetation damage followed in many cases by soil and sediment erosion. The cumulative pressures of vehicles, pedestrians and horses can lead to the serious deterioration of vegetation and increased risk to the stability of dune systems. The artificial maintenance of grasslands for golf courses can result in structural and ecological alterations to the dune systems,



which can reduce or destroy the value of the habitat. Excessive human activity in coastal areas can exclude seabirds from large areas of their natural habitat denying them feeding opportunities.

Like the oceans which shape them, coasts are a dynamic environment which undergo constant change. The earth's natural processes, particularly sea level rise, waves and various weather phenomena, have resulted in the erosion, accretion and reshaping of coasts as well as the increasing severity and recurrence of coastal flooding. This has subsequently led to a greater need for different techniques of coastal management or coastal defences. These fall into two main categories, 'hard' and 'soft' engineering. Hard engineering is the more traditional engineering response to erosion and involves the construction of structures which stop wave energy reaching the shore, or absorb and reflect the energy. Examples of hard engineering techniques along the East Meath Coast include gabions and the vertical retaining walls. Studies of the Meath sand dunes have shown that the presence of the Boyne River training wall (built in the early 1970's) has led to the accumulation of sand and enhanced development of dunes at the Mornington end and the decline of dune growth around Bettystown and Laytown. The movement of sand from south to north is leading to the removal of sand from the beach in the vicinity of Laytown and Bettystown and therefore exposing outwash gravels. Hard coastal defences can be expensive and unsightly and can also lead to increased erosion at other locations. For this reason soft engineering techniques have become more popular. These techniques involve promoting natural systems such as sand dunes and salt marshes which protect the coast, and are usually cheaper to construct and maintain than hard engineering techniques, and may be self-sustaining.

POLICIES

HER POL 47	To protect and enhance the natural heritage and landscape character of the coast.
HER POL 48	To promote the usage of the coast and riverbanks as leisure areas in order to enhance the potential of the coast and riverbanks as actively used amenity areas and to ensure that there is appropriate public access to the coast including the provision of coastal walkways.

HER POL 49	To work to protect beaches and coastal areas from motor vehicles in the interest of environmental integrity, quality of amenity and in the interest of public safety.
HER POL 50	To ensure that the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes, and estuary lands are not compromised by inappropriate works or development.
HER POL 51	To ensure that coastal wetlands and floodplains, such as mudflats, salt marshes and wet grasslands are protected and enhanced.
HER POL 52	To maintain the beaches along the county's East Coast to a high standard and develop upon their recreational potential as a seaside amenity in co-operation with the relevant agencies, in order to bring them to a Blue Flag standard.

8.2.19 Coastal Zone Management



The Coastal Zone extends seaward and landward of the coastline and its limits are determined by the geographical extent of natural coastal processes and human activities associated with the coast. Sustainable development in coastal areas is best achieved through a process of Coastal Zone Management (CZM). CZM involves the management of human activities and natural processes at work in coastal areas and aims to promote a partnership approach to planning and management in the coastal zone involving all stakeholders.

POLICIES

HER POL 54	To co-operate with the Coastal Zone Management Division of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, as required, in the preparation of the national stocking exercise and in the preparation and implementation of a national Coastal Zone Management Strategy.
HER POL 55	To support the development of Integrated Coastal Zone Management initiatives in Meath in partnership with the local community, environmental groups, user organisations and statutory authorities.

8.3 BUILT HERITAGE

8.3.1 Introduction/Context

Meath has a wealth of built heritage, from castles to cottages, including the great passage tombs of Brú na Bóinne and Loughcrew, planned towns and villages such as Slane and Moynalty, great country houses, farmsteads, monastic settlements, churches, mills, canals and railways. Within this great variety of building types and uses are structures of architectural heritage significance and distinctive character that are deemed worthy of protection.

This section establishes Meath County Councils policies and proposals for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the built environment of Meath. Built Heritage refers to all built features in the environment including buildings and other structures such as bridges, wells, pumps, archaeological sites and field boundary walls.



The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (2004 - 2016) state that Planning Authorities should adopt policies in line with the mandatory objectives in the Planning and Development Act, 2000, and other relevant legislation, to protect the built heritage of their areas.

The RPGs emphasise that Planning Authorities should:

- Adopt policies which will protect and enhance the architectural character and landscape settings of settlements in their area;
- Give consideration to identifying areas of townscape character and quality and develop urban design frameworks for these areas;
- Secure the regeneration of historic urban areas in accordance with agreed urban design frameworks;
- Preserve and protect all protected archaeological sites and monuments, protected structures, conservation areas, and their settings to a degree appropriate to the need to safeguard their historic integrity, and;
- Preserve and protect architectural heritage and to encourage the sympathetic re-use and / or development thereof.

Conservation of the built heritage emerged as a significant issue during the pre draft consultation phase of preparing the County Development Plan. A number of submissions from members of the general public in addition to those received from statutory bodies such as the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Heritage Council related to the built heritage of the County. Areas of concern included the need to protect the rural character, setting and archaeological heritage of the landscape in the vicinity of Tara and the new M3 Motorway, the need to address the planning issues pertaining to the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site and the need to afford a greater degree of protection to the historic environment of the county, including towns and villages. Many specific comments were made regarding Protected Structures and suggestions were made for additions to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

It is the goal of the Planning Authority to protect, conserve and enhance buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. Conservation is a priority for Meath County Council, reflected in the policies and objectives outlined in this section of the Development Plan.

Built heritage is addressed in this section under the following four subheadings:

- Archaeological Heritage;
- Architectural Heritage - Record of Protected Structures;
- Architectural Conservation Areas, and;
- Vernacular Heritage.

GOAL

To protect, conserve and enhance buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

8.3.2 Archaeological Heritage

The archaeological heritage of an area includes structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, moveable objects, monuments of other kind as well as their context, whether situated on land or under water. In this respect, Meath has a significant archaeological heritage, which provides a valuable cultural, educational and tourism resource. The Planning Authority recognises the importance of preserving, protecting and fostering a greater public appreciation of the county's archaeological heritage.



The National Monuments Acts 1930 – 2004 provide for the protection of the archaeological heritage. The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) was established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 and structures, features, objects or sites listed in this Record are known as Recorded Monuments. As well as extending protection to all known sites, now identified as Recorded Monuments, the National Monuments Acts 1930 – 2004 extends protection to all previously unknown archaeological items and sites that are uncovered through ground disturbance or the accidental discovery of sites located underwater. Where necessary, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government will issue preservation orders to ensure protection is afforded to sites believed to be under threat.

All excavation, digging, ploughing or disturbance of the ground in proximity to National Monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government or of the Local Authority requires the consent in writing of the Minister (Section 14 as substituted by Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004).

Under the provisions of Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, any person who plans to undertake development work which may impinge upon a Recorded Monument must

give 2 months written notice to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Copies of the Record of Monuments and Places are available for public consultation in the Council's Planning Department and throughout the network of libraries in Co. Meath.

County Meath has a wealth of archaeological sites ranging from cairns and passage graves to medieval churches and castles. For example, the archaeological complexes of Newgrange, Knowth, Dowth, Tara and Loughcrew are of international archaeological significance whilst the towns of Trim, Kells and Slane are also of particular archaeological significance with very important medieval structures surviving intact above ground and the potential of archaeological finds below ground. These towns have zones of archaeological potential delineated by the National Monuments Section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOEHLG), around their cores to protect their significant archaeological heritage.

The commitment of Meath County Council to the conservation of the prime archaeological resource in the county, namely Brú na Bóinne, can be seen in its objective to prepare an LAP in conjunction with Louth County Council for this World Heritage Site. (Refer to section 8.3.3). Meath County Council are also committed to the conservation of the Tara Skryne area, another of the prime archaeological resources in the county. This can be seen in its objective to designate this area as a Landscape Conservation Area in conjunction with the Heritage Council.

Industrial Archaeology is also very evident in Meath. The County contains significant stretches of both operational and derelict waterways, which represent major heritage artefacts. The Planning Authority fully supports the aims of the document "Policy Paper on Ireland's Waterway Corridors and the National Heritage" published by the Heritage Council in August 2005. The restoration of the Boyne Navigation and its unique industrial archaeological qualities remains an objective, which the Planning Authority supports and this has been acknowledged in the policy paper referred to above. The Planning Authority also supports a detailed study into the possibility of a link between the Boyne Navigation, from its terminus at Navan, to the Royal Canal at Longwood. Meath County Council identifies the role that industry has played in the development of the County and shall seek to protect buildings and features of industrial heritage in situ and their related artefacts and plant.

The details of National Monuments and Sites with preservation orders are contained in Appendix IV. In relation to all such sites, whether Recorded Monuments or those carrying a higher status, the Planning Authority recommends that potential developers consult as early as possible with the relevant agencies (such as the National Monuments Service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government) and the Planning Authority in order to ensure that archaeological concerns can be integrated into development proposals at as early a stage as possible.

Section 3 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987 (further amended in the 1994 Act) makes specific provisions for the protection of shipwrecks and underwater archaeological objects. Meath's rivers and tidal estuaries may contain such objects and any development within these areas should take into consideration the potential for archaeological discoveries.

Archaeological structures may, in some situations, also be considered as architectural heritage and, therefore, may appear on both the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and the Record of



Protected Structures (RPS). This means that these structures are protected by both the National Monuments Acts and the Planning and Development Act 2000.

The value and significance of this archaeological heritage is acknowledged by Meath County Council and through policies contained in this Development Plan, they seek to ensure the effective protection, conservation and enhancement of archaeological sites, monuments and their settings. (Please consult the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's Record of Monuments and Places for the location of Recorded Monuments and Zones of Archaeological Potential in Meath).

POLICIES

HER POL 55	To protect archaeological sites, monuments (including their setting), underwater archaeology and peatlands, and objects within the jurisdiction of Meath County Council, including those that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places or newly discovered sub-surface archaeological remains.
HER POL 56	To ensure that full consideration is given to the protection of archaeological heritage when undertaking, approving or authorising development in order to avoid unnecessary conflict between development and the protection of the archaeological heritage.
HER POL 57	To ensure that all development proposals affecting sites specified in the Record of Monuments and Places or Zones of Archaeological Potential are referred to the Prescribed Bodies (as set out in the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 - 2007, as amended) and to have regard to the advice and recommendations of the Prescribed Bodies in relation to undertaking, approving or authorising development.
HER POL 58	To ensure that when an unrecorded archaeological object or site is discovered, any works that threaten the object or site are immediately suspended and that the appropriate Government agency is informed.
HER POL 59	To protect important archaeological landscapes in co-operation with the appropriate Government agency.
HER POL 60	To seek the preservation in situ (or at a minimum, preservation by record) of all archaeological sites or objects and their settings.
HER POL 61	To require the retention of surviving medieval plots and street patterns in the villages and towns of Meath and to record evidence of ancient boundaries, layouts, etc. in the course of development.

HER POL 62	To protect historical burial grounds within Meath and encourage their maintenance in accordance with conservation principles.
HER POL 63	To encourage and promote the appropriate management and enhancement of the County's archaeological heritage.
HER POL 64	To protect the heritage of groups of important national monuments, inclusive of their contextual setting and interpretation, in the operation of development management.
HER POL 65	To employ the full extent of the statutory provisions of the Planning & Development Acts and Regulations and all other relevant legislation including the National Monuments Acts to ensure the sustained protection of landscapes of exceptional value and sensitivity and in particular to protect the rural character, setting, amenity and archaeological heritage of Brú na Bóinne and the Hill of Tara, and of the surrounding areas including the area in the vicinity of the proposed M3 Motorway and its related Interchange in the townlands of Blundelstown and Castletown Tara.

OBJECTIVES

HER OBJ 7	To make the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) available to the public via the Council's website.
HER OBJ 8	To establish in-house training programmes for Council staff carrying out repair and maintenance works to historic structures and produce a guidance note on this subject for contractors and local community groups.
HER OBJ 9	To identify appropriate archaeological sites in the County to which public access could be provided, and work to secure public access where appropriate in consultation with the land owner.
HER OBJ 10	To undertake an inventory of the county's industrial heritage – including canals, mills, railways and bridges.

Development Assessment Criteria

In considering developments which impact on Archaeology, the Planning Authority will:

- Seek archaeological impact assessments as part of the planning application when a proposed development could affect a Recorded Monument, a Zone of Archaeological Potential, or as yet unidentified element of archaeological heritage, or their setting, and;

- Ensure that a suitably qualified archaeologist carries out all archaeological works required when permission is granted for development that requires mitigation of impacts on the archaeological heritage.

8.3.3 Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site

Brú na Bóinne is one of the world's most important archaeological complexes. The archaeological complex of Brú na Bóinne contains many outstanding archaeological features, notably its megalithic art, the large and varied grouping of monuments and evidence of continuous settlement and activity in the area for some 7,000 years. The international significance of Brú na Bóinne has gradually been revealed through a process of discovery and research which began 300 years ago.



Brú na Bóinne is a cultural landscape that has been formed by people as well as by nature. It is in the lower plain of a river valley in which the watercourse defines a large 'U shape' and encompasses a series of low knolls to the north and to the south with steeper ground near Dowth. The large passage tombs are on high ground overlooking the valley, while there are numerous other archaeological sites on the low lying areas and floodplain closer to the river. The flood plain along the north side of the Boyne is rich in wildlife and has been designated a Natural Heritage Area. Multi ownership has created an attractive mosaic of mixed farmland ranging from intensive arable to permanent pasture. Many of the hedgerows and old field boundaries remain in place, with patches of deciduous woodland. There are remains of a medieval settlement and an eighteenth century estate at Dowth. The area of the World Heritage Site is primarily agricultural with a farming tradition that spans some 6,000 years and the survival of such a diverse range of monuments is testament to the tradition of respect shown by generations of farming communities.

Brú na Bóinne's famous archaeological remains, including National Monuments in the ownership of the Minister of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, are comprehensively identified in the Archaeological Inventory of County Meath and are given legal protection in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) of Co. Meath (1996) which lists all known archaeological monuments and sites. Some 93 Recorded Monuments, protected under the National Monuments Acts, lie within the bounds of the World Heritage Site. These include passage tombs, henges, fulacht fiadhs and cist burials, ringforts and souterrains, granges, medieval and manorial villages. In addition, the World Heritage Site encompasses Battle of the Boyne landmarks, significant architectural heritage many of the which are Protected Structures in the record of Protected Structures including demesne landscapes (Netterville, Campbell – Caldwell and Coddington Estate), the Boyne Navigation and important designated wildlife habitats such as Boyne River Islands & River Boyne SAC, Crewbane March, Rosnaree Riverbank and Dowth Wetlands proposed NHAs.

8.3.3.1 World Heritage Site Management Plan



In 1987, the State approved the establishment of the Boyne Valley Archaeological Park, which focused on the passage tombs of Knowth, Dowth & Newgrange. The core area of the Park is about 780 hectares in extent and the total area, which includes the buffer zone, extends to 3,300 hectares. The establishment of the Boyne Valley Archaeological Park followed a study of the planning issues involved in Brú na Bóinne commissioned by the Government.

The aims of the Park included the protection of this remarkable archaeological area, using the highest planning standards, while at the same time facilitating local residents and local economic activity compatible with such protection and to cater for the strong tourist potential of the area. The tourism aspects of Brú na Bóinne are dealt with in Chapter 3.

The Boyne Valley Archaeological Park designation was superseded in 1993 when at the request of the Government, UNESCO designated Brú na Bóinne as a World Heritage Site, one of only three on the island of Ireland. This listing recognises the universal importance of this cultural landscape and legally obliges the State to protect the area to the highest international standards. To adhere to the requirements of the World Heritage Site designation, a Management Plan was prepared in December 2002 by the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government following a detailed process of public consultation. The Plan, which has a 5 year lifespan, sets out to address the many complex issues that arise in a site of the importance of Brú na Bóinne. The aim of the plan is to provide a clear strategy for managing the area so that priorities may be set that are achievable within given resources.

The Brú na Bóinne Management Plan contains 5 key objectives (Section 1.8):

1. To ensure protection of its cultural and natural heritage by implementing legislation, co-operating with landowners and liaising effectively with planning / development authorities and other interested bodies;
2. To undertake a monitoring programme of the impact of the conservation works at the megalithic tombs at Newgrange and Knowth and to prepare conservation strategies for all the archaeological sites, the Special Areas of Conservation and Natural Heritage Areas in Brú na Bóinne;
3. To provide a high standard of public access and interpretation of the site;
4. To establish key priorities for research which will provide a greater understanding of the site's broad range of archaeological monuments, and;
5. To maintain close co-operation with the local community, government departments and agencies to ensure the effective implementation of the management plan.

Section 7 of the Plan proposes a total of 29 actions under the five broad headings of protection, conservation, presentation, research and general management. Action 27 seeks to have the Management Plan formally adopted and appended to the County Development Plan of both Louth & Meath County Council.

8.3.3.2 Preservation of Brú na Bóinne and the County Development Plan

Whilst the various archaeological monuments and wildlife sites and features are protected under separate legislation, the protection of the overall landscape and interpretation of various structures and features is largely the domain of the Development Plan. The Planning & Development Act 2000 provides the basis for the introduction of a philosophy of sustainable development into the Irish planning system.



The mandatory objectives of a Development Plan include:

- The conservation and protection of the environment including, in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and the conservation and protection of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed for the purposes of the paragraph;
- The integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population;
- The preservation of the character of the landscape, where and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty, and;
- The protection of structures or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historic, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

All of the above objectives relate to Brú na Bóinne.



In recognition of its status as a World Heritage Site, Meath County Council are committed to the conservation of Brú na Bóinne, the prime archaeological resource in the county. This commitment was demonstrated in the 2001 - 2007 County Development Plan in its support for the implementation of the Boyne Valley Integrated Development Plan. In addition, consideration of proposals, both public and private, in such a sensitive archaeological context with heritage buildings and structures of international importance makes it necessary to consider the impact on the Protected Structures, their setting and interpretation in the landscape, on wildlife designations, on the Landscape Guidelines, on the protection of the archaeological potential of the area including its setting and interpretation and on the protection of important views and aspects. The preservation of this important archaeological, cultural, mythical, landscape and amenity resource is intertwined throughout this Development Plan.

The area surrounding the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site and the adjoining Battle of the Boyne site are of regional to international amenity and heritage importance and contains areas of the highest visual quality in the county. This area is very sensitive to all categories of new development, particularly housing, large agricultural structures, extractive industries, coniferous afforestation and masts or other tall structures which impinge from outside the visual envelope along the valley. There are a large number of views and prospects that are sensitive to inappropriate forms of development.

The Planning & Development Act 2000 also allows the Planning Authority at any time and for any particular area within its functional area, to prepare a local area plan in respect of that area. In recognition of the unique significance of Brú na Bóinne, it is now the intention of the Planning Authority to formally incorporate the World Heritage Site Management Plan into the Development Plan and to prepare a Local Area Plan in conjunction with Louth County Council for the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site. The preparation of the Local Area Plan would lend further support to the implementation of the World Heritage Site Management Plan. The Brú na Bóinne landscape extends beyond the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site and indeed extends into Co. Louth. The Planning & Development Act 2000 also provides for two Planning Authorities co-operating in the preparation of a local area plan in respect of any area which lies within the combined functional

area of the authorities concerned. This LAP is intended to establish a planning framework in which development proposals, including future land use zoning objectives in adjoining settlements, one off houses, agricultural developments, signage, telecommunication structures and antennae, etc., would be assessed against. The preparation of the LAP would give effect to some of the objectives contained in the existing Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Management Plan and the Boyne Valley Integrated Development Plan.

As outlined, this area is also one of the foremost and popular heritage site visitor attractions in the country and as such, is a very important local and national tourism asset. The Development Plan recognises this importance and supports the maintenance and enhancement of the tourism interest for local employment creation and maintenance. The Development Plan seeks to protect the World Heritage Site and its hinterland in a manner that supports the maintenance and enhancement of its cultural landscape. This protection will also underpin the tourism aspects of the Boyne Valley in the vicinity of the World Heritage Site as a generator of local employment.

POLICIES

HER POL 66	To protect the vulnerable archaeological and cultural landscape and to enhance views within and adjacent to the World Heritage Site.
HER POL 67	Pending the preparation of the LAP (see objective HER OBJ 11), it shall be the express policy within the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site, as shown on Map No. 8.4, to permit individual housing only to those involved locally in full time agriculture and who do not own land outside of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site. In addition to satisfying a clear agricultural housing need, such development is also subject to the Development Assessment Criteria set out in Volume 1, Chapter 8, Section 3.3.2 and elsewhere in the Development Plan.

OBJECTIVES

HER OBJ 11	To prepare a Local Area Plan (LAP) in conjunction with Louth County Council for the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site and environs. This LAP would establish a planning framework in which development proposals, including rural housing and intensive agriculture, would be assessed against. The preparation of the LAP would give effect to some of the objectives contained in the existing Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Management Plan and the Boyne Valley Integrated Development Plan.
HER OBJ 12	To refer all planning applications within the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site and environs to the Heritage and Planning Division of the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government for comment and these comments shall be taken into account and such account shall be demonstrated in the making of decisions in all such planning applications.
HER OBJ 13	To agree a revised co-ordinated signage programme for the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site area with the National Roads Authority and the Heritage and Planning Division of the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

Development Assessment Criteria

The primary policy which operates in the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site seeks to protect the vulnerable archaeological and cultural landscape and to enhance views within and adjacent to the World Heritage Site.

Within the World Heritage Site and in particular the Core Area, pending the preparation of the Local Area Plan, with the exception of one off houses for those whose full time employment is in agricultural development, this policy will limit development to modest works such as small scale extensions to existing domestic dwellings, modest, sensitively designed and sited agricultural buildings and replacement buildings comparable in scale to buildings being removed and permitting appropriate works to and reuse of historic buildings.

Within the World Heritage Site, the assessment of development proposals must also adhere to other policies contained in the Development Plan relating to the protection of the World Heritage Site, including the protection of views, prospects, archaeology and the protection of the heritage setting and amenities of the National Monuments in the area.

This will include inter alia an assessment of the following:

- There should be no inter-visibility between the development sites and the National Monuments of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, up to and including apex of roof level, and minimisation of inter-visibility between the development site and the other National Monuments sites;
- Existing protected views shall be retained;
- Development must not negatively affect the amenity, views, and landscape setting of the National Monuments, i.e. protecting all of the above;
- Extensive screen planting which would alter the landscape setting of the National Monuments will not in itself be considered as adequate mitigation, and;
- Development that would give rise to or exacerbate inappropriate clustering or ribbon development will not be permitted.

Exempted Development

Exempted development is subject to restrictions in certain circumstances, For example, exemption does not apply to development which would interfere with sites, features or views listed for protection in the Meath County Development Plan. Please refer to the Development and Planning Regulations 2001 - 2007, Part 2 'Exempted Development' in particular Article 9(1)(a) parts (i), (vi), and (vii).

8.3.4 Architectural Heritage – Record of Protected Structures

The Planning & Development Act 2000 (Part II, Section 10) places an obligation on all Local Authorities to include in its Development Plan objectives for the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. These buildings and structures are compiled on a register known as the Record of Protected Structures (RPS), and is outlined in Appendix V and mapped on the Built Heritage Conservation Maps.

The updating of the Record of Protected Structures in the County has had regard to

- the recently published DoEHLG National Inventory of Architectural Heritage for County Meath which surveyed County Meath and has recommended that all structures deemed of regional, national and international importance should be included as Protected Structures in the Record of Protected Structures, and;
- Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

A survey was also carried out of all of the structures included in the previous 2001 - 2007 County Development Plan and East Meath Development Plan 2000 but not included in the NIAH recommendations to ensure that only appropriate structures are retained in the RPS. The East Meath Local Area Plans (November 2005) do not contain a RPS and those listed in the former East Meath Development Plan (2000) have been subsumed into and protected under the County Development Plan. The towns of Navan, Trim and Kells have their own Record of Protected Structures contained in their relevant development plans.



Any person or organisation who wishes to recommend a structure be added to the record may send details, which should include a location map, photographs and any historical references available, to the relevant Planning Authority.

A Protected Structure, unless otherwise stated in the RPS, includes the interior of the structure, the land lying within its curtilage, any other structures and their interiors lying within that curtilage, plus all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any of these structures. An up-to-date RPS, incorporating any additions or deletions within the lifetime of the current development plan, will be maintained on the Council's website or can be checked at the public counter of the Council's Offices. Structures may be added to the RPS, outside of the Development Plan without the requirement to make a variation of the Development Plan, and updated records and proposals for new additions are available for inspection in the offices of the Planning Authority. Developers and persons proposing to purchase historic buildings are advised to check the updated Record of Protected Structures.



Under the planning system, many minor works to structures do not normally require planning permission. These works are known as exempted development. However, for a protected structure, such works can be carried out without planning permission only if the works would not affect the character of the structure or any element of the structure that contributes to its special interest. A owner or occupier may seek a declaration from the Planning Authority as to the types of works which would or would not materially affect the character of the structure, and would or would not require planning permission. This does not preclude redevelopment or alterations from taking place subject to planning control.

The Planning Authority acknowledges that the continued well-being of a protected structure may involve its adaptation for a new use. However, the Planning Authority will require the maintenance of its architectural character, retaining external features and its setting. Developments in proximity to protected structures, which would seriously affect their character, will not normally be permitted.

The scheme of Conservation Grants for Protected Structures provides financial assistance for the owners and occupiers of Protected Structures, to maintain and care for their properties in appropriate fashion. The Planning Authority has been instrumental in assisting the owners of such properties identify other sources of assistance either through direct grant aid or by fiscal measures available under the Finance Acts.

POLICIES

HER POL 68	To preserve, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of Meath.
HER POL 69	To seek the protection of all structures (or, where appropriate, parts of structures) within the county which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, which are included in the Record of Protected Structures (See Appendix V).
HER POL 70	To encourage the sympathetic retention, reuse and rehabilitation of protected structures and their setting. In certain cases, land use zoning restrictions may be relaxed in order to secure the conservation of the protected structure. The Planning Authority will require that all works to protected structures be carried out in accordance with conservation guidelines and best practice and that the special interest, character and setting of the building be protected.
HER POL 71	To protect the original structures of the Royal Canal and Boyne Navigation in association with Waterways Ireland and other relevant organisations and to ensure that development along their banks does not have a detrimental affect on the character of these canals.
HER POL 72	To protect the historic bridges, railway and roadside features (such as historic milestones, cast-iron pumps and post boxes) and street furniture of the County.
HER POL 73	To encourage the retention of original windows, doors, renders, roof coverings and other significant features of historic buildings, whether protected or not.
HER POL 74	To continue to develop the Council's advisory/educational role with regard to Heritage matters and to promote awareness and understanding of the architectural heritage.

HER POL 75	To adhere to the standards advocated in the Principles of Conservation published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in undertaking works on elements of the built heritage.
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OBJECTIVES

HER OBJ 14	To review the Record of Protected Structures on an on-going basis and to add structures of special interest as appropriate, including 20th century structures.
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HER OBJ 15	To ensure that all planning applications relating to Protected Structures must contain the required accompanying documentation outlined in the Validation Checklist, to enable the proper assessment of the proposed works.
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HER OBJ 16	To identify and retain good examples of historic street furniture in situ e.g. cast-iron post boxes, water pumps, signage, street lighting and kerbing.
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HER OBJ 17	To make available and distribute detailed guidance notes and provide advice to the public, developers, public bodies, groups and associations with regard to Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, Conservation Grant Schemes and architectural heritage in general.
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HER OBJ 18	To liaise with Waterways Ireland and other relevant organisations to investigate the preparation of a Management Plan for the maintenance and enhancement of the Royal Canal and Boyne Navigation and associated structures within Meath's jurisdiction.
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8.3.5 Architectural Conservation Areas

The Planning & Development Act 2000 (Part II, Section 10 and Part IV, Section 81) places an obligation on Local Authorities to include an objective for the preservation of the character of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). An ACA is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. They also include areas, which contribute to the appreciation of Protected Structures.



An ACA may consist of patterns of elements, such as materials, construction systems, architectural elements, that are repeated within the area and give it a sense of harmony or it may relate to the importance of a number of buildings or structures whose protection is based on the wider ensemble of which it may be a component. ACAs could encompass, for example, a terrace of houses, a whole streetscape, town centre or a small cluster of structures associated with a specific building such as a mill or country house. It is concerned as much with the setting of the structures

and their interrelationship, though it may relate to urban forms of distinctiveness or to a particular relationship, or landscape settings. The effect of having a building within the Architectural Conservation Area, has the effect of de-exempting works to the exterior of any structure within the ACA where the proposed works would materially affect the character of the area concerned. Piecemeal alterations on individual non protected structures can have a significant cumulative effect on a streetscape. It is proposed to designate nine towns / villages, one mill complex, asset of terraces and seven demesnes as ACAs in Meath. These are distinctive areas, which in terms of composition of streetscapes, buildings of different periods, style and detail, and layout of buildings and streets, merits their individual designation as an ACA.

ACAs are identified in the objectives listed below and have their boundaries defined on Maps 8.1.1 – 8.1.15. The identification of new ACAs and the modification of existing ACAs may be proposed during the lifetime of the Plan by a variation of the plan. A character appraisal and set of policies has been produced for each ACA and is contained in Appendix III.

POLICIES

HER POL 76	To identify places of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest and to define them as Architectural Conservation Areas. Additional Architectural Conservation Areas may be identified and proposed during the lifetime of the Plan. The Planning Authority will require that all development proposals within an ACA should be appropriate to the character of the area, inclusive of its general scale and materials. Development proposals on sites in the vicinity of an Architectural Conservation Area will only be permitted where it can clearly be demonstrated that the development will not materially affect the character or the integrity of the Area.
HER POL 77	To ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions affecting a protected structure, adjoining structure or structure within an ACA are sited and designed appropriately, and are not detrimental to the character of the structure or to its setting or the general character of the ACA.

OBJECTIVES

HER OBJ 19	<p>To designate the Architectural Conservation Areas listed below and to carry out ongoing assessment and appraisal of existing and proposed ACAs during the lifetime of the Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Kilmessan ii. Slane iii. Julianstown iv. Longwood v. Summerhill vi. Athboy vii. Moynalty viii. Laytown ix. Oldcastle x. Dunboyne xi. Slane Mill Complex xii. Demesnes - Ardbraccan, Dunsany Castle, Headfort, Oldbridge Estate, Slane Castle, Sommerville & Stackallan. <p>Note: <i>The Planning Department will prepare a map showing the extent of the Sommerville Demesne ACA following the publication of the final adopted County Development Plan.</i></p>
HER OBJ 20	<p>To prohibit the demolition of a structure that positively contributes to the character of an ACA, except in very exceptional circumstances. Where demolition is granted within an ACA, an assessment of the impact of the replacement building on the character of the ACA will be required.</p>
HER OBJ 21	<p>To ensure that all planning applications relating to structures in an ACA or proposed ACA should be referred to the Conservation Officer and to the Prescribed Bodies for comment prior to a decision being made.</p>
HER OBJ 22	<p>To assess the surviving demesnes within Meath and promote the conservation of their essential character, both built and natural, while allowing for appropriate re-use.</p>

8.3.6 Vernacular Heritage

Vernacular Architecture is defined in James Steven Curl's Encyclopaedia of Architectural Terms as 'a term used to describe the local regional traditional building forms and types using indigenous materials, and without grand architectural pretensions', i.e. the homes and workplaces of the ordinary people built by local people using local materials. This is in contrast to formal architecture, such as the grand estate houses of the gentry, churches and public buildings, which were often designed by architects or engineers. The majority of vernacular buildings are domestic dwellings. Examples of other structures that may fall into this category include shops, outbuildings, mills, limekilns, farmsteads, forges, gates and gate piers.

This architecture of the ordinary people was once commonplace but is becoming increasingly rare. For example, Meath was once renowned for its thatched cottages. Unfortunately, this distinctive building type has been and continues to be in decline. The loss of thatch in the county is alarming and every effort will be made by the Council to encourage and facilitate the survival of the remaining examples.

The traditional farm complexes and historic agricultural buildings of Meath are also under increasing threat as they are seen to be no longer economically viable to the modern farm. Often these farm buildings are located on the site of an inhabited main house or active farm but as older outbuildings, they have become redundant and left derelict. Generally these structures are of mud-wall or rubble stone construction with external lime renders. In some cases, the agricultural outbuildings belong to large estates and are of fine cut stone, with excellent detailing of features. The Council will encourage the appropriate re-use of these structures rather than their replacement or dereliction. Other types of vernacular architecture under increasing pressure for demolition and alteration are historic shop fronts and pubs.

The loss of vernacular architecture is seen not only in the loss of whole buildings but also in the gradual attrition of details such as the replacement of roof coverings and windows with modern materials, removal of external render, inappropriate re-pointing and the addition of inappropriate extensions. Alterations to individual buildings can have a significant and cumulative effect on streetscapes, and landscapes. By the very nature of vernacular architectural heritage, it is normally the case that they are the most sustainable forms of construction, built with local materials in a style responding to local conditions, with a low energy use compared to the construction of equivalent modern buildings. Many of our surviving examples of vernacular architecture are people's homes and places of work, which by definition need to evolve with a changing society to facilitate ongoing occupancy and therefore survival. Any such changes need to be sympathetic to the special features and character of the building.

The built environment is not static, but is continually developing and evolving. The structures of today will become the heritage of the future. Contemporary buildings of a high design standard should be actively encouraged through the planning system.

POLICIES

HER POL 78	To encourage the protection, retention, appreciation and appropriate revitalisation of the vernacular heritage of Meath in both the towns and rural areas of the County.
HER POL 79	To preserve the character and setting (e.g. gates & gate piers, courtyards etc.) of vernacular buildings.
HER POL 80	To seek the retention of historic shop fronts and pub fronts as part of the streetscape of the towns and villages of Meath.

HER POL 81	To encourage the appropriate re-use of redundant vernacular farm buildings.
HER POL 82	To discourage the replacement of good quality vernacular buildings with modern structures.
HER POL 83	To assist the retention and development of traditional building skills in Meath.

OBJECTIVES

HER OBJ 23	To protect, through the use of Architectural Conservation Areas, the Record of Protected Structures and in the normal course of development management, vernacular buildings where they contribute to the character of areas and / or where they are rare examples of a structure type.
HER OBJ 24	To ensure that both new build adjoining, and extensions to vernacular buildings are of an appropriate design and do not detract from the buildings character.
HER OBJ 25	To carry out an audit of surviving thatched structures in Meath and to promote the DoEHLG thatching grant and the Council's conservation grant to assist owners with retention and repair of thatched roofs.

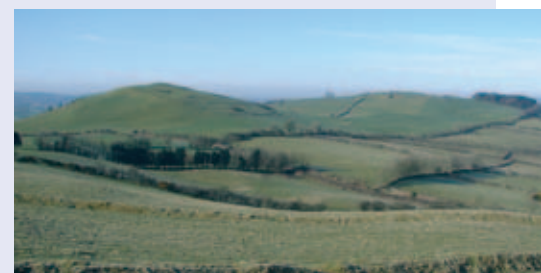
8.4 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

8.4.1 Statutory Context & Purpose

The Planning and Development Acts 2000 - 2006, specifically, Part II, S.10, (e) and 1st Schedule, Part IV, (7) requires that every Planning Authority in making a development plan must include objectives for the:

Preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.

The desire and requirement to protect the landscape character of an area is not a new concept. The 2001 - 2007 Meath County Development Plan identified a number of Areas of Visual Quality (Section 3.6.3), and associated sensitivities, albeit largely on the basis of a desk top study. Since the enactment of the Planning and Development Act 2000, the various Ministers for Environment, have introduced detailed planning guidance on numerous issues. In respect of landscape character preservation, such guidance,



although still in draft format, now indicates the preferred manner in which this is to be done (refer to DoEHLG, Draft Landscape Character Assessment: Guidelines for Planning Authorities).

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process, which describes, maps and classifies landscapes objectively. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual landscape elements and the processes that may alter landscape character in the future. The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be divorced from its physical and visual characteristics so all of these elements are considered. In preparing the LCA, the county's rich natural and built heritage, as outlined in the preceding sections had a significant bearing.

The purpose of the LCA, is to assist the Council in the formulation and implementation of its policies, informing the council, in particular where it is policy:

1. To promote the understanding of Co. Meath's landscape in terms of its inherent and unique character and to recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced.
2. To predict the broad pattern of future changes and devise policies and objectives as guidance to planners and other parties which will ensure that change is complimentary to landscape character. Sensitivity and capacity of the landscape should be given due consideration in all aspects of decision-making.
3. To assist in the achievement of sustainable development, the underlying principle of all current planning practice and legislation, by promoting a unified approach to landscape planning and management which links policies and recommendations for landscape character to existing planning policies.

As outlined in the introduction to this Chapter, the LCA forms Appendix VI to the Development Plan and will assist the public, applicants, Elected Members, planners and managers when considering individual applications. It provides a tool to aid decision-making and management or simply to promote particular attractions. In the assessment of an individual application, all of the relevant policies and objectives contained in the Development Plan must be considered in order to make an informed decision.

8.4.2 Forces of Change in the Landscape

The landscapes in County Meath are constantly evolving in response to natural forces and human activity. Glacial movement shaped the topography into its present form and mans' activities have been largely responsible for land cover since farming began around the 4th Century. There have been several phases of history which have left their marks on the landscape and which are evident today as a patchwork of elements including passage tombs and pre-Christian earthworks, early Christian ecclesiastical buildings, Norman castles and walled settlements, 17th – 18th Century demesnes and field patterns and an 18th – 19th Century buildings and structures.



Today the pressures of change continue apace. Whilst many changes are a result of economic necessity, crucial to the development of the County, the impacts on landscape character are potentially very damaging. The Landscape Character Assessment seeks to recognise what is valuable and what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced. It also aims to predict the broad pattern of future changes and devise policies and objectives which will assist in ensuring that change is complimentary to landscape character.

The main forces for change, which are causing changes to the overall appearance, function and condition of the landscape can be categorised as follows:

- Settlements and Built Structures
- Infrastructure and Industry
- Tourism
- Rivers and Canals
- Agriculture
- Tree Cover

The most likely forms of development to occur in Co. Meath are identified in the Landscape Character Assessment, and are done so on the basis of a review of the current and planned landscape trends described above.

Likely forms of development include:

- 1) Large modern farm buildings;
- 2) Visitor facilities;
- 3) Multi-house residential developments;
- 4) One-off houses;
- 5) Conversion of existing buildings;
- 6) Overhead cables, substations and communications masts;
- 7) Transport corridors, i.e. roads and railways;
- 8) Installation of new underground services such as gas and water pipes;
- 9) Wind turbines, and;
- 10) Biomass and forestry (including extractive industries).

Having regard to the nature of developments likely within the County, a series of broad objectives, which aim to assist in the preservation of the landscape character of the area, have been formulated as outlined below.

GOALS

To promote the understanding of Co. Meath's landscape in terms of its inherent and unique character and to recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced.

To promote a unified approach to landscape planning and management, linking policies and objectives for the preservation of the county's unique landscape character to all relevant planning policies and objectives throughout the Plan.

STRATEGIC POLICY

HERITAGE SP 1

To protect the physical landscape and visual character of the County.

POLICIES

HER POL 84	To ensure that development, particularly in sensitive landscapes, adheres to tailored design guidelines. Sensitive landscapes include demesne villages and LCAs identified as being sensitive.
HER POL 85	To provide adequate protection of views and vistas that contribute to the appreciation of landscape character.
HER POL 86	To maintain scenic vistas and panoramic views from key vantage points and towards key landmarks and features within the landscape.
HER POL 87	To maintain the visual integrity of sensitive and exceptional landscape value areas.
HER POL 88	To encourage the continued sustainable development of rural communities without compromising the physical, environmental, natural and heritage resources of the county.
HER POL 89	To protect and enhance the visual qualities of rural areas through the sensitive design of necessary development.

OBJECTIVE

HER OBJ 26	To commission further supplementary guidance to assist in the achievement of the protection of the physical landscape. In this regard, enhancement strategies where landscape character areas are not in optimum condition, Design Statements for villages and graigs that are inextricably linked to their landscape setting, design guides for new development such as tourism, housing, infrastructure corridors and one-off houses, and management plans for sensitive and popular sites.
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STRATEGIC POLICY

HERITAGE SP 2	To protect the historic and archaeological landscapes of the County.
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POLICIES

HER POL 90	To accurately assess and define objectives and policies for the conservation and preservation of all important historic landscapes and their settings in Co. Meath whilst ensuring the need to allow public enjoyment of them.
HER POL 91	To preserve the integrity of the landscape setting of important historic landscape features for the purposes of maintaining unique and unspoilt areas of landscape character, visual amenity and integrity.
HER POL 92	To recognise the contribution that common place elements of traditional built development make to local character as well as designated / special features.
HER POL 93	To encourage restoration of, and sustainable and suitable uses for historic buildings as part of the essential character of all settlements in County Meath.

STRATEGIC POLICY

HERITAGE SP 3	To maintain a hierarchy of settlement types as a critical part of landscape character in Meath and to preserve the essential characteristics of individual settlements within their settings by developing robust design guidance.
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POLICIES

HER POL 94	To accommodate development where it is best suited by respecting the sensitivity and capacity of landscape character areas whilst also recognising the longer term aims of reducing inter County commuting and strengthening the economy.
HER POL 95	To encourage the development of compact urban forms by consolidating existing development boundaries and utilising brownfield sites in preference to expanding urban areas into the countryside and adjoining settlements.
HER POL 96	To promote the creation of sustainable residential developments that are built in a style and scale that is appropriate to the landscape setting.

HER POL 97	To prepare rural dwelling design and development guidelines within one year of the adoption of the development plan.
HER POL 98	To have regard to the traditional Green Belt concept of ensuring residents of urban areas have adequate access to high quality green open space that provides recreational opportunities, retains attractive landscapes near population centres, improves degraded land and secures nature conservation.
HER POL 99	To prevent the coalescence of settlements by identification of appropriate areas of landscape as settings and buffer zones in tandem with the traditional Green Belt concept.

STRATEGIC POLICY

HERITAGE SP 4	To have regard to the potential environmental impacts of new infrastructure and industrial development, such as noise and air pollution, impinging on views, tranquility and character and the consequences that such development may have for the evolution of settlements, e.g. encouragement of out-of-town development.
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POLICIES

HER POL 100	To respect scale, pattern, materials and vernacular style when permitting new development whilst recognising the need to maintain a viable and sustainable economy.
HER POL 101	To improve the amenity and environment of various towns and villages in the county, which are traversed by busy road networks serving excessive commuting.
HER POL 102	To have regard to the natural and cultural heritage of the county in the pursuit of objectives relating to the provision of transport infrastructure.
HER POL 103	To protect areas of recognised landscape importance and significant views from construction of such large-scale visually intrusive energy transmission infrastructure.
HER POL 104	To avoid the location of Telecommunications Antennae & Support Structures, Windfarms, Large-scale Enterprise, Extractive Industries and other such visually obtrusive structures or activities in fragile landscapes such as areas of Special Visual Quality or archaeological heritage, where views and / or prospects are to be preserved and in areas adjacent to national monuments, archaeological sites or listed buildings or structures.

STRATEGIC POLICY

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.

POLICIES

HER POL 105	To maximise the potential tourism value of Meath's diverse range of landscape assets and attractions and identify a hierarchy of sites by interpreting and communicating the landscape character of Meath in a range of accessible media.
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HER POL 106	To ensure that the provision of new or enhanced visitor facilities does not detract from landscape character and are designed to the highest standards.
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HER POL 107	To encourage the reuse of historic buildings and recognise the contribution that they can make to economic development, tourism, education and the aesthetic qualities of landscapes and settlements.
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HER POL 108	To protect and enhance the character of existing landscape features, whether man-made or natural which provide viable tourist attractions.
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STRATEGIC POLICY

HERITAGE SP 6

To maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.

POLICIES

HER POL 109	To sustain a viable working rural landscape by maintaining and facilitating agricultural practices that positively contribute to landscape character, value and condition.
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HER POL 110	To encourage sensitive diversification of the rural economy where the decline in traditional agricultural practices is causing a decline in landscape value and condition. Alternative economic activities may include light technology, crafts, green tourism and associated supporting services for such enterprises. Reuse of redundant traditional buildings should form a key part of economic diversification in rural areas, as this will make a positive contribution to landscape character.
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HER POL 111

To develop sustainable graigs focusing on agriculture / rural activities to create vibrant localised economies, which relate directly to their rural landscape setting.

8.4.3 Landscape Character Types and Areas

The county's landscape is not homogenous, and neither are the pressures on it. It is inevitable that different parts of the county will be subject to different development pressures and will exhibit differing abilities to absorb and accommodate such development pressure. The LCA therefore considers the characteristics of the county, describing and defining them and assesses their capacity for development.



The LCA divides the county into 4 landscape character types (LCTs) representing generic areas of distinctive character such as uplands or river corridors. These LCTs are sub-divided into 20 geographically specific landscape character areas. Information has been gathered through extensive research and site survey work. It is presented in the form of a written summary of the LCTs and detailed descriptions of Landscape Character Areas including descriptions of key characteristics and settlements (in the LCA attached as an Appendix VI). Photographs, maps and sketches are used to illustrate written information. The Landscape Character Assessment is also accompanied by a database of photographs and a series of maps showing, inter alia, the boundaries of Landscape Character Areas, statutory designations, land uses, water bodies, soil types, historic features and transportation routes. The LCA includes recommendations

that would if implemented protect and enhance the landscape character, and facilitate and guide sensitively designed development.

The LCA places a value on each landscape character area, ranging from 'Exceptional' to 'Low'. The Landscape Character Areas are evaluated using criteria which takes account of scenic quality, tranquillity, remoteness, rarity, cultural associations, history, conservation, recreational interests and broader social, economic and environmental aspects. A judgement has also been made of the importance of each landscape character area in an international, national, regional or local context. This does not always relate directly to its value or sensitivity - locally important areas can make as much of a contribution to strong landscape character. However, an internationally important area may require greater consideration in terms of statutory protection and management (e.g. if it is a major tourist attraction).

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

Finally, the potential capacity of each LCA is based on indicative types of development that are likely to occur within the study area. Capacity is the ability that the landscape has to absorb specific types of development. It is only possible to define actual capacity on a case-by-case basis because

it will vary according to the type and form of development, its location in relation to the landscape character area in question and its visibility from it.

The final stage of analysis, results in the production of a practical planning tool comprising a map, or series of maps and photographic and written descriptions which represent landscape character areas, together with an overlay of values and of sensitivities, as outlined above. Recommendations have been formulated to assist the development of related planning policies, the promotion of strategies and development management within the county. These recommendations aim to enhance and maintain landscape character within the broader goal of accommodating development in a sustainable manner. Not all recommendations are incorporated into the Development Plan, in that many fall outside the remit of the Development Plan and / or Planning Authority.

Table 26: Landscape Character: Summary Matrix - Value, Importance and Sensitivity of Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character Type	Landscape Character Area	Value: Exceptional, Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low	Importance: International, National Regional, Local	Sensitivity: High, Medium, Low
River Corridors and Estuaries	5. Boyne Valley 8. River Nanny 14. Royal Canal 20. River Blackwater	Exceptional Very High High Very High	International Regional Regional Regional	High High Medium High
Lowland Landscapes	3. North Navan Farmland 6. Central Lowlands 10. Ashbourne-Dunboyne Farmland 11. Dunboyne Farmland 13. Rathmoylon Farmland 15. Hill of Down 16. Athboy Farmland 17. West Kells Farmland	Moderate High Low Very High High High Moderate Moderate	Regional Regional Regional Regional National Regional Local Local	Medium Medium High Medium High High Medium Medium
Hills and Uplands Areas	1. North West Uplands 2. Cavan-Louth Border 4. North Slane Hills 9. East Meath Farmland 12. Tara –Skryne Hills 18. Westmeath Borders 19. Loughcrew Hills	High Moderate Very High Very High Exceptional High Exceptional	Local Regional Regional Regional International Regional International	Medium Low High Medium High High High
Coastal Landscape	7. Coastal Plain	Moderate	Regional	High

POLICY

HER POL 112	In determining an application, the Planning Authority shall have regard to the value of a landscape, its importance and sensitivity, such as to ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character area, as it pertains to the proper planning and sustainable development.
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As already outlined, the LCA provides a planning tool to assist the Council in formulating their policies and objectives as they relate to the preservation of the landscape. Having regard to the above (summarised and extracted from the LCA), an updated table has been prepared, generally consistent with that contained in the previous County Development Plan, briefly describing the landscape character areas, their value and the nature of development generally acceptable within the particular Landscape Character Areas.

Landscape Character Areas	
Characteristics	Sensitivities
Coastal Plains (Landscape Character Area 7)	
The Coastal Plain comprises a large area of east coast lowland divided by the Nanny estuary. The area is characterised by scrubby rolling lowland. Long distance views are available along the coastline, however due to the flat topography of the landscape and overgrown nature of many hedgerows, views from inland of the coast are not readily available.	The Coastal Plain exhibits high sensitivity with respect to development. In particular, it has a low capacity to absorb large farm buildings, visitor facilities, overhead cables, roads and railways, windfarms, forestry and undergrounding of cables. Subject to good design and siting, the landscape has greater capacity to absorb one-off housing, as well as multi-house developments within the urban areas.
Boyne Valley (Landscape Character Area 5)	
This landscape is of International importance, comprising the World Heritage site of Brú na Bóinne. It is of exceptional value, and it is an objective of the Planning Authority to protect, conserve and maximise the opportunities associated with this valuable heritage within the county. To this end a Local Area Plan will be prepared to advance and outline the Planning Authorities policies and objectives for the area.	This area is highly sensitive to most categories of new development, particularly housing (including one-off), large agricultural structures, extractive industries, afforestation, masts or other tall structures, windfarms, forestry and undergrounding of cables. There is some capacity to facilitate re-use of existing buildings (including derelict agricultural buildings) and to provide visitor facilities.
River Corridors and Estuaries, comprising Nanny Valley, and Blackwater Valley (Landscape Character Areas 8 & 20)	
The River Blackwater runs between Kells and Navan where it joins with the Boyne. The entire river has a European designation as an cSAC and a number of smaller parts designated as pNHAs. The rivers Nanny and Delvin have largely undeveloped corridors and as such have high ecological value (with associated wetlands, sand bars, mudflats and coastal areas). Both estuaries (Boyne and Nanny) are densely wooded and relatively undisturbed, making them important habitats, and evident in their pNHA designation.	These areas are considered to be of very high value and are regionally important. They are highly sensitive to development. The Nanny Valley in particular would have a low capacity to absorb all types of development. The Blackwater valley can however absorb some development, in particular visitor facilities, conversion of existing buildings, overhead and underground cables, windfarms, roads and railways.

Landscape Character Areas	
Characteristics	Sensitivities
Royal Canal (Landscape Character Area 14)	
The Royal Canal runs near the southern border of Meath and is primarily a product of 19th century industry. There are several towns along its banks, and the canal is a valuable tourist and amenity resource. The area is considered to be of high value and is regionally important.	It is moderately sensitive to development. This area subject to good design and siting, can accommodate visitor facilities, one-off houses, windfarms, overhead and underground cabling / services as well as roads and rail.
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. It encompasses an upland area to the south of Oldcastle that contains significant archaeological remains and which offers commanding views over the surrounding region. The field pattern is notably open and frequently composed of stone walling.	The area is highly sensitive to development and is considered to be the most sensitive of all the areas to most forms of development. In particular, it is considered to be unable to accommodate large-scale housing, overhead and underground cabling or services, new roads, rail and windfarms. Subject to good design and siting, it can accommodate one-off house, conversions and visitor facilities.
Lough Sheelin Uplands (Landscape Character Area 18)	
This area is of regional importance and is considered to be of high value. The area includes the eastern shores of the lake which are also bounded by counties Westmeath and Cavan. The area of Ross including the headland is relatively low lying but highly visible from the lake.	It is highly sensitive to development, although in particular urban development such as multi-house developments, roads, rail, cabling, and windfarms, masts, etc. This area subject to good design and siting can accommodate visitor facilities, one-off houses, conversions, and forestry.
Tara Skryne Hills (Landscape Character Area 12)	
The historic Tara Skryne area is considered to be of exceptional value and is of international importance. Having regard to the area's value from a heritage perspective, in consultation with the heritage council and DoEHLG, the Planning Authority propose to designate the area a Landscape Conservation Area (Refer to Section.8.4.4)	The area is highly sensitive to development, in particular large-scale visually obtrusive developments, whether large farm buildings, infrastructure, windfarms, masts, or forestry. The area has some capacity to absorb one-off housing, visitor facilities and conversions of existing buildings. Design and siting will be instrumental in the determination of the nature and scale of development which can be absorbed within this landscape character area.

Landscape Character Areas	
Characteristics	Sensitivities
Lowland Landscapes (Landscape Character Areas 3, 6, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16 and 17)	
<p>Landscapes within this classification vary from local to national importance and from low to very high values. Having regard to the diversity in value and sensitivity to development which exists within this landscape character type (formerly Areas VQ10 and AVQ11) are considered within the LCA under 3 headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationally Important Lowlands; • Regionally Important Lowlands, and; • Locally important Lowlands. <p>The lowland character type covers the largest proportion of Meath and due to the high quality of the land is primarily agricultural. In the south of the county there is an abundance of 18th Century demesnes with extensive areas of mixed woodland and parkland bounded by original stone walls, creating an attractive landscape.</p>	<p>The Lowlands have been developed quite extensively, relative to other landscape types, therefore it is critical that if further development is to be accommodated it must be carried out sensitively in order not to cause degradation of these landscape areas.</p> <p>Nationally important lowlands, such as that around Rathmoylon is of high value and highly sensitive to most forms of development.</p> <p>Regionally important lowlands such as North Navan, Central, South-East and South-West lowlands range in value from very high to moderate and medium sensitivity. The Ward Lowlands are an exception to this, being of low value due to the nature and extent of existing development are highly sensitive to further development given the limited residual capacity. South-west Kells and West Navan lowlands are of moderate value and only of local importance. They have a significant ability to absorb further development.</p>

POLICY

HER POL 113	To protect from inappropriate development the views identified on the Landscape Character Map 05: Visual Amenity, and the views and prospects as indicated on Map 8.6 (listed table on next two pages)
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Table 27 : Views & Prospects to be Protected

View	Reference	Townland in which view is located
VP1	Hill of Tara	Jordanstown, Castletown Tara, Castleboy, Belpere, Cabragh
VP2	Boyne	(a) Blackcastle Demesne, Donaghmore, (b) Donaghmore, Dunmoe, Harmonstown, (c) Stackallan, Cruicetown, Pighill, Carrick Dexter, Castleparcs, Slane Castle Demense, (d) Fennor, Crebane, Cashel
VP3		(a) Crewbane, Knowth Newgrange (b) Proudfootstown, Dowth
VP4		Oldbridge
VP5		Oldbridge & Rathmullan
VP6		Oldhouse, Sheephouse & Donore
VP7		Stalleen, Red Mountain, Cruicerath & Roughgrange
VP8		Stalleen, Dowth, Newgrange, Giltown & Rosnaree
VP 9		Rosnaree, Fennor, Crewbane & Slane
VP10		Painstown
VP11		Kingstown, Carnuff Little & Ardmulchan
VP12		Dunmoe
VP13	Drogheda	Lagovooren, Stagrennan, Stameen & Mornington
VP14		Mornington
VP15		Ninch
VP16		Kennetstown, Legganhall, Hollymount, Hilltown Great, Collierstown, Caulstown, Ongenstown, Carnes East, Carnes West, Lunderstown, Prioryland, Bellewstown & Hilltown Little
VP17		Hodgerstown, Naul, Herbertstown, Micknanstown, Fourknocks & Grange Flemington
VP18		Rathbranchurch, Hoardstown & Creewood
VP19		Heronstown, Rathkenny, Horistown, Tankardstown & Creewood
VP20		Lobinstown
VP21		Mullaghmore, Meath Hill & Ballyhoe
VP22		Ardagh & Barleyhill
VP23		BarleyHill, Ardagh, Meath Hill & Ballyhoe
VP24		Kilmessan, Tullykane, Swainstown, Dunsany, Killeen, Warrenstown, Clowanstown & Leshemstown
VP25		Dunsany, Slane River & Swainstown
VP26		Hurely River, Kilbrew, Ballyhack & Primatestown
VP27		Skryne

View	Reference	Townland in which view is located
VP28		(a) Athlumney (b) Athlumney, Kilcarn & Balreask Old (c) Ardsallagh, Ballinter & Dowdstown (d) Bective (e) Commons & Saint Johns (f) Friaryland (g) Derrydaly (h) Moyfeagher (i) Lionsden, Donore, Castlerickard & Clonee (j) Drummond, Moyfin & Blackshade (k) Ballynabarney & Boolkeagh
VP29		Rathcore
VP30		Collegeland, Arodstown & Moynalvy
VP31		Fordrath, Wardstown, Mullaghstones & Eighty Eight Acres
VP32		(a) Tankardstown & Donaghpatrick (b) Bloomsberry (c) Headfort Demesne & Sedanrath (d) Moyfin, Cakestown Glebe & Archdeaconry Glebe (e) White Commons (f) Castlepole, Mountainpole & Rathbrack
VP33		Raneevoige, Crossakeel & Dogstown
VP34		Ballinlough, Lough Bane & Ballany
VP35		Knocklough, Loughcrew & Belleek
VP36		Cullendragh & Ross
VP37		(a) Loughcrew, Newtown, Summerbank & Carnbane (b) Corstown, Patrickstown & Ballinvally
VP38		(a) Loughcrew, Newtown, Mullagh, Rahaghy & Carnbane (b) Forkill, Summerbank, Corstown & Newtown (c) Ballinvally, Drumlerry & Patrickstown
VP39		Ervey
VP40		Alexander Reid, Mooretown & Harristown
VP41		Royal Canal

Development Assessment Criteria

The actual capacity to absorb development while influenced by the landscape into which it is to be sited will be also be influenced by design, siting, scale, etc. In this regard, it should be noted that all Landscape Character Areas can absorb one-off housing and essential farming activities. However, as is evident from the assessment of the current LCA and county development plan policies and objectives, not all areas have the same ability to absorb the same level of development.

In addition, most landscapes are sufficiently robust to absorb other forms of development, whether related to forestry, windfarms, infrastructure, extractive industries, enterprise, etc. The LCA does not preclude the granting of permission for this type of development throughout the county, however,

the greater the value of the landscape, there is a greater requirement on the Planning Authority to protect these.

The Loughcrew & Slieve na Calliagh Hills (LCA 19), to a certain extent is an exception to the above, in that it has been identified as being unable to absorb particular developments, namely new roads, infrastructure, industry, masts, underground and overhead services / cables, etc. Although all other landscape areas can absorb each type of development, the design, siting and particular locations within each LCA will strongly influence the assessment and outcome of individual applications for development.

In making an application, potential applicants should have regard to the landscape character area in to which the application site falls, and to address the concerns of the Planning Authority at design and siting stage.

In determining an application the Planning Authority shall endeavour to give clear guidance, understanding or justification of a decision, where this decision was strongly influenced by the proposed development's location within a particular LCA.

8.4.4 Heritage Landscapes

Areas which are of exceptional value and of international importance, such as the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site are highly sensitive to development and thus must be afforded particular protection. The Council, will over the life of the plan, move towards the preparation of a Local Area Plan in respect of areas surrounding and influencing (a) the World Heritage site of the Brú na Bóinne complex and will explore the designation of Landscape Conservation Area(s), pursuant to Section 204 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000, in respect of their core areas for (a) the Tara and Skryne area(s) and (b) Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills.

The purpose of such plans and / or designations is to protect the rural character, setting, historic context and archaeological heritage of the landscape. In identifying and / or designating such areas, the Planning Authority will be required to ensure that the scope and extent of such designation is sufficient to conserve the specific areas requiring protection, i.e. may be wider than the immediate area of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site, the Tara and Skryne area and / or Loughcrew / Slieve na Calliagh Hills. In the case of Tara-Skryne area, particular regard will be had to protecting the landscape from the perceived threat of possible secondary development on foot of the approved M3 Motorway and adjoining Interchange, while in the case of Brú na Bóinne and / or Loughcrew area, the focus will be on the impact of non-essential or poorly integrated development.

The basis for such designation will be strongly influenced and guided by:

- European landscape convention;
- National legislation and guidelines;
- Ministerial Direction;
- The analysis and assessment carried out in the recently completed Landscape Character Assessment (attached as Appendix VI, Brú na Bóinne Management Plan);
- The adopted Hill of Tara Management Plan, and;
- Stakeholder participation.

The preparation of a Local Area Plan and / or designation of Landscape Conservation Area(s) will require significant financial and technical resources, and thus assistance from numerous agencies charged with protecting valuable heritage areas will be required (i.e. DoEHLG & Heritage Council).

In this regard the Council will take the following step to initiate and progress these objectives:

- Establishment of a multidisciplinary team comprising DoEHLG, Heritage Council, Meath County Council, Louth County Council (for the Brú na Bóinne LAP);
- Identification and agreement on the mechanism for funding the projects, and;
- Clarification and agreement regarding the detailed scope of the project, including inter alia the use of a Local Area Plan and / or Landscape Conservation Area to provide a recognised statutory framework for the implementation of this purpose.

Thereafter the Planning Authority and those charged with the preparation of LAP(s) and / or designation of LCA(s) will ensure adequate and appropriate stakeholder involvement at a local level, in line with the Planning Authority's objective to improve education, awareness and pride in the heritage.

8.4.5 Green Belt Strategy

In 2001, a draft Green Belt Strategy was prepared for County Meath and Fingal. The strategic purpose of the Strategy was:

- To retain the open and rural character of the lands between and adjacent to urban areas.
- To provide for a permanent openness and rural character between urban areas.
- To ensure to the greatest extent possible that urban areas or urban generated development should not be 'intervisible' across the Green Belt.
- To provide for a clear distinction between the urban area and the countryside.
- To prevent, and where necessary counteract, urban sprawl, encroachment and coalescence.

In addition to fulfilling the above primary functions, Green Belt policy must also facilitate the following objectives:

- To maintain and support viable rural community and agricultural economy in Green Belt areas by protecting agricultural lands from urban generated pressures and facilitating agricultural and associated activities in accordance with the primary objectives of the Green Belt.
- To maintain the viability of the countryside, facilitating the favourable consideration of viable uses, whether agricultural or recreational.
- To encourage and promote urban regeneration and redevelopment as an alternative to urban sprawl.
- To retain and enhance landscapes close to urban centres.
- To maintain and preserve demesne and other sensitive and valuable landscapes.

While it is desirable that a greenbelt strategy be prepared, in particular to ensure the protection of the landscapes and the rural setting between the urban areas of adjoining authorities, the rural countryside between urban areas within Meath can in the interim be protected through the implementation of policies as outlined in the above noted chapters and in the Landscape Character Assessment, or through the inclusion of relevant objectives in the various LAPs to be prepared for individual settlement centres or groups of centres.

