

VARIATION NO.1 TO THE KELLS DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013-2019

Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report



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GLOSSARY

<i>Appropriate Assessment</i>	An assessment of the effects of a plan or project on the Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network comprises Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive, Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive and Ramsar sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (collectively referred to as European sites).
<i>Baseline environment:</i>	A description of the present state of the environment of the P/P area.
<i>Birds Directive:</i>	Council Directive of 2nd April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC).
<i>Cumulative effects:</i>	Effects on the environment that result from incremental changes caused by the strategic action together with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. These effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time or space.
<i>Data:</i>	Includes environmental data, proxy data, and any other relevant statistical data.
<i>Designated authority</i> <i>(Designated environmental authority):</i>	An organisation that must be consulted in accordance with the SEA Regulations. For Ireland these are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) and the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine (DoAFM).
<i>Environmental Assessment:</i>	The preparation of an environmental report, the carrying out of consultations, the taking into account of the environmental report and the results of the consultations in decision-making and the provision of information on the decision (in accordance with Articles 4 to 9 of the SEA Directive).
<i>Environmental Characteristics:</i>	Environmental resources, issues and trends in the area affected by the P/P.
<i>Environmental indicator:</i>	An environmental indicator is a measure of an environmental variable over time, used to measure achievement of environmental objectives and targets.
<i>Environmental objective:</i>	Environmental objectives are broad, overarching principles which should specify a desired direction of environmental change.
<i>Environmental receptors:</i>	Include biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological) and landscape as listed in the SEA Directive. This list is not exhaustive, and can include other receptors which may arise for a particular P/P.

<i>Environmental Report (ER):</i>	A document required by the SEA Directive as part of an environmental assessment which identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan or programme.
<i>Environmental targets:</i>	A target usually underpins an objective often having a time deadline that should be met and should be accompanied by limits or thresholds.
<i>Evolution of the baseline:</i>	A description of the future state of the baseline in the absence of a plan or programme assuming 'business as usual' or 'do nothing' scenarios, depending on which is more reasonable for the P/P being proposed.
<i>Habitats Directive:</i>	Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.
<i>Hierarchy of Plans:</i>	Both higher and lower level P/P relevant to the P/P being assessed.
<i>Indirect effect:</i>	Any aspect of a P/P that may have an impact (positive or negative) on the environment, but that is not a direct result of the proposed P/P. May also be referred to as a secondary effect
<i>Interrelationships:</i>	Associations or linkages, related to environmental impact of the proposed P/P usually on environmental receptors.
<i>Issues Paper:</i>	Paper produced as part of the consultation process, usually for Land Use Plans, to facilitate consultation with stakeholders on key issues.
<i>Key environmental issues:</i>	Those significant environmental issues, which are of particular relevance and significance within a P/P area and/or the zone of influence of that P/P. These issues should be identified during SEA Scoping process.
<i>Key environmental receptors:</i>	Aspects of the environment likely to be significantly impacted by the proposed P/P.
<i>Material Assets:</i>	Critical infrastructure essential for the functioning of society such as: electricity generation and distribution, water supply, wastewater treatment transportation etc.
<i>Member States:</i>	Those countries that belong to the European Union.
<i>Mitigation measures:</i>	Measures to avoid, minimise/reduce, or as fully as possible, offset/compensate for any significant adverse effects on the environment, as a result of implementing a P/P.
<i>Monitoring:</i>	A continuing assessment of environmental conditions at, and surrounding, the plan or programme. This determines if effects occur as predicted or if operations remain within acceptable limits, and if mitigation measures are as effective as predicted.

The primary purpose of monitoring is to identify significant environmental effects which arise during the implementation stage against those predicted during the plan preparation stage.

Monitoring Programme:

A detailed description of the monitoring arrangements to be put in place to carry out the monitoring of the impact of the proposed P/P on the environment including; frequency of monitoring, who has responsibility for monitoring, and responses if monitoring identifies significant negative impacts.

Non-technical summary:

A summary of the findings of the ER, summarized under the headings listed in Annex 1 of the SEA Directive that can be readily understood by decision-makers and by the general public. It should accurately reflect findings of ER.

Plan or Programme:

Including those co-financed by the European Community, as well as any modifications to them:

- which are subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government, and
- which are required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. In accordance with the SEA Directive, P/P that require SEA are those that fulfil the conditions listed in Article 2(a) and Article 3 of the SEA Directive.

Post-mitigation residual impacts:

Environmental effects that remain after mitigation measures have been employed.

Proxy data:

Is a measure of activity resulting from a P/P which provides information on environmental impact without the need for a direct measure of an environmental receptor for example, an increase in the number of vehicles (activity resulting from a P/P) can provide information on the impact on air quality and greenhouse gases without having to measure the concentration of these parameters in the receiving environmental receptor.

Public:

One or more natural or legal persons and, in accordance with national legislation or practice, their associations, organisations or groups.

Reasonable alternatives:

Alternatives should take into account the objectives and geographical scope of the P/P. There can be different ways of fulfilling the P/P objectives, or of dealing with environmental problems. The alternatives should be realistic, capable of implementation and should fall within the legal and geographical competence of the authority concerned.

Scoping:

The process of deciding the content and level of detail of an SEA, including the key environmental issues, likely significant environmental effects and alternatives which need to be considered, the assessment methods to be employed, and the structure and contents of the Environmental Report.

<i>Screening:</i>	<p>The determination of whether implementation of a P/P would be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment.</p> <p>The process of deciding whether a P/P requires SEA.</p>
<i>SEA Directive:</i>	Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment'.
<i>SEA Statement:</i>	<p>A statement summarising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how environmental considerations have been integrated into the P/P - how the ER, the opinions of the public and designated authorities, and the results of transboundary consultations have been taken into account - the reasons for choosing the P/P as adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives.
<i>Secondary effect:</i>	Effects that are not a direct result of the P/P, same as indirect effect.
<i>Short-term effects:</i>	These are typical of those effects that may occur during construction stage of a development, for example, the increased traffic going to and from a site during construction, or, the noise associated with construction activities.
<i>Significant effects:</i>	Effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.
<i>Statutory authority:</i>	The authority by which or on whose behalf the plan or programme is prepared.
<i>Statutory Instrument (S.I.):</i>	Any order, regulation, rule, scheme or bye-law made in exercise of a power conferred by statute.
<i>Synergistic effect:</i>	Effects that, when totalled, result in a greater or lesser effect than the sum of the individual effects.

1.0 Non-Technical Summary

1.1 Introduction

Meath County Council proposed to vary the Kells Town Development Plan (TDP) 2013-2019 to incorporate the aims and measures of the Meath Economic Development Strategy. The preparation of the Meath Economic Development Strategy was subject to its own SEA Screening process at the time of its preparation.

This Environmental Report on Variation No.1 of the Kells Town Development Plan has been prepared to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences, both positive and negative and to indicate where necessary, how improvements can be incorporated to improve its environmental performance.

This section of the Environmental Report is a Non-Technical Summary. The purpose of the Non-Technical Summary is to ensure that the key findings of the Environmental Report are readily understood by both decision makers and the general public. To this end, technical jargon has been avoided where possible.

The preparation of Variation No. 1 ran in parallel with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which influenced the drafting of this Variation.


In this regard, environmental considerations have been considered throughout the Variation process and have been incorporated into the Variation No. 1 ensuring a continuation of a qualitative environment.






The Environmental Report is the primary element in the SEA process and accompanied the draft Variation on public display.

1.2 Steps in the SEA Process

Table 1.1 below highlights the key stages in the SEA process and the progress made to date:

Table 1.1: Key Stages in SEA process

Stage	Description	Status
Scoping	<p>The scoping of the Draft Variation No. 1 was carried out in accordance with Article 5(4) of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).</p> <p>The principal purpose of the scoping stage was to decide upon the range of issues to be included in the Environmental Report and level of detail appropriate to each subject. An overview of the relevant environmental issues requiring further analysis was given consideration in the Environmental Report. By highlighting any significant issues at an early stage, it ensured that the matters were firmly to the forefront when considering the policies and objectives of the draft variation and reduced the Environmental potential for relevant issues to be overlooked.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 

Stage	Description	Status
Consultation with Statutory Bodies	Submissions were received from the following bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environmental Protection Agency • Inland Fisheries Ireland 	Completed 
Preparation of Draft Variation Environmental Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-disciplinary team was established to create policy consistent documents and to examine the effects on the environment of implementing the objectives and policies. • Policies and objectives created in the Draft Variation were assessed in the Environmental Report and proposed measures for the area examined. • Feedback was received throughout the Variation preparation process & Environmental Report preparation. • Mitigation measures have been discussed and chosen. • Monitoring incorporated into existing methods. 	Completed 
Consultation	Consultation on Draft Variation No. 1 and accompanying Environmental Report, Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was carried out.	Completed 
Evaluation of submissions	Evaluation of submissions and observations made on the Draft Variation, Environmental Report, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.	Completed 
Finalisation of the Variation No. 1, Environmental Report & SEA Statement.	Finalisation of Variation No. 1 to the Kells TDP and SEA Environmental Report. SEA Statement prepared identifying how environmental considerations and consultations have been integrated into the final plan.	Completed 
Monitoring	Monitoring of significant environmental effects over the lifetime of Variation No. 1.	Future Stage

1.3 Content of Environmental Report

The Environmental Report considers all of the following in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive:

1. Biodiversity and Flora & Fauna
2. Population
3. Human Health
4. Soil and Geology
5. Water
6. Air Quality and Climate Change
7. Material Assets
8. Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage

9. Landscape
10. Interaction of the foregoing

Table 1.2 below summarises the content of the Environmental Report. In the first instance, the Environmental Report details the current condition of the environment of the study area of the Variation under each of the sub-headings set out above. The Environmental Report also summarises the significant environmental pressures that may affect each of the environmental topics and the current (baseline) condition of the environment.

Table 1.2: Content of Environmental Report

Section	Description
1. Non-Technical Summary	A brief summary of the Environmental Report, its main points and conclusions.
2. Introduction & Background	A description of the Variation and a summary of its key policies and objectives. This section outlines the purpose of the SEA process, SEA requirements, its benefits and how the plan and Environmental Report have progressed.
3. Methodology	The steps taken in preparation of the SEA, including the methods used and technical difficulties encountered.
4. Review of Relevant Policies, Plans and Programmes.	The relationship of the variation to other relevant plans and programmes is highlighted.
5. Baseline Environment	A description of the current environment of the area of Variation No. 1 is given, highlighting any existing environmental problems. This exercise results in a comprehensive baseline against which the likely effects of implementing the variation can be examined.
6. Strategic Environmental Objectives	A number of environmental protection objectives which have been established at international, EU or national Level and are relevant to the Variation are listed. Following this, a description of how the objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account in the preparation of the Variation is given.
7. Alternatives	An assessment of proposed alternatives to Variation No. 1 are considered at this stage.
8. Environmental Assessment	An examination of the Variation and policies in terms of their potential effects on the various environmental parameters.
9. Mitigation Measures	Should potentially significant effects be discovered, measures to avoid, reduce or offset these effects are proposed and integrated into the Variation.
10. Monitoring	Proposals for monitoring the significant effects of Variation No. 1. A number of indicators of change and targets are identified and existing monitoring arrangements are utilised.

11. Conclusion	A conclusion with regard to the overall potential impact on the environment resulting from the implementation of Variation No. 1 to the Kells TDP.
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1.4 Policy Context

The preparation of Variation No. 1 is considered within the context of a hierarchy of policies, plans and strategies of international, national, regional and local level as detailed in Section 3 of the Environmental Report. Other relevant plans, policies and programmes were considered in this report and are referenced throughout.

1.5 Appropriate Assessment

The need for 'Appropriate Assessment' (AA) arises out of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) (on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora), which requires that proposed plans and programmes (including amendments or variations) undergo screening for likely or potential effects on European Sites (also Natura 2000 sites) arising from their implementation.

The Variation was subject to separate screening assessment for AA and determined that a Natura Impact Report would be prepared. As documented in the NIR, following an analysis and evaluation of Variation No. 1 to the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 (the primary purpose of which is to incorporate the Meath Economic Development Strategy into the Kells Development Plan) in light of best scientific knowledge, it was objectively concluded that Variation No. 1 to the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 does not pose a risk of adversely affecting the integrity of any European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

1.6 Strategic Environmental Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) assist in the prediction, description and monitoring of impacts on the environment as a result of Variation No. 1. The Strategic Environmental Objectives are environmental protection objectives which have been established at international, EU or national Level, and are relevant to the Variation. The Strategic Environmental Objectives for the Variation are primarily derived from the Environmental Report of the Kells Town Development Plan 2013-2019 as they remain relevant to Variation No. 1 and take into account feedback from Statutory Authorities on the Scoping Report.

Table 1.3: Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs)

Environmental Component	Strategic Environmental Objectives
BIODIVERSITY, FLORA & FAUNA	B1: Conserve the diversity of habitats and species by limiting adverse impacts on habitats and species of conservation concern.
POPULATION & HUMAN BEINGS	PH1: Improve people's quality of life based on high-quality residential, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns.
SOILS & GEOLOGY	S1: Protect quality and quantity of existing soil and geology.
WATER	W1: Improve/maintain water quality and the management of watercourses to comply with the standards of the Water Framework

	Directive and incorporate the objectives of the Floods Directive into sustainable planning and development.
AIR CLIMATE & NOISE	A1: Maintain and promote continuing environmental improvement where possible of emissions to air (including noise emissions).
MATERIAL ASSESTS	M1: Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure.
CULTURAL HERITAGE	CH1: Promote the protection and conservation of the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage.
LANDSCAPE	L1: Conserve and enhance valued natural and historic landscapes and features within them

1.7 Alternative Plan Scenarios

The SEA Directive requires the consideration of SEA Alternatives. This consideration is outlined in Chapter 7 of the Environmental Report.

Three alternatives were considered for the Variation:

- Alternative 1: Do Nothing Approach (No Change to Land-use Zoning)
- Alternative 2: Unrestricted Approach (to land-use zonings requirements)
- Alternative 3: Planned Approach (to land-use zonings requirements)

The alternatives reviewed represented choices available to the planning authority in delivering the Variation. Following consideration against the Strategic Environmental Objectives, it was considered that Alternative 3 was the most appropriate approach with regards to the future sustainable planning and development of Kells.

The future development envisaged requires a balance between the desire to increase economic and employment opportunity and the need to ensure adequate infrastructure is in place to accommodate growth. The alternative chosen in the Variation represents an appropriate balance between the competing environmental objectives.

1.8 Evaluation of Variation No. 1 to the Kells Town Development Plan (Policies and Objectives)

The SEA aims to highlight the potential conflicts, if they are present, between the stated policies and objectives contained in the Variation with the Strategic Environmental Objectives. Furthermore, the assessment examines the potential impact arising from the adoption of the policies and objectives on sensitive environmental receptors.

The process of SEA and Variation formulation is an iterative one and environmental considerations have informed the preparation of Variation No. 1. SEA is carried out in order to minimise the potential for significant adverse effects arising from adoption of the Variation. Where the environmental assessment identifies significant adverse effects, consideration is given in the first instance to avoid such impacts. Where avoidance is not possible, Variation No.1 will seek to lessen or offset those effects through mitigation measures.

In some instances, there is little or no relationship between the various policies/objectives and the respective environmental receptor. In some instances there is little or no relationship between the various Plan Policies/Objectives and the respective environmental receptor. Where this

occurs, the potential impact is regarded as neutral and no further discussion is deemed necessary.

The next phase of the assessment identifies the potential impact of the policies and objectives of the proposed Variation on the environment. Table 8.3 in the Environmental Report highlights where the impact may be either potentially positive; neutral; potentially negative; or uncertain. Where a neutral impact is identified, no further discussion is deemed necessary. However, it is acknowledged that localised issues may arise depending on site specific issues and the type of development proposed. The assessment contained in Table 9.1 deals with strategic issues alone. For potential localised impacts, the mitigation section contained in Chapter 9 should be consulted.

It has been determined that there are certain policies and objectives where the impact is potentially negative. The significant issues are discussed in Table 9.1 of this Report. A comprehensive and detailed set of mitigation and protection measures are provided in Chapter 9 which effectively reduces or eliminates identified potentially negative impacts. Similarly, monitoring the implementation of the Variation, as discussed in Chapter 10, will ensure that if any negative impact becomes a reality, it will be identified at an early stage and appropriate actions taken by the relevant authority/agency to remedy the situation.

1.9 Mitigation Measures

Monitoring of the Variation and its implications on the environment is paramount to ensure that the environment of the area of influence is not adversely affected through the implementation of the Variation.

It is proposed to build monitoring criteria on a series of indicators which measure changes in the environment, especially changes which are critical in terms of environmental quality, for example water or air pollution levels. A list of environmental indicators is provided in Table 10.1 in Chapter 10 of this Report. The indicators are based on the Strategic Environmental Objectives presented in Chapter 6 and have been derived from knowledge of the existing environmental issues within the plan area and also from legislation, guidelines and higher level plans.

Environmental indicator assessment during monitoring can show positive, neutral impacts or negative impacts on the environment. Where an indicator value highlights a positive, neutral impact on the environment, it is likely that the policies and objectives of the plan are well defined with regard to the environment. Conversely, where the objectives of the Variation have a negative impact on the environment, it may be necessary to review or change the objectives of the Variation.

Where significant effects such as positive, negative, cumulative and indirect effects have the potential to occur as a result of the undertaking of individual projects or multiple individual projects, such instances should be identified and recorded and should feed into the monitoring evaluation.

1.10 Local Area Plan Monitoring

Monitoring of the Variation No.1 and its implications on the environment is paramount to ensure that the Kells plan area is not adversely affected by the adoption of Variation No.1 to the Kells Development Plan.

It is proposed to build monitoring criteria on a series of indicators which measure changes in the environment, especially changes which are critical in terms of environmental quality, for example water or air pollution levels. A list of environmental indicators is provided in Table 10.1 in Section

10 of this Report. The indicators are based on the Strategic Environmental Objectives presented in Chapter 6 and have been derived from knowledge of the existing environmental issues within the study area and also from legislation, guidelines and higher level plans.

Environmental indicator assessment during monitoring can show positive, neutral impacts or negative impacts on the environment. Where an indicator value highlights a positive, neutral impact on the environment, it is likely that the policies and objectives of the Variation are well defined with regard to the environment. Conversely, where the objectives of the Variation have a negative impact on the environment, it may be necessary to review the policies or objectives of the plan or take some other form of intervention to change the Variation.

Where significant effects such as including positive, negative, cumulative and indirect have the potential to occur as a result of the undertaking of individual projects or multiple individual projects, such instances should be identified and recorded and should feed into the monitoring evaluation.

1.11 Sources

Measurements for indicators generally come from existing monitoring sources. Existing monitoring sources include those maintained by the relevant authorities including the National Transport Authority, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Central Statistics Office and the local authority itself.

The output of lower-tier environmental assessment and decision making – including a review of project approvals granted and associated documents – will also be utilised as part of the Monitoring Programme.

Where significant effects - including positive, negative, cumulative and indirect - have the potential to occur as a result of the undertaking of individual projects or multiple individual projects, such instances should be identified and recorded and should feed into the monitoring evaluation.

2.0 Introduction & Background

2.1 Introduction to Environmental Report

This report comprises an Environmental Report prepared as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Variation No. 1 to the Kells Town Development Plan 2007-2017. The purpose of the Environmental Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences arising from Variation No. 1 to the Kells Development Plan.

The SEA is carried out in order to comply with the requirements of the 'SEA Directive' (2001/42/EC) and the provisions of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (Statutory Instrument Number (SI No. 435 of 2004), as amended.

This Environmental Report should be read in conjunction with Variation No. 1 to the Kells Development Plan, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening carried out under the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive (1992/43/EEC).

The Environmental Report is the primary element in the SEA process and accompanied the variation on public display.

The Environmental Report has been prepared by Brady Shipman Martin, Environmental, planning and Landscape Consultants.

2.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic environmental assessment of the likely significant effects of implementing a plan or programme. It is carried out during the preparation period of the plan or programme to ensure that environmental implications arising from its implementation is taken into account in decision-making prior to its finalisation.

2.2.1 SEA Legislative and Guideline Context

The requirement to undertake SEA derives from the 2001 European Community Directive 2001/42/EC (also known as the 'SEA Directive') on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. Article 1 of the SEA Directive states:

"The objective of this directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment."

The SEA Directive was subsequently transposed into Irish law through:

- **S.I. No. 435 of 2004** (*European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004*, as amended by **S.I. No. 200 of 2011** (*European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011*), and
- **S.I. No. 436 of 2004** (*Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004*, as amended by **S.I. No. 201 of 2011** (*Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011*) and **S.I. 262 of 2011** (*Planning and Development (Amendment) Regulations 2011*).

The preparation of the Environmental Report for the Variation has had particular regard to the above legislation and to a range of guidance documents on the implementation and practice of SEA, including:

Environmental Protection Agency

- 2016: GISEA Manual 2015.
- 2015: Development and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 2015: Integrating Climate Change into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland – A Guidance Note.
- 2015: SEA Scoping Guidance Document.
- 2015: SEA Spatial Information Sources May 2015.
- 2013: SEA Pack.
- 2013: Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment – Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner’s Manual.
- 2013: SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities – Integration of SEA Legislation and Procedures for Landuse Plans (Draft).
- 2008: SEA Process Checklist – Consultation Draft.
- 2003: Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland.

Department of Environment, Community and Local Government

- 2011: Circular Letter PSSP 6/2011: Further Transposition of EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

- 2008: Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08: Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans.
- 2004: Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities.

European Commission

- 2003: Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

2.3 Variation No.1 to the Kells Town Development Plan 2013-2019

The Kells Development Plan is the primary tool available to Meath County Council when assessing development proposals for the Kells area and aims to ensure that future developments in area take place in a planned, structured and sustainable manner.

The key purpose of the Variation to the Kells Development Plan is to align the Plan with the key tenets of the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014 – 2022 as they relate to statutory land use planning. The Variation also seeks to align the Kells Development Plan with the provisions of the County Development Plan (as varied) and update the written text and maps accordingly.

The Variation comprised the following amendments to the Kells Development Plan:

- To amend the text of the Kells Development Plan narrative, policies and objectives to bring these into line with the Meath Economic Development Strategy.
- To review the appropriateness of the Masterplan/Framework plan objectives in the town as it pertains to their compatibility with employment generation
- To review the requirements surrounding the preparation of Master Plans on employment zonings.
- The introduction of additional employment generating lands to provide for a high end technology and major campus style office based employment as well as to facilitate logistics, warehousing, distribution and supply chain management to the south-east of Kells, the introduction of which will stimulate growth at this key location in the town. The provision of additional employment lands is consistent with Action 4 of the Economic Development Strategy to promote the hierarchy of economic centres with the objective of facilitating significant new enterprise employment in Meath.
- Introduce a 'spot objective' for the development of employment zoned lands (E1 and E3 land use zoning objectives) to the south-east of Kells, on the Navan Road and adjacent to the Kells (south) M3 interchange at junction 10. These lands will provide for a high end technology and major campus style office employment as well as to facilitate logistics, warehousing, distribution and supply chain management and shall be subject to the preparation and written approval of a Master Plan by the Executive of the Planning Authority.
- The introduction of additional lands for the provision of retail warehouse facilities which previously had the benefit of a retail warehouse zoning to the rear of the existing Aldi retail store in order to provide for the comprehensive development of these lands to the north of Kells and adjacent to an interchange on the M3 Motorway. The development of retail warehouse parks shall be subject to the provision of necessary physical infrastructure, and, where deemed appropriate by Meath County Council at pre-planning stage, in accordance with an approved Masterplan.
- Amendments to the employment zoning objectives set in order to provide more flexibility in the provision of employment generating uses. This will ensure consistency with the County Development Plan zoning objectives.
- Amendments to take account of flood risk mapping published since adoption of the Kells Development Plan (undertaken in October 2013)

Figure 2.1 below shows the proposed revised zoning within Kells town boundary.



Master Plan 2 will relate to undeveloped lands adjacent to the Aldi foodstore on the Cavan Road north of Kells town centre to facilitate the provision of inter alia Enterprise and Garden Centres, Research and Development facilities, office uses where services are not principally provided to members of the public, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, amongst other uses in a good quality physical environment.

Master Plan 4 will relate to the development of the “Front lands” located to the west of Bective Street/Bective Square/Suffolk Street.

Master Plan 6 relates to lands on the western side of the Navan Road and is to facilitate the provision of high end technology/ manufacturing and major campus style office based employment and/or to facilitate logistics, warehousing, distribution and supply chain management subject to the preparation of a Master Plan by the land owner(s) which shall have the written approval of the Executive of the Planning Authority.

Master Plan 7 will refer to the development of high quality Executive Style residential units south of the existing Maple Drive residential development and to be accessed off the Athboy Road.

2.4 Policies and Objectives in Variation No. 1 of the Kells Development Plan

A number of amendments to the Kells Development Plan were proposed in order to incorporate the recommendations of the Meath Economic Development Strategy and to align the Kells Development Plan with the County Development Plan as varied.

New policies and objectives or text introduced into a policy or objective is identified in blue. Text removed from policies and objectives can be seen with a strikethrough e.g. ~~striketrough~~ in blue.

• Core Strategy OBJ 1

The development of new residential properties at Rabbit Hill Wood along the Headfort Road shall be linked to the opening of a publicly accessible river walk. ~~This proposal shall be subject to a Framework Plan being agreed in writing with Meath County Council. The Framework Plan shall provide inter alia the following;~~ Development shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands.....

..... ~~No application for development within the subject lands will be considered in the absence of the required Framework Plan having first being agreed in writing with Meath County Council. When prepared, all subsequent applications for development~~ The Master Plan shall be accompanied ~~with by~~ a design statement ~~demonstrating compliance with the Framework Plan.~~

• Core Strategy OBJ 2

The development of new high quality Executive Style residential properties south of the existing Maple Drive residential development along the Athboy Road. Development shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands.

The Master Plan shall address the following:

- Provision of high quality residential accommodation at an appropriate density
- A consistent design theme of high architectural merit shall be provided for the development;
- A high standard of design, finish and layout;
- A comprehensive landscaping plan;
- Infrastructural requirements including access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists
- The allocation of residential units to these lands shall remain within the Core Strategy parameters.

The Master Plan shall be accompanied by a design statement.

• Creation of E1 Employment Objective

E1-Strategic Employment Zones (High Technology Uses)

Objective-To facilitate opportunities for high end technology/manufacturing and major campus style office based employment within high quality and accessible locations.

Guidance:

E1 zones facilitate opportunities for high end, high value added businesses and corporate headquarters. This adheres to the concept of 4th generation Science & Technology Parks. It is envisaged that such locations are suitable for high density employment generating activity with associated commercial development located adjacent to or in close proximity to high frequency public transport corridors.

Permitted Uses

Bio-Technology Manufacturing, Call Centres, Childcare Facility, Convenience Outlet, Green/Clean Light Industries, Education (third level), High Technology Manufacturing, Information Communication Technologies, International and National Traded Services, Knowledge Based Economic Development, Offices 100 to 1,000 sq m, Offices >1,000 sq m, Research & Development, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Telecommunication Structures, water services/Public Services.

Open for Consideration Uses: Advertisement and Advertising Structures, Conference/Event Centre, Education, Enterprise/Training Centre, Leisure facilities, Hotel/Apart hotel, Industry-light, Restaurant/Cafe, Petrol Station, Transport Depot/Logistics, Warehousing

Uses not listed under the “permissible” or “open for consideration” categories will be assessed on their own merits ,however any such uses shall not conflict with the primary land-use objective to provide for the creation and production of enterprise and employment.

• **Revision of E2 Employment Objective**

Objective: To provide for the creation of enterprise and facilitate opportunities for employment through industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and other general employment /enterprise uses in a good quality physical environment.

Guidance (General):

E2 lands constitute an important land bank for employment use which must be protected. The development of E2 lands seek to provide for the creation and production of enterprise and facilitate opportunities for industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and other general employment/enterprise uses in a good quality physical environment.

It shall be the policy of Meath County Council to apply a more flexible approach to large scale office type development in excess of 200 sq m of gross floor area in significant areas (i.e. in excess of 3hectares of land that is currently undeveloped) of E2 land use zoning objective under the following conditions:

- The preparation of a non statutory Master Plan to ensure the provision of the necessary physical infrastructure, the appropriate density and design of layout and the interface between proposed uses and existing development. This document should be submitted in conjunction with any planning applications arising;
- That all processes being operated in the vicinity of the site, similarly zoned E2, are classified as light industrial in nature, as defined in the Planning & Development Regulations 2001-2013;
- That the site is located adjacent to a public transport corridor and is served by an adequate road network, and:

- That the application is accompanied by a viable Mobility Management Plan which is to the satisfaction of Meath County Council and provides for the achievement of acceptable modal shares for both public and private transport within an appropriate timeframe.

Existing employment generating uses together with their expansion to an appropriate scale and size, consistent with the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and the National transport Authority Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area, shall be facilitated notwithstanding the category of settlement specified.

The majority of the E2 zoned lands in Kells are located in the Kells Business Park off the Cavan Road. A new ~~framework Master plan to guide future development in the undeveloped areas of the park~~ is of the undeveloped areas of the Business Park ~~contained in Appendix G of this Plan~~ shall be prepared by the land owner(s) which shall have the written approval of the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall provide for all of the aspects outlined with specific objective ED OBJ 5 outlined within Chapter 3 - Economy and Employment.

- **Creation of E3 Employment objective**

Objective: To facilitate logistics, warehousing, distribution and supply chain management inclusive of related industry facilities which require good access to the major road network.

Permitted Uses:

Bring Banks, car park (incl. Of park and Ride), CHP/Waste to Energy Facilities, Distribution and Supply Chain management, Domestic Fuel Depot, Energy Installation, Fuel Depot, Heavy Vehicle Park, Logistics, Plant Storage, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Telecommunication storage depot, Transport Depot, Warehousing, Water Services / Public Services, Wholesale Warehousing / Cash and Carry

Open for Consideration Uses

Agri-Business, ~~Childcare facility~~, Enterprise & Business Start Ups, Enterprise/Training Centre, Garden Centre, Industry-Light, Petrol Station, ~~Restaurant / Cafe~~, Waste Recycling /Transfer / Sorting Centre.

Uses not listed under the permissible or 'open for consideration' categories will be assessed on their own merits, however any such uses shall not conflict with the primary land-use objective to facilitate logistics, warehousing and distribution type facilities.

- **WL White Lands Objective**

These are strategic lands located adjoining the site identified for the proposed Regional Hospital and their designation is to allow for a long term, integrated approach to the taken to the expansion of an urban area. It is not generally envisaged that development proposals will be brought forward during the life of this Development Plan for such lands. No indication is therefore generally offered regarding the suitability or otherwise of individual uses on said lands within this Development Plan. The acceptability of specific proposals for development on the lands prior to that time, e.g. an expansion to an existing permitted business, will be

considered on their merits. It is vital that such lands are protected against developments which would impede the orderly expansion of an urban area. Should the Planning Authority be satisfied that a project proposed for lands with a white land designation would assist with the implementation of the Economic Strategy, these lands can be released for development during the plan period.

- **ED POL 1**

To implement the policies, actions and recommendations of the Economic Development strategy for County Meath

- **ED POL 2**

To encourage and facilitate the successful development of Kells Business Park identified as a strategic employment site in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022.

- **ED POL 6**

To continue to support and promote existing industries and enterprises in Kells and build upon the status of Kells as part of an EU designated Regional Aid area and to explore funding streams such as the REDZ initiative to support enterprise within Meath.

- **ED POL 9**

To facilitate the sustainable development of commercial, office, incubator units, light industrial and warehousing development on appropriately zoned and serviced lands in co-operation with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and the ~~County Enterprise Board~~ Local Enterprise Office.

- **ED OBJ 3**

To provide for strategic employment uses predominantly lead by a Science Park for Innovation and Research or similar high-end Business and/or Corporate Headquarters, primarily FDI, requiring a significant site area at Navan Road, Kells. Development shall be on a phased basis and in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands

The Master Plan shall address the following:

- A design concept for the lands;
- Guidance for high quality design throughout the development;
- Building heights and densities;
- A landscape plan for the development and landscape management plan (post-completion of the development);
- Flood Risk Assessment which takes account of the most up to date available CFRAMS data;
- A Transport Assessment which addresses the following issues:
 - 1) Access arrangements to the development sites;
 - 2) Provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the development site;

3) Provision and access for Service Vehicles to the site:

- **ED OBJ 4**

To provide for employment uses predominantly lead by industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and other general employment/enterprise uses within the Kells Business Park. Development shall be on a phased basis and shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on the undeveloped lands

The Master Plan shall address the following:

- A design concept for the lands;
- Guidance for high quality design throughout the development;
- Building heights and densities;
- A landscape plan for the development and landscape management plan (post-completion of the development);
- Flood Risk Assessment which takes account of the most up to date available CFRAMS data;
- A Transport Assessment which addresses the following issues:
 - 1) Access arrangements to the development sites;
 - 2) Provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the development site;
 - 3) Provision and access for Service Vehicles to the site.

- **ED OBJ 5**

To provide for the development of retail warehouse uses on lands adjacent to the existing Aldi foodstore on the Cavan Road in a good quality physical environment. Development shall be on a phased basis and shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands

The Master Plan shall address the following:

- A design concept for the lands;
- Guidance for high quality design throughout the development;
- Building heights and densities;
- A landscape plan for the development and landscape management plan (post-completion of the development);
- Flood Risk Assessment which takes account of the most up to date available CFRAMS data;
- A Transport Assessment which addresses the following issues:
 - 1) Access arrangements to the development sites;
 - 2) Provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the development site;
 - 3) Provision and access for Service Vehicles to the site.

- **TOUR POL 5**

To co-operate with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Meath Boyne Valley Tourism, Louth County Council, Boyne Valley and any other relevant bodies in the implementation of the Boyne Valley Destination Development Strategy Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 and Ireland's Ancient East Programme.

- **TOUR OBJ 1**

To implement the recommendations of the Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 Drive Infrastructure Study, the Tourism Route Interpretation Plan for the Boyne Valley Drive and the Interpretative Plan for Boyne Valley Orientation Points as they apply to the town of Kells and its environs

- **TOUR OBJ 2**

To facilitate the creation of a cultural quarter hub in Kells in accordance with the provisions of the Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 as a cultural hub and support retail, tourism and artisan development in Kells. a cluster of creative and cultural industries with galleries, craft shops, potteries, goldsmiths and jewellery designers, artisan foods, restaurants, cafes, etc. - in the Market Street, Church Hill, Church Street, New Market Street and Canon Street. Flexibility of land use zoning considerations shall apply whereby proposals can demonstrate consistency with this policy and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

- **TOUR OBJ 5**

To prepare and implement an overall tourism and amenity development strategy for the Town Council land bank at Lloyd. which would, inter alia, implement the recommendations contained in the Boyne Valley Drive Infrastructure Study & Tourism Route Interpretation Plan for the Boyne Valley Drive. The preparation of the development strategy shall be completed within 2 years of the adoption of this Development Plan, subject to funding. In addition, future development proposals will be subject to a Traffic & Transport Assessment (TTA), where appropriate, in relation to the potential impact of any specific development on the national road network in the area.

2.5 Relationships with other relevant Plans and Programmes.

The Variation to the Kells Development Plan sits within a hierarchy of strategic actions such as plans and programmes, including those listed below and detailed in Section 3 of this Report. The varied Plan must comply with relevant higher level strategic actions such as policies and objectives of the relevant County Development Plan.

The Variation is subject to a number of high level environmental protection policies and objectives with which it must comply, including those which have been identified as Strategic Environmental Objectives in Section 6. Examples of Environmental Protection Objectives include the aims of the EU Habitats Directive - which is to contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of Member States - and to improve the quality and status of surface waters and groundwater.

2.6 Implications of Variation No. 1 to the Kells Town Development Plan

Article 9 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended, sets out criteria for determining whether SEA should be undertaken on certain types of plans. Considering these criteria, Meath County Council concluded that an SEA was required for the Variation to the Kells Development Plan, as it comprises a Variation which is likely to have significant environmental effects.

The findings of the SEA are set out in this Environmental Report, which accompanied Variation No. 1 on public display. These findings have been slightly altered in order to take account of any changes which have been made to the variation on foot of submissions. Meath County Council have also taken into account the findings of this Environmental Report during their consideration of the Variation and before it is finalised. On finalisation of the Variation, a SEA Statement is prepared which summarises, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the document.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology used to carry out the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Variation No. 2 reflects the requirements of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC), SEA Regulations (S.I. 435 & 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. 200 & 201 of 2011 respectively) and various SEA Guidance documentation as noted in sub-section 2.2.1 of this Environmental Report.

The SEA process follows a sequential step by step process as set out in Table 3.1 whereby the preparation of the Variation is integrated with the SEA and AA processes as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

This Environmental Report takes account of the content of SEA scoping submissions from environmental authorities and the environmental impacts of the Variation have been predicted, evaluated and mitigated.

Table 3.1 – Stages in the SEA Process

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Screening	<p>The screening process is the first stage of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. Screening assesses the need to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment.</p> <p>The decision is made after having regard to the relevant criteria as set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule 2A of S.I. No. 436/2004 – Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations, as amended, and whether the implementation of the Plan or Programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment. Having regard to the relevant criteria as set out in Schedule 2A of S.I. No. 436/2004 - Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations, as amended, screening concluded that the Variation No.1 to the Kells Town Development Plan should be subject to full Strategic Environmental Assessment</p>
Scoping	<p>Scoping, which is the second stage in the SEA process, allows for determination of the range of key issues, to be addressed in the Environmental Report (Stage 3) as set out in S.I. 436/2004, as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011 and in Annex I of the SEA Directive.</p>

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
	Scoping ensures that the SEA is focused on the relevant environmental issues and examines issues at the appropriate level of detail. The Scoping Stage also allows for consultation via a Scoping Report with the Statutory Authorities. By highlighting some of the significant issues at an early stage, it ensures that the issues are firmly to the forefront when considering each of the policies and objectives of the Variation and reduces the possibility of relevant issues not being addressed.
Consultation with Environmental Authorities	<p>Submissions were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environmental Protection Agency • Inland Fisheries Ireland <p>Submissions received from Environmental Authorities were reviewed and incorporated into the SEA process as appropriate.</p>
Preparation of Variation to the Kells Town Development Plan & SEA Environmental Report	<p>A multi-disciplinary team has been established to create policy consistent documents and to examine the effects on the environment of implementing the objectives and policies.</p> <p>Objectives created in the Variation have been assessed in the Environmental Report and proposed measures for the area examined.</p> <p>Feedback has been received throughout the Variation preparation process & Environmental Report preparation</p> <p>Mitigation measures have been discussed and selected.</p> <p>Monitoring of implementation of Variation.</p>
Consultation	Consultation on the Variation and accompanying Environmental Report, Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.
Evaluation of submissions	Evaluation of submissions and observations made on the Variation, Environmental Report, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.
Finalisation of the Variation No. 1, Environmental Report & SEA Statement	Finalisation of the Variation No.1 and SEA Environmental Report. SEA Statement prepared identifying how environmental considerations and consultations have been integrated into the final variation.
Monitoring	Monitoring of significant environmental effects over the lifetime of Variation No. 1.

3.2 SEA Screening

The SEA Directive and Regulations state that full SEA is a mandatory requirement in respect of certain Plans or Programmes, for example, Development Plans (City or County) where the population or target population of the area is 10,000 persons or more.

As SEA is not mandatory for Variation No. 1 to the Kells Development Plan, the Variation was subject to SEA Screening. The screening assessment concluded that Variation No. 1 to the Kells

Town Development Plan 2013-2019 had the potential to result in likely significant effects on the environment and therefore should be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment.

3.3 Scoping

SEA Scoping allows for determination of the range of key issues, to be addressed in the environmental assessment and detailed in the Environmental Report. Scoping took place with the following environmental authorities:

- the Environmental Protection Agency;
- the Minister of the Environment, Community and Local Government (now the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government);
- the Minister of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
- the Minister of Agriculture, Marine & Food.
- the Minister of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and the Gaeltacht Affairs; and
- the surrounding planning authorities of Louth County Council, Monaghan County Council, Cavan County Council, Westmeath County Council, Offaly County Council, Kildare County Council and Fingal County Council.

3.3.1 Scoping Responses

Submissions were received from the following statutory consultees:

- the Environmental Protection Agency;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland

Table 3.2 below outlines the issues raised in submissions and the response and how these issues have been addressed within the preparation of the Environmental Report.

Table 3.2 – Summary of Scoping Submissions

CONSULTEE AND COMMENTS	RESPONSE
Environmental Protection Agency	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledged receipt of the Scoping Report for the Draft Variation No.1 to Kells Town Development Plan. • Recommend that a commitment is included in the Variation to collaborate with Irish Water on the provision, maintenance and enhancement of water services over the lifetime of the amended Plan to cater for development within the Plan area. • Provided an SEA Integration guidance document setting out the key environmental issues to be taken into account in the preparation of the SEA and Draft Plan. 	Comments and suggestions have been considered in the preparation of the Environmental Report
Inland Fisheries Ireland	
<p>In determining the likely significant effects of the some key issues from a fisheries perspective for consideration in the SEA, the IFI recommended the consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality • Fish spawning and nursery areas • Ecosystem structure and functioning • Sport and commercial fishing and angling 	Noted and incorporated into Environmental Report

CONSULTEE AND COMMENTS	RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amenity and recreational areas <p>While many of our watercourses are designated under European and National legislation (SAC, SPA, NHA, Ramsar) a significant portion are located outside areas under formal European designation but may hold species that are designated under the European Habitats Directive i.e. salmon and lamprey (sea, river and brook), which are listed as an Annex II Species.</p> <p>The IFI expressed concerns about the limitations imposed with regard to the necessity for potable water and wastewater treatment and would ask that there would be no population expansion in the absence of these issues being resolved.</p> <p>The following baseline information was also provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding Section 5.2.4.2 – Water Quality – Central Fisheries Board should read Inland Fisheries Ireland. • the Kells Blackwater EPA station monitored downstream of Kells (Donaghagh Bridge) has deteriorated from a 3-4 or moderate status to a Q3 or poor status (2015). 	

3.4 Environmental Report

The information to be provided in the Environmental Report is set out in Annex I of the SEA Directive and reproduced in Schedule 2B of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as inserted by article 12 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 as amended). This report contains the sections as outlined in Table 3.2.

In this SEA Environmental Report, which was placed on public display alongside Variation No. 1, the likely environmental effects of the Variation and the alternatives were predicted and their significance evaluated with regard to the environmental baseline. The Environmental Report provides stakeholders and the public with a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of implementing the Variation.

Mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential negative effects posed by the Variation are identified in Section 9.

The Environmental Report will be updated in order to take account of recommendations contained in submissions and to take account of changes which are made to the original Variation that is being placed on public display.

No significant difficulties have been encountered during the undertaking of the assessment to date.

Table 3.3: SEA Report Structure

SECTION	DESCRIPTION
Non-Technical Summary	A brief summary of the Environmental Report, its main points and conclusions.
Introduction & Background	This section outlines the purpose of the Environmental Report and Strategic Environmental Assessment as well as providing a brief description of the Variation.
SEA Process	The steps taken in Strategic Environmental Assessment and in the preparation of the Environmental Report, including the methods used and technical difficulties encountered.
Review of Relevant Policies, Plans and Programmes	The relationship of the Variation to other relevant plans and programmes is highlighted.
Baseline Environment	A description of the current environment of the Kells plan boundary area is given, highlighting any existing environmental problems. This exercise results in a comprehensive baseline against which the likely effects of implementing the Variation can be examined.
Strategic Environmental Objectives	A number of environmental protection objectives which have been established at international, EU or national Level and are relevant to the Variation are listed. Following this, a description of how the objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account in the preparation of the Variation is given.
Alternatives	An assessment of alternatives to the approach as set out in the Variation are considered and assessed.
Environmental Assessment	An examination of the measures and objectives of the Variation in terms of its potential effects on the various Environmental parameters.
Mitigation Measures	Should potentially significant effects be discovered, measures to avoid, reduce or offset these effects are proposed and integrated into the Variation, as appropriate.
Monitoring	Proposals for monitoring the significant effects of the Variation on the environment are put forward. A number of indicators of change and targets are identified and existing monitoring arrangements are utilised.

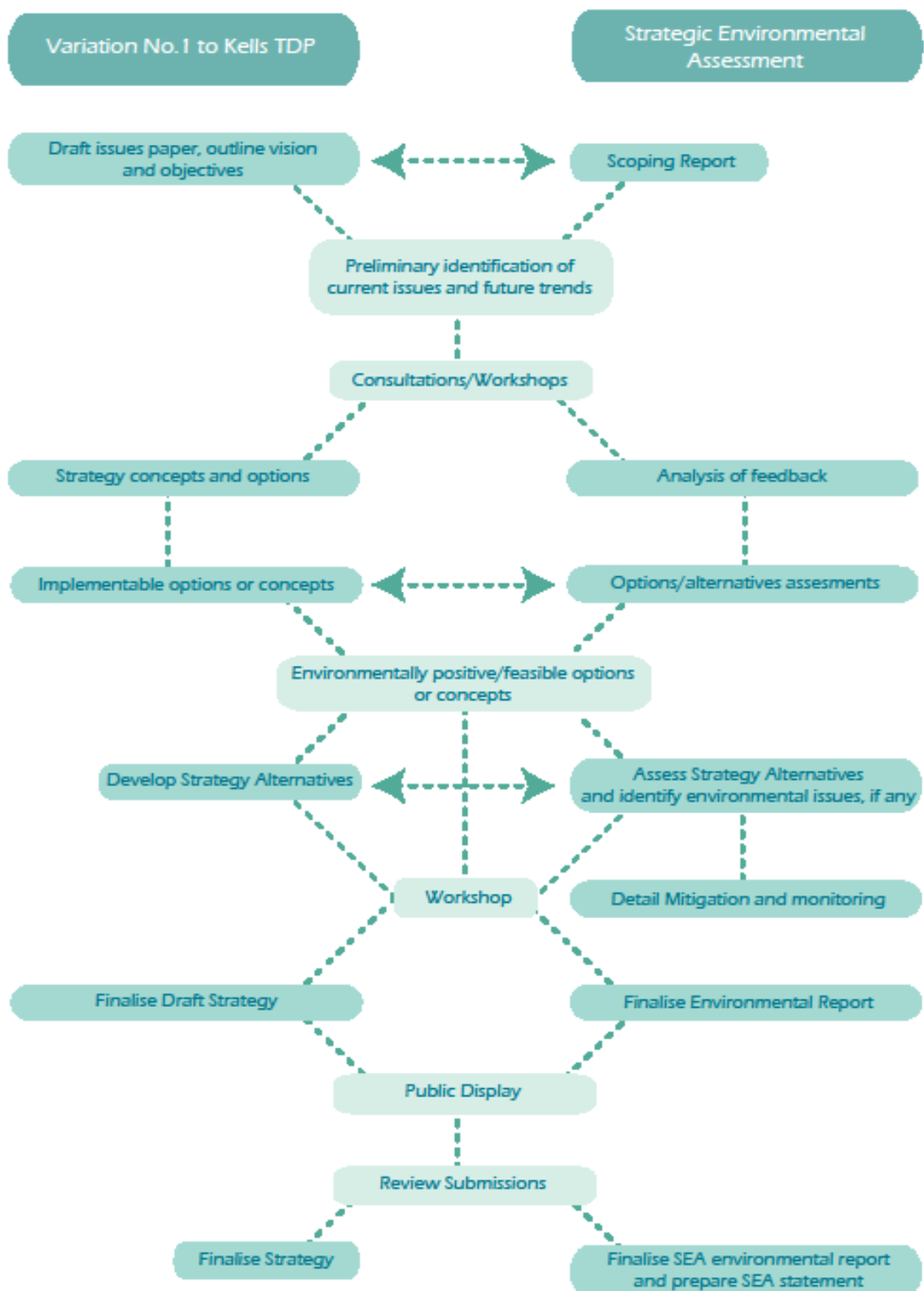


Figure 3.1 Outline of Variation No. 1 and integration with SEA Process

3.5 SEA Statement

When Variation No. 1 is finalised, a SEA Statement will be prepared which will include information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Variation, highlighting the changes to the Variation which resulted from the SEA process;
- How the SEA Environmental Report and consultations have been taken into account, summarising the key issues raised in consultations and in the Environmental Report indicating what action was taken in response;
- The reasons for choosing the Variation in the light of other alternatives considered, identifying these alternatives, commenting on their potential effects and explaining why the final Variation was selected; and the measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing of the plan.

3.6 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The need for 'Appropriate Assessment' (AA) arises out of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) (on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).

The Variation was subject to separate screening assessment for AA and determined that a Natura Impact Report (NIR) would be prepared. As documented in the NIR, following an analysis and evaluation of Variation No. 1 to the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 (the primary purpose of which is to incorporate the Meath Economic Development Strategy into the Kells Development Plan) in light of best scientific knowledge, it was objectively concluded that Variation No. 1 to the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 does not pose a risk of adversely affecting the integrity of any European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

3.7 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has also been carried out and accompanies the Variation at public consultation. The findings of the SFRA were considered in the preparation of this Environmental Report.

4.0 Review of Relevant Policies, Plans and Programmes

4.1 Introduction

The Variation is framed within a hierarchy of spatial plans which range from the international down to site specific level. These plans are informed by International, National and Regional level policy guidelines. This hierarchy of plans, programmes, policies and strategies sets the legislative and policy framework by which the Variation must be formulated. The National, Regional and County strategies and policies play a central role in establishing higher level agendas and the county level plan objectives. The Kells Town Development Plan is required to conform to and translate the objectives of these higher levels plans, in particular the Meath County Development Plan 2014-2022 to a town plan area basis.

The SEA Directive requires that the SEA process should include a review of other plans or programmes, which are associated to and concern the assessment of the Variation. The key issue is that the Variation and its SEA has taken due consideration of the objectives set out in the legislative and policy framework. The following plans, programmes, policies, strategies and guidelines are relevant to the making of Variation No. 1.

4.2 European and National Legislation & Policy

4.1.1 *Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) as amended*

The EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) requires all Member States to protect and improve water quality in all waters so that we achieve good ecological status by 2015 or, at the latest, by 2027. It was given legal effect in Ireland by the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003). It applies to rivers, lakes, groundwater, and transitional coastal waters. The Directive requires that management plans be prepared on a river basin basis and specifies a structured method for developing these plans.

River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) are plans to protect and improve Ireland's water environment. They are prepared and reviewed every six years. Preparation of the 2nd Cycle RBMPs is now underway.

For the 2nd Cycle, the Eastern, South Eastern, South Western, Western and Shannon River Basin Districts will be merged to form one national River Basin District. In relation to the North Western and Neagh Bann International River Basin Districts a single administrative area will be established in the Republic of Ireland portion of these two IRBDs for the purpose of coordinating their management with authorities in Northern Ireland

While this rearrangement will lead to efficiencies in relation to matters such as assessment and reporting, regionalised administrative structures will be put in place to support implementation (e.g. river basin district characterisation, the development of programmes of measures, enforcement, public consultation and awareness activities). Arrangements will also need to be put in place to facilitate the input of communities at local catchment level.

4.1.2 Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)

Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks entered into force on 26 November 2007. The Directive aims to establish a common framework for assessing and reducing the risk that floods within the European Union pose to human health, the environment, property and economic activity. This Directive requires Member States to assess if all water courses and coast lines are at risk from flooding, to map the flood extent and assets and humans at risk in these areas and to take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce this flood risk. This includes the preparation and implementation of flood risk management plans for each river basin district. This Directive also reinforces the rights of the public to access this information and to have a say in the planning process.

4.1.3 EC Freshwater Fish Directive, (78/659/EEC) 1978

The aim of the EU Freshwater Fish Directive (78/659/EEC) is to protect fish life from pollution discharge into waters and lays out water sampling and monitoring procedures and definitions. The Directive was ratified by Ireland by S.I. No. 293 of 1988, and aims to protect those fresh water bodies identified by Member States as waters suitable for sustaining fish populations. The Directive is due to be repealed in 2013 by the EU Water Framework Directive.

4.1.4 The Groundwater Directive, (2006/118/EC) 2006

This Directive establishes a regime which sets underground water quality standards and introduces measures to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater. The directive establishes quality criteria that takes account local characteristics and allows for further improvements to be made based on monitoring data and new scientific knowledge. The directive thus represents a proportionate and scientifically sound response to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) as it relates to assessments on chemical status of groundwater and the identification and reversal of significant and sustained upward trends in pollutant concentrations. Member States will have to establish the standards at the most appropriate level and take into account local or regional conditions.

The groundwater directive complements the Water Framework Directive. It requires:

- groundwater quality standards to be established by the end of 2008;
- pollution trend studies to be carried out by using existing data and data which is mandatory by the Water Framework Directive (referred to as "baseline level" data obtained in 2007-2008);
- pollution trends to be reversed so that environmental objectives are achieved by 2015 by using the measures set out in the WFD;
- measures to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater to be operational so that WFD environmental objectives can be achieved by 2015;
- reviews of technical provisions of the directive to be carried out in 2013 and every six years thereafter;
- compliance with good chemical status criteria (based on EU standards of nitrates and pesticides and on threshold values established by Member States).

A public consultation on the review of Annexes I and II of the Groundwater Directive was carried out in 2013 with the aim of collecting opinions on different policy options for the review of the Annexes, and to identify missing options and gather data on impacts.

4.1.5 *EC Bathing Water Quality Directive, (2006/7/EC) 2006*

This Directive strengthens the rules guaranteeing bathing water quality. It supplements Directive 2000/60/EC on water protection and management.

Each year, the Member States are required to identify the bathing waters in their territory and define the length of the bathing season.

They shall establish monitoring at the location most used by bathers or where the risk of pollution is greatest. Monitoring shall take place by means of sampling:

- four samples, including one before the start of the bathing season.
- three samples only if the season does not exceed eight weeks or if the region is subject to special geographical constraints.

Member States shall communicate the results of their monitoring to the European Commission with a description of the water quality management measures. Monitoring may be suspended exceptionally once the Commission has been informed.

4.1.6 *EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, (2009/147/EC) 1979*

This Directive ensures far-reaching protection for all of Europe's wild birds, identifying 194 species and sub-species among them as particularly threatened and in need of special conservation measures. There are a number of components to this scheme:

Member States are required to designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for 194 particularly threatened species and all migratory bird species. SPAs are scientifically identified areas critical for the survival of the targeted species, such as wetlands. They are part of the Natura 2000 ecological network set up under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

A second component bans activities that directly threaten birds, such as the deliberate killing or capture of birds, the destruction of their nests and taking of their eggs, and associated activities such as trading in live or dead birds (with a few exceptions).

A third component establishes rules that limit the number of bird species that can be hunted and the periods during which they can be hunted. It also defines hunting methods which are permitted (e.g. non-selective hunting is banned).

4.1.7 *EU Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna, (92/43/EEC), 1992*

In conjunction with the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive forms the backbone of EU nature protection legislation.

Known as the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) this legislation was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 (S.I. No. 94 of 1997). The main goal of the Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain, protect or restore natural habitats, animal and plant species to a favourable conservation status, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance. For Ireland, these habitats include raised bogs, active blanket bogs, turloughs, sand dunes, machair (flat sandy plains on the north and west coasts), heaths, lakes, rivers, woodlands, estuaries and sea inlets. The Directive provides for a network of protected sites known as The Natura 2000 network,

which limits the extent and nature of development which may have a detrimental effect on the flora or fauna identified therein. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are part of the Natura 2000 Network and as such Ireland is required to propose relevant areas for designation as SACs to ensure the natural habitats and species habitats are maintained and restored if necessary to a favourable conservation status. Animals and plant species that are in need of strict protection are listed in Annexes to the Directive. The Habitats Directive is considered the most important EU initiative to support National and International biodiversity.

4.1.8 *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011*

These regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats)(Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in the CJEU judgements.

Articles 6(1) and (2) of the Regulations require Member States to take appropriate conservation measures to maintain and restore habitats and species, for which a site has been designated, to a favourable conservation status. Furthermore the Regulations require Member States to avoid damaging activities that could significantly disturb these species or deteriorate the habitats of the protected species or habitat types. Under these regulations any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall undergo an Appropriate Assessment to determine its implications for the site.

The competent authorities can only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned. In exceptional circumstances, a plan or project may still be allowed to go ahead, in spite of a negative assessment, provided there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project is considered to be of overriding public interest. In such cases the Member State must take appropriate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 Network is protected. Article 12 of the Regulations is also important as it affords protection to specific species regardless of their location.

4.1.9 *SEA Directive - Assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment, (2001/42/EC) 2001*

This Directive requires plan-makers to carry out an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before the plan or programme is adopted. There are two statutory instruments which transposed the SEA Directive into Irish Law:

The SEA Directive (2001/42/EEC) came into force in 2004 and was subsequently transposed into Irish law through S.I. No. 435 of 2004 European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 and S.I. No. 436 of 2004 Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 and S.I. No. 201 of 2011 Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 respectively.

4.1.10 Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC) (97/11/EC), 1985

The EIA Directive (85/337/EEC) came into force in 1985 and applies to a wide range of defined public and private projects, which are defined in Annexes I and II of the Directive. The Directive has been amended three times, in 1997, 2003 and 2009. Under the Directive Member States are required to carry out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) of certain public and private projects, before they are authorised, where it is believed that the projects are likely to have a significant impact on the environment.

The initial Directive of 1985 and its three amendments have been codified by Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011.

4.1.11 Environmental Noise Directive 2006

The objectives of EU and Irish noise legislation is “to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole”, and this includes noise nuisance. To this effect the Plan should ensure this requirement is complied with. The assessment and management of noise from the main infrastructural transport sources (roads, rail, and airports) are governed by the Environmental Noise Directive and associated 2006 Environmental Noise Regulations (S.I. 140 of 2006). In this context, as appropriate, the Plan should promote the implementation of Environmental Noise Directive and associated national regulations. <http://www.environ.ie/environment/noise/si-140-2006environmental-noise-regulations-2006>

Available Noise Action Plans should be taken into account also and reviewed as required, to reflect the Plan period and associated development proposals. Consideration should be given to any relevant noise maps, and action plans. Strategic noise maps are designed to assess noise exposure resulting from major roads, railways and airports. Noise action plans are designed to act as a means of managing environmental noise through land use planning, traffic management and control of noise sources. The third round of noise mapping is currently underway in Ireland and will be completed in 2018. <http://noise.eionet.europa.eu/help.html>.

4.1.12 European Landscape Convention 2000

The 2000 European Landscape Convention, adopted in Florence (and was ratified by Ireland in 2002), requires a commitment to introduce policies on landscape protection and management. It promotes the protection, management and planning of EU landscapes as a response to European-wide concerns that the quality and diversity of landscapes were deteriorating. The underlying purpose of the Convention is to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, Regional, National and International level to protect and manage landscapes throughout Europe.

4.1.13 National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is a coherent national planning framework for Ireland for the next 20 years. The NSS aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective planning. The Strategy aims to achieve balanced development throughout the country by setting out a range of measures to be implemented at the national, regional, county and local level.

The focus of the NSS is on people, places and building communities. The NSS is intended to provide an upper-tier of strategic guidance that feeds into general government policy-making and also into the regional and local development planning framework. In order to further these aims, the NSS sets down a series of policies in relation to: employment, housing, rural development, access to services, and quality of life/environmental quality. The strategy identifies a limited number of Regional Gateways and Hubs. Meath is located within the Dublin and Mid East Region as designated by the NSS.

A new National Planning Framework is currently being developed to succeed the National Spatial Strategy. It will provide a framework for national planning, pulling together relevant Government policies and investment on national and regional development. It will have a focus on economic development and investment in housing, water services, transport, communications, energy, and health and education infrastructure at national, regional and local level.

The National Planning Framework will be a statement of the Government's objectives for Ireland's spatial development and it will form the top tier of Ireland's planning policy hierarchy.

4.1.14 Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005

The Rural Housing Guidelines seek to ensure that sustainable housing development patterns are supported in rural areas and that the policies and practices of planning authorities should seek to:

- (1) Ensure that the needs of rural communities are identified in the development plan process and that policies are put in place to ensure that the type and scale of residential and other development in rural areas, at appropriate locations, necessary to sustain rural communities is accommodated.
- (2) Manage pressure for overspill development from urban areas in the rural areas closest to the main cities and towns such as the gateways, hubs, and other large towns.
- (3) Take account of other related dimensions in relation to rural settlement such as environmental and heritage protection and the need to maintain the integrity of economic resources

The Guidelines suggest that settlement strategies should start by putting forward a development vision for rural areas that:

- Aims to support the sustainable development of these areas in economic, social and environmental terms in a way that supports the rural economy and rural communities,
- Ensures that development of rural areas takes place in a way that is compatible with the protection of key economic, environmental and natural and cultural heritage assets such as the road network, water quality, important landscapes, key identified areas with wind energy potential, habitats and built heritage, and
- Promotes the development and consolidation of key settlements in rural areas.

4.1.15 *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities, (2007)*

This 2007 policy statement provides for an integrated approach to housing and planning in Ireland. The policy recognises that continued strong demand for housing presents major challenges in respect of the planning of new housing and associated services. Sustainable neighbourhoods involve the efficient use of land and quality urban design, effectively integrated with the supply of appropriate physical and social infrastructure by providing a quality environment; sustainable neighbourhoods also contribute to the provision of attractive locations to support the NSS objective for a more coherent form of future regional development.

4.1.16 *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities, (2007)*

Design guidelines intended to assist in the implementation of the policies set out in *Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities* (above). The aim of these Guidelines is to identify principles and criteria that are important in the design of housing and to highlight specific design features, requirements and standards that have been found to be particularly relevant.

4.1.17 *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments. Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2007)*

The primary aim of these guidelines is to promote sustainable urban housing, by ensuring that the design and layout of new apartments will provide satisfactory accommodation for a variety of household types and sizes – including families with children - over the medium to long term.

These guidelines provide recommended minimum standards for:

- floor areas for different types of apartments,
- storage spaces,
- sizes for apartment balconies / patios, and
- room dimensions for certain rooms

4.1.18 *Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020*

This document represents the transport policy for Ireland for the period 2009-2020

Key goals of this policy are:

- (i) To reduce overall travel demand,
- (ii) To maximise the efficiency of the transport network,
- (iii) To reduce reliance on fossil fuels,
- (iv) To reduce transport emissions, and
- (v) To improve accessibility to transport.

The policy sets out 49 Key Actions for achieving sustainable transport. They can be grouped into the following four themes:

- Actions to reduce distance travelled by private car and encourage smarter travel.
- Actions aimed at ensuring that alternatives to the car are more widely available.
- Actions aimed at strengthening institutional arrangements to deliver the targets.

- Actions aimed at improving the fuel efficiency of motorised transport.

4.1.19 *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (and Technical Appendices) for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, OPW), 2009*

These guidelines require the planning system at national, regional and local levels to:

- Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding, particularly floodplains, unless there are proven wider sustainability grounds that justify appropriate development and where the flood risk can be reduced or managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere;
- Adopt a sequential approach to flood risk management when assessing the location for new development based on avoidance, reduction and mitigation of flood risk; and
- Incorporate flood risk assessment into the process of making decisions on planning applications and planning appeals

In relation to planning the guidelines require planning authorities to:

- Introduce flood risk assessment as an integral and leading element of their forward planning functions at the earliest practicable opportunity.
- Align strategic flood risk assessment (SFRA) with the SEA process.
- Establish flood risk assessment requirements as part of the preparation of statutory land use plans.
- Assess planning applications against the guidance set out in the Guidelines.
- Ensure development is not permitted in areas of flood risk except where there are no suitable alternative sites.

4.1.20 *National Renewable Energy Action Plan, (NREAP) 2010*

Submitted under Article 4 of Directive 2009/28/EC this plan sets out Ireland's renewable energy targets to be achieved by 2020. Ireland's overall target is to achieve 16% of energy from renewable sources by 2020. Member states are to achieve their individual target across the heat, transport and electricity sectors and apart from a sub-target of a minimum of 10% in the transport sector that applies to all Member States, there is flexibility for each country to choose how to achieve their individual target across the sectors.

4.1.21 *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)*

Formulated to assist with compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive Article 6(3) states that:

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Appropriate Assessment is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of the plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

4.1.22 *Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000*

The Wildlife Act is Ireland's primary national legislation for the protection of wildlife. It covers a broad range of issues, from the designation of nature reserves, the protection of species, regulation of hunting and controls in wildlife trading. It is implemented by a series

of regulations. The Act provides strict protection for nearly all birds, 22 other animal species, and 86 plant species. These species are protected from injury, or from disturbance / damage to their breeding or resting place wherever these occur. The 2000 Act was amended in 2010.

The main objectives of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000 are to:

- provide a mechanism to give statutory protection to NHAs;
- provide for statutory protection for important geological and geomorphological sites, including fossil sites by designation as NHAs;
- improve some existing measures, and introduce new ones, to enhance the conservation of wildlife species and their habitats;
- enhance a number of existing controls in respect of hunting, which are designed to serve the interests of wildlife conservation;
- broaden the scope of the Wildlife Acts to include most species, including the majority of fish and aquatic invertebrate species which were excluded from the 1976 Act;
- introduce new provisions to enable regulation of the business of commercial shoot operators;
- ensure or strengthen compliance with international agreements and, in particular, enable Ireland to ratify the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA).
- increase substantially the level of fines for contravention of the Wildlife Acts and to allow for the imposition of prison sentences;
- provide mechanisms to allow the Minister to act independently of forestry legislation, for example, in relation to the acquisition of land by agreement;
- strengthen the provisions relating to the cutting of hedgerows during the critical bird-nesting period and include a requirement that hedgerows may only be cut during that period by public bodies, including local authorities, for reasons of public health or safety;
- strengthen the protective regime for Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) by removing any doubt that protection will in all cases apply from the time of notification of proposed sites;
- and give specific statutory recognition to the Minister's responsibilities in regard to promoting the conservation of biological diversity, in light of Ireland's commitment to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

4.1.23 Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)

The 2004 guidelines were reissued in 2011 following the transfer of architectural heritage protection functions to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2011 sets out the legislative provisions for the protection and conservation of our architectural heritage. The main features of the act in this respect are:

- Local authorities must create and maintain a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) which is to include all structures within the administrative area which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. The RPS must form part of the Development Plan for each county.
- Local authorities must also protect the character of places and townscapes which are comply with the special interests listed above. This is done through the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) which are also to be contained within Development Plans.

- Development plans must include objectives for the protection of such structures and the preservation of the character of such areas to ensure proper and sustainable planning and development.
- Owners and occupiers of protected structures can be held responsible in ensuring that buildings are not endangered either directly or through neglect.

4.1.24 National Climate Change Strategy (2007-2012)

The National Climate Change Strategy 2007 - 2012 sets out a range of measures, building on those already in place under the first National Climate Change Strategy (2000) to ensure Ireland reaches its target under the Kyoto Protocol. The Strategy provides a framework for action to reduce Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions

The Framework for Climate Change Bill published in December 2009 provides for a statutory obligation on the Minister to propose to the Government a National Climate Change Strategy on a 5 year cycle and to review the previous Strategy at the end of this time. The Strategy will set an overall reduction target for the 5-year period within the context of the long-term and annual reduction targets set out in the Bill (as subject to review by the Minister). It will also set the policy context for the Carbon Budget and set out requirements in terms of policy objectives for the various sectors in the economy.

4.1.25 A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland – Strategy Issues Paper for Public Consultation, (Sept 2011)

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has issued A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland – Strategy Issues Paper for Public Consultation, which sets out objectives and principles in the context of a proposed National Landscape Strategy for Ireland. This strategy is being prepared in compliance with the European Landscape Convention.

This document sets out Ireland's aims and objectives with regard to landscape and positions it in the context of existing strategies, policies and objectives as well as the framework of the European Landscape Convention.

The National Landscape Strategy, when completed, will add to the suite of national plans (including the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 and the National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012) which will be used to map out the future sustainable development of the country.

The main objective of the Strategy will be to set out a framework which seeks the right balance between management, planning and protection of the landscape. Its primary aim will be the sustainable management of change affecting landscape: it is not the preservation or "freezing" of the landscape at a particular point in its continuing evolution.

4.1.27 Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness - 2016

This Government Strategy states: "Since 2009, persistent under-supply, means that the housing supply deficit is likely to currently exceed 50,000 homes, suggesting that to address both accumulated under-supply and meet future needs, the objective may well need to be to reach supply levels in excess of 25,000 units per annum. The first step, however, is to move from current levels (12,666 in 2015) towards 25,000 per annum as quickly as possible – and it is this transition, coupled with a significant increase and acceleration in social housing delivery, that is the primary focus of the Plan".

The document outlines actions based on 5 pillars (referenced below).

The detailed strategy and actions of the Plan are based around 5 pillars:

1. Address homelessness
2. Accelerate social housing
3. Build more homes
4. Improve the rental sector
5. Utilise existing housing

The Plan outlines that boosting supply is fundamentally linked to all housing sector stakeholders re-shaping the entire delivery process, from land to infrastructure provision and through to construction methods, to match market affordability trends. In addition, the State sector must support an inherently affordable supply of housing through the measures under its control.

4.1.28 *'Get Ireland Active – National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland'*

Healthy Ireland, a framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025 is the national framework for Government and whole of society action to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. The Framework identifies a number of broad inter-sectoral actions, one of which commits to the development of a plan to promote increased physical activity levels.

4.1.29 *Healthy Ireland – A healthy Weight for Ireland*

The Obesity Policy and Action Plan covers a ten-year period, up to 2025. The vision is to turn the tide of the overweight and obesity epidemic. The overall aim is to increase the number of people with a healthy weight and set us on a path where healthy weight becomes the norm. There is an opportunity now to act collectively and set the direction towards reversing this pandemic. The policy also aims to remove the stigma associated with obesity, especially in children.

4.1.30 *The National Positive Ageing Strategy*

The National Positive Ageing Strategy is a high level document outlining Ireland's vision for ageing and older people and the national goals and objectives required to promote positive ageing. It is an over-arching cross-departmental policy that will be the blueprint for age related policy and service delivery across Government in the years ahead.

A Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI) has been established to implement the research objective of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. It is a joint initiative between the Department of Health, the HSE's Health and Wellbeing programme and the Atlantic Philanthropies and will run from October 2014 to December 2017, with a commitment to Department of Health funding for a further two years. The Initiative will monitor changes in older people's health and wellbeing linked to the Goals and Objectives of the Positive Ageing Strategy

4.1.31 *Ireland's Second National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2020*

Ireland's Second National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2020 contains 97 actions and programmes in securing a more sustainable energy future for Ireland. Of the 97, five will play an integral role in the delivery of the national target:

1. **Public Target:** instruction of a series of obligations on public-sector bodies to address consumption, procurement and reporting of energy use.
2. **Energy Performance Contracting:** Establishment of a National Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) process to deliver innovative models of retrofitting and financing of energy efficiency measures in the commercial and public sectors.
3. **PAYS:** Introduction of an appropriate PAY-As-You-Save (PAYS) model for Ireland to replace existing Exchequer supports for domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency upgrade measures.
4. **Energy-savings targets for energy suppliers:** The Better Energy programme will deliver energy efficiency savings across a number of sectors.

Implementation Group: A Cross-Departmental Implementation Group will be established to ensure that all the actions contained in this Action Plan are delivered.

4.2 Regional and Local Plans and Policies

4.2.1 *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (2010-2022)*

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022 give effect, at a Regional level, to the national planning framework put forward in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and National Development Plan (NDP). They provide a Regional framework for the formulation of policies and strategy in the County Development Plan and seek to ensure the proper balance between the different settlements in the region with regard to development, population and services. The Guidelines present an updated Regional settlement strategy. They also set out 'Population Targets' for the region and for each County, including County Meath, which have been formulated having regard to the January 2009 'population targets' issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and supplementary guidance of August and October 2009.

Kells is a 'Moderate Sustainable Growth Town' in the settlement hierarchy of the Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and within the hinterland area. The Guidelines outline a range of criteria for Development Plans in the context of population and settlement and identify strategic infrastructure investments for the region, this criteria then feeds from the County Plan through to the preparation of Local Area Plans. This Regional guidance has influenced the development of the settlement strategy for County Meath and in turn the Kells plan area.

4.2.2 *Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2016-2035*

The transport strategy constitutes a framework for the planning and delivery of transport, infrastructure and services for the GDA for the next 20 years.

Land use planning in the Greater Dublin Area, which covers the counties of Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow, is guided by the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022 (Regional Planning Guidelines).

The Strategy sets out a number of core principles deriving from its vision. These principle are as follows:

- Dublin as the capital city of Ireland and a major European centre shall grow and progress, competing with other cities in the EU, and serving a wide range of international, national, regional and local needs.

- The Dublin and Mid-East Regions will be attractive, vibrant locations for industry, commerce, recreation and tourism and will be a major focus for economic growth within the Country.
- The GDA, through its ports and airport connections will continue to be the most important entry/exit point for the country as a whole, and as a Gateway between the European Union and the rest of the World. Access to and through the GDA will continue to be a matter of national importance.
- Development in the GDA shall be directly related to investment in integrated high quality public transport services and focused on compact urban form. National Transport Authority Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035
- Development within the existing urban footprint of the Metropolitan Area will be consolidated to achieve a more compact urban form, allowing for the accommodation of a greater population than at present, with much-enhanced public transport system, with the expansion of the built up areas providing for well-designed urban environments linked to high quality public transport networks, enhancing the quality of life for residents and workers alike.
- Development in the Hinterland Area will be focused on the high quality integrated growth and consolidation of development in key identified towns, separated from each other by extensive areas of strategic green belt land devoted to agriculture and similar uses. These towns will have high levels of employment activity, high order shopping and full range of social services, with good road and bus linkages to other towns and by high quality public transport to the City and play key roles in serving the surrounding rural communities and smaller towns and villages.”

4.2.3 *Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021*

Meath is located in the North East region of the country in terms of waste management planning. The Waste Management Plan sets out the policy for integrated waste management within the region and places an emphasis on waste prevention and minimisation through source reduction, producer responsibility and public awareness and the management of recovery/recycling/disposal of regional waste. Dublin City Council is the lead authority progressing the preparation of a new waste management plan. The public consultation phase for this plan has commenced.

4.2.4 *Eastern River Basin District River Basin Management Plan (2009 – 2015)*

The Eastern River Basin District (ERBD) covers the Kells area of County Meath and is one of eight river districts within the island of Ireland formed to aid the implementation of the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC. The Directive requires the preparation of management plans for each district.

The ERBD River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) sets out the objectives for the water bodies within the plan area and outlines actions necessary to achieve these objectives. In compliance with the WFD these are to establish a framework for the protection of inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwaters which:

- a) Prevents further deterioration and protects and enhances the status of aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystems;
- b) Promotes sustainable water use based on a long-term protection of available water resources;

- c) Aims at enhanced protection and improvement of the aquatic environment, including through specific measures for the progressive reduction of discharges, emissions and losses of priority substances and the cessation or phasing-out of discharges, emissions and losses of the priority hazardous substances;
- d) Ensures the progressive reduction of pollution of groundwater and prevents its further pollution, and
- e) Contributes to mitigating the effects of floods and droughts.

4.2.5 Meath County Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019

The Meath County Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019 contains the following vision “Meath County Council will lead economic, social and community development, deliver efficient and good value services, and represents the people and communities of County Meath, as effectively and accountably as possible.”

The Corporate Plan sets out six organisation wide objectives to guide and shape the direction of the functions of Meath County Council. These objectives are summarised below:

1. Deliver excellent services
2. Lead economic development
3. Build strong influential partnerships
4. Engage the larger community
5. Nurture a staff excellence culture
6. Develop system and process capability

These objectives and those of the Meath County Development Board Strategy have contributed to generating the vision and strategic direction of the Kells Development Plan set out in Chapter 2, Strategic Context and Core Strategy.

The significant changes heralded by ‘Putting People First’ (2012) and the Local Government Reform Act of 2014 represent some of the most far-reaching reforms in the Local Government sector for many years. Local authorities are now required to play a much more proactive role in economic development. Economically, effective local authority planning means maximising positive externalities, which broadly equates to facilitating the environment in which enterprises can create and grow employment. Local Authorities are now expected to be more sensitive to the economic consequences of their day-to-day actions and to have a greater understanding of the wider regional context of their operations. Local authority planning is inevitably shifting towards realising the potential of the “functional region”, from which constituent local authorities can benefit.

On foot of the guidance set out within these documents an Economic Development Strategy has been prepared for County Meath for the period 2014-2022.

In December 2015 the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government published a roadmap for the delivery of the National Planning Framework (NPF). The NPF will succeed the National Spatial Strategy 2002 (NSS) and will provide a long-term, 20 year development strategy setting out the place Ireland will become in terms of economic activity, social progress and environmental quality, through co-ordinated policy, investment and action at national, regional and local levels. The NPF is intended to be the spatial expression of the Government’s wider economic and reform agenda as it applies

to the key geographical areas of economic activity and their urban and rural components that drive the economic and social progress of our Country. The roadmap acknowledges the importance of a research based approach to economic development and acknowledges that estimations of long-term economic development, analysis of demographic and development trends will be key inputs into the NPF.

Since the “Action Plan for Jobs” process commenced in 2012 a number of Regional Reports have been published. The Government has published the “Action Plan for Jobs: Mid East Region”. This plan will cover Counties Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. The plan identifies that the region has significant existing enterprise strengths and assets. It notes that increased collaboration can be facilitated by building on the recent reforms such as:

- The growing impact of LEO;
- The new mandate of Education and Training Boards;
- The strengthening of Regional Offices of the IDA and Enterprise Ireland;
- The reform of Local Government with emphasis on economic development role;
- The blueprint of a stronger policy framework to underpin sectoral opportunities.

4.2.6 Action Plan for Jobs - Mid East Region

This Action Plan for Jobs for the Mid East region covers the counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. The primary objective of the Plan is to have a further 10-15% employment in the region by 2020 and to ensure the unemployment rate is within 1% of the State average. The Mid East region has significant existing enterprise strengths and assets, and the capability to surpass these objectives. However a new level of collaboration between key players in the region is needed to ensure these common objectives are achieved. This increased collaboration will be facilitated through a number of policy reforms that have been put in place by the Government, including:

- the growing impact of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network developed through the close cooperation between Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities;
- the fresh mandate of the new Education and Training Boards, who like the Higher Education Institutes are now focused on developing stronger links with their local enterprise base;
- the strengthening of the Regional Offices of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland with a new focus in their respective national strategies on regional job growth;
- the reform of Local Government, with a greater emphasis on the economic development role of the local authorities; and
- the emergence of stronger policy framework to underpin sectoral opportunities with a strong profile at regional level.

The Mid East has key areas of strength and areas of strong potential that offer opportunity for strategic development:

- Well-established and growing clusters of multinational and indigenous companies in sectors such as Internationally Traded Services and High-Tech Manufacturing

- Competitive advantage in its excellent connectivity and access, an asset for enterprise development as well as facilitating tourism and infrastructure-dependent sectors such as distribution and logistics
- A strong and diverse agri-food sector encompassing microenterprises, companies of significant scale, in addition to food technology and innovation facilities
- Proximity to many of the State's major Universities and Institutes of Technology, as well as its own Maynooth University, which has a strong track record in facilitating and prioritising research commercialisation
- Strong assets to support tourism, leisure and recreation, including some of the country's most significant heritage assets and an internationally-renowned horse sport tradition
- A reputation as a hub for the film industry; the region has excellent capacity for large-scale film production, hosting two state-of-the-art film studios facilitating both indigenous and international productions

4.2.7 Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019

The Meath County Development Plan was adopted on the 17th December 2012 and came into effect on the 22nd January 2013 and provides the overall statutory framework for the development of County Meath detailing the spatial development strategy for the county which is organised around a hierarchical structure of urban settlements and the rural area.

Since the adoption of the Meath County Development Plan, three no. variations have been adopted. The most recent Variation no 3 was required to align the County Development Plan with the key tenets of the Meath Economic Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022. Variation no 1 to the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 will similarly align the Kells Plan with the key tenets of the Meath Economic Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022.

The Core Strategy outlined in the County Development Plan 2013-2019 reiterates the identification of Kells as a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town in line with its current RPG status, in addition to it being a Secondary Economic Growth Town in the county linked to Navan in a complementary and supportive role. Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns should develop in a self-sufficient manner and levels of growth should be balanced to ensure that any increase in population will be in tandem with employment opportunities, capacity in physical and social infrastructure and will not be based on long distance commuting. Economic development and service provision will be an important factor in determining the appropriateness of new housing. These towns will need to provide a full range of services adequate to meet local needs, both within the town and in the surrounding rural catchment area, but not generate long distance travel patterns.

Tourism is also a major asset for development in Trim and Kells with the centres to act as a tourism cluster with improvement in the connectivity between both centres identified for investment. Each town is to develop a strategy for niche tourism as an integral part of their overall development strategy.

4.2.8 Meath Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022

The Economic Development strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 sets out clear, concise, innovative and evidence based measures aimed at accelerating the economic transformation, revitalisation and sustainable development of County Meath from 2014-

2022. The Economic Development Strategy contains 8 no. key actions/recommendations designed to achieve the projected level of employment growth in Meath by 2022 of an additional 7,500 jobs in order to broaden Meath's economic base by growing the share of employment taken up by knowledge orientated activities and thus growing both indigenous and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) enterprises in County Meath.

The measures recommended within the Economic Development strategy seek to promote County Meath to fulfil its economic potential and to prosper as a successful, diverse and vibrant social, civic, commercial, and residential centre that will be recognised locally, nationally and internationally as a highly attractive and distinctive location in which to conduct business.

The Core Strategy outlined in the County Development Plan reiterates the identification of Kells as a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town in line with its current RPG status, in addition to it being a Secondary Economic Growth Town in the county linked to Navan in a complementary & supportive role. Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns should develop in a self-sufficient manner and levels of growth should be balanced to ensure that any increase in population will be in tandem with employment opportunities, capacity in physical and social infrastructure and will not be based on long distance commuting. Economic development and service provision will be an important factor in determining the appropriateness of new housing. These towns will need to provide a full range of services adequate to meet local needs, both within the town and in the surrounding rural catchment area, but not generate long distance travel patterns.

4.2.9 Meath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides for the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) in each local authority area. One of the primary functions of the LCDCs is to develop, implement and monitor a six-year Local Economic and Community Plan for the local authority area.

The development of the Local Economic and Community Plan was informed by a range of international, national, regional and local policies, strategies and plans. These are detailed in the Action Plan in a way that links the Sustainable Community Objectives and the Sustainable Economic Development Objectives to the underpinning policy and/or strategy. The overarching aim of economic development and employment pervades national policy initiatives, including the Medium-Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020, the Action Plan for Jobs and the public sector reform process, including Putting People First (2012) and the Local Government Reform Act 2014 which underpin the LECP process and have the aim of making local government more responsible for assisting economic development.

4.2.10 Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020.

This Strategy has been developed in a collaborative manner between Failte Ireland, Meath and Louth County Council's and the "goal for the destination is to create and sustain direct and indirect employment generated through increased tourism activity". The broad range of experiences is to the fore in this Strategy and that the region has many attributes that make it attractive as a tourist destination and "increasing dwell time in the area" rather than as short stay destination. Kells is specifically referenced as a 'Destination Town' within the Strategy. A key aspect of the Strategy is the marketing actions and brand

development which includes the Irelands ‘ancient east’ branding and logo’s which have been introduced at the focal entry points to Kells.

4.2.11 Kells Town Development Plan 2013-2019

The Kells Development Plan was adopted by Meath County Council and Kells Town Council on the 7th October 2013 and set out the intention of the Planning Authority - Meath County Council, as to the future growth and sustainable development of Kells and its immediate environs. The principal aim of the Planning Authority is to ensure that future development in Kells takes place in a planned, coordinated and sustainable manner over the coming years.

The Development Plan is a statutory document, consistent with the objectives of Meath County Council, containing guidelines as to how the town and its environs should develop over the Plan period. The written statement contains analysis of statistics, projections and policy objectives. The Plan provides a framework for sustainability, by preserving the quality of the cultural heritage and material assets of Kells, and by protecting the integrity of the built and natural environment from damage caused by insensitive development proposals. The Development Plan maps give a graphic representation of the proposals included in the Plan, indicating land-use, conservation designations and other development management standards together with various specific objectives. They do not purport to be accurate survey, and should any conflict arise between the maps and the statement, the statement shall prevail.

5 Baseline Environment of Variation No.1

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of the Environmental Report is to describe the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment within the Variation area of influence. As the area of influence of the Variation relates to the Kells Development plan area, a comprehensive account of the environmental baseline is also detailed in the Environmental Report for the Kells Town Development Plan 2013-2019 and has been updated to take into account additional environmental consideration since 2014.

This baseline information outlines the relevant environmental context to the Variation. The aim of this chapter is therefore to identify the following parameters:

- The key environmental baseline resources and sensitivities;
- The key environmental threats and trends; and
- The likely evolution of the environment in the absence of the Variation No.1.

The headings provided are in accordance with the legislative requirements of the SEA Directive. An emphasis is placed on the strategic elements of each aspect and where potentially relevant to the Variation. The topics addressed are:

- Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna
- Population
- Human Health
- Soil & Geology (incl. land use)
- Water
- Air Quality and Climate Change
- Material Assets
- Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage; and
- Landscape

5.2 Biodiversity and Flora & Fauna

Biodiversity or biological diversity refers to the variety of all living things on earth - including people, plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms. The term biodiversity, however, refers to more than individual species and includes the genes they contain, the habitats and ecosystems of which they form part, and also highlights the interdependence and interconnectedness of all living things.

A Biodiversity Action Plan was adopted by Meath County Council in 2010 for the 2008 – 2012 period. A Draft Meath Biodiversity Action Plan now exists of the period 2015-2020 though has not yet been adopted. The purpose of these documents are to provide a framework for the conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level by translating policies (national and international) and legislation into action on the ground.

The natural heritage of Meath includes a variety of habitats. The Biodiversity Action Plan provides an overview of the habitats of County Meath. A summary of those relevant to Kells is provided in Table 5.1.

Habitat	Description
Woodland	Woodland is considered to have a high nature conservation value with specialist species adapted to low light, relatively low humidity levels. Woodlands also contain a rich food supply for fauna living there. This habitat has a high amenity value.
Hedgerows	Hedgerows provide refuge for many woodland species of plants and animals. As linear features, hedges provide corridors for wildlife to move across the landscape. They also help to mitigate against flooding, and shelter stock and crops.
Rivers	The River Blackwater runs to the north and east of the town of Kells. Rivers are invaluable for wildlife and are also used as resources for tourism, recreation and education.
Hedgerows	Hedgerows provide refuge for many woodland species of plants and animals. As linear features, hedges provide corridors for wildlife to move across the landscape. They also help to mitigate against flooding, and shelter stock and crops.
Rivers	The River Blackwater runs to the north and east of the town of Kells. Rivers are invaluable for wildlife and are also used as resources for tourism, recreation and education.
Cultivated land	Intensively managed improved grassland, semi natural grassland, arable crops, horticultural land and tilled land.
Urban	A wide range of plants and animals can be found in public green spaces, town parks, old stone walls, hedgerows, graveyards, bridges, rivers, canals, gardens and waste ground.

Table 5.1: Summary of Habitats in County Meath

Meath is home to several rare, protected and/or threatened plants and animals. Protected species found in the vicinity of Kells include those that are legally protected under Irish wildlife legislation (e.g. badgers, bats, hares etc.). Other protected species are those listed on the Birds Directive (Kingfisher) and Annex II of the Habitats Directive (e.g. otters, Atlantic salmon etc.)

5.2.1 Designated Sites

Under the Water Framework Directive, there are a number of entries to the Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs) arising from ecological value. These are the River Boyne and Blackwater SAC and SPA and the River Boyne Salmonid Water (see Figure 5.1).

The SAC and SPA designations can be defined as follows:

- A Special Area of Conservation is a site designated under the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora). The Directive obliges member states to designate SACs to protect and conserve habitats and species of importance in a European Union context. The Directive also lists priority habitats and species which must be conserved. Irish habitats include raised bogs, blanket bogs, turloughs, sand dunes, machair (flat sandy plains on the north and west coasts), heaths, lakes, rivers, woodlands, estuaries and sea inlets.
- Species which must be afforded protection include Salmon, Otter, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Bottlenose Dolphin and Killarney Fern. The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law by Ministerial Regulation. The European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 set out how these sites are to be protected and managed. All SAC sites are afforded full legal protection.

- A Special Protection Area is an area 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.

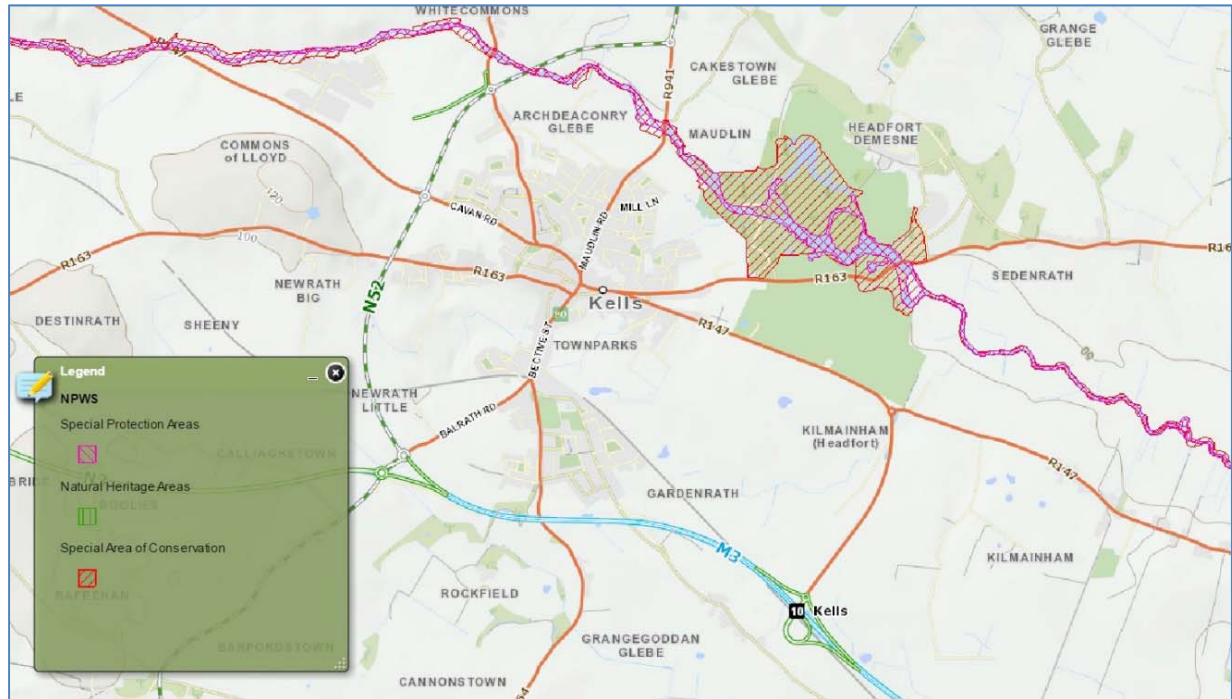


Figure 5.1 Ecologically Designated Sites in Kells

5.2.2 River Blackwater SAC & SPA

The River Blackwater which circles the north and east of the town of Kells flowing in a north-east direction is a salmonid river and is designated (along with the River Boyne) for nature conservation as both a Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) (Site Ref. 002299) and Special Protection Area (SPA) (Site Ref. 004232).

The River site was designated as a cSAC for its alkaline fen and alluvial woodlands, both habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also designated because of the presence of species listed on Annex II of the same directive namely, Atlantic Salmon, Otter and River Lamprey. There is also a wide diversity of other plant and animal life present at the site including a number of species which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book namely, Pine Marten, Badger, Common Frog and Irish Hare. All of these animals with the addition of the Stoat and Red Squirrel, which also occur within the site, are protected under the Wildlife Act.

The Blackwater River site was designated as an SPA as it supports a nationally important population of Kingfisher, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Other species which live within the site include Mute Swan, Teal, Mallard, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Moorhen, Snipe and Sand Martin.

5.2.3 *Lough Bane SAC*

Lough Bane which is located on the Meath/Westmeath border approximately 20 km southwest of Kells is part of the Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC (Site Ref. 002120). The existing water supply to Kells is supplied primarily by surface water abstraction from this lake.

The site was designated for its status as a good example of a hard water marl lake with well-developed stonewort (*Chara* spp.) communities which is an important habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

5.2.4 *Other sites of Interest*

Although not a designated site, Headfort Demesne, which is located along the eastern Kells town boundary, is of local natural heritage interest. It contains sections of forest and woodland which are considered to have a high nature conservation value.

5.2.5 *Trees*

The Tree Council of Ireland maintains a list of champion trees in Ireland i.e. the Tree Register of Ireland. These trees are among the largest of their species in terms of height, circumference or age. County Meath has many champion trees most of which are found in demesne gardens or parklands and were planted by the improving landlords of the 18th century. Some species found in Meath are rare in Ireland, thus adding to their interest. Champion trees can also have added historical or cultural significance that may or may not be associated with their striking size or shape.

According to the Tree Register, there is a large native sessile oak in Headfort, Kells which measures 27 m in height and over 5.0 m girth. Other notable natives include the pair of pedunculate oaks in Rockfield House, Kells which measure 28 and 31 m in height respectively with girths of approximately 2.0 m.

5.2.6 *Woodlands*

There are four woodland types that occur in Ireland (as classified by the National Survey of Native Woodlands (NSNW 6) that are listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive:

- Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles (91A0).
- Bog woodland (91D0) (*priority habitat type).
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (91E0) (*priority habitat type).
- *Taxus baccata* woods (Yew Woodland) of the British Isles (91J0) (*priority habitat type).

Examples of the first three woodland types can be found in Meath and alluvial woodlands are found along the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC. Yew woodland is the only Annex I woodland type found not to be present.

5.2.7 *Environmental Issues*

Urban expansion has been accelerating over recent years as increased development expands into the countryside. The constant encroachment of the built environment on natural habitats will undoubtedly have an impact on natural flora, fauna and biodiversity.

5.2.8 *Water Dependants Habitats*

In general, water treatment and wastewater discharges, agricultural runoff, leachate from contaminated sites, urban runoff and unlicensed industrial discharges all have significant negative impacts on water quality which results in subsequent impacts to biodiversity to both aquatic ecosystems as well as neighbouring terrestrial ecosystems. In the vicinity of Kells, the water dependant ecosystems of the River Blackwater and the Newrath Stream (a tributary of the River Blackwater) rely on good water quality. Any impacts to these surface waters could lead to a deterioration of water quality and a consequent impact to their ecosystems.

Kells and its environs are within the River Boyne catchment which is classified as a nutrient sensitive water body. According to the Eastern River Basin District Authority (ERBDA), the River Boyne is at high risk from diffuse pollution through groundwater and urban run-off and from point sources located within its catchment.

Unrestrained development can have a direct impact on water dependent and rare habitats. Abstractions for potable water can result in a direct impact on rivers and lakes and their associated flora and fauna and on groundwater dependent habitats.

5.2.9 *Invasive Species*

Invasive non-native plant and animal species are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Invasive alien species negatively impact biodiversity through competition, herbivory, predation, habitat alteration and introduction of parasites or pathogens and poses a risk to the genetic integrity of our native species.

Terrestrial and aquatic habitats can be significantly negatively impacted, resulting in severe damage to conservation and economic interests, such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry and various recreational activities.

5.3 *Population and Human Health*

5.3.1 *Population*

The population of Kells in 2011 was 5,888 persons which represented an increase of 12.2% on the 2006 population. This population increase was confined to Kells environs, with the town itself experiencing a decrease in population of -2.2% compared with 2006 numbers.

For the purpose of looking at the population structure in an area, three factors are of relevance: the dependent population (i.e. persons within the 0-14 and 65+ age groups); the working/independent population (i.e. persons within the 15-65 age group) and persons in the childbearing age group, aged 25-44. It is important to look at the age profile of any area when making provisions for schools, healthcare and employment etc. The age profile of Kells compared with the County of Meath is outlined in Table 5.2.

<i>Age</i>	<i>0-14</i>	<i>15-24</i>	<i>25-44</i>	<i>45-64</i>	<i>65+</i>	<i>Total</i>
Kells	1396	661	2006	1210	615	5888
% Total	23.7	11.2	34.1	20.6	10.4	100

Table 5.2: Age Profile of County Meath from Census 2011

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) 2010-2022 outlines population and housing targets for Meath up to 2022 which are outlined in Table 5.3.

<i>Age</i>	<i>2006 Census</i>	<i>2011 Census</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2022</i>
Population	196,831	184,135	195,898	210,260
Housing	61,257	69,697	79,729	95,458

Table 5:3 Population & Housing Targets for Meath

The Core Strategy for County Meath, as outlined in Chapter 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 sets out the housing allocations and land zoning requirements for each settlement in the County for the lifetime of the plan i.e. 2013 – 2019, in accordance with the Regional Planning Guidelines population and housing targets for the County, as outlined in Table 5.3 above.

5.3.2 Human Health

The concept of health has been defined by the World Health Organisation as “... a state of complete physical, psychological and social well-being, and not simply the absence of disease or infirmity.” Health is influenced by many factors in the social and built environment including housing, employment status, education, transport and access to fresh food and resources, as well as the impacts of air quality, water quality, flooding and access to green space.

A Health Impact Assessment for Active Travel Routes for Kells was prepared by the Health Service Executive and Meath County Council in 2011. The assessment focused on a proposal to invest in pedestrian and cycle provisions along the Kells relief road and made a number of recommendations to support the design and implementation aspects of the proposal. While this assessment, considered the relationship between health and the provision of public services like cycle paths and walkways it did not address the overall relationship between planning and health.

Good planning can play an important role in reducing health inequalities. The World Health Organisation’s Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) states governments should ‘Ensure urban planning promotes healthy and safe behaviours equitably, through investment in active transport, retail planning to manage access to unhealthy foods, and through good environmental design and regulatory controls, including control of the number of alcohol outlets’.

Given the strong links between income and health, it is recognised that the sustainability of current and future economic activity is an important element in protecting and promoting population health. However, emphasising economic growth without due regard for social and environmental consequences of such growth can have negative impacts on health both for the population as a whole and for groups within the population.

Even within areas of economic development, job creation does not necessarily ‘trickle down’ to job opportunities for the long-term unemployed, and is neither a sufficient, nor necessary, condition for reducing long-term unemployment. Thus economic development needs to be targeted, geographically and within population groups to ensure that it reduces and does not exacerbate social inequalities.

Cognisance must also be paid to environmental issues and sustainability endeavours to protect human health as the local economy develops. While employment is generally good for health, there can be negative impacts, usually related to the quality of the working environment and type of work undertaken.

The groups which face the highest risk of experiencing the adverse effects of unemployment appear to be middle-aged men, youths who have recently left school, the economically marginal such as women attempting re-entry into the labour force and children in families in which the primary earner is unemployed.

The level of green space and access to the natural environment is extremely important for the populace health. The health and wellbeing of individuals is greatly affected by the communities in which they live and the nature of their physical environment. A key element of sustainable communities is access to space as environments which lack public gathering places can encourage sedentary living habits. Open space provision can improve levels of exercise in a community which can impact on health and can improve social interaction and community activities which can contribute to reducing stress-related problems.

5.3.3 *Environmental Issues*

Population change is a complex topic. High growth has occurred in some areas of the GDA while falling occupancy rates has occurred elsewhere. Major changes took place to the housing market following changes in economic circumstances and trends such as a reduction in housing completions and rising vacancy rates. Predicting accurate population forecasts impacts on future housing demand and issues such as age profiles, housing stock and occupancy rates and migration must all be taken into account. Future housing demand and all of the services required to sustainably meet demand (e.g. health and sanitation services including waste collection, wastewater treatment and potable water supply, electricity, gas, telecommunications, transportation, education and amenity access) needs to be addressed in a planned manner.

There are a number of interlinking areas which are relevant to the Kells Development Plan, for example, the development of sustainable transport and sustainable communities. Policies relating to these areas will impact on human health and quality of life.

The following issues are relevant to the plan:

- Increase in demand for water supply, waste water treatment and other
- Infrastructural and community services due to economic growth.
- Impact of population growth on sensitive habitats and landscape in terms of
- Development and recreational pressures.
- Impacts from noise and air pollution as a result of development and transport.
- Effects on water quality due to new emissions.
- Promotion of walking and cycling via integrated land use and transport policy.
- Consideration of future SEVESO sites.
- Housing needs for all sectors of the community.
- Community infrastructure needs including community facilities.
- Educational needs for both primary and secondary level education.
- Provision of open spaces within residential areas and areas throughout the town.

- Health/medical facility requirements for the town for the future.
- Preservation of public rights of way to allow public access to amenity.
- Adequacy of public/civil space areas.
- Provision for retail and commercial services.
- Vitality and viability of the town centre.
- Ease of access to the town centre.

5.4 Soils and Geology

Overlying soils fall into the Kells Soil Series which occupies 11.81% of the County. This soil is classified as Brown Earth and its parent material consists of till composed of Lower Palaeozoic shales (Ordovician and Silurian) with some sandstone and siltstone.

Geologically the area around Kells and its environs is dominated by Ordovician and Silurian rock formations, one of the three dominant rock types of County Meath. These rock formations consist of shale, siltstone and fine sandstone.

5.4.1 Soil Issues

Eroded soil washed into rivers has the potential to increase nutrient content leading to alteration of surface water nutrient balances which can further lead to the eutrophication of rivers and lakes. If contaminated soils are eroded and transported to watercourses, aquatic plants and animals can be severely damaged.

Geotechnical extraction activities, when not managed in an environmentally sustainable fashion results in further pressure on the hydrological environment.

5.5 Water Resources

This section provides a description of the existing hydrological and hydrogeological environment. This section also provides some information on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared for the Plan.

The hydrological environment relates to all surface water catchments whereas the hydrogeological environment refers to groundwater issues.

5.4.2 Water Framework Directive

Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000/60/EC which was transposed into Irish law under the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722/2003). This legislation requires governments to take a holistic approach to managing all their water resources based on natural geographic boundaries, i.e. the river catchment or basin. The WFD establishes a common framework for the sustainable and integrated management of all waters covering groundwater, inland surface waters, transitional waters and coastal waters.

For the purpose of implementing the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the WFD requires Member States to manage all of their waters and ensure that they achieve at least 'good status' by 2015 and beyond. The River Basin Management Plan affecting the plan area sets out the objectives and actions required to achieve at least 'good' quality status for all waters, in the period 2009-2015 and thereafter. The ultimate deadline for Member States for achievement of 'good' status is 2027 at the latest. In line with requirements of the Eastern River Basin District

River Basin Management Plans (ERBD RBMP) 2009 – 2015, ecological sampling by the EPA is carried out.

Based on EPA surveys, river waters are classed into four biological quality classes.

- A - Unpolluted (Good)
- B - Slightly polluted/eutrophic (Moderate)
- C - Moderately polluted (Poor) and
- D - Seriously polluted (Bad)

The plan area is located in the Boyne Catchment in Hydrometric Area 07 and drains a total area of 2,694 km². The total population of the catchment is approximately 196,365 with a population density of 73 people per km². Water quality status within this catchment ranges from moderate to poor. The Boyne's major tributary the Blackwater River flows west to east to the north and northeast of the Kells town boundary. The Blackwater River is also a designated ecological area as outlined in Section 4.3. The Newrath stream flows through the southern portion of Kells town in a west to east direction. This stream is a tributary of the Blackwater River. Surface water features are presented in Figure 5.2.

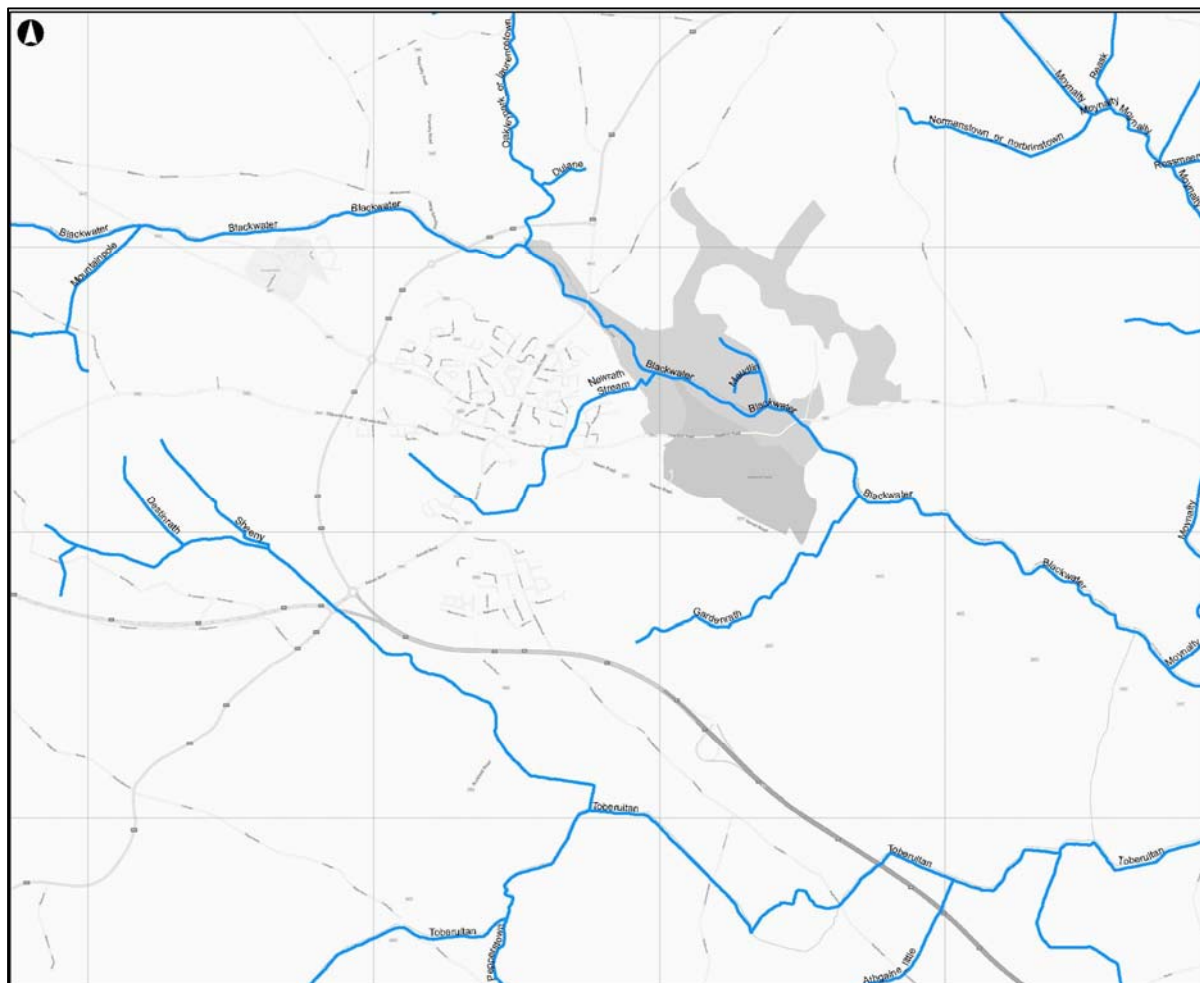


Figure 5.2: Rivers and Streams in Kells and surrounding environs.

5.4.3 Water Quality

As part of the implementation of the WFD a baseline risk assessment was completed of the water bodies within each River Basin District. These assessments were made using water pollution indicators, point and diffuse pollution sources, water abstractions and detail on commercial activities. The risk assessment assigned a water quality status to each waterbody and indicated a risk status namely, whether the water body would meet the criteria for “good status” or would be considered “at risk” of not meeting the standards by 2015. However, extended timescales have been set for certain waters due to technical, economic, environmental or recovery constraints.

The River Blackwater flows through Kells town and could potentially be impacted by any proposed development. Information on quality status and WFD risk are outlined in Table 5.5

Information on other rivers which are tributaries of the Blackwater is also included with the exception of Newrath Stream for which no information is available. Surface water vulnerability is shown in Table 5.5.

Waterbody Code	Waterbody Name	Current Status	Current Risk	Overall Objective
IE_EA_07_754	Nugentstown Lower	Moderate	1b – probably at risk	Restore good status by 2021.
IE_EA_07_940	Moynalty Lower	Poor	1a – at risk	Restore good status by 2021.
IE_EA_07_1536_1	Blackwater Lower 1	Poor	1a – at risk	Restore good status by 2027.
IE_EA_07_1536_2	Blackwater Lower 2	Moderate	1a – at risk	Restore good status by 2027.
IE_EA_07_1536_3	Blackwater Lower 2	Moderate	1a – at risk	Restore good status by 2021.
IE_EA_07_1556	Loughan	Good	1b – probably at risk	Protect

Table 5.5: WFD Waterbody Status, Risk and Objectives

As part of the monitoring of water bodies for the implementation of the WFD, the biological, physical and chemical properties of water are routinely assessed. The assessments are predominately conducted by the EPA and local authorities, and complemented by other government bodies including the Central Fisheries Board and the Marine Institute.

In Meath, surface water quality monitoring is conducted at recorded sampling locations by local authority staff. The data is supplied to the EPA for compilation. The data gathered for the biological sampling is used to determine the EPA biotic index for the water body. The corresponding biotic index is used to describe the water quality as is shown in Table 5.6.

Water Quality	EPA Biotic Index
Unpolluted	4-5 or 5
Slightly polluted	3-4 or 4
Moderately Polluted	2-3 or 3

Seriously polluted	1, 1-2 or 2
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Table 5.6: EPA Water Quality Indices

5.4.4 Hydrology

The plan area is underlain by a bedrock aquifer which is classified by the GSI as a 'Poor Aquifer' (PI) which is generally unproductive except for local zones. Groundwater vulnerability is predominantly high with pockets of extreme vulnerability. (Refer to Figure 5.3).

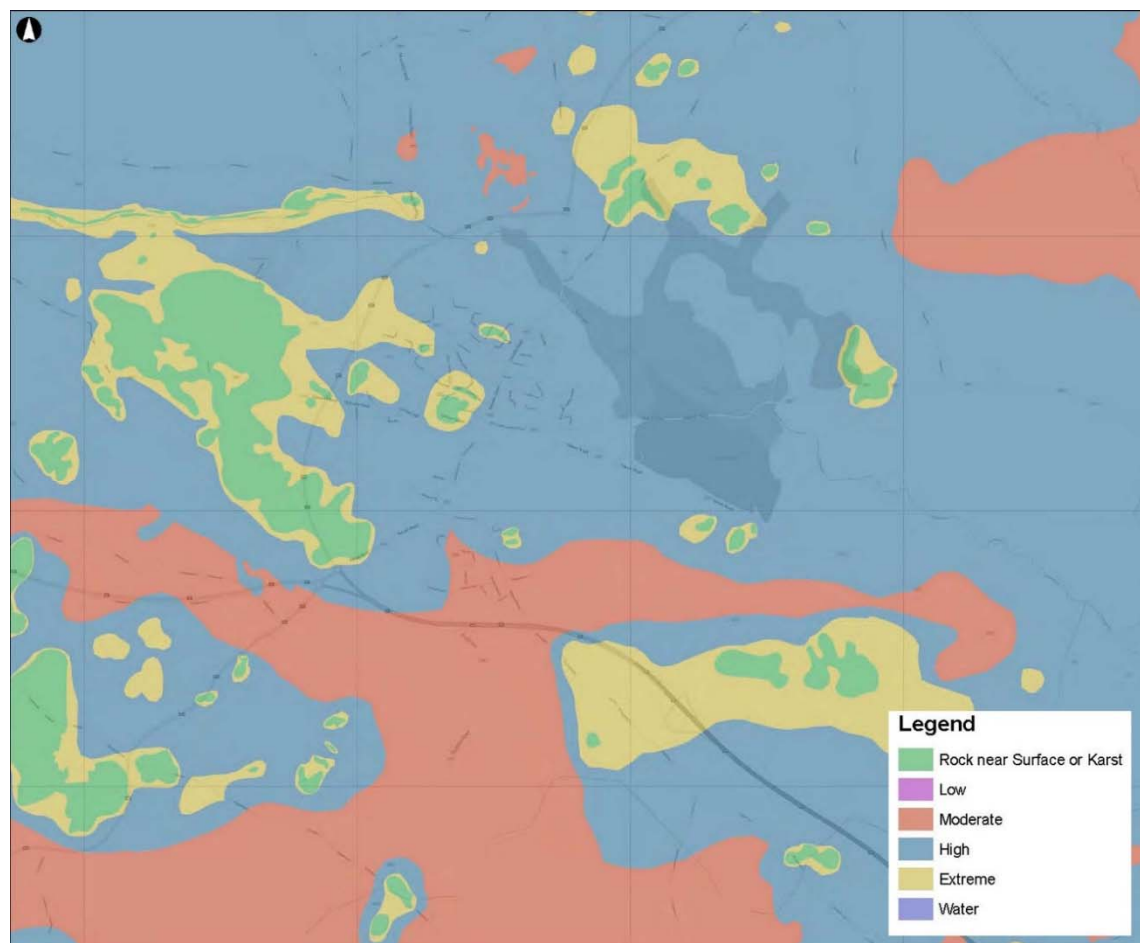


Table 5.3: GSI Ground Water Vulnerability

5.4.5 Flooding

An area specific Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was carried out for the Variation to guide the future development of Kells as part of the Development Plan Review and also inform the SEA process.

The SFRA identified three main areas of flood risk in the town (Refer to Figure 5.4):

- **Zone A:** High probability of flooding. This zone defines areas with the highest risk of flooding from rivers (i.e. more than 1% probability or more than 1 in 100) and the coast (i.e. more than 0.5% probability or more than 1 in 200). Most areas of the town that are subject to flood risk fall into this category. Here, most types of development would be considered to be inappropriate. Development in this zone should be avoided and/or only considered in exceptional circumstances, such as in the town centre, or in the case of essential infrastructure that cannot be located elsewhere. A Justification Test set out in the Ministerial Guidelines applies to proposals in this zone. Only water compatible development, that require a

waterside location, amenity open space, outdoor sports and recreation would be considered in this zone.

- **Zone B:** Moderate probability of flooding. This zone defines areas with a moderate risk of flooding from rivers (i.e. 0.1% to 1% probability or between 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000) and the coast (i.e. 0.1% to 0.5% probability or between 1 in 200 and 1 in 1000). In the town, this designation applies only to limited areas of land. In only a few locations do significant sites fall into this category. Here, highly vulnerable development, such as hospitals, residential care homes, Garda, Fire and ambulance stations, dwelling houses and primary strategic transport and utilities infrastructure, would generally be considered inappropriate. Less vulnerable development such as retail, commercial and industrial uses, sites used for short-let for caravans and camping and secondary strategic transport and utilities, and water compatible development might be considered appropriate in this zone.
- **Zone C:** Low probability of flooding. This zone applies to all other areas of Kells and defines areas with a low risk of flooding from rivers and the coast (i.e. less than 0.1% probability or less than 1 in 1000). Development in this zone is appropriate from a flood risk perspective (subject to assessment of flood hazard from sources other than rivers and the coast) but would need to meet the normal range of other proper planning and sustainable development considerations.

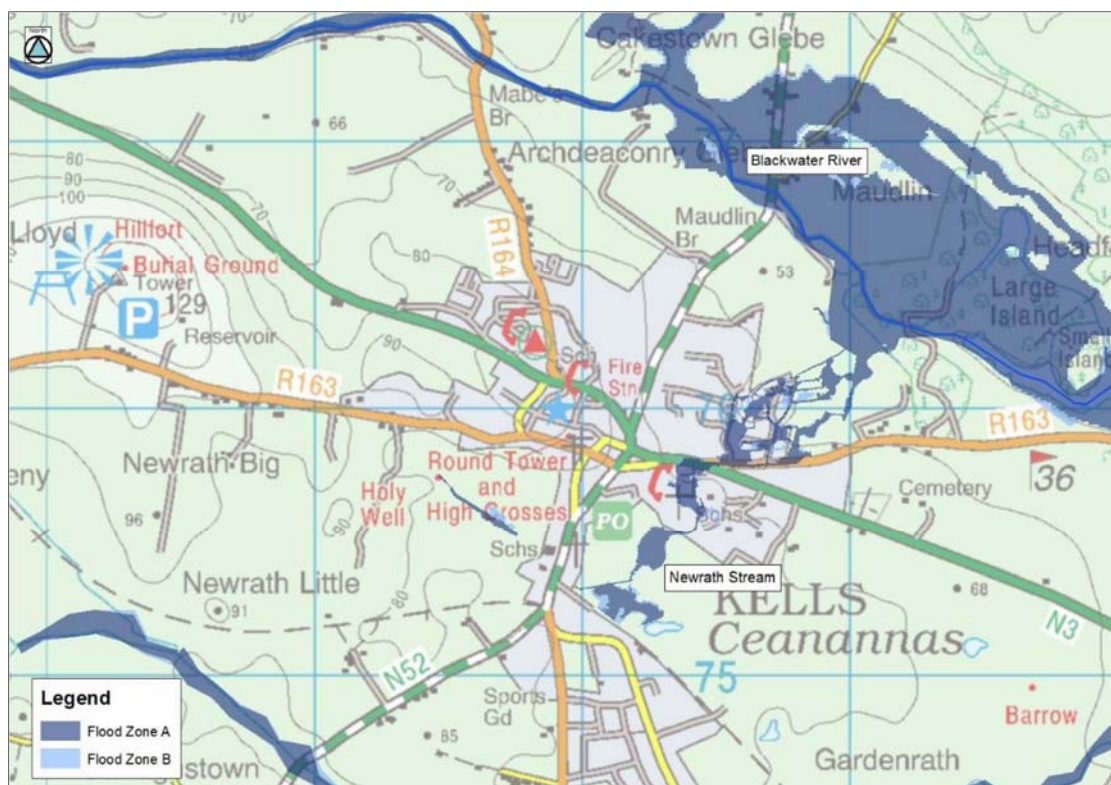


Figure 5.4: Flood Risk Areas in Kells

When considering appropriate uses The SFRA recommends that the Sequential Approach is applied whereby Flood Zone A is zoned for water compatible uses and Flood Zone B is only considered for less vulnerable use, such as retail, commercial, industrial. In general, a green space buffer is recommended to be applied to open watercourses to allow for adequate maintenance and green infrastructure. The SFRA notes that in some instances the new CFRAM

mapping represents a reduction in flood extent and consideration can be given to increasing the area of highly or less vulnerable zoning types.

5.4.6 Relevant Environmental Issues

In relation to the Headfort Housing Estate Area, flooding in this area has resulted from the overland flow route resulting from the old N3 culvert surcharging. The culvert upgrade scheme that passes under the N3 in Kells could provide a pathway to mitigating and managing this risk, reducing risk to a significant amount of existing community zoned lands – HSE offices, Church and swimming pool.

The area which is zoned for residential land use is shown to be at high or moderate risk of flooding includes. Prior to any flood relief/drainage works, it is preferential to incorporate open space and amenity within residential zoned land in areas at high or moderate flood risk (i.e. Flood Zone A/B).

A formal scheme as recommended under the Kells Stormwater Drainage Study should be implemented prior to future developments within land zoning A2.

All remaining planning applications should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Kells Development Plan and Meath County Development Plan.

Surrounding undeveloped residential and community lands are in Zone C and appropriate. There are a range of existing pressures on the water resources of the region. Many of these pressures apply to biodiversity, flora and fauna, soils and geology, land use and landscape as well as water. In general these pressures apply directly to quality, quantity and supply and demand of water resources with indirect pressure on the other environmental features.

Physical modifications have a direct impact on surface water systems through the alteration of habitats, and by indirectly affecting natural processes through the alteration of ecosystems, by reducing their diversity, distribution and population. Land use practices such as agriculture, forestry and urban expansion can have an indirect effect, manipulating the extent of water draining from the land, which can lead to an increased flood risk to properties and development.

Inadequately treated effluents and spills or leakage from foul water sewer systems networks can lead to the pollution of the receiving waters. These pollutants can lead to a deterioration in water quality with subsequent downstream uses being impacted negatively e.g. water dependant ecosystems, potable water supplies, industrial or agricultural abstraction, fishing etc. Current estimates for the GDA indicate that the nutrient input into surface waters from direct industrial discharges produce approximately 60% of the yearly phosphorus load with the remainder arising from diffuse sources such as agriculture.

Houses and businesses not connected to public foul water collection and treatment systems rely mainly on on-site systems. If these systems fail it can lead to accidental discharges to surface water and / or groundwater systems. Provision of public sewerage systems, especially ahead of new development, can be logistically and financially challenging.

Waste disposal sites (including old or historical un-lined landfills), quarries, industrial lands etc. can produce direct discharges to both surface and groundwaters. According to an EPA

2005 report there was evidence of significant unauthorised landfilling of commercial and industrial waste and construction and demolition waste in the GDA (predominantly Wicklow but also Kildare and Meath) in the period between 1997 and 2002. However, there is no evidence of any such illegal landfill sites in the Kells area.

The effect of climate change on the hydrological regime of the planet is difficult to predict, even more so for a small region; however, there is the potential for heavier and prolonged rainstorms to cause more flash flooding, which can lead to an increase in diffuse pollution loads from soil runoff and increasing demand for flood alleviation, control and relief schemes. Conversely, summer droughts are also considered likely and recent research has indicated that the effects of climate change in Ireland will have serious consequences for water resources, resulting in a potential 40% reduction in drinking water supplies. Also, temperature fluctuations may give invasive alien water species a competitive advantage and alter aquatic ecosystems further.

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5.6 Air, Noise and Climate

5.6.1 Air

The Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 180 of 2011) establish the limit values in Ireland for Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), and oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), lead, benzene and Carbon Monoxide (CO) with alert threshold values specified for SO₂ and NO₂.

These regulations are based on EU Directive 2008/50/EC¹⁵. In order to comply with these regulations, the EPA measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants throughout Ireland. For the purposes of monitoring in Ireland, four zones are defined in the Regulations, as follows:

- Zone A - Dublin Conurbation: The Restricted Area of Dublin, as specified in the First Schedule to the Air Pollution Act 1987 (Marketing, Sale and Distribution of Fuels) Regulations 1998 to 2003.
- Zone B – Cork Conurbation: The Restricted Area of Cork, as specified in the First Schedule to the Air Pollution Act 1987 (Marketing, Sale and Distribution of Fuels) Regulations 1998 to 2003.
- Zone C – Other Cities and Large Towns: For Meath, this includes Navan and environs.
- Zone D – Rural Ireland: Remainder of the State excluding Zones A, B and C.

Current air quality in Zone D is described as “good” by the EPA report Air Quality in Ireland 201017. Real time air quality data on the EPA website confirms that remains unchanged since the publication of the aforementioned report.

Currently there are no significant concerns with regard to air quality. There are likely to be slightly elevated levels of vehicle emissions within the urban area of Kells however, this is the same for all urban areas. Dust and PM10 can be an issue locally during construction and operation.

A recent EPA report stated that emissions from cars (particulate matter and nitrogen oxides) are a major health concern and a climate change concern. However, the prospects for compliance with targets under the EU National Emissions Ceilings Directive are more positive. With the exception of NOX emissions, emissions of acidifying gases are expected to achieve prescribed target emission levels within the next few years. NOx emissions are too expected to decline but are likely to remain considerably above the target limit.

5.6.2 Noise

The Environmental Noise Directive (END) (2002/49/EC18) requires that action is taken by each member state, with a view to preventing and reducing environmental noise where necessary and particularly where exposure levels can induce harmful effects on human health and to preserving environmental acoustic quality where it is good. The relevant local authorities have been designated by the Environmental Noise Regulations, S.I. Regulations No. 140 of 2006, as the bodies charged with development and making of ‘Noise Action Plans’. Meath County Council prepared a Noise Action Plan in 2013 which spans 5 years. Under the requirements of the legislation the Council is responsible for noise action planning relating only to the major roads passing through their functional area. There are seven main population centres which fall within the areas covered by the strategic noise maps. These are Ashbourne, Enfield, Julianstown, Kells, Navan and Ratoath.

The most significant development in County Meath since the publication of the 2008 Noise Action Plan was the opening of the M3 motorway. The effect has been to remove the “major road” status of the N3, which now has less than 3 million vehicle passages per year. A total of 3354 people were exposed to environmental noise along the N3 route, with 780 estimated to be exposed to LNIGHT values of greater than 60dB(A). The opening of the M3 constitutes a significant improvement in the environmental noise exposure along this route. In addition, the route selection process for the M3 motorway took account of noise pollution for newly exposed dwellings and significant efforts were made to minimize such exposure.

Certain locations and building types such as schools and hospitals are considered to be more sensitive to noise pollution than others. The main priority of the END is to reduce environmental noise exposure in residential areas.

The noise environment in Kells currently varies from town centre noise which would be influenced by local noise sources such as building services equipment, serving shops and restaurants and traffic to rural areas where the noise environment would be influenced by community noise sources such as local traffic, agricultural activity etc. Drumbarragh National School is recognized as the main noise sensitive location in Kells.

It is noteworthy that local authorities and the EPA have the power to maintain noise limits through the control of noise emissions from industry (IPPC licence limits) or through the inclusion of noise limits in planning permissions. Local Authorities can also control community noise nuisance under the power of the EPA Act (No. 7 of 1992).

Potential future noise mapping must be taken into account during the development of the plan. Consideration will need to be given to the following scenarios:

- Bringing people to noise through the zoning of land for new housing, schools etc. developments near to existing road noise.
- Bringing noise to people through the provision of new or altered roads, industrial sites or commercial developments which would alter the noise environment in the vicinity of noise sensitive locations.

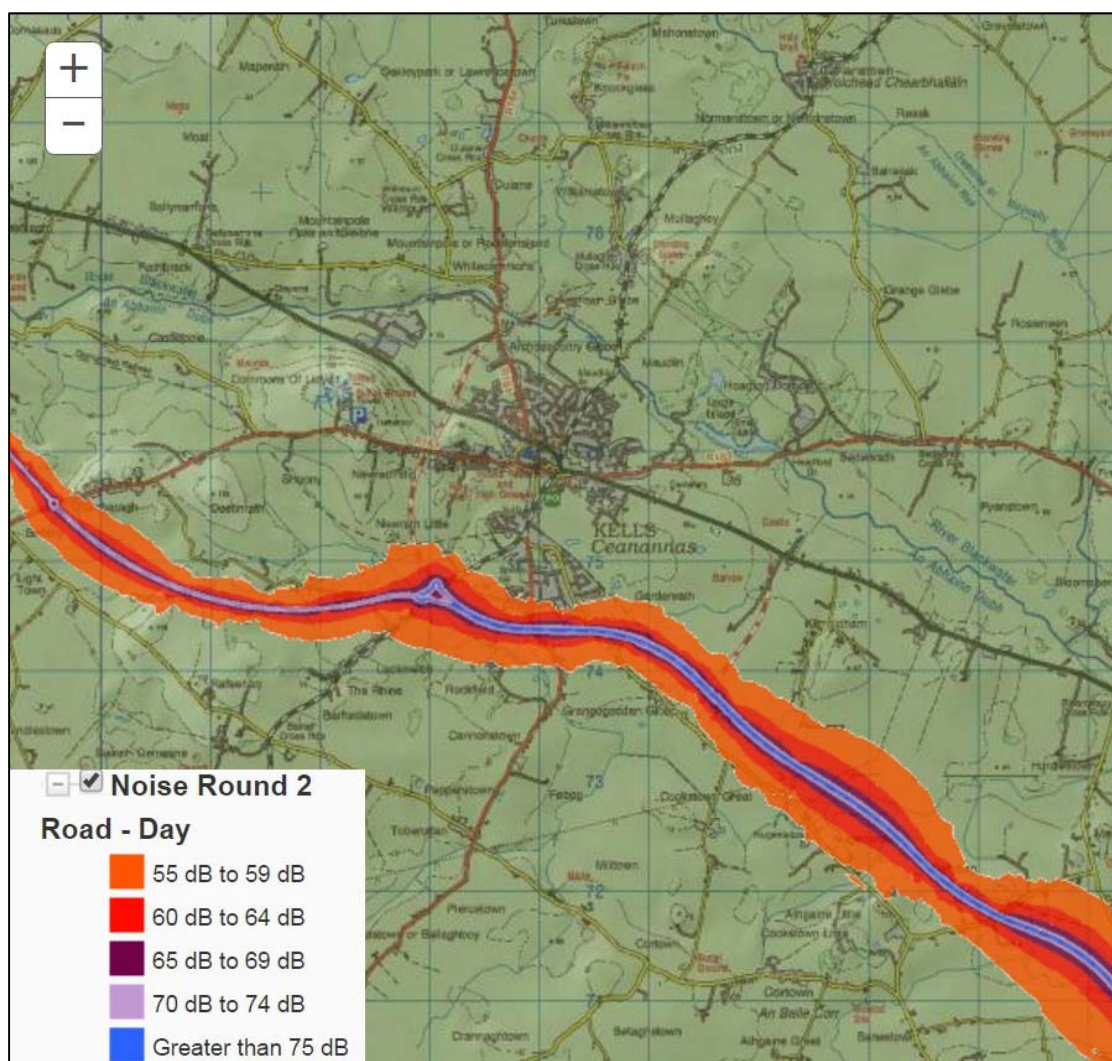


Figure 5.5: Road Noise Map for Kells

5.6.3 Climate

The existing climate for Kells corresponds with the general climatic conditions for the whole country which is dominated by the Atlantic Ocean and its air and oceanic currents.

Consequently, the region does not suffer from extremes of temperature. According to Met Éireann, average annual temperature is about 9°C.

Mean annual wind speed varies between about 4 m/sec in the east midlands and 7 m/sec in the northwest. Average rainfall varies between about 800 and 2,800 mm. Rainfall accumulation tends to be highest in winter and lowest in early summer. According to the United Nations Integrated Panel on Climate Change, in line with the global picture, Ireland's average temperature has increased by about 0.7°C over the last 100 years, and the rate of increase has been higher in the last couple of decades. The increase has not been uniform over time, with a warming period from 1910 to the 1940s, followed by a cooling period up to the 1960s. The current warming period commenced around 1980. 2006 was the warmest year on record at both Malin Head and Phoenix Park, which have observations dating back over 100 years, and also at Casement Aerodrome, Kilkenny and Rosslare.

Ten of the fifteen warmest years in the last century have occurred since 1990. In the last 100 years, 2006 was the second warmest year, 1945 being slightly warmer, and the last 10 years have been the warmest decade. Whilst we can be less categorical about wind speeds, there is some evidence of a reduction in annual average wind speeds, with a corresponding decrease in the frequency of high wind speeds and gusts. Increases in total annual rainfall in parts of the West and North have been observed, with some increase in the number of days with heavier rain but there is no clear pattern of change in other areas.

While the national scale of potential change is evident, translating the potential effects of climate change to a region is a process of inference on what will happen to Ireland at large being reduced to a regional scale. Temperatures in Ireland are predicted to increase by 1.25-1.5°C by 2040 compared to 1961 to 2000.

Rainfall is expected to increase in winter by about 15% and summer projections range from no change to a 20% decrease, potentially along the east coast of the country. Studies have shown that extreme rainfall events associated with climate change show more marked changes with more events occurring in autumn and a 20% increase in 2-day extreme rain amounts, especially in northern areas. Taking the projected precipitation changes into account, there will be the potential for a significant increase in the number of extreme discharge events and a slight increase in their intensity, leading to an increased probability of flooding in the future.

The potential rise in global temperature might affect the intensity and frequency of storms in the North Atlantic. As a consequence of stormy weather there exists the potential for flash flooding and erosion which would affect a wide range of ecosystems and economic sectors.

The United Nations International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated categorically that greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere (including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxides and a number of gases that arise from both agricultural and industrial processes) are rising, as a result of human activity and are directly linked to climate change.

In 2008, the EU Commission's 'Energy and Climate Package' required Ireland to deliver a 20% reduction in non-Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 (relative to 2005 levels) and keep emissions below annual limits over the period 2013-2020.

Projections indicate that Ireland will breach its annual limit by 2016, in the best case scenario, and exceed its EU 2020 target by between 4.1 and 8.8 million tonnes of CO₂ in 2020.

As previously mentioned in the Water Resources Section, climate change will have an impact on the region's water resources and must be taken into account in all aspects of sustainable planning.

Further, increased rainfall intensity and stormy weather increases the potential for flash flooding and erosion which would affect a wide range of ecosystems and economic sectors.

5.7 Material Assets

The term 'Material Assets' refers to all infrastructure and local services including, transportation, water supply, waste-water treatment and discharge, waste management services, electricity supply, telecommunications etc. A summary of all material assets in Kells is provided in the Environmental Report.

The current usage of the land within the development plan area is predominantly urban fabric, industrial developments, undeveloped grassland and pasture land.

Of particular relevance to the plan review was the existing water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure which is currently close to capacity.

5.7.1 Transport Infrastructure

Kells is located in the north west of County Meath approximately 65 km from Dublin and 16 km from Navan town. It is connected to the national road network by the M3 which links Dublin to the northwest of Meath. In addition to reducing the journey time to Dublin, the motorway has significantly reduced the numbers of vehicles passing through the town. This now provides an opportunity to develop the town as a vibrant and prosperous settlement.

The town is also bypassed by the new N52 which circles the west of the town and re-joins the old N52 approximately 1 km north east of Kells.

5.7.2 Water Supply

The water supply resources in Meath are provided both from surface water and ground water abstractions i.e. from rivers, lakes and boreholes. With limitations on abstraction levels from surface water sources within the County, greater dependence will be placed on groundwater to satisfy increasing demand, particularly in the east of the county.

The existing water supply to Kells is supplied from the Kells/Oldcastle Scheme which primarily gets its water through surface water abstraction from Lough Bane which is augmented by extraction at Clavin's Bridge fed by the River Blackwater.

This scheme supplies water to both of these areas (Kells & Oldcastle) and the general area between these settlements given the projected level of development in each centre.

The total combined capacity is 27,500 P.E. with;

- Existing and committed usage accounting for 25,000 P.E.
- Remaining: 2,500 P.E is for the entire catchment area.

Upgrade works for the Kells/Oldcastle scheme was recently completed and will supply improved drinking water to over 15,000 homes and businesses in Kells, Oldcastle, Crossakiel, Kilskyre, Dromone, Carlanstown and surrounding areas.

5.7.3 Waste-water Treatment

Outside the main towns and villages, the main method of sewage disposal is by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary systems. These have been identified as a potential source of pollution of both surface waters and groundwaters. The government has recently announced a new system of registration and regulation for septic tanks that is currently being implemented.

Watercourses to which treated effluent is discharged also needs to be protected to comply with the Water Framework Directive and facilitate future development within the county.

The existing Kells Wastewater Treatment Plant located to the east of the town has a design capacity of 8,000 person equivalent (P.E.). This facility outfalls to the River Blackwater and is currently nearing capacity. The Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012 includes a provision for an upgrade to 12,000 PE of the Kells Sewerage Scheme to advance to planning stage. However, its construction will be subject to funding from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

There is an additional wastewater treatment plant at Lloyd Business Park which caters for the needs of the park. There is some capacity remaining at this plant which will accommodate proposed future development at the park. This plant also discharges to the River Blackwater.

5.7.4 Telecommunications and Broadband

The availability of broadband infrastructure enables high speed access to information for industry, public and private sector organisations and domestic users. It facilitates international e-commerce and is essential for all aspects of business including Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) and multinationals. Fixed line broadband is available in Kells. A map identifying the Metropolitan Area Network (MANs) in Kells is provided in Figure 5.6 below. The MANS are networks of ducting, sub-ducting and high capacity fibre optic cable, typically laid in urban areas. The objectives of MANs are to address a market failure in the provision of broadband services. The MANS operate on an open access basis meaning that all authorised operators have access. This allows for competition in a way that has not previously happened.

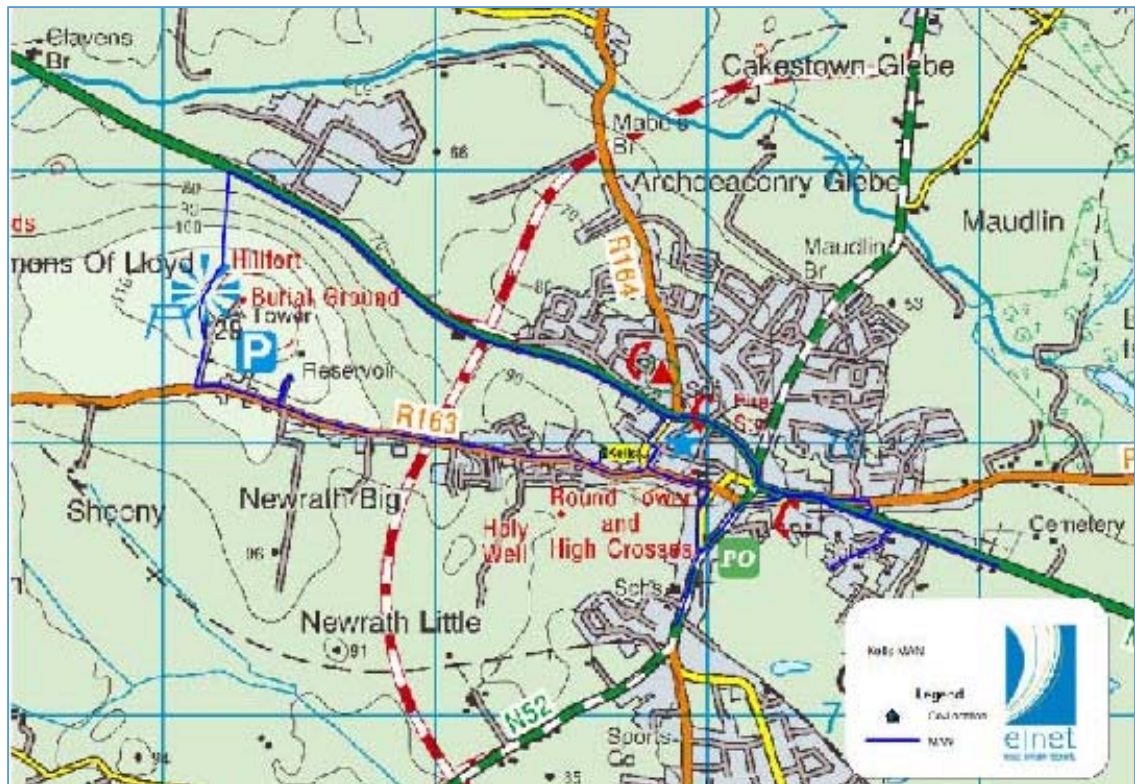


Figure 5.6 Map of local MAN Network in Kells Town.

5.8 Cultural Heritage

The County of Meath has a wealth of built heritage which extends back through millennia 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.

Built Heritage for Kells is addressed in this report under the following headings:

- Archaeological Heritage.
- Architectural Heritage.
- Vernacular Heritage.

5.8.1 Archaeological Heritage

A number of towns in Ireland have been assigned zones of archaeological potential by the National Monuments Section of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG). These zones extend around a towns core to protect its significant archaeological heritage. The town of Kells has been assigned a designated zone of archaeological potential which includes most of the town historic core namely Bective Street, Farrell Street, Suffolk Street, Canon Street, Church Lane, Carrick Street, Maudlin Street, Castle Street, John Street, Kenlis Place, Headfort Place and the cemetery on the Navan Road.

A record of archaeological heritage is maintained on the 'Record of Monuments and Places' which was established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 (No. 17 of 1994). Structures, features, objects or sites listed in this Record are known as

Recorded Monuments. The town of Kells itself is a Recorded Monument within which there are a number of archaeological sites and monuments.

According to the database, there are approximately 49 Recorded Monuments within and immediately adjacent to the Kells Town and environs boundary. Any person intending to carry out works at or in relation to a Recorded Monument, or within the zone of Archaeological potential, must give the National Monuments Section of the DAHG two months' notice in writing.

5.8.2 Architectural Heritage

Kells also possesses a diverse and rich architectural heritage that forms an integral part of the town. In 1999 the Government launched a package of measures aimed at protecting our built heritage.

At the heart of the system is a statutory requirement that the protection of buildings of artistic, architectural, historical, cultural, archaeological, scientific, technical or social interest be a mandatory objective of each local authority's Development Plan. These buildings and structures are compiled on a register known as the 'Record of Protected Structures' (RPS).

There are 82 protected structures listed on the RPS for the Kells Development Plan. Owners and occupiers of protected buildings are required to ensure that buildings do not become endangered through harm, decay or damage.

The Planning & Development Act 2000-2012 (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). Kells Historic Core (which includes Bective Street, Farrell Street, Suffolk Street, Canon Street, Church Lane, Carrick Street, Maudlin Street, Castle Street, John Street and Kenlis Place) and Headfort Place were both designated as ACA's in the previous development plan. Headfort Demesne to the west of the town is also designated as an ACA in the Meath County Development Plan. ACA's are depicted in Figure 5.6.

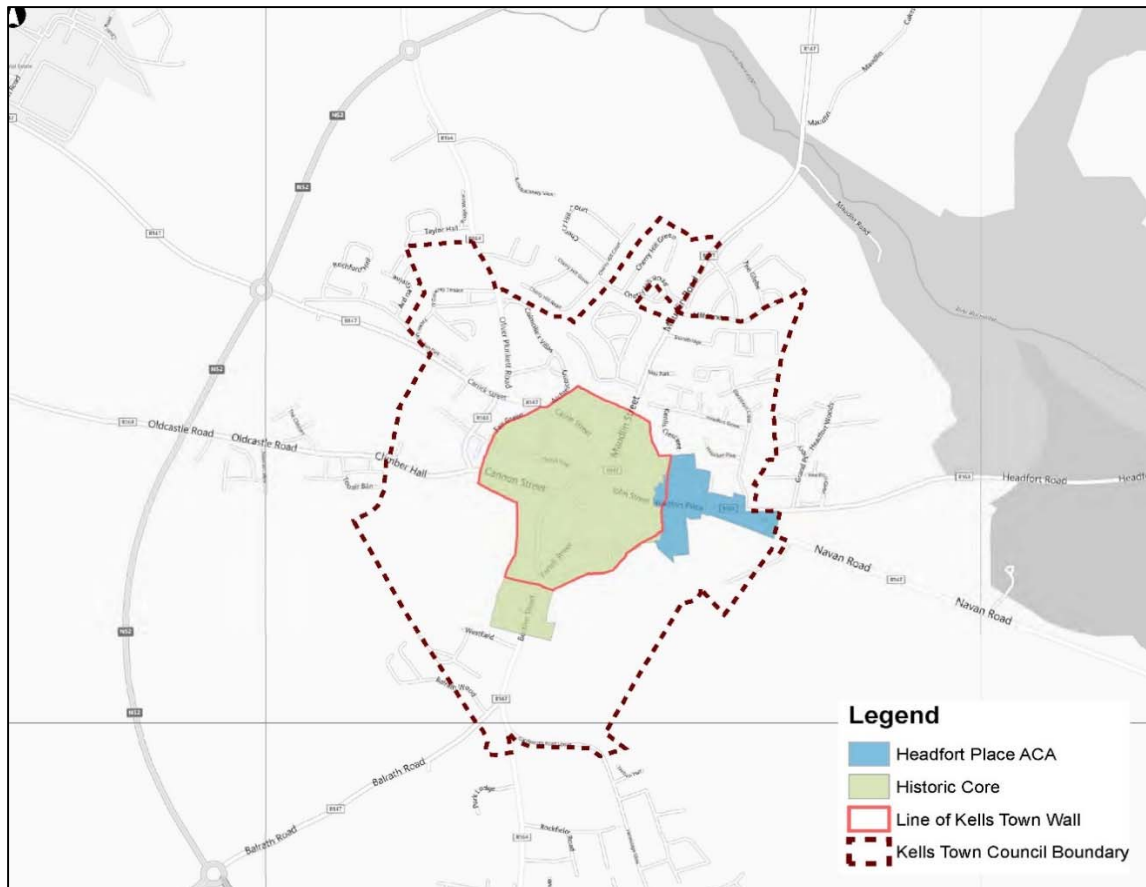


Figure 5.6 Map of local MAN Network in Kells Town.

Vernacular Architecture describes 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.

5.8.3 World Heritage Tentative List

The protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage is of high importance for present and future generations and to this end the State is committed to the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission of its World Heritage Sites to future generations in accordance with Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention.

A Tentative List is an inventory of those properties which a country intends to consider for nomination to the World Heritage List. The new Tentative List was approved by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and submitted to UNESCO in March 2010. The nomination of any property from the new Tentative List for inscription on the World Heritage List will only take place after consultation with relevant stakeholders, interested parties and local communities.

Two sites in Meath were included on the Tentative List as part of larger assemblies of sites:

- The Royal Sites of Ireland (Cashel, Dún Ailinne, Hill of Uisneach, Rathcroghan Complex and Tara Complex)
- Early Medieval Monastic Sites (Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Inis Cealtra, Kells and Monasterboice)

Continued development resulting from the unprecedented economic growth of the past decade and increasing population has increased pressure on sites or features of heritage interest. Individually these developments put direct pressure of architectural heritage, where it is in proximity, or increases the potential to interact with known or previously unknown archaeological sites and features. Cumulatively, this can result in negative impact on the overall cultural heritage resource.

5.9 Landscape

The County of Meath has a high quality landscape much of it of notable cultural and historical significance. A Landscape Character Assessment was prepared as part of the County Development Plan 2013 – 2019. The purpose of this document was to develop landscape objectives for the County Development Plan.

The County is divided into four Landscape Character Types (LCT's) representing generic areas of distinctive character such as uplands or river corridors. These LCT's are sub-divided into twenty Landscape Character Areas (LCA's) which are geographically specific.

Those LCA's of interest to the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 are LCA 17 South West Kells Lowlands and LCA 20 Blackwater Valley.

5.9.1 Visual

A total of four views and prospects have been identified in the Kells Development Plan as being worthy of protection:

- From Headfort Place looking to the Round Tower and Church Yard.
- From the top of Church Lane looking east over Kells.
- From the junction of Bective St, Farrell St and Suffolk St looking back toward the tower.
- View from proposed town centre expansion in the Frontlands towards the Mural Tower of the Kells Town Wall, the Round Tower and St. Columba's Church. The manner in which this view shall be framed and protected shall be indicated in the agreed Framework Plan.

Existing pressures on landscape and visual resources are primarily related to impacts to sensitive views and landscapes resulting from the positioning of new development, infrastructure including road, rail, electricity and water-service infrastructure, without sensitivity to these resources. The following issues were considered during the plan preparation:

- Maintenance of existing landscape character.

- Impacts on designated protected landscapes, heritage landscapes and protected views as a result of development.
- Impacts due to development on the ecological components of the landscape.

5.8 Interactions

The environment is both complex and dynamic and the various elements of the environment interact in an equally complex and dynamic manner. The permutations can be numerous; however at a simplistic level the principal interactions can be either qualified or quantified in most instances.

These interactions can be either benign or unfavourable; can be either proportionate or synergistic; can be short lived or permanent. In addition an event, an individual action or an ongoing activity can have an effect on one or more aspects of the environment. This effect may differ in magnitude, type and duration across several different aspects of the environment.

For example the potential exists for discharges of treated effluent from wastewater plants to surface water systems to impact negatively on water quality. Similarly the use of septic tanks can impact negatively on the quality of ground water resources if working inefficiently or inappropriately sited. This report has attempted to deal with the issues at a 'root' level thereby diminishing the necessity to discuss further the possible and numerous interactions between the various environmental receptors.

This environmental report has approached each of the environmental receptors on an individual basis though it is fully cognisant of the relationship between the various elements. The report has therefore attempted to present the data in such a way as to indicate fully the potential for impacts on other aspects of the environment where they may occur or indeed are likely to occur.

To highlight the extent of the relationship between the various elements of the environment the matrix presented in Table 5.2 provides an indication of the interactions present between environmental receptors.

To highlight the extent of the relationship between the various elements of the environment the matrix presented in Table 5.2 provides an indication of the interactions present between environmental receptors. Categories highlighted in **blue** identify where interactions between environmental receptors occur.

The significant aspect of the matrix (is the relationship between human beings and all aspects of the environment. There are three simple conclusions to be drawn from the matrix; people benefit most from a high quality environment; people are collectively responsible for the adverse impacts that can occur; and people are most seriously affected by deterioration in environmental quality.

Table 5.2 Interrelationship between Environmental Receptors

		Biodiversity - Flora and Fauna	Human Beings - Population	Human Beings - Health	Soil and Geology	Water	Landscape and Visual Issues	Material Assets - Transportation	Material Assets - Other	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Noise
Is this aspect of the environment likely to interact with other aspects of the environment?	Biodiversity - Flora and Fauna											
	Human Beings - Population											
	Human Beings - Health											
	Soils and Geology											
	Water											
	Landscape and Visual Issues											
	Material Assets - Transportation											
	Material Assets - Other											
	Cultural Heritage											
	Air Quality											
	Noise											

6 Strategic Environmental Objectives

6.1 Introduction

The primary objective of the SEA is to provide for a high level of environmental protection and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of Variation No.1 to the Kells Town Development Plan.

Article 5 of the SEA Directive requires the identification of environmental protection objectives. These Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) assist in the prediction, description and monitoring of impacts on the environment as a result of the Variation. Indicators allow impacts to be assessed and highlighted in a simple and effective manner. Indicators can also be used to form the basis of a monitoring programme for the Plan, (outlined in Chapter 10 of this Environmental Report) the results of which will inform the next Plan Review and other studies.

Indicators allow impacts to be assessed and highlighted in a simple and effective manner. Indicators can also be used as standards to form the basis of a monitoring programme for the Variation (outlined in Chapter 10 of this Environmental Report).

While indicators facilitate the monitoring aspect of the SEA, targets provide a realistic and achievable target to which the local authorities can work towards. All SEOs, indicators and targets are provided on Table 6.1 while background to these measures is provided in the subsections below.

Table 4.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives, Targets and Indicators.

Objectives	SEA Indicator	Targets
B1: Biodiversity including Flora and Fauna		
Conserve the diversity of habitats and species by limiting adverse impacts on habitats and species of conservation concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and extent of Protected Sites. Areas actively managed for conservation. Population and range of Protected Species. Achievement of the Objectives of Biodiversity Plans. No net loss in length of ecological corridors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider siting of new development on non-sensitive sites. Improve/maintain protection for protected sites and species. Improve/maintain protection for important wildlife sites, particularly urban wildlife corridors. Improve access for the appreciation and promotion of wildlife.
PH1: Population and Human Health		
Improve people's quality of life based on high-quality residential, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Census population data. Rates of Unemployment per area. % increase in housing (number and type). Rate of local employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise population exposure to high levels of noise, vibration and air pollution. Increase modal shift to public transport. Co-ordinate land use and transportation policies. Improve access to recreation opportunities.

Objectives	SEA Indicator	Targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise effect on human health due to flooding
S1: Soils & Geology		
Protect quality and quantity of existing soil and geology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates of re-use / recycling of construction waste. Rates of cement / concrete production. Rates of brownfield site and contaminated land reuse and development. Rates of greenfield development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent pollution of soil through adoption of appropriate environmental protection procedures during construction and maintenance works on site. Ensure polluting substances are appropriately stored and banded. Ensure appropriate management of existing contaminated soil in accordance with the requirements of current waste legislation. Re-use of brownfield lands, rather than developing Greenfield lands, where possible.
W1: Water Resources		
Improve/maintain water quality and the management of watercourses to comply with the standards of the Water Framework Directive and incorporate the objectives of the Floods Directive into sustainable planning and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance of potable water sources to water quality regulations Compliance of surface waters with national and international standards Potable/wastewater treatment capacity versus population % of wastewater achieving tertiary treatment Achievement of the Objectives of the River Basin Management Plans Implementation of recommendations of SFRA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the achievement agreed targets in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. Minimise flood risk through appropriate management of flood vulnerable zones and retention, where practicable, of flood plains. Promote sustainable drainage practices to improve water quality and flow. Maintain sustainable levels of abstraction from Lough Bane. Control/minimise point and diffuse sources of pollution within the Plan area.
A1: Air, Noise & Climate		
Maintain and promote continuing environmental improvement where possible of emissions to air (including noise emissions).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic, Transport and Vehicular survey data National and region specific emission data Compliance with national standards Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions Number and extent of emission licensed facilities Number of energy/renewable energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise air and noise emissions during construction and operation of new developments. Promote minimisation of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere

Objectives	SEA Indicator	Targets
	facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of new residential units with C1 or better BER rating 	
CH1: Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage		
Promote the protection and conservation of the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating of inventories to include new sites / features Achieving the objectives of development plans regarding heritage protection Range and extent of areas of heritage potential Range and extent of areas of special planning controls – Architectural Conservation Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regeneration of derelict and underutilised heritage sites. Improve appearance of areas with particular townscape character. Improve protection for protected archaeological sites and monuments and their settings, protected structures and conservation areas and areas of archaeological potential. Enhance access to sites of heritage interest
L1: Landscape and Visual		
Conserve and enhance valued natural and historic landscapes and features within them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range and extent of Amenity Landscapes Rates of development within designated landscapes Rates of urban expansion Rates of deforestation Rates of agricultural land redevelopment % change of land use from rural to urban Areas of new Green Infrastructure established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve protection for landscapes of recognised quality. Maintain clear urban/rural distinctions. Enhance provision of, and access to, green infrastructure in Kells. Ensure development is sensitive to its surroundings
M1: Material Assets		
Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement/expansion of existing infrastructure. Achievement of development plan Objectives Rates of deprivation Rate of waste disposal to landfill statistics Range and extent of recycling facilities and services Rates of recycling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve availability and accessibility of commercially provided facilities and public services. Increase local employment opportunities. Improve efficiencies of transport, energy and communication infrastructure. Promotion of sustainable transport infrastructure i.e. increased public transport. Reduce the generation of waste and adopt a sustainable approach to waste management.

7 Description of Alternatives

7.1 Introduction

The issue of alternatives is a critical function of the SEA process and is necessary to evaluate the likely environmental consequences of a range of alternative development strategies for the county within the constraints imposed by environmental conditions. The alternatives were considered at an early stage of the process and through an iterative process with the Variation No.1, SEA and AA teams the most appropriate scenario was selected.

7.2 Legislative Context

Article 5 of the SEA Directive requires the consideration of reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme and the significant environmental effects of the alternatives proposed. It states under Article 5(1) that;

Where an environmental assessment is required under Article 3(1), an environmental report shall be prepared in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated. The information to be given for this purpose is referred to in Annex I.

In accordance with SEA guidelines the alternatives put forward should be reasonable, realistic and capable of implementation. They should also be in line with the appropriate strategic level at which the Plan will be implemented within the national and county planning hierarchy. Variation No. 1 will be framed within a policy context set by a hierarchy of National, Regional and County level strategic plans.

The key purpose of this Variation No. 1 is to align the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 with the key tenets of the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 as they relate to land-use planning. The Variation also seeks to align the Plan with the provisions of the County Development Plan (as varied) and update the written text and maps accordingly. The preparation of the Economic Development Strategy was itself subject to Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Variation No. 3 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, which aligned the County Development Plan with the key tenets of the Economic Development Strategy, was also subject to Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment.

One of the main purposes of the Variation is to review the quantum and location of employment zoned land within the Plan area and as such includes amendments to employment zoning objectives and development management standards so as to incorporate flexibility in the provision of employment generating uses and to ensure consistency with the County Development Plan.

7.3 Methodology for the Selection of Alternatives

The Variation is based on the principles of sustainable development which means that development will be promoted in accordance with the appropriate international, national, regional and county guidelines.

The Variation is based on the principles of sustainable development which means that development will be promoted in accordance with the appropriate international, national, regional and county guidelines.

Particular reference is drawn to the Core Strategy of the Meath County Development Plan which must be complied with. The following factors have been used to determine the suitability of specific lands for residential development which constitute the proper planning and sustainable development of the town:

- i) Proximity of similar land-uses;
- ii) Impact on adjacent land-uses;
- iii) Provision of existing and proposed road and services infrastructure;
- iv) Existing phasing proposals for release of residential lands
- v) Environmental constraints – proximity to and potential impact on the qualifying interests of the adjoining designated sites;

7.4 Description of Alternatives

Three alternatives were considered in the drafting of the SEA and the preparation of Variation No.1 of the Kells Town Development Plan. Options developed are not predictions or preferences; instead they offer a range of outcomes arising from different planning and development strategies that were considered. These three scenarios form the basis for comparative evaluation of the likely environmental effects of each as part of this study.

- Alternative 1: Do Nothing Approach (No change to Land Use Zoning)
- Alternative 2: Unrestricted Approach (to land-use zonings requirements)
- Alternative 3: Planned Approach (to land-use zonings requirements)

7.4.1 Overview of Alternatives

Alternative 1: Do Nothing Approach (No Change to Land-use Zoning)

This would retain land-use zonings as per the existing Kells Development Plan, as previously varied.

Overview

- Land-use zonings do not allow for realising potential of additional employment generation opportunities.
- Land-use zonings do not allow for realising potential of additional economic generation opportunities.
- No new potential effects on habitats and landscapes.

Alternative 2: Unrestricted Approach (to land-use zonings requirements)

This approach would involve placing no restrictions on variation-related development opportunity of the Plan lands.

Overview

- Has potential to lead to an uncoordinated use of lands with disconnected development.
- Has potential for unknown impact on road and services infrastructure and networks.
- Underutilises the potential to consolidate existing land-uses and their access and service requirements.
- Has potential for unknown impact or pressures on habitats and landscapes.

Alternative 3: Planned Approach (to land-use zonings requirements)

This approach would involve phasing development subject to most appropriate/desirable locations in tandem with any necessary physical infrastructure upgrades and increased social infrastructure provision.

Overview

- Allows for an orderly and consolidated strengthening and expansion of existing similar land-uses.
- Allows for best use of existing and planned road and services infrastructure and networks.
- Avoids developments of incompatible land-uses.
- Allows for planned consideration and appropriate mitigation of potential pressures on habitats and landscapes.

7.5 Evaluation of Alternatives

This section provides a comparative evaluation of the environmental effect of implementing the alternatives and determines which alternative is likely to have a beneficial, neutral or negative relationship with the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEO's) outlined in Chapter 6. Using the above SEOs, the three alternatives are evaluated against these environmental objectives, the results of the assessment are presented in Table 7.1. The Assessment is categorized as follows:

Positive	
Neutral	
Uncertain	
Negative	

7.6 Outcome of Alternatives Assessment

The alternatives reviewed represent choices that are available to the planning authority in delivering the Variation. Following consideration against the Strategic Environmental Objectives it was considered that Alternative three was the most appropriate approach with regards to the future sustainable planning and development of Kells.

The future development envisaged requires a balance between the desire to increase economic and employment opportunity and the need to ensure adequate infrastructure is in place to accommodate growth. The alternative chosen in the Variation represents an appropriate balance between the competing environmental objectives.

Table 7.1 SEA Assessment of Alternative Scenarios

SEA Objective	Alternative 1: Do Nothing Approach	Alternative 2: Unrestricted Approach	Alternative 3: Planned Approach
BIODIVERSITY			
B1: Conserve the diversity of habitats and species by limiting adverse impacts on habitats and species of conservation concern.	Neutral	Negative	Neutral
POPULATION			
PH1: Improve people's quality of life based on high-quality residential, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns.	Negative	Negative	Positive
SOILS AND GEOLOGY			
S1: Protect quality and quantity of existing soil and geology.	Neutral	Negative	Neutral
AIR QUALITY & CLIMATE			
A1: Maintain and promote continuing environmental improvement where possible of emissions to air (including noise emissions).	Neutral	Negative	Neutral
WATER			
W1: Improve/maintain water quality and the management of watercourses to comply with the standards of the Water Framework Directive and incorporate the objectives of the Floods Directive into sustainable planning and development.	Neutral	Negative	Neutral
MATERIAL ASSETS			
M1: Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure.	Neutral	Negative	Neutral
CULTURAL HERITAGE			
CH1: Promote the protection and conservation of the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage.	Neutral	Negative	Neutral
LANDSCAPE			
L1: Conserve and enhance valued natural and historic landscapes and features within them.	Neutral	Negative	Neutral

8 Strategic Environmental Assessment of Variation No.1

8.1 Introduction

The SEA process ensures that the environment is central to all decisions on the future development of the plan area.

The purpose of this section of the Environmental Report is to highlight the potential conflicts, if they are present, between the stated policies and objectives contained in Variation No. 1 with the Strategic Environmental Objectives. Furthermore the assessment examines the potential impact arising from the Plan's implementation of its policies and objectives on sensitive environmental receptors.

The process of SEA and Variation No. 1 formulation is an iterative one and as such, environmental considerations have informed all stages of Variation No. 1 carried out to date in order for the potential for significant adverse effects arising from implementation of the variation to be minimised. Nonetheless, it is possible that some individual plan objectives or policies will create such effects. Where the environmental assessment identifies significant adverse effects, consideration is given in the first instance to preventing such impacts and where this is not possible for stated reasons, to lessening or offsetting those effects through mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 9 of this report.

In some instances, there is little or no relationship between the variation Policies/Objectives and the respective environmental receptor. Where this occurs, the potential impact is regarded as neutral and no further discussion is deemed necessary.

This section provides a comparative evaluation of the environmental effect of implementing the stated policies and objectives of Variation No. 1 and determines whether each measure is likely to have a positive, neutral, uncertain or negative relationship with the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEO's) outlined in Chapter 6. Using the above SEOs, the policies and objectives of Variation No. 1 are evaluated in the context of their impact on these environmental objectives, the results of the assessment are presented in a table format below. The potential effects are categorised as follows:

- Potential Positive Impact
- Uncertain impact
- Neutral or No relationship
- Potential Negative impact

Where the evaluation identifies a potential uncertain or negative impact with the status of an SEO, the relevant SEO code and provision is entered into a Mitigation Table (Table 9.1) to assess what mitigation is available to offset uncertain or potentially negative impacts arising from the provision.

Table 8.1 Environmental Assessment Of Variation No. 1 Policies and Objectives

Specific Elements/Components Of Variation No.1 to Kells Development Plan	Potential Negative Impact	Potentially Uncertain Impact	Potentially Neutral or No relationship	Potential Positive Impact
Policies & Objectives				
<p>Core Strategy OBJ 1</p> <p>The development of new residential properties at Rabbit Hill Wood along the Headfort Road shall be linked to the opening of a publicly accessible river walk. This proposal shall be subject to a Framework Plan being agreed in writing with Meath County Council. The Framework Plan shall provide inter alia the following; Development shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands.....</p> <p>..... No application for development within the subject lands will be considered in the absence of the required Framework Plan having first being agreed in writing with Meath County Council. When prepared, all subsequent applications for development The Master Plan shall be accompanied with by a design statement demonstrating compliance with the Framework Plan.</p>	W1,		PH1, S1, A1, CH1, L1, M1, B1	
<p>Core Strategy OBJ 2</p> <p>The development of new high quality Executive Style residential properties south of the existing Maple Drive residential development along the Athboy Road. Development shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands.</p> <p>The Master Plan shall address the following:</p>		PH1, S1, A1	B1, W1, CH1, M1, L1,	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of residential dwellings shall be in the order of 40 units, • A high standard of design, finish and layout; • A comprehensive landscaping plan; • Infrastructural requirements including access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists, • A consistent design theme shall be provided for the development. <p>The Master Plan shall be accompanied by a design statement.</p>				
<p>Creation of E1 Employment Objective</p> <p>E1-Strategic Employment Zones (High Technology Uses)</p> <p>Objective-To facilitate opportunities for high end technology/manufacturing and major campus style office based employment within high quality and accessible locations.</p> <p><u>Guidance:</u></p> <p>E1 zones facilitate opportunities for high end, high value added businesses and corporate headquarters. This adheres to the concept of 4th generation Science & Technology Parks. It is envisaged that such locations are suitable for high density employment generating activity with associated commercial development located adjacent to or in close proximity to high frequency public transport corridors.</p> <p><u>Permitted Uses</u></p> <p>Bio-Technology Manufacturing, Call Centres, Childcare Facility, Convenience Outlet, Green/Clean Light Industries, Education (third</p>			B1, S1, W1, L1, CH1	PH1, A1

<p>level), High Technology Manufacturing, Information Communication Technologies, International and National Traded Services, Knowledge Based Economic Development, Offices 100 to 1,000 sq m, Offices >1,000 sq m, Research & Development, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Telecommunication Structures, water services/Public Services.</p> <p>Open for Consideration Uses: Advertisement and Advertising Structures, Conference/Event Centre, Education, Enterprise/Training Centre, Leisure facilities, Hotel/Apart hotel, Industry-light, Restaurant/Cafe, Petrol Station, Transport Depot/Logistics, Warehousing</p> <p>Uses not listed under the “permissible” or “open for consideration” categories will be assessed on their own merits ,however any such uses shall not conflict with the primary land-use objective to provide for the creation and production of enterprise and employment.</p>				
<p>Revision of E2 Employment Objective</p> <p>Objective: To provide for the creation of enterprise and facilitate opportunities for employment through industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and other general employment /enterprise uses in a good quality physical environment.</p> <p><u>Guidance (General):</u></p> <p>E2 lands constitute an important land bank for employment use which must be protected. The development of E2 lands seek to provide for the creation and production of enterprise and facilitate opportunities for industrial, manufacturing, distribution,</p>			B1, S1, W1, A1, L1	M1, PH1

<p>warehousing and other general employment/enterprise uses in a good quality physical environment.</p> <p>It shall be the policy of Meath County Council to apply a more flexible approach to large scale office type development in excess of 200 sq m of gross floor area in significant areas (i.e. in excess of 3 hectares of land that is currently undeveloped) of E2 land use zoning objective under the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The preparation of a non statutory Master Plan to ensure the provision of the necessary physical infrastructure, the appropriate density and design of layout and the interface between proposed uses and existing development. This document should be submitted in conjunction with any planning applications arising; • That all processes being operated in the vicinity of the site, similarly zoned E2, are classified as light industrial in nature, as defined in the Planning & Development Regulations 2001-2013; • That the site is located adjacent to a public transport corridor and is served by an adequate road network, and: • That the application is accompanied by a viable Mobility Management Plan which is to the satisfaction of Meath County Council and provides for the achievement of acceptable modal shares for both public and private transport within an appropriate timeframe. <p>Existing employment generating uses together with their expansion to an appropriate scale and size, consistent with the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and the National transport Authority Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area,</p>				
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<p>shall be facilitated notwithstanding the category of settlement specified.</p> <p>The majority of the E2 zoned lands in Kells are located in the Kells Business Park off the Cavan Road. A new framework Master plan to guide future development in the undeveloped areas of the park is of the undeveloped areas of the Business Park contained in Appendix G of this Plan shall be prepared by the land owner(s) which shall have the written approval of the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall provide for all of the aspects outlined with specific objective ED OBJ 5 outlined within Chapter 3- Economy and Employment.</p>				
<p>Creation of E3 Employment objective</p> <p>Objective: To facilitate logistics, warehousing, distribution and supply chain management inclusive of related industry facilities which require good access to the major road network.</p> <p><u>Permitted Uses:</u> Bring Banks, car park (incl. Of park and Ride), CHP/Wate to Energy Facilities, Distribution and Supply Chain management, Domestic Fuel Depot, Energy Installation, Fuel Depot, Heavy Vehicle Park, Logistics, Plant Storage, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Telecommunication storage depot, Transport Depot, Warehousing, Water Services / Public Services, Wholesale Warehousing / Cash and Carry</p> <p><u>Open for Consideration Uses</u> Agri-Business, Childcare facility, Enterprise & Business Start Ups, Enterprise/Training Centre, Garden Centre, Industry-Light, Petrol Station, Restaurant / Cafe, Waste Recycling /Transfer / Sorting Centre.</p>			B1, S1,W1, A1, CH1, L1	M1, PH1,

Uses not listed under the permissible or 'open for consideration' categories will be assessed on their own merits, however any such uses shall not conflict with the primary land-use objective to facilitate logistics, warehousing and distribution type facilities.				
<p>WL White Lands Objective</p> <p>To protect strategic lands from inappropriate forms of development which would impede the orderly expansion of a strategic urban centre.</p> <p>These are strategic lands and their designation is to allow for a long term integrated approach to be taken to the expansion of an urban area. It is not generally envisaged that development proposals will be brought forward during the life of this Development Plan for such lands. No indication is therefore generally offered regarding the suitability or otherwise of individual uses on said lands within this Development Plan. The acceptability of specific proposals for development on the lands prior to that time (other than housing will be considered on their merits. It is vital that such lands are protected against developments which would impede the orderly expansion of an urban area. <i>Should the Planning Authority be satisfied that a project proposed for lands with a white land designation would assist with the implementation of the Economic Strategy; these lands can be released for development during the plan period.</i></p>			B1, S1,W1, A1, CH1, L1, M1, PH1	
<p>ED POL 1</p> <p>To implement the policies, actions and recommendations of the Economic Development strategy for County Meath.</p>			B1, S1,W1, A1, CH1, L1, M1	PH1
<p>ED POL 2</p> <p>To encourage and facilitate the successful development of Kells Business Park identified as a strategic employment site in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022.</p>			B1, S1, W1, A1, CH1, L1	PH1, M1

<p>ED POL 6</p> <p>To continue to support and promote existing industries and enterprises in Kells and build upon the status of Kells as part of an EU designated Regional Aid area and to explore funding streams such as the REDZ initiative to support enterprise within Meath.</p>			B1, S1, W1, A1, CH1, L1, M1	PH1,
<p>ED POL 9</p> <p>To facilitate the sustainable development of commercial, office, incubator units, light industrial and warehousing development on appropriately zoned and serviced lands in co-operation with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and the County Enterprise Board. Local Enterprise Office</p>			B1, S1, W1, A1, CH1, L1, M1, PH1	
<p>ED OBJ 3 – Rezoning from Tourism and Open Space to Strategic Employment Zone.</p> <p>To provide for strategic employment uses predominantly lead by a Science Park for Innovation and Research or similar high-end-Business and/or Corporate Headquarters, primarily FDI, requiring a significant site area at Navan Road, Kells. Development shall be on a phased basis and in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands.</p> <p>The Master Plan shall address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A design concept for the lands; • Guidance for high quality design throughout the development; • Building heights and densities; • A landscape plan for the development and landscape management plan (post-completion of the development); • Flood Risk Assessment which takes account of the most up to date available CFRAMS data; 		B1, L1, S1	M1, A1, CH1, W1	PH1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Transport Assessment which addresses the following issues: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Access arrangements to the development sites; 2) Provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the development site; 3) Provision and access for Service Vehicles to the site. 				
<p>ED OBJ 4</p> <p>To provide for employment uses predominantly lead by industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and other general employment/enterprise uses within the Kells Business Park. Development shall be on a phased basis and shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on the undeveloped lands.</p> <p>The Master Plan shall address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A design concept for the lands; - Guidance for high quality design throughout the development; - Building heights and densities; - A landscape plan for the development and landscape management plan (post-completion of the development); - Flood Risk Assessment which takes account of the most up to date available CFRAMS data; - A Transport Assessment which addresses the following issues: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Access arrangements to the development sites; 2) Provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the development site; 3) Provision and access for Service Vehicles to the site. 			B1, S1, A1, W1, CH1, L1, M1	PH1

<p>ED OBJ 5 – Extension of B2 Lands</p> <p>To provide for the development of retail warehouse uses on lands adjacent to the existing Aldi foodstore on the Cavan Road in a good quality physical environment. Development shall be on a phased basis and shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands. The Master Plan shall address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A design concept for the lands; - Guidance for high quality design throughout the development; - Building heights and densities; - A landscape plan for the development and landscape management plan (post-completion of the development); - Flood Risk Assessment which takes account of the most up to date available CFRAMS data; - A Transport Assessment which addresses the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Access arrangements to the development sites; 2) Provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the development site; 3) Provision and access for Service Vehicles to the site. 		B1	PH1, S1, W1, A1, CH1, M1	
<p>Policies & Objectives</p> <p>Tourism</p>				
<p>TOUR POL 5</p> <p>To co-operate with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Meath Boyne Valley Tourism, Louth County Council, Boyne Valley and any other relevant bodies in the implementation of the Boyne Valley</p>			B1, PH1, M1, S1, W1, A1, CH1	

Destination Development Strategy Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 and Ireland's Ancient East Programme.				
TOUR OBJ 1 To implement the recommendations of the Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 Drive Infrastructure Study, the Tourism Route Interpretation Plan for the Boyne Valley Drive and the Interpretative Plan for Boyne Valley Orientation Points as they apply to the town of Kells and its environs.			B1, PH1, M1, S1, W1, A1, CH1, L1	
TOUR OBJ 2 To facilitate the creation of a cultural quarter hub in Kells in accordance with the provisions of the Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 as a cultural hub and support retail, tourism and artisan development in Kells. a cluster of creative and cultural industries with galleries, craft shops, potteries, goldsmiths and jewellery designers, artisan foods, restaurants, cafes, etc. - in the Market Street, Church Hill, Church Street, New Market Street and Canon Street. Flexibility of land use zoning considerations shall apply whereby proposals can demonstrate consistency with this policy and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.			B1, PH1, M1, S1, W1, A1, CH1, L1	
TOUR OBJ 5 To prepare and implement an overall tourism and amenity development strategy for the Town Council land bank at Lloyd which would, inter alia, implement the recommendations contained in the Boyne Valley Drive Infrastructure Study & Tourism Route Interpretation Plan for the Boyne Valley Drive. The preparation of the development strategy shall be completed within 2 years of the adoption of this Development Plan, subject to funding. In addition, future development proposals will be subject to a Traffic & Transport Assessment (TTA), where appropriate, in relation to the potential impact of any specific development on the national road network in the area.			B1, M1, S1, W1, A1	PH1, CH1

9 Mitigation Measures

9.1 Introduction

This section outlines the mitigation measures identified, as necessary, to address the potential negative impacts arising from the adoption of Variation No.1. While every effort will be taken to ensure that the impact of the Variation on the environment is neutral to positive, particular uncertain or negative impacts may occur as a result of its implementation. The Environmental Report details mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate identified negative impacts.

Policies and objectives set out in the Variation which run contrary to the objectives and policies contained within the Development Plans will not normally be permitted, and if permitted, not without the detailing of appropriate site and development specific mitigation measures. In addition, particular policies or objectives which form the basis of the future project, e.g the delivery of a regional hospital, will in themselves be subject to further project specific environmental assessment by means of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

9.2 Mitigation Measures

Given the environmental designations, landscape and cultural heritage sensitivities in the plan area, there were occasional uncertain and potential negative impacts identified as a result of interactions between the policies and objectives of Variation No. 1 and the Strategic Environmental Objectives. In these instances, many potential uncertainties or negative impacts can be mitigated by protective policies already contained within the Kells Town Development Plan. These environmental protection policies will serve, in many cases, to safeguard against the Variation resulting in adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites. The AA process has also identified mitigation measures to safeguard against potentially adverse effects. These protective policies and objectives are derived from the Kells Town Development Plan.

An initial review of the Variation recommended that, in certain circumstances, the inclusion of further protective measures or text should be included in the drafting of the Variation. The following text in green was included to protect against the potential for adverse environmental impacts:

- **ED OBJ 3 – Rezoning from Tourism and Open Space to Strategic Employment Zone.**

To provide for strategic employment uses predominantly lead by a Science Park for Innovation and Research or similar high-end Business and/or Corporate Headquarters, primarily FDI, requiring a significant site area at Navan Road, Kells. Development shall be on a phased basis and in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands

The Master Plan shall address the following:

- A design concept for the lands;
- Guidance for high quality design throughout the development;
- Building heights and densities;
- A landscape plan for the development and landscape management plan (post-completion of the development);

- *the provision of a substantial landscape buffer to the southern and eastern site boundaries to address the openness of the site;*
- Flood Risk Assessment which takes account of the most up to date available CFRAMS data;
- A Transport Assessment which addresses the following issues:
 - Access arrangements to the development sites;
 - Provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the development site;
 - Provision and access for Service Vehicles to the site.
- **Suggested Additional Objective**
In order to ensure the protection of soils, consider adding the following objective:

HER OBJ 5: To protect and conserve the integrity of soils that support the rich biodiversity and ecological networks in Kells.
- **Suggested Additional Objective**
In order to ensure regard to the Meath Noise Action Plan and Air Quality in Kells, consider adding the following objective:

Her OBJ 6: 'To seek to preserve and maintain air and noise quality in Kells in accordance with good practice, relevant legislation and ambient noise thresholds in Meath Noise Action Plan 2013-2019.'
- **Suggested Additional text**
The inclusion of additional wording as a general "catch all" clause for all Masterplan areas:
Development located in lands governed by a Masterplan will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive, and any other ecological assessments deemed necessary by the Council.

A recommendation from the EPA Scoping submission suggested the incorporation of an appropriate riverside buffer alongside designated sites (including the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC / River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA) in order to protect and enhance ecological linkage. This was reviewed in the context of the zoning alterations. There are no zoning changes to any lands adjacent to the River Boyne or River Blackwater and lands currently zoned for enterprise and employment adjacent to the River Blackwater are already in part developed. Taking in account the protective ecological and water policies and objectives detailed in both the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 and the Variation, any further development proposals on these lands would be provided adequate protection against adverse effects on water quality status and aquatic wildlife.

This section below outlines the mitigation measures identified, as necessary, to address the potential negative or uncertain impacts arising from the implementation particular policies and objectives within Variation No. 1. While every effort will be taken to ensure that the impact of the Variation on the environment is neutral to positive, particular unavoidable negative impacts may occur as a result of its implementation. This section details mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate identified negative or uncertain impacts.

Similarly, monitoring of Variation No.1, in accordance with the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, will incorporate proposals to monitor various environmental receptors. A schedule of monitoring and reporting is set out in Table 10.1 in order to ensure that any unforeseen negative impact is identified at the earliest opportunity and subsequently appropriate mitigation measures are put in place to eliminate or at a minimum, limit the level of impact to an acceptable degree. This monitoring is aligned with the monitoring required for the current Kells Town Development Plan 2013-2019.

Table 9.1 Mitigation Table

Specific Elements/Components Of Variation No.1 to Kells Development Plan	Potential Negative Impact	Potentially Uncertain Impact	Mitigation
Policies & Objectives			
<p>Core Strategy OBJ 1</p> <p>The development of new residential properties at Rabbit Hill Wood along the Headfort Road shall be linked to the opening of a publicly accessible river walk. This proposal shall be subject to a Framework Plan being agreed in writing with Meath County Council. The Framework Plan shall provide inter alia the following; Development shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands.....</p> <p>..... No application for development within the subject lands will be considered in the absence of the required Framework Plan having first being agreed in writing with Meath County Council. When prepared, all subsequent applications for development The Master Plan shall be accompanied with by a design statement demonstrating compliance with the Framework Plan.</p>	W1		Potential negative impacts on flooding can be mitigated by INF POL 16, INF POL 17, INF POL 18, INF OBJ 4, INF OBJ 5, INF POL 19 of the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019.
<p>Core Strategy OBJ 2</p> <p>The development of new high quality Executive Style residential properties south of the existing Maple Drive residential development along the Athboy Road. Development shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive</p>		PH1, S1, A1	<p>Potential uncertain impacts on Human Beings and Air & Climate could be mitigated by TRAN POL 1 and PC POL 1 of the Meath CDP 2013-2019.</p> <p>The introduction of an objective to mitigate against uncertain impacts on human health, air quality and</p>

<p>of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands.</p> <p>The Master Plan shall address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of residential dwellings shall be in the order of 40 units, • A high standard of design, finish and layout; • A comprehensive landscaping plan; • Infrastructural requirements including access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists, • A consistent design theme shall be provided for the development. <p>The Master Plan shall be accompanied by a design statement.</p>			<p>noise has also been incorporated into the Variation to into the Kells Town Development Plan:</p> <p><i>‘To seek to preserve and maintain air and noise quality in the county in accordance with good practice, relevant legislation and ambient noise thresholds in Meath Noise Action Plan.’</i></p> <p>Potential uncertain impacts on soils can be mitigated by Land Use Zoning Objective A1 and A2 of the Kells Town Development Plan.</p> <p>The introduction of an objective to mitigate against uncertain impacts on soils has also been incorporated into the Variation to into the Kells Town Development Plan:</p> <p>HER OBJ 5: <i>To protect and conserve the integrity of soils that support the rich biodiversity and ecological networks in Kells.</i></p>
<p>ED OBJ 5 – Extension of B2 Lands</p> <p>To provide for the development of retail warehouse uses on lands adjacent to the existing Aldi foodstore on the Cavan Road in a good quality physical environment. Development shall be on a phased basis and shall be in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands</p> <p>The Master Plan shall address the following:</p>		B1	<p>The following additional wording to strengthen the commitment to protect European sites has also been included with regard to MP2 lands:</p> <p><i>‘All future development within the MP2 lands will have to take full account of the sensitivities of the receiving environment. Proposals for development which would be likely to have a significant effect on European sites will only be approved if it can be ascertained, by means of an Appropriate Assessment (in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A design concept for the lands; - Guidance for high quality design throughout the development; - Building heights and densities; - A landscape plan for the development and landscape management plan (post-completion of the development); - Flood Risk Assessment which takes account of the most up to date available CFRAMS data; - A Transport Assessment which addresses the following issues: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Access arrangements to the development sites; 2) Provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the development site; 3) Provision and access for Service Vehicles to the site. 			<p><i>Directive), that the integrity of these sites will not be adversely affected.'</i></p>
<p>ED OBJ 3 – Rezoning from Tourism and Open Space to Strategic Employment Zone.</p> <p>To provide for strategic employment uses predominantly lead by a Science Park for Innovation and Research or similar high-end Business and/or Corporate Headquarters, primarily FDI, requiring a significant site area at Navan Road, Kells. Development shall be on a phased basis and in accordance with a Master Plan which shall be approved in writing with the Executive of the Planning Authority. The Master Plan shall accompany any planning application for planning permission on these lands</p> <p>The Master Plan shall address the following:</p>		<p>B1, L1, S1</p>	<p>Potential uncertain impacts on Biodiversity arising from the change in use of the Lands originally zoned as open space and tourism to a Strategic employment use will be mitigated by GGI POL 8 and GI OBJ 2 of the Kells Town Development Plan.</p> <p>The following additional wording to strengthen the commitment to protect European sites has also been included:</p> <p><i>'All future development within the MP6 lands will have to take full account of the sensitivities of the receiving environment. Proposals for development which would be likely to have a significant effect on</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A design concept for the lands; • Guidance for high quality design throughout the development; • Building heights and densities; • A landscape plan for the development and landscape management plan (post-completion of the development); • Flood Risk Assessment which takes account of the most up to date available CFRAMS data; • A Transport Assessment which addresses the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Access arrangements to the development sites; 2) Provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the development site; 3) Provision and access for Service Vehicles to the site. 			<p><i>European sites will only be approved if it can be ascertained, by means of an Appropriate Assessment (in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive), that the integrity of these sites will not be adversely affected.'</i></p> <p>The introduction of an objective to mitigate against uncertain impacts on landscape has also been incorporated into the Variation to into the Kells Town Development Plan through the inclusion of another bullet point in ED Obj 3 as follows:</p> <p><i>'The Master Plan shall address the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the provision of a substantial landscape buffer to the southern and eastern site boundaries to address the openness of the site;'</i> <p>The introduction of an objective to mitigate against uncertain impacts on biodiversity has also been incorporated into the Variation to into the Kells Town Development Plan:</p> <p><i>'HER OBJ: To protect and conserve the integrity of soils that support the rich biodiversity and ecological networks in Kells.</i></p>
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10 Monitoring Programme

10.1 Introduction

Monitoring of Variation No. 1 and its implications on the environment is paramount to ensure that the environment is not adversely affected through its implementation. Under Article 10 of the SEA Directive, monitoring must be carried out of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the Plan *“in order to, inter alia, identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.”* The SEA Guidelines state that monitoring should concentrate on likely significant environmental effects, which have been identified in the Environmental Report, and measures identified as necessary to avoid, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects.

10.2 Monitoring Indicators

Baseline monitoring is proposed on a series of indicators which measure changes in the environment, especially changes which are critical in terms of environmental quality, for example water or air pollution levels. These indicators aim to simplify complex interrelationships and provide information about environmental issues which is easy to understand. A list of environmental indicators is provided in Table 10.1. The indicators are based on the Strategic Environmental Objectives presented in Chapter 6 and have been derived from knowledge of the existing environmental issues within the plan area and also from legislation, guidelines and higher level plans.

It is considered that a monitoring report on the implementation of the policies and objectives within Variation No.1 is important for the on-going and future implementation of the Plan. It is also considered appropriate that the monitoring programme for the implementation of the policies and objectives within the Variation No. 1 is integrated with the monitoring programme for the statutory development plans for Meath County.

Environmental indicator assessment during monitoring can show positive/neutral impacts or negative impacts on the environment. Where an indicator value highlights a positive/neutral impact on the environment, it is likely that the policies of the Variation are well defined with regard to the environment. Conversely, where the policies of Variation No.1 have a negative impact on the environment, it may be necessary to review the policies or objectives of the plan or to take some other form of intervention. For example, if an objective or policy is having a significant adverse impact, a change may be considered during the lifetime of the Plan.

10.3 Sources

Measurements for indicators generally come from existing monitoring sources. Existing monitoring sources include those maintained by the relevant authorities including the National Transport Authority, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Central Statistics Office.

The output of lower-tier environmental assessment and decision making – including a review of project approvals granted and associated documents – will also be utilised as part of the Monitoring Programme.

Where significant effects - including positive, negative, cumulative and indirect - have the potential to occur as a result of the undertaking of individual projects or multiple individual projects, such instances should be identified and recorded and should feed into the monitoring evaluation.

Table 10.1 Monitoring Environmental Indicators

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Responsibility	Frequency / Timing
BIODIVERSITY, FLORA & FAUNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and extent of Protected Sites. Areas actively managed for conservation. Population and range of Protected Species. Achievement of the Objectives of Biodiversity Plans. No net loss in length of ecological corridors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider siting of new development on non-sensitive sites. Improve/maintain protection for protected sites and species. Improve/maintain protection for important wildlife sites, particularly urban wildlife corridors. Improve access for the appreciation and promotion of wildlife. 	Meath County Council, National Parks & Wildlife, Department of Arts, Heritage Regional Rural and Gaeltacht affairs	<p>Monitoring of environmental likely significant effects on a project by project basis as particular elements of the variation are developed and advanced.</p> <p>Monitoring will also occur every 6 years on overall review of Kells Development Plan 2013-2019. On review, Kells Development Plan will be replaced by a Local Area Plan for Kells.</p> <p>National Monitoring Report under Article 12 of the Birds Directive. (c. every 6 years).</p>
POPULATION & HUMAN HEALTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Census population data. Rates of Unemployment per area. % increase in housing (number and type). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise population exposure to high levels of noise, vibration and air pollution. Increase modal shift to public transport. Co-ordinate land use and transportation policies. Improve access to recreation opportunities. 	Meath County Council, Central Statistics Office.	<p>On-going regular monitoring supplemented by data arising from the development and delivery of the plan (every c.2 years).</p> <p>Monitoring will also occur every 6 years on overall review of Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 which will be</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise effect on human health due to flooding 		subsequently replaced by Local Area Plan.
SOILS INCLUDING GEOLOGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates of re-use / recycling of construction waste. Rates of cement / concrete production. Rates of brownfield site and contaminated land reuse and development. Rates of greenfield development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent pollution of soil through adoption of appropriate environmental protection procedures during construction and maintenance works on site. Ensure polluting substances are appropriately stored and banded. Ensure appropriate management of existing contaminated soil in accordance with the requirements of current waste legislation. Re-use of brownfield lands, rather than developing Greenfield lands, where possible. 	Meath County Council, EPA	<p>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects on a project by project basis where potential for interaction with historical landfill sites occur.</p> <p>Review of CORINE mapping (every c.5 years).</p> <p>Monitoring will also occur every 6 years on overall review of Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 which will be subsequently replaced by Local Area Plan.</p>
AIR & CLIMATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic, Transport and Vehicular survey data National and region specific emission data Compliance with national standards Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise air and noise emissions during construction and operation of new developments. Promote minimisation of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere 	Meath County Council, EPA	On-going regular monitoring supplemented by data arising from development and delivery of the measures within the plan (every c.2 years).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and extent of emission licensed facilities • Number of energy/renewable energy facilities • % of new residential units with C1 or better BER rating 			
WATER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance of potable water sources to water quality regulations • Compliance of surface waters with national and international standards • Potable/wastewater treatment capacity versus population % of wastewater achieving tertiary treatment • Achievement of the Objectives of the River Basin Management Plans • Implementation of recommendations of SFRA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the achievement agreed targets in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. • Minimise flood risk through appropriate management of flood vulnerable zones and retention, where practicable, of flood plains. • Promote sustainable drainage practices to improve water quality and flow. • Maintain sustainable levels of abstraction from Lough Bane. • Control/minimise point and diffuse sources of pollution within the Plan area. 	Meath County Council, EPA, Irish Water	Monitoring of water quality in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. (every c.2 years)
MATERIAL ASSETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement/expansion of existing infrastructure. • Achievement of development plan Objectives. • Rates of deprivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve availability and accessibility of commercially provided facilities and public services. 	Meath County Council, NTA	On-going regular monitoring supplemented by data arising from development (every c.2 years).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of waste disposal to landfill statistics. • Range and extent of recycling facilities and services • Rates of recycling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase local employment opportunities. • Improve efficiencies of transport, energy and communication infrastructure. • Promotion of sustainable transport infrastructure i.e. increased public transport. • Reduce the generation of waste and adopt a sustainable approach to waste management. 		Monitoring will also occur every 6 years on overall review of Kells Development Plan 2013-2019
CULTURAL HERITAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating of inventories to include new sites / features • Achieving the objectives of development plans regarding heritage protection • Range and extent of areas of heritage potential • Range and extent of areas of special planning controls – Architectural Conservation Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration of derelict and under utilised heritage sites. • Improve appearance of areas with particular townscape character. • Improve protection for protected archaeological sites and monuments and their settings, protected structures and conservation areas and areas of archaeological potential. • Enhance access to sites of heritage interest 	Meath County Council, Dept. of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht, The Heritage Council.	On-going regular monitoring
LANDSCAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range and extent of Amenity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve protection for landscapes of recognised quality. 	Meath County Council, private developers/ landowners	Monitoring of Statutory Consultee inputs on environmental effects as particular elements of the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscapes Rates of development within designated landscapes Rates of urban expansion Rates of deforestation Rates of agricultural land redevelopment % change of land use from rural to urban Areas of new Green Infrastructure established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain clear urban/rural distinctions. Enhance provision of, and access to, green infrastructure in Kells. Ensure development is sensitive to its surroundings 		<p>Variation No.1 are developed and advanced.</p> <p>Monitoring will also occur every 6 years on overall review of Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 which will be subsequently replaced by a Local Area Plan</p>
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EPA:
NPWS:
CSO:

Environmental Protection Agency
National Parks and Wildlife Service
Central Statistics Office

DAHRRGA:
DHPCLG:

Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government

11 CONCLUSION

Variation No.1 to the Kells Development Plan, its policies and objectives are key to the development of a sustainable economic strategy for Kells Town and its environs. Variation No. 1 sets out the sets out the medium - term strategy for economic development within Kells up to 2022.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment process has been carried out in conjunction with the Appropriate Assessment, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and the preparation of the Variation itself. This has allowed for an early indication of the potential environmental effects likely to occur as a result of the implementation of the objectives within the Variation. As a result, changes or alterations to the Variation were made throughout the course of its preparation. The benefit of preparing the Variation, the NIR, the SFRA and the Environment Report simultaneously ensured that these issues were highlighted at an early stage in the process. This allows any potential negative impacts arising from the Variation to be predicted early on, evaluated and effectively prevented or mitigated.

The objectives of the Variation No.1 were assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives and indicate that the full implementation of the Variation will not result in a significant negative or adverse impact on the environmental resources within the plan area. As a result, the Variation will have a neutral to positive impact on the environment as a whole.

Where the SEA has found potential for negative impacts on the environment as a result of the implementation of the Variation, mitigation measures have been proposed. The implementation of these measures, coupled with the monitoring procedures will ensure the Variation is acceptable from an environmental perspective.

In summary, the assessment of the Variation No. 1 has concluded that its policies and objectives are acceptable and represent a balanced approach to economic and employment development in Kells. Monitoring of the Variation throughout its lifetime will ensure that any potential adverse environmental impacts, unforeseen at this stage will be identified early, so as to prevent any deterioration of the environment. This Variation, as currently presented, can contribute to the delivery of a clear and concise measures aimed at accelerating the economic transformation, revitalisation and sustainable development of Kells Town and its environs.

Appendix I: Scoping Submissions



Mr Pat Gallagher
Senior Planner
Meath County Council
County Hall
Navan
County Meath

13th December 2016

Our Ref: SCP161102.1

Re: Proposed Variation No. 1 of Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 SEA Scoping Opinion

Dear Mr Gallagher,

I refer to and acknowledge your correspondence, dated 24th November 2016, in relation to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping for proposed Variation No. 1 of the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019, hereafter referred to as the “Variation”.

Please find attached an SEA integration guidance document which sets out the key environmental issues, as relevant and appropriate, to be taken into account in the preparation of the SEA.

Specific Comments to be considered

We note that the proposed Variation is for the purposes of incorporating the aims and measures of the Meath Economic Development Strategy and includes proposed changes to the quantum and location of employment zoned land within the Plan area. The Variation should be consistent with the Greater Dublin Area Regional Planning Guidelines 2010–2022 and the Meath County Development Plan 2013–2019. In addition, we recommend that a commitment is included in the Variation, to remain consistent with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) upon their finalisation.

Water Framework Directive

The River Blackwater, which flows to the north of the plan area, is classified as having *Poor* quality status under the Water Framework Directive downstream of Kells. The Variation should protect and where possible, improve surface water, groundwater resources and their associated habitats and species, including fisheries, in accordance with the Water Framework Directive and the Eastern River Basin Management Plan and associated Programme of Measures.

Floods Directive

In the context of proposed future development and zoning, any development should be appropriate to the level of flood risk identified and should be consistent with *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DEHLG/OPW 2009). The Variation should also take into account the relevant aspects of the Draft Flood Risk Management Plan for the Boyne (UoM 07), as relevant and appropriate.

Critical Water-Related Infrastructure

We note that Kells-Oldcastle is listed on the EPA’s Drinking Water Remedial Action List Q3 2016 due to “*inadequate treatment for Cryptosporidium*”, with a proposed action programme involving “*upgrade of water treatment plant to include treatment barrier capable of removing Cryptosporidium*”. We recommend that a commitment is included in the Variation to collaborate with Irish Water on the provision, maintenance and enhancement of water services over the lifetime of the amended Plan to cater for development within the Plan area.

Biodiversity Considerations

The Variation should consider incorporating an appropriate riverside buffer alongside designated sites (including the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC / River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA) in order to protect and enhance ecological linkages and assist in the management of flood risk. Where the application of buffer zones is being considered, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and where relevant Inland Fisheries Ireland should be consulted.

EPA State of the Environment Report 2016

The EPA has recently published our State of the Environment Report for 2016 *Ireland's Environment – An Assessment* (EPA, 2016). The recommendations, key issues and challenges described within this report should be taken into account, as relevant and appropriate in preparing the Variation and associated SEA. This report can be consulted at:

<http://www.epa.ie/irelandsenvironment/stateoftheenvironmentreport/>

Scoping Process Guidance

Guidance on the SEA Scoping Process, including an SEA Pack, Integration Guidance, SEA Checklist, and SEA Spatial Information Sources, is available on the EPA website and should be considered in the preparation of the SEA. This can be consulted at the following address: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/>

In addition, recently published guidance on [*Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA*](#) (EPA, 2015) and [*Integrating Climate Change into SEA in Ireland*](#) (EPA, 2015) should be taken into account as appropriate.

SEA WebGIS Tool and datasets

The EPA's web-based GIS application for the purposes of SEA allows users to explore, interrogate and produce an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in specific geographic areas. These reports are indicative and will provide an overview of key aspects of the environment within a specific plan area and may be used to inform the SEA scoping stage for the Variation. It may be accessed via www.edenireland.ie

The EPA also maintains an inventory of spatial datasets which can be used to inform the Environmental Report and associated environmental assessment. Data sources include Air Quality, Climate, Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna, Geology, Soils, Hydrology and Water Quality. The inventory is available on the EPA website at:

www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/seaspatialinfomationsourcesjune2016.html

In addition, the EPA has recently launched a new website Catchments.ie which has been developed by the EPA in collaboration the DHPCLG and the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO). This website provides detailed information on water quality assessments and trends for the 46 catchments, 583 sub-catchments and 4829 water bodies nationally.

Environmental Authorities

Under the SEA Regulations (*S.I. No. 436 of 2004*), as amended by *S.I. No. 201 of 2011*, notice should also be given to the following:

- The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (now the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government)
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Minister for Communications Energy and Natural Resources (now the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment),



where it appears to the planning authority that the plan or programme, or modification of the plan or programme, might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment

- where it appears to the competent authority that the plan or programme, or amendment to a plan or programme, might have significant effects in relation to the architectural heritage or to nature conservation, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (now the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs), and
- any adjoining planning authority whose area is continuous to the area of a planning authority which prepared a draft plan, proposed variation or local area plan.

Further comment may be provided by the Agency upon receipt of the Draft SEA Environmental Report and associated documents during the next statutory consultation phase of the SEA Process.

Should you have any queries or require further information in relation to the above please contact the undersigned.

I would be grateful if an acknowledgement of receipt of this submission could be sent electronically to the following address: sea@epa.ie.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tara Higgins'.

Dr Tara Higgins
Scientific Officer
SEA Section
Office of Environmental Assessment
Environmental Protection Agency
PO Box 3000
Johnstown Castle Estate
Co. Wexford

INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

References in this guidance to “Plan” refers to the proposed Variation of the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019.

The Plan should be set in the context of the planning hierarchy and a clear statement should be provided as to the function of the Plan and what the Plan can and cannot do. Where other Plans/Programmes/Strategies are responsible for implementing relevant policies / objectives / initiatives, these should be acknowledged and fully referenced in the Plan.

The Agency responds to Plans on a priority basis. The attached integration document sets out the key environmental issues, as relevant and appropriate, to be taken into account in the preparation of the SEA and the Plan. Specific comments/Further comment will/may be provided upon receipt of the Environmental Report and Draft Plan and associated documents during the next statutory consultation phase of the SEA Process.

The comments below relate to the integration of the environmental considerations and recommendations that have been set out in the Environmental Report, as well as the additional information highlighted by the EPA, within the Plan. Suggestions are put forward for consideration with a view to addressing the integration of a number of key environmental considerations within the Plan.

The EPA is a statutory Environmental Authority under the SEA Regulations. The EPA’s role in SEA in relation to Land Use Plans focuses on promoting full integration of the findings of the Environmental Assessment into the Plan. It is not the function of the EPA to either approve or enforce Land Use Plans.

In addition to the generic guidance below, specific environmental information is highlighted in **red**). Both the generic and specific information should be taken into account in the preparation of the Plan and SEA in the context of integrating the protection of environmental vulnerabilities / sensitivities into the Plan, where relevant and as appropriate.

Summary of Latest Updates in 2016

Changes	Comments
11/03/16	Updated link to GIS SEA Manual now available
11/03/16	Updated Noise section
24/04/16	Updated link to Bathing Water Quality Report for 2015
19/05/16	Added link to CORINE 2012 Data in Appendix II
19/05/16	Added link to EPA/WRA Draft SEA Resource Manual in Appendix I
30/05/16	Added link to LA Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines (EPA, 2016)
30/05/16	Added link to Catchments.ie in Appendix I
27/10/16	Updated reference to latest Drinking Water Report for 2015
27/10/16	<i>EcoPlan</i> Project (Green-Infrastructure) added to Section 2.3 and Appendix I
27/10/16	Added Table 15.1 and Table 15.2 with links to environmental resources
10/11/16	Included text on EPA State of Environment Report 2016
28/11/16	Updated link to Urban Waste Water Treatment Report for 2015 (EPA, 2016)
28/11/16	Updated link to Air Quality in Ireland for 2015 Report (EPA, 2016)

Status of Current EPA SEA Related Guidance / Research

- [SEA & Climate Change](#) (Available)
- [SEA & Alternatives](#) (Available)
- [GISEA Manual Update](#) (Available)

- Cumulative Effects Assessment (Estimated publication date Q4 2016)
- SEA & Energy (Estimated publication date Q4 2016)

1 WATER

1.1 Water Framework Directive

The Plan should promote the protection of surface water, groundwater and coastal/estuarine resources and their associated habitats and species, including fisheries.

Provisions should be made in the Plan for the incorporation of the specific relevant objectives and measures for individual water bodies set out in the relevant River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and associated Programme of Measures (POM). The Plan should not hinder, and where possible promote the achievement of these specific objectives at water body level. In addition the plan should outline the current water quality status and the status to be achieved by 2015 in any receiving waters covered by the Plan.

You are in particular referred to the Water Maps GIS Tool within this weblink:

<http://www.wfdireland.ie/maps.html>

The full range of Protected Areas within each of the River Basin Districts (RBD's) as set out in Annex IV 1(i) – (v) inclusive of the Water Framework Directive should be taken into account in the Drafting of the Plan.

The EU's *Common Implementation Strategy for the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) – Guidance Document No. 20*, in particular *Section 3.5 Key Issues for Article 4.7 should be taken into account*. Provisions should also be included in the Plan to ensure that any proposed land use zoning or development associated with the Plan is not in breach of the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. The guidance document can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/objectives/pdf/Guidance_document_20.pdf

The Plan should refer to and incorporate the Surface Water legislation '*Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009*' 2009 (S.I. No 272 of 2009), where relevant and appropriate. You are referred to the Legislation at:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Water/WaterQuality/EnvironmentalObjectivesSurfaceWatersRegulations2009/>

The Plan should refer to the recent '*Water Quality in Ireland 2010 – 2012*' (EPA, 2015) as appropriate and relevant. You are referred to the Report at:

<http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/waterqua/>

Your attention is brought to the water quality reports for the Western and Southern regions in 2013 (EPA, 2014) which should be integrated where relevant and appropriate.

<http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/waterqua/> . Other water quality reports are available at this link also.

The *European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 350 of 2014)* have recently been published and is available from the address below. It sets out the roles, and responsibilities of the various stakeholders and the associated requirements in relation to river basin management planning.

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2014/en.si.2014.0350.pdf>

1.2 Drinking Water/Water Supply

It is noted that since 1st Jan 2014, responsibility for the provision of adequate and appropriate drinking water and waste water services has passed to Irish Water. The SEA and Plan making processes should address (in collaboration with other stakeholders) drinking water supply capacity, leakage and quality in the Plan area. Future predicted increases in population and demand should be taken into consideration in the context of current drinking water supply and future requirements.

The Plan should implement the European Communities (Drinking Water)(No.2) Regulations 2007 and should include a commitment to include, as appropriate, the relevant recommendations set out in *Drinking Water Report 2015* (EPA, 2016). This Report is available at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/drinking/>.

The Plan should seek to implement best practice in the provision of appropriate drinking water to service the Plan area.

The Plan should include, where applicable, specific objectives for the improvement of any water supplies in the Plan area. In particular, the Plan should address the specific objectives to be achieved where these water supplies are included on the EPA's Remedial Action List (RAL).

The RAL published in the most recent annual Drinking Water report (**Q3 of 2016**) can be found at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/drinking/>. It should be noted that the RAL is a dynamic list which is reviewed quarterly by the EPA, so the current list may differ from that published in the most recent annual Drinking Water Report. Guidance on the Remedial Action List has been prepared by the EPA and is available in Section 6 of the Drinking Water Handbook mentioned above and available at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/drinking/>.

The EPA has published a series of Drinking Water Advice Notes which are available at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/drinkingwater/>. The Planning Authority must develop appropriate solutions that may involve abandoning or replacing drinking water sources, upgrading the treatment facilities or improving management and operational practices.

1.3 Waste Water Treatment

The Plan should highlight the requirement under *The Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations* for all wastewater discharges, including storm water discharges which come within the scope of these Regulations to be licensed (for agglomerations over 500pe) or certified (for agglomeration below 500pe). In this regard, the Plan should highlight the specific requirements of Regulations 43 & 44 of the *Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations, 2007*, S.I. No. 684 of 2007, regarding the consideration of proposals and consultation on such proposals by Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála, where applications for proposed development are being considered and decided upon.

The Plan should include as appropriate measures to improve water quality impacted by waste water discharges as identified in the EPA Waste Water Report and the Water Quality in Ireland reports.

The Plan should implement the Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations 2001 and 2004 and promote, as appropriate, specific provisions for the implementation of the relevant recommendations set out in the *Urban Waste Water Treatment in 2015 Report* (EPA, 2016), available at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/wastewater/>.



The EPA has published a *Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (p.e ≤ 10)*, (EPA, 2009). The code of practice (CoP) establishes an overall framework of best practice in relation to the development of wastewater treatment and disposal systems, in unsewered rural areas, for protection of our environment and specifically water quality and is available at the following link: <http://www.epa.ie/water/wastewater/guidance/cop/>

The Plan should, where possible and appropriate, include/ and /or promote the inclusion of specific Policies and Objectives regarding the provision and maintenance of adequate and appropriate wastewater treatment infrastructure to service zoned lands and developments within the Plan area.

Where the introduction of additional lands for development is being proposed within the Plan area, relevant Policies/objectives should be included in the Plan, and as appropriate, to promote assessment of the adequacy of the existing wastewater treatment facility (ies) in terms of both capacity and performance and the potential risk to human health and water quality. Where relevant, the potential impact on habitats and species of ecological importance should be addressed.

The Plan should include as appropriate measures to ensure that trade effluent in the area covered by the Plan is managed properly and discharged to sewer in accordance with relevant discharge licences where appropriate.

1.4 Groundwater Protection

The Plan should include clear Policy and Objective for the protection of groundwater resources and associated habitats and species. The Plan should make reference to the requirements of the Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC) on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration, which came into force on the 12th December 2006.

This Directive addresses the main elements of groundwater protection as required by Article 17 of the WFD. It establishes underground water quality standards and introduces measures to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater. You are referred to the following legislation *European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010* (S.I.9 of 2010) at:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Water/WaterQuality/GroundwaterRegulations2010/>

The GSI have launched a new groundwater GIS application which can be accessed at: <http://j.mp/gsigroundwater>. The Agency has also published a number of reports in relation to groundwater which should be integrated as appropriate into the Plan. You are referred to these reports at: <http://www.epa.ie/downloads/pubs/water/ground/>

The Plan should take account of any Groundwater Protection Schemes and Groundwater Source Protection Zones data available at the Geological Survey of Ireland: <http://www.gsi.ie>. Where not already available, the Plan should promote the development of a Groundwater Protection Scheme for the relevant local authority areas covered by the Plan.

Consideration should also be given, where relevant and appropriate, to promotion of the inclusion of Policies and Objectives in the Plan for the following:

- *Enforcement of Planning Conditions related to installation, operation and maintenance of on-site wastewater treatment / septic tank systems.*
- *Connection of all remaining houses within Town Boundary to the Wastewater Treatment Plant.*

- *The development of a wastewater leak detection programme. The use of a strategic metering system to aid in leak detection should be considered*
- *The implementation and enforcement of the European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2009 and associated European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice For Protection Of Waters) Regulations 2010- S.I.610 of 2010.*

1.5 Bathing Water

The most recent report on bathing water quality ‘*The Quality of Bathing Water in Ireland – A Report for the Year 2015, (EPA, 2016)*’ sets out the status of Irish Seawater and Freshwater Bathing areas. This Report is available at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/bathing/>.

“The purpose of the Bathing Water Regulations is the protection of human health”, and the relevant local authorities, where appropriate, “should ensure that where any bathing water fails the mandatory bathing standards that the public are made ware of this fact by means of information notices posted at the bathing area.” To this effect the Plan should include as appropriate a Policy/ Objective to ensure this requirement is complied with.

You are also referred to the “*Directive on bathing water (Directive 2006/7/EC)*”. This Directive is implemented in Ireland by the *Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008 (S.I. No. 79) of 2008*.

The Plan should promote the protection of waters within the Plan area that are used for bathing. In this regard, the EPA’s bathing water GIS resource “Splash” is available at: <http://splash.epa.ie/#>

1.6 Water Conservation

The Plan should include measures to promote conservation of water. In this context, the development of a Water Conservation Strategy should be considered, and where relevant addressed in combination with adjoining local authorities. The Strategy should address new and existing developments within the Plan area. Where such a Strategy is being developed, specific timescales should be assigned to its preparation with clear responsibilities and timescales for its implementation.

1.7 Flood Prevention and Management

The Plan should promote the appropriate zoning of lands and restriction of use in areas liable to flooding to avoid increased risk of flooding of the lands either within or adjoining the zoned areas. A specific Policy should be included to provide for/promote appropriate flood risk assessments to be undertaken, where development(s) and zoning are being proposed in the Plan area where there is risk of flooding.

The Plan should make reference to the E.U Directive (2007/60/EC) on the assessment and management of flood risks entered into force on 12 December 2007. The provisions of this Directive include the development of flood risk management plans.

The Flood Risk Management approach as adopted by the Office of Public Works (OPW) should be promoted, as appropriate, in consultation with the OPW where there is potential risk of flooding in the Plan area. You are referred to the Planning Guidelines on flooding in “*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Environment, Heritage and Local Government – OPW, November 2009* which can be consulted at:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/NationalSpatialStrategy/Flood%20Risk%20Management/>

The Plan should promote the development, where appropriate, of adaptation measures to account for the likely increased risk of flooding due to Climate Change within the Plan area.

The Plan should include measures to promote the implementation of adequate and appropriate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

The Plan should provide for protection, management, and as appropriate, enhancement of existing wetland habitats where flood protection/management measures are necessary. See definition of “Wetlands” in - *Wetlands Conservation and Protection in EPA Code of Practice: Environmental Risk Assessment for Waste Sites* (EPA, 2007). The full report is available at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/waste/waste/>

1.8 Integration of infrastructure, zoning and development

Where zoning/rezoning of lands and the introduction of new development is being proposed within the Plan area, the Plan should ensure the adequacy of the existing water supply/wastewater treatment facilities and associated networks are assessed. This should address both capacity and performance and the potential risk to human health, water quality and water quantity. The potential impact on habitats and species of ecological importance should also be addressed as appropriate, from pressures impacting on water quality and quantity.

Zoning for development within the Plan area should be linked to availability and adequacy of water supply/waste water treatment infrastructure and capacity. The provision of adequate and appropriate infrastructure in advance of development within the Plan area should be promoted through the Plan.

The implications of Flood Risk likely to be associated with already zoned and undeveloped lands in the Plan area should also be considered. This should be considered in the context of possible rezoning options as appropriate.

The above requirements should be promoted in the Plan and as appropriate should be reflected in relevant Policies/Objectives.

2 BIODIVERSITY

The Convention on Biological Diversity defines biodiversity as “*the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part.*” This includes sites, habitats, species and networks of importance at the international, national or local level, and which may occur within or outside the Plan area. The Plan should include clear Objectives to conserve and protect all designated sites within and adjacent to the Plan area (including the habitats and/or species for which they have been selected, or which they support), and should also promote the protection of undesignated sites and local biodiversity features.

The main elements of biodiversity are:

- European (Natura 2000) sites (SACs and SPAs, and candidate SACs and SPAs),
- NHAs, National Parks, Nature Reserves, Wildfowl Sanctuaries, Refuges for Fauna or Flora or sites proposed for designation,
- Undesignated sites such as proposed NHAs (pNHAs), local biodiversity areas,
- Sites and habitats that can be considered to be corridors or stepping stones for the purpose of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive,

- ‘Natural habitats and protected species’ for the purposes of the Environmental Liability Directive, including habitats and species listed under the Habitats Directive (Annex I habitats, Annex II and Annex IV species and their habitats) and Birds Directives (Annex I species and their habitats, and regularly occurring migratory birds) wherever they occur,
- Legally protected species including protected flora under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and Wildlife Acts 1976-2000,
- Sites identified under the Bern, Ramsar and Bonn Conventions,
- Biodiversity in general including habitats important for birds, red listed and BoCCI listed species, natural and semi-natural habitat areas including wetlands, woodlands, waterbodies, etc.

2.1 EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland

Habitats Directive

The Plan should include, where relevant, a specific commitment to deliver the requirement of the Habitats Directive (Article 4, Paragraph 4) for the maintenance or restoration of annexed habitats and species within SACs at a “favourable conservation status”. In particular, the Plan should include a specific Policy/Objective for promoting the maintenance and, as appropriate, achievement of favourable conservation status of habitats and species, in association with the NPWS and other stakeholders. (See section on Annex I, II and IV below)

In addition, provisions should be made in the Plan to deliver the requirements of Article 3, Paragraph 3, to “*improve the ecological coherence of Natura 2000 by maintaining, and where appropriate developing, features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora*”. (see section on green infrastructure below)

Further, the Plan should include a Policy/Objective to reflect the provisions of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive:

“Member States shall endeavour, where they consider it necessary, in their land-use planning and development policies, and in particular, with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 Network, to 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 marking 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.”

Annex I/ Annex II /Annex IV Habitats Directive

The Plan should also commit to the protection of SACs, Annex I habitats and Annex II and Annex IV species and their key habitats which occur within and adjoining the Plan area as per the Habitats Directive and Environmental Liability Directive.

Birds Directive

The Plan should include a commitment to protect SPAs, Annex I bird species, and regularly occurring migratory bird species and their habitats, and to avoid pollution or deterioration of important bird habitats outside SPAs (as per Article 4(4) of the Birds Directive). The Plan should also promote the protection of wetlands and, in particular, wetlands of international importance as required by Article 4, Paragraph 2 of the Birds Directive.

Appropriate Assessment

The Plan should promote the setting up of procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, and should be itself subject to Appropriate

Assessment (AA). The Plan also should include a clear Policy/Objective that sets out a requirement for AA Screening for new, reviewed or amended Plans and proposed projects being prepared by the local authority for the Plan area, which may have the potential to impact on European sites. Potential for cumulative/in-combination effects associated with other relevant Plans/Programmes/Projects should also be determined.

A determination for the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment of all Land Use Plans and related variations should be made in consultation with the DAHG - National Parks and Wildlife Service, and this should be highlighted in the Plan.

The Plan should promote the application of the Guidance set out in the recent DoEHLG Publication ‘*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland- Guidance for Planning Authorities* (2009; revision 2010)’, which can be found at:

<http://www.npws.ie/en/media/NPWS/Publications/CodesofPractice/AA%20Guidance.pdf>

The Plan should also promote the application of the EU Guidance “*Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites*” and “*Managing Natura 2000 Sites*”, which can be found at the links below. Section 3.6 “*Habitats Directive Article 6(3) and (4) Assessment Review Package*” of the former is of particular relevance and can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/natura_2000_asses_s_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/provision_of_art6_en.pdf

The Plan should include Policies/Objectives to ensure that the local authority, in fulfilling its responsibilities in the supply of services, zoning of lands and undertaking and authorisation of development, addresses the potential effects on biodiversity and the needs of priority habitats and species which occur within or adjoining the LA areas, as identified in the National Parks and Wildlife Service Report “*The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland*”, (NPWS, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008).

<http://www.npws.ie/en/media/Media.6440,en.pdf>

Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas (www.wfdireland.ie), and in particular those protected areas relating to biodiversity. The Plan should include policies/objectives for the protection of these areas occurring within and adjacent to the Plan area.

The *Plan* should incorporate, as relevant, the objectives of the Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plans. Consideration should also be given to the protection of Freshwater Pearl Mussels. Copies of the Draft Management Plans and Programmes of Measures for this species can be accessed at: http://www.wfdireland.ie/docs/5_FreshwaterPearlMusselPlans/

Fisheries

The Plan should promote the protection of salmonid waters, designated fisheries and shellfisheries where relevant and appropriate within each Plan area and adjoining LA areas.

The Plan should promote the guidance from Inland Fisheries Ireland including where appropriate and relevant:

- *Guidelines to the Planning, Design, Construction and Operation of Small Scale Hydro Electric Schemes and Fisheries*
- *10 steps to environmentally friendly drainage maintenance*

See: <http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Research/recent-publications.html>

2.2 Nationally Designated Habitats and Species

The Plan should include policies/objectives for the protection of NHAs, National Parks, Nature Reserves, Wildfowl Sanctuaries, Refuges for Fauna or Flora and sites proposed for designation. In addition, species protected under the Wildlife Acts including protected flora (Flora (Protection) Order, 1999 – S.I. No. 94 of 1999) should be taken into account. Consideration should be given to protecting proposed NHAs in a similar way to fully designated NHAs.

2.3 Other (Undesignated) Biodiversity Considerations

The Plan should promote the protection of non-designated areas including the protection (where relevant) of habitats, species and local biodiversity features including rivers, wetlands, hedgerows, individual trees, streams, grassland, coastal areas etc.). The protection of habitats in undesignated areas such as pNHAs, and species found on Irish Red Lists and Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BoCCI), should also be promoted in the Plan. These can be found at: <http://www.npws.ie/publications/redlists/>

Buffer Zones / Linkages

The Plan should promote the provision/application of appropriate buffer zones between designated ecological sites and areas zoned for development, and should take cognisance of potential boundary changes to designated sites made during the lifetime of the Plan. Where the application of buffer zones is being considered, you should consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG). Inland Fisheries Ireland should also be consulted where fisheries protection is a concern/objective.

The provision of appropriate buffer zones between local (undesignated) biodiversity features and areas zoned for development should be considered. The Plan should promote the protection of linkages between local biodiversity features and ecological networks, e.g. hedgerows, watercourses etc. Opportunities for enhancement of local biodiversity features should be promoted where appropriate.

A relevant policy should be included to maintain or enhance biodiversity richness by protecting rivers, stream corridors and valleys by reserving riparian zones/ecological corridors, maintaining them free from inappropriate development, discouraging culverting or realignment, and promoting natural flood functions.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is the network of green spaces, habitats and ecosystems, including wild, semi natural and developed environments, which provide multiple social, environmental and economic benefits to society (including ecosystem services). Consideration should be given to including policies/objectives in the Plan for the development of green infrastructure within the Plan area. You are referred to the EPA funded *EcoPlan* project for information on current green infrastructure practice in Ireland. The EPA has published a **Users' Guide (EPA Research 182)**: for disseminating and integrating the green infrastructure concept – an approach that addresses multiple issues in an environmentally-sensitive manner by promoting spatial connectivity and multifunctionality. The *EcoPlan* Final Report (EPA Research 188): 'Integrating Ecosystem Approaches, Green Infrastructure and Spatial Planning' is also available.

Consideration should be given to providing a Plan lead approach to the inclusion of green infrastructure taking into account the above guidelines as relevant and appropriate.

Habitat Mapping

Plans with landuse zoning should be supported/informed by available habitat information and maps (including wetland mapping) and other ecological surveys. Where these are not available, consideration should be given to including a policy/objective in the Plan for carrying out future habitat mapping. Consideration should also be given to reviewing existing Habitat Maps with a view to updating as appropriate. This Habitat Mapping should be undertaken at an appropriate scale and in accordance with the Heritage Council's "*Best Practice Guidance to Habitat Mapping and Survey*" available at <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/wildlife/publications/>. It should be undertaken on a phased basis and should have specific timescales assigned. The scope of the proposed habitat mapping should be agreed in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, DAHG, the Heritage Council, Inland Fisheries Ireland, and other relevant statutory and non-statutory nature conservation interest groups.

Biodiversity Action Plans

The Plan should, where relevant and appropriate, refer to and integrate the new National Biodiversity Action Plan, *Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan – Actions for Biodiversity 2011-16* (DAHG, 2011). You are referred to this at:

<http://www.npws.ie/legislationandconventions/nationalbiodiversityplan/>

The Plan also should support/acknowledge existing Local Heritage/Biodiversity Plans and should promote the implementation of key actions set out in these Plans. Where not already prepared and adopted through County Development Plans, the Plan should promote the preparation of County and, where relevant and appropriate, Local Heritage/Biodiversity Plans. These county/local plans should reflect the actions/goals of the National Biodiversity Action Plan, and should be reviewed and updated as appropriate.

2.4 Data Sources / Resources

Alien Species & Noxious Weeds

The *Plan* should promote the implementation of measures to control and manage alien/invasive species (e.g. Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Zebra Mussel etc.) and noxious weeds (e.g. Ragwort, Thistle, Dock etc.) within the Plan area according to best practice (as per the new Birds and Habitats Regulations).

Management Plans for Designated Areas

The availability of conservation objectives and Management Plans for European sites within the Plan area should be determined. Where available, the Plan should include a specific Policy/Objective in local authority land use Plans to take into account the objectives and management practices proposed in the available Management Plans.

3 AIR, NOISE AND CLIMATIC FACTORS

3.1 Noise

The objectives of EU and Irish noise legislation is "*to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole*", and this includes noise nuisance. To this effect the Plan should ensure this requirement is complied with. The assessment and management of noise from the main infrastructural transport sources (roads, rail, and airports) are governed by the Environmental Noise Directive and associated 2006 Environmental Noise Regulations (S.I. 140 of 2006). In this context, as appropriate, the Plan should also promote the implementation of Environmental Noise Directive and associated national regulations.

Available Noise Action Plans should be taken into account also and reviewed as required, to reflect the Plan period and associated development proposals. Consideration should be given to any relevant noise maps, and action plans. Strategic noise maps are designed to assess noise exposure resulting from major roads, railways and airports. Noise action plans are designed to act as a means of managing environmental noise through land use planning, traffic management and control of noise sources. The third round of noise mapping is currently underway in Ireland and will be completed in 2018. <http://noise.eionet.europa.eu/help.html>.

Consideration should be given to protect any designated quiet areas in open country. In 2003, the EPA commissioned a [research project](#) to establish baseline data for the identification of quiet areas in rural locations. Quiet Areas are defined as “*an area in open country, substantially unaffected by anthropogenic noise.*” A range of minimum distance criteria from man-made noise sources such as urban areas, industry and major road sources were defined, and the report includes a number of key recommendations for the identification and control of Quiet Areas.

3.2 Air & Climatic Factors

Consideration should be given to promoting specific Policies / Objectives in the Plan for the protection and improvement, as appropriate, of air quality within the Plan area, particularly in areas zoned for increased urban and transport related development.

The Plan should promote specific Policies/Objectives and associated provisions for the development and promotion of appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures that can be implemented through relevant land use plans and/or specific plans e.g. Flood Risk Management Plans, Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans etc.

The Plan should also promote the inclusion of specific Policies, which promote the integration of the implications of Climate Change at a regional and local level, in land use planning within the Plan area. In particular the Plan should refer to *Ireland's National Climate Strategy 2007 – 2012*. This is available at:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Atmosphere/ClimateChange/>

Recently, [Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines](#), (EPA, 2016) has been published, to support local authorities develop local climate adaptation strategies.

The Plan should also address how climate change might impact on the implementation of the *Plan*. In this regard you are referred to the potential impact of climate change on “increased risk of flooding” and possible “increased occurrence of drought conditions”

You are referred to *Air Quality in Ireland 2015*, (EPA, 2016), which sets out the most recent status in each of the four air quality zones in Ireland. You are referred to this report at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/quality/>. A number of useful reports on air quality indices and health related aspects are also available for download at the same link.

The objectives of EU and Irish air quality legislation is “*to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole*”, and the relevant local authorities, where appropriate, “*shall promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development.*” To this effect the Plan should include as appropriate a Policy/Objective to ensure this requirement is complied with.

Consideration should be given to promoting specific Policies / Objectives in the Plan for the protection and improvement, as appropriate, of air quality within the Plan area, particularly in areas zoned for increased urban and transport related development.

3.3 Radon

The Plan should consider the significant concentrations of radon, which may occur within the Plan area. Radon Maps are now provided by the EPA at <http://www.epa.ie/radiation/radonmap/> and should be consulted with regard to assessing the risk of radon, which should be taken into account as appropriate into the Plan.

4 ENERGY CONSERVATION/RENEWABLE ENERGY

Consideration should be given to the inclusion in the Plan, as appropriate, of a Policy/Objective in relation to the preparation and implementation of “An Energy Conservation Strategy” and associated awareness campaign within the Plan area. Specific timescales should be assigned to the preparation of such a strategy.

The Plan should promote, where appropriate, the use of renewable energy systems (e.g. solar, wind, geothermal etc.) within the Plan area. The Plan should also provide for promotion of energy conservation measures in buildings. Relevant guidance can be found on the website of Sustainable Energy Ireland: www.sei.ie.

5 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

The Plan should promote the protection of designated scenic landscapes, scenic views, scenic routes and landscape features of regional, county and local value. Where not already available the Plan should promote the undertaking of Landscape Character Assessment in accordance with the relevant Guidance from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Heritage Council.

The Plan should also take into account the landscape character adjoining the Plan area. There is a need to take into account landscape features and designations adjoining the Plan area.

Consideration should also be given to promoting the requirement for an appropriate “Visual Impact Assessment” for proposed development with potential to impact adversely on significant landscape features within the Plan area. The Plan should promote the application of standard impact assessment methodology for all such development.

The Plan should promote the recognition of visual linkages between established landmarks and landscape features and views which should be taken into account when land is being zoned and when individual development proposals are being assessed / considered within the Plan area.

6 GEOLOGY / GEOMORPHOLOGY

Where relevant and appropriate, the Plan should promote the protection of any designated Geological and Geomorphological NHAs/pNHAs, which may be present within or adjacent to the Plan area. The Geological Survey of Ireland should be consulted in this regard.

7 HUMAN HEALTH / QUALITY OF LIFE

The Plan should ensure provision of adequate and appropriate infrastructure and to serve both the existing community and likely future predicted increases in population within the Plan area.

In preparing the Plan, there would be merits in exploring current practice and opportunities with respect to promoting the protection and, as appropriate, improvement of “Quality of Life”. Where relevant, the application of existing “Quality of Life Indices” would be considered in consultation with relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies/organisations.

You are also referred the relevant aspects already referred to above under water, biodiversity, air, energy.

8 TRANSPORTATION

The Plan should promote and, as appropriate provide for, the provision of sustainable modes of transport. The Department of Transport Tourism and Sport *Smarter Transport – A Sustainable Transport Future* (DTTS, 2009) available at <http://smartertravel.ie/content/smartertravel-policy-document-0> should be reviewed in the context of possible initiatives which could be included as Objectives within the Plan.

9 INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

The Plan should promote the integrated planning for adequate and appropriate infrastructure to service any development proposed and authorised during the lifetime of the Plan.

In particular, the Plan should promote the provision of adequate and appropriate wastewater treatment, water supply, surface and storm water drainage, transport, waste management, community services and amenities etc. on planned and phased basis to address any current problems and/or deficits and to reflect predicted increases in population during the life of individual plans adopted within the Plan area.

The Plan should promote the development of traffic management measures to reduce the potential for traffic congestion and associated vehicular emissions within the Plan area. In particular the preparation of Integrated Traffic Management Plans, where relevant and appropriate, for the existing urban areas and proposed new urban developments should be promoted as appropriate through the Plan. This approach should address the short, medium and long-term traffic management requirements within the Plan area.

10 URBAN WASTE WATER DISCHARGE LICENSING

The Plan should refer to the requirement under The Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations (as described in *Section 1.3 Wastewater Treatment* above) for all wastewater discharges, including storm water discharges which come within the scope of these Regulations to be licensed. The EPA is currently in the process of licensing discharges from wastewater treatment facilities.

11 WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Plan should promote the integration of land use zoning and development to existing and planned availability of waste infrastructure and capacity. Priority should be given to provision of adequate and appropriate waste related infrastructure in advance of any development.



The Plan should seek to incorporate relevant guidance and legislation to address issues such as Waste Prevention, Food Wastes, Identification of Historic Landfill Sites, Backyard Burning, Illegal Dumping, Brown Field Development etc

The Plan should promote and incorporate the information, and any recommendations, in the following EPA reports:

- *The Nature and Extent of Unauthorised Waste Activity in Ireland (Sep 2005)* - This report sets out the findings of a nationwide investigation by the EPA's Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE) on unauthorised waste activities in Ireland and sets out an Action Plan to deal with the issue. You are referred to the report at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/unauthorisedwaste/>
- *National Waste Report 2012* (EPA, 2014) and *Ireland-Progress towards EU waste targets* (EPA, 2014) – You are referred to this Report at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/stats/>
- *National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2014-2020* – available at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/haz/>
- *Ireland's Environment 2016* (EPA, 2016) State of the Environment report - This report evaluates the state of the environment across a number of themes including, water quality, air quality and emissions, waste, chemicals, land and soil. This can be consulted at: <http://www.epa.ie/irelandsenvironment/stateoftheenvironmentreport/>

12 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

The Plan should highlight that, under the EIA and Planning and Development Regulations, certain projects arising during the implementation of the Plan may require an Environmental Impact Assessment. There are also requirements with regard to EIA for sub-threshold development. In this regard, you are referred to the following Publications:

- “*Guidelines on Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements*” (EPA, 2002).
- “*Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements*”, (EPA, 2003).

These documents are available at: <http://www.epa.ie/monitoringassessment/assessment/eia/>

In addition to the above, you are referred to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government's Publication: “*Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for consent Authorities regarding sub-threshold development*”, (DEHLG, 2003), which can be downloaded at <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/PlanningDevelopment/EnvironmentalAssessment/EIASEAGuidance/>

An unofficial consolidated version of the Planning and Development Regulations, which includes all recent amendments to the threshold levels for EIA is available at <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/PlanningDevelopment/Planning/PlanningLegislation-Overview/PlanningRegulations/>. You are also referred to the European Commission's review of the EIA Directive which can be found, along with an informal consolidated version of the EIA Directive, at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/review.htm>

It should be noted that Projects may also require Appropriate Assessment screening with respect to the requirement for Habitats Directive, as required by Article 6 of the Habitats

Directive. In this context, you are also referred to the DEHLG guidance available in relation to Appropriate Assessment ‘*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland*’ (DEHLG, 2009) at:

<http://www.npws.ie/en/media/NPWS/Publications/CodesofPractice/AA%20Guidance.pdf>

13 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT(SEA)

Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a specific Policy/Objective in the Plan to ensure full compliance, with the requirements of *Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment* – The SEA Directive and the associated *Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004*.

The Plan should promote the development and implementation of Procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements of the SEA Directive and related SEA Regulations.

14 EPA REPORT: IRELAND’S ENVIRONMENT 2016 – AN ASSESSMENT

The Plan should include relevant Policies and Objectives to address, where appropriate, the “Environmental Challenges and Emerging Issues” for Ireland as set out in Chapter 13 of [EPA Ireland’s Environment 2016](#) (EPA, 2016). These challenges and issues are discussed in 7 key environmental actions needing to be addressed, which relate to the following:

- *Environment, Health and Wellbeing*
- *Climate Change*
- *Implementation of Legislation*
- *Restore and Protect Water Quality*
- *Sustainable Economic Activities*
- *Nature and Wild Places*
- *Community Engagement.*

The integration of these actions will be important to deliver environmental protection and sustainable development.

Section II of *Ireland’s Environment 2016* describes the key thematic areas to be considered and assessed, as appropriate. These are: *Air Quality & Transboundary Air Emissions, Climate Change, Nature, Inland & Marine Waters, Waste and Land Use & Soil*. The relationship between the Environment, Health and Wellbeing (Section III) and between the Environment and the Economy (Section IV) are also discussed.

The Plan should consider how to implement the above key actions, taking into account the thematic areas described, to ensure proper planning and sustainable development is promoted in the lifetime of the Plan. The EPA website includes an ‘[Ireland’s Environment](#)’ section that provides an overview of the key issues in each thematic area with links to specific environmental indicator data.

The LA in implementing the Plan and in fulfilling its responsibilities should ensure Plan – making authorities take into account and address, where appropriate, the relevant Environmental Challenges” set out above.

15 ADDITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

A list of available SEA Spatial Information Sources is available on the EPA website and should be considered in the preparation of the SEA. This can be consulted at the following address: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/>

Hydrometrics

Consideration should be given to incorporating hydrometric information, as relevant and appropriate, into the Plan, particularly in relation to water services and wastewater treatment. You are referred to the Agency's available information in this regard at: <http://www.epa.ie/water/wm/hydrometrics/network/>

Where flood risk assessment is concerned, your attention is also brought to existing hydrometric data available from the OPW: See: <http://www.opw.ie/hydro/index.asp>

Mineral Abstraction and Natura 2000 Sites

The EU guidance in relation to “*Undertaking Non-Energy Extractive Activities in Accordance with Natura 2000 Requirements*”

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/nee_i_n2000_guidance.pdf

Port Development, Dredging and Natura 2000 sites

The European Commission's guidelines on ‘*The implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives in Estuaries and Coastal Zones - with particular attention to port development and dredging*’ (European Commission, 2011) should be taken into account as appropriate. These guidelines are available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/doc/guidance_doc.pdf.

Wind Energy Developments and Natura 2000 Sites

EU Guidance: “*Wind Energy Developments and Natura 2000 sites*” (October 2010):

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/Wind_farms.pdf

European Environmental Agency “10 Message” Publications

The European Environment Agency (EEA) has released a series of publications which provide a short assessment of European Biodiversity and associated climate change impacts on a range of ecosystems. These topics include: *Protected Areas, Freshwater Ecosystems, Marine Ecosystems, Forest Ecosystems, Urban Ecosystems, Agriculture Ecosystems, Mountain Ecosystems, Coastal Ecosystems and Cultural landscapes and biodiversity heritage*. These are available at: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/10-messages-for-2010>

Ramsar “Wise Use of Wetlands” Handbooks

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has released a series of handbooks on the “wise use of wetlands” which can be found at http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-pubs-handbooks/main/ramsar/1-30-33_4000_0 “*Handbook 13 Inventory, Assessment and Monitoring*” of wetlands may be of particular relevance: <http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/lib/hbk4-13.pdf>

Invasive Species

Invasive Species Action Plans are available for a number of species on the Invasive Species Ireland website. Information on invasive species can be found at: <http://www.invasivespeciesireland.com/>

The National Biodiversity Data Centre website <http://invasives.biodiversityireland.ie/> contains online maps and information showing the distribution of invasive species on a national level which should be consulted where relevant.

The National Roads Authority has produced a report entitled the “Management of Noxious Weeds and Non-Native Invasive Plant Species on National Roads” which can be found at: <http://www.nra.ie/Publications/DownloadableDocumentation/Environment/file.16172.en.pdf>

Green Infrastructure

- <http://www.irishlandscapeinstitute.com/home.html>
- <http://www.uep.ie/news/greencity.htm>
- <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/green-infrastructure-and-territorial-cohesion>
- <http://www.comharsdc.ie/files/Comhar%20Green%20infrastructure%20report%20final.pdf>

National Parks and Wildlife Service

The National Parks and Wildlife Service holds data and information on nature conservation sites, ecological survey datasets, including data on certain habitats and species inside and outside designated sites, ecological survey reports and ecological monitoring reports, including as summarised in *The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland* (NPWS, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008).

<http://www.npws.ie/en/media/Media,6440,en.pdf>

National Biodiversity Data Centre (the Data Centre)

The National Biodiversity Data Centre website, <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/>, is a national resource, presenting data and information on all aspects of biodiversity. It also serves as a link between the Data Centre knowledgebase and the provision of high quality information to improve decision making. Key features of the website include:

- Easy access to detailed information on over 1.5 million observations of Ireland’s wildlife (as of July 2011).
- a dedicated mapping tool for information on Ireland’s threatened habitats and species which serves as a portal to data and information on all species protected under legislation in Ireland and all Red Listed species, available at: <http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/>
- An inventory of the primary sources of data on Ireland’s biodiversity resource <http://biodiversity.biodiversityireland.ie/>
- A latest news feature to highlight any new developments in wildlife recording and surveying in Ireland

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

The SEAI have produced a guidance document entitled ‘*Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies*’ (2013) which should be taken into consideration by local authorities in the preparation of renewable energy strategies. This document is available at http://www.seai.ie/Publications/Renewables_Publications/Wind_Power/Methodology_for_Local_Authority_RE_Strategies/Methodology_for_Local_Authority_Renewable_Energy_Strategies.pdf

Scottish Government - SEA Guidance (2013)

This guidance is available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/08/3355>

The **Scottish SEA Database** provides many examples of completed SEA reports, which practitioners can feel free to use as a guide.
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/environmental-assessment/sea/SEAG

SEPA has also updated the Scottish information in the SEA guidance website on how to take into account air, soil and water in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
www.seaguidance.org.uk. This website provides:

- sources of information and details of current legislation and other relevant plans and programmes, state of the environment and trends;
- advice on assessment methods such as setting objectives for air, soil and water;
- Examples of cumulative effects, mitigation and enhancement measures; monitoring frameworks and significance criteria for assessing effects.

Table 15.1 Some Useful Environmental Resources

Environmental Criteria	Selected Resources
State of Environment	http://www.epa.ie/irelandsenvironment/stateoftheenvironmentreport/
Surface Water	http://www.wfdireland.ie/index.html http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/waterqua/ http://www.catchments.ie
Ground Water	http://j.mp/gsigroundwater http://www.epa.ie/downloads/pubs/water/ground/ http://www.epa.ie/hydronet/#Water%20Levels
Drinking Water	http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/drinking/
Waste Water	http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/wastewater/
Bathing Water	http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/bathing http://splash.epa.ie/#
Marine	http://www.marine.ie/Home/site-area/home/home
Biodiversity	http://www.npws.ie/guidance-appropriate-assessment-planning-authorities http://www.npws.ie/publications http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/#/Home <i>EcoPLan Project (Green-Infrastructure/Ecosystems Approaches) Guide and Report</i>
Flood Prevention and Management	www.floodmaps.ie www.cfram.ie
Air	http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/quality/
Climate	http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Atmosphere/ClimateChange/ http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/climate/
Waste Management	http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/
Radon	http://www.epa.ie/radiation/radonmap
Energy Conservation	www.sei.ie
Landscape	http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/

Character Assessment	
Geology / Geomorphology	http://www.gsi.ie/Mapping.htm
Transportation	https://www.nationaltransport.ie/planning-policy/ http://www.nra.ie/environment/
SEA	www.edenireland.ie (SEAGIS Reporting Tool) http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/ http://www.epa.ie/pubs/consultation/manual/
EIA	http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/PlanningDevelopment/EnvironmentalAssessment/EIASEAGuidance

Table 15.2: Some Useful Planning Related Resources

Environmental Criteria	Selected Resources
Spatial Planning GIS	www.myplan.ie http://www.epa.ie/soilandbiodiversity/soils/land/corine/
Legislation	http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/PlanningDevelopment/Planning/
Flood Risk	www.cfram.ie www.floodmaps.ie

From: Noel McGloin <Noel.McGloin@fisheriesireland.ie>
Sent: 13 December 2016 14:35
To: CorporateSupport.Unit
Subject: RE: PL- FP- Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report for proposed Variation No. 1 of the Kells Development Plan, 2013-2019

Dear Noelle

Our response is as follows:

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the state body responsible for the protection, management and conservation of the inland fisheries and sea angling resource in Ireland. Angling as a sport and tourism activity is estimated to be worth over €700 million to the Irish economy. Protection of the aquatic environment and habitat is a vitally important element of IFI's work. Section 7(3) of the IFI Act states that IFI in the performance of its functions shall have regard to (g) the requirements of the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 (S.I. No. 94 of 1997) and the need for the sustainable development of the inland fisheries resource (including the conservation of fish and other species of fauna and flora habitats and the biodiversity of inland water ecosystems), (h) as far as possible, ensure that its activities are carried out so as to protect the national heritage (within the meaning of the Heritage Act 1995).

We note the Key Potential Environmental Issues, which are contained throughout the report which include a number of issues which have the potential to negatively impact on fish and fish habitats including water quality.

In determining the likely significant effects of the some key issues from a fisheries perspective for consideration in the SEA should bear in mind:

- Water quality
- Fish spawning and nursery areas
- Ecosystem structure and functioning
- Sport and commercial fishing and angling
- Amenity and recreational areas

While many of our watercourses are designated under European and National legislation (SAC, SPA, NHA, Ramsar) a significant portion are located outside areas under formal European designation but may hold species that are designated under the European Habitats Directive i.e. salmon and lamprey (sea, river and brook), which are listed as an Annex II Species.

We are mainly concerned about the limitations imposed with regard to the necessity for potable water and wastewater treatment and would ask that there would be no population expansion in the absence of these issues being resolved.

Please also note that:

- Regarding Section 5.2.4.2 – *Water Quality – Central Fisheries Board* should read Inland Fisheries Ireland.
- the Kells Blackwater EPA station monitored downstream of Kells (Donaghagh Bridge) has deteriorated from a 3-4 or *moderate* status to a Q3 or *poor* status(2015).

Key IFI publications to be taken on board are:

- *Guidelines on protection of fisheries during construction works in and adjacent to waters*. These can be accessed at: <http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/fisheries-management-1/624-guidelines-on-protection-of-fisheries-during-construction-works-in-and-adjacent-to-waters>

- Guidelines on the Planning, Design, Construction & Operation of Small-Scale Hydro-Electric Schemes. These can be accessed at: <http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/fisheries-research-1/13-guidelines-on-the-planning-design-construction-operation-of-small-scale-hydro-electric-schemes-a-1>.

We look forward to any further relevant reports with regard to the above in due course.

Yours sincerely

Noel McGloin
Senior Fisheries Environmental Officer
Inland Fisheries Ireland - Dublin

Iascach Intire Eireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Telephone: +353 (0) 1 8842688

Email: noel.mcgloin@fisheriesireland.ie

Web: www.fisheriesireland.ie

3044 Lake Drive, City West, Dublin 24, IRELAND. D24 Y265

Help Protect Ireland's Inland Fisheries

Call 1890 34 74 24 to report illegal fishing, water pollution or invasive species.

From: CorporateSupport.Unit [mailto:CorporateSupport.Unit@DCCAE.gov.ie]

Sent: 30 November 2016 15:59

To: Noel McGloin

Subject: FW: PL- FP- Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report for proposed Variation No. 1 of the Kells Development Plan, 2013-2019

Importance: High

Noel,

You may not have received the attachment in my earlier email due to size limits. Please find attached a zip file.

Regards,

Noelle Carroll

Noelle Carroll | Corporate Support Unit



Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment
Elm House, Earlsvale Road, Cavan, Co Cavan, H12 A8H7, Ireland
www.dccae.gov.ie | Dept_CCAE
T:+353 01 678 3072 | E:Noelle.Carroll@dccae.gov.ie

From: CorporateSupport.Unit
Sent: 30 November 2016 15:06
To: Noel.McGloin@fisheriesireland.ie; John Butler; Sophie Preteseille; EMD Info; Rebecca McNamara
Subject: PL- FP- Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report for proposed Variation No. 1 of the Kells Development Plan, 2013-2019
Importance: High

Dear all,

Please find attached and below correspondence received from Meath County Council in the above regard.

Please forward any observations you may have in this instance to the [Corporate Support Unit](#) mailbox by Wednesday 14th December, 2016 for returning to the Council.

Regards,

Noelle Carroll



Noelle Carroll | Corporate Support Unit
Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment
Elm House, Earlsvale Road, Cavan, Co Cavan, H12 A8H7, Ireland
www.dccae.gov.ie | Dept_CCAE
T:+353 01 678 3072 | E:Noelle.Carroll@dccae.gov.ie

From: Louise Heeney [<mailto:lheeney@meathcoco.ie>]
Sent: 24 November 2016 15:32
To: EPA - Env Management; CorporateSupport.Unit; Minister Naughten; Minister Kyne; minister@housing.gov.ie; ministerofstate@housing.gov.ie
Cc: Patrick Gallagher; Wendy Bagnall
Subject: FW: PL- FP- Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report for proposed Variation No. 1 of the Kells Development Plan, 2013-2019
Importance: High

A Chara,

Please see attached above the Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report for proposed Variation No. 1 of the Kells Development Plan, 2013-2019 for your comments. Please note that the closing date for receipt of your comments in relation to same is Friday 16th December, 2016.

Is mise le meas,

Pat Gallagher
Senior Planner

Email Disclaimer: <http://www.meath.ie/EmailDisclaimer/>

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Tá eolas sa teachtaireacht leictreonach seo (agus b'fhéidir sa chomhaid ceangailte leis) a d'fhéadfadh bheith príobháideach nó faoi rún. Is le h-aghaidh an duine/na ndaoine nó le h-aghaidh an aonáin atá ainmnithe thuas agus le haghaidh an duine/na ndaoine sin amháin atá an t-eolas. Murab ionann tusa agus an té a bhfuil an teachtaireacht ceaptha dó bíodh a fhios agat nach gceadaítear nochtadh, cóipeáil, scaipeadh nó úsáid an eolais agus/nó an chomhaid seo. Más trí earráid a fuair tú an teachtaireacht leictreonach seo cuir, más é do thoil é, an té ar sheol an teachtaireacht ar an eolas láithreach. Deimhnítear leis seo freisin nár aims odh víreas sa phost seo tar éis a scanadh.

This email and any attachments to it may be confidential and are intended solely for the use of the individual to whom it is addressed. Any views or opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Inland Fisheries Ireland. If you are not the intended recipient of this email, you must neither take any action based upon its contents, nor copy or show it to anyone. Please contact the sender if you believe you have received this email in error.

Appendix II: Kells Town Development Plan 2013-2019: Policies and Objectives.

Chapter 2 Strategic Context and Core Strategy

1. To facilitate the growth of Kells as a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town in line with its status provided for in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area.
2. To strengthen the economy of the town, attracting new investment in employment, services, administration, retail and tourism uses.
3. To build upon the Heritage Town status of Kells and to develop specific niche tourism products so as to create sustainable job growth in the tourism sector for the town.
4. To strengthen the role of the town centre as a primarily retail area and the centre of the community.
5. To secure investment in essential infrastructure including water services.

Core Strategy POL 1

To prioritise the sustainable development of Kells as a Moderate Growth Town within the Navan Core Economic Area and to ensure that Kells can support the level of growth to underpin its role within the Navan Core Economic Area as a “driver” of development in developing and sustaining strong levels of economic growth.

Core Strategy POL 2

To facilitate the development of new housing in accordance with the targets set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines and the County Settlement Hierarchy in the County Development Plan.

Core Strategy POL 3

To consolidate and develop a sustainable town and avoid further sprawl.

Core Strategy POL 4

To support the sustainable development of Kells as a focal point for north Meath economic development and employment growth.

Core Strategy POL 5

To provide for the future well being of residents and workers of Kells by facilitating economic development and the growth of employment opportunities in all sectors in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Core Strategy POL 6

To address commuting patterns by building up the local economy to a more sustainable level.

Core Strategy POL 7

To support, protect, reinforce and extend the role of the town centre as the central retailing and service area of Kells through the intensification, consolidation and appropriate expansion of the town centre.

Core Strategy POL 8

To facilitate the provision of broad ranging uses and to continue to enhance and develop the urban fabric of the town centre. To promote the appropriate use and re-use of town centre backland and under-utilised sites to promote the regeneration of areas in need of renewal.

Core Strategy POL 9

To promote and facilitate the development of sustainable communities through land use planning, by providing for land uses capable of accommodating employment, community, leisure, recreational and cultural facilities, accessible to and meeting the needs of all individuals and local community groups, in tandem with the delivery of residential and physical infrastructure to create quality environments in which to live.

Core Strategy POL 10

To ensure that developments are accessible to meet the needs of all individuals and local community groups.

Core Strategy POL 11

To seek the delivery of physical and community infrastructure in conjunction with high quality residential developments to create quality living environments.

Core Strategy POL 12

To consider planning applications for new residential development only in accordance with the Order of Priority set in Table 6 and the land use zoning objectives map whereby residential development, other than infill, brownfield or as part of a mixed use / commercial development (the latter within B1 or C1 lands only) shall only be permitted within the life of this Development Plan. The Planning Authority shall continually monitor the release of the identified lands for residential purposes and take corrective action if required.

Core Strategy POL 13

On expiration of current committed (extant) planning permissions or those commitments which do not receive an extension of the appropriate period under Section 42 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 – 2013 located outside of the administrative area of Kells Town Council, it shall be deemed that such lands revert to agricultural use and are dezoned from their previous residential land use zoning objective. No extension of duration permitted for multiple unit residential developments pursuant to Section 42 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 – 2013 shall extend the life of a planning permission beyond the 6 year period of this Development Plan.

Core Strategy POL 14

To require that planning applications for residential development submit a 'Phasing and Implementation Statement' to ensure compliance with the 'Development Objectives of the Kells Development Plan 2013 – 2019'.

Core Strategy POL 15

To promote development of brownfield / infill sites approximating or less than 0.5 hectares in extent by excluding such sites from the requirement to comply with the phasing strategy throughout the Development Plan Area.

Core Strategy POL 16

Any development proposed as a result of these core strategies will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment.

Core Strategy OBJ 1

The development of new residential properties at Rabbit Hill Wood along the Headfort Road shall be linked to the opening of a publicly accessible river walk. This proposal shall be subject to a Framework Plan being agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. The Framework Plan shall provide inter alia the following;

- The development of additional residential properties shall be subject to the opening of recreational trails / lands identified as H1 land use zoning objective to the general public from the Headfort Road to the Mausoleum. The development of recreational trails shall seek to only use of the existing available trails within the sensitive Natura 2000 site. No additional residential development shall be constructed prior to the entering into of a legal agreement between the landowner and the Local Authority satisfying this aspect of the overall development.
- The scale and number of additional residential dwellings which shall be considered within the area of the Framework Plan identified as A1 "Existing Residential" shall seek to minimise the loss of any existing mature specimen trees and seek to assimilative new development into its sensitive woodland setting. A consistent design theme shall be provided for all development. The location of new development shall primarily be located within the cleared area to the north of the site identified as A1 "Existing Residential" land use zoning objective to ensure that dwellings maximise available sunlight / passive solar gain.

The permissible density shall be a maximum of 5 units per hectare and shall be on the basis of a qualitative assessment which demonstrates compliance with the remainder of this objective but also the setting of the site within the Headfort Demesne Architectural Conservation Area.

- Any development within the subject lands shall be subject to the carrying out of an Appropriate Assessment pursuant to the Habitats Directive ensuring that the proposed development will not adversely impact upon the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites.

No application for development within the subject lands will be considered in the absence of the required Framework Plan having first being agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. When prepared, all subsequent applications for development shall be accompanied with a design statement demonstrating compliance with the Framework Plan.

However, should a single application be lodged at any time over the life of the Development Plan seeking the replacement of the existing Rabbit Hill Lodge, it shall be assessed against the remaining policies in the Development Plan and shall not be subject to the requirements of the Framework Plan.

2.4 Development Management

1. To ensure a high quality and standard of design for all new and extended developments in the town & environs.
2. To provide for sustainable residential communities and along with providing for and maintaining a satisfactory community and business environment.

Land Use Zoning Objectives

A1 Existing Residential: To protect and enhance the amenity of developed residential communities.

A2 New Residential: To provide for new residential communities with ancillary community facilities, neighbourhood facilities and employment uses as considered appropriate for the status of the centre in the Settlement Hierarchy.

B1 Commercial / Town or Village Centre: To protect, provide for and / or improve town and village centre facilities and uses.

B2 Retail Warehouse Park: To provide for the development of a retail warehouse park.

C1 Mixed Use: To provide for and facilitate mixed residential and business uses.

D1 Tourism: To provide for appropriate and sustainable visitor and tourist facilities and associated uses.

E2 General Enterprise & Employment: To provide for the creation of enterprise and facilitate opportunities for employment through industrial, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and other general employment / enterprise uses in a good quality physical environment.

F1 Open Space: To provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities.

G1 Community Infrastructure: To provide for necessary community, social and educational facilities.

H1 High Amenity: To protect and improve areas of high amenity

WL White Lands: To protect strategic lands from inappropriate forms of development which would impede the orderly expansion of Kells.

Chapter 3 Economy & Employment

Key Aims for Economy & Employment

1. To maximise the number of local job opportunities created over the life of the development plan befitting the Secondary Economic Growth Town status of Kells.
2. To reduce the dependence on commuting for access to suitable job opportunities for the growing resident population.
3. To develop the tourism sector of the town maximising the economic potential arising from the inclusion of Kells in the tentative World Heritage Site list and its designation as an Orientation Point in the Boyne Valley.

4. To maximise the economic opportunities arising from the synergies which can be developed between the heritage, tourism and retail sectors of Kells.

ECON POL 1: To promote and provide for employment and enterprise creation opportunities and initiatives, in line with the designation of Kells as a Secondary Economic Growth Town within the Navan Core Economic Area.

ECON POL 2: To protect and enhance the special character of Kells town centre and to provide for and improve retailing, residential, commercial, office, cultural, tourism and other appropriate uses in the town centre.

ECON POL 3: To promote and facilitate synergy between heritage, retail and tourism developments that enhances the economic profile of Kells town.

ECON POL4: To continue to consolidate the centre of Kells as the focal point of the town for cultural, social, retail and commercial facilities.

ECON POL 5: To continue to support and promote existing industries and enterprises in Kells.

ECON POL 6: To provide for the location of high-density employment uses, such as offices, in locations within or close to the town centre and within 500m of the 109 / 109A bus service thereby minimizing the demand for private car based travel.

ECON POL 7: To provide for and facilitate the orderly phased development of enterprise and employment uses at Kells Business Park generally in accordance with the Kells Business Park Framework Plan 2013 (Appendix G). Further development can only be facilitated subject to the availability of adequate piped water services. The Planning Authority shall seek to achieve a high standard of layout, landscaping and design of the overall site, buildings and groups of buildings. It shall be a requirement of the Planning Authority that all development proposals are generally in accordance with the provisions of the Framework Plan. In addition, future development proposals will be subject to a Traffic & Transport Assessment (TTA), where appropriate, in relation to the potential impact on any specific development on the national road network in the area.

EMP POL 8: To encourage predominantly lower density employment uses (industrial, warehousing, distribution, logistics and associated uses) on lands zoned for 'E2' land use at Kells Business Park.

ECON POL 9: To facilitate the sustainable development of commercial, office, incubator units, light industrial and warehousing development on appropriately zoned and serviced lands in co-operation with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and the County Enterprise Board.

ECON POL 10: To encourage the provision of a number of incubator units for enterprises, as part of larger light industrial or office developments.

EMP POL 11: To apply a flexible approach to the assessment of entrepreneurial start up business and small scale industrial and employment generating activities, where it can be demonstrated that the proposed use would have minimal impact on adjoining uses, primarily residential property.

EMP POL 12: Any land development proposed as a result of Economic and Employment policies and objectives will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment.

ECON OBJ 1: To carry out further environmental improvements, public realm enhancements and traffic management in the town centre area which will assist in generating a positive ambience in the

town thus creating a positive impact on potential employers/employees locating in, and for shoppers/ tourist visiting, the town.

EMP OBJ 2: To provide landmark commercial buildings of significant architectural merit and within a landscaped setting on lands identified on the Navan Road opposite the entrance to Headfort Golf Club.

EMP OBJ 3: To monitor the release of land zoned for employment generating uses and the progress made in providing the necessary piped water services capacity to service such lands. Further development can only be facilitated subject to the availability of adequate piped water services. The Planning Authorities will seek to ensure that sufficient land is available to cater for the development of retail, commercial, industrial and enterprise uses to match the needs of the town's growing population.

EMP OBJ 4: To prepare a commercial profile for Kells as a significant element of the promotion and marketing of the town by the Economic Development & Innovation Unit of Meath County Council for employment and enterprise development targeting tourism, high value added manufacturing, retail (convenience & lower order comparison) and administration.

TOUR POL 1: To support the development of Kells as a significant tourism centre in the county, a gateway to the Boyne Valley and a bridge between Dublin and the North West regions.

TOUR POL 2: To improve the visitor experience to the town and to co-operate with all stakeholders and appropriate agencies in promoting tourism and securing tourist based enterprises and facilities in the town.

TOUR POL 3: To develop the sustainable tourism potential of Kells through targeted initiatives remedying the identified infrastructure and interpretation deficiencies

TOUR POL 4: To protect and conserve those natural, built and cultural heritage features that form the principle assets of the town's tourism asset and in particular, to protect the medieval area of the town from inappropriate or visually intrusive development.

TOUR POL 5: To ensure that new tourism facilities, including accommodation and other facilities, are provided where they can best support the provision of services and the general economic vitality of the town.

TOUR POL 6: To co-operate with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Meath Tourism, Louth County Council, Boyne Valley and any other relevant bodies in the implementation of the Boyne Valley Destination Development Strategy.

TOUR POL 7: To ensure that the provision of dwellings, which form part of an integrated tourist development, will not be occupied as permanent places of residence.

TOUR POL 8: To facilitate the development of high-quality tourist accommodation such as hotels, hostels, B&Bs / Guesthouses, etc. at suitable locations, subject to ensuring a high standard of architecture, the provision of adequate infrastructure and compliance with normal planning considerations.

TOUR POL 9: To consider the provision of caravan, camping and motor home sites at suitable locations. In all instances, the Planning Authorities will seek to ensure a high standard of layout, design and amenity in such proposals whilst safeguarding the landscape character in sensitive areas.

TOUR POL 10: Any land development proposed as a result of Tourism policies, particularly in relation to development at Lloyd or adjacent to the River Blackwater, will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment.

TOUR OBJ 1: To implement the recommendations of the Boyne Valley Drive Infrastructure Study, the Tourism Route Interpretation Plan for the Boyne Valley Drive and the Interpretative Plan for Boyne Valley Orientation Points as they apply to the town of Kells and its environs.

TOUR OBJ 2: To facilitate the creation of a cultural quarter – a cluster of creative and cultural industries with galleries, craft shops, potteries, goldsmiths and jewellery designers, artisan foods, restaurants, cafes, etc. - in the Market Street, Church Hill, Church Street, New Market Street and Canon Street. Flexibility of land use zoning considerations shall apply whereby proposals can demonstrate consistency with this policy and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

TOUR OBJ 3: To implement an agreed programme of public realm enhancement during the life of the Development Plan to continue to improve the appearance and presentation of the town. This shall also include the removal or screening of unsightly elements at historically sensitive locations within the town centre such as inappropriate advertising, poles, telecoms, power boxes and wirescapes. Such improvements should respect the unique heritage of Kells and promote this where practicable.

TOUR OBJ 4: To implement the Traffic Management Plan for Kells and in particular introduce significant traffic calming and pedestrian / cyclist priority measures in the medieval and cultural quarter of the town.

TOUR OBJ 5: To prepare and implement a strategy to address the considerable extent of vacancy and creeping dereliction in the historic town core.

TOUR OBJ 6: To prepare and implement an overall tourism and amenity development strategy for the Town Council land bank at Lloyd which would, inter alia, implement the recommendations contained in the Boyne Valley Drive Infrastructure Study & Tourism Route Interpretation Plan for the Boyne Valley Drive. The preparation of the development strategy shall be completed within 2 years of the adoption of this Development Plan, subject to funding. In addition, future development proposals will be subject to a Traffic & Transport Assessment (TTA), where appropriate, in relation to the potential impact of any specific development on the national road network in the area.

TOUR OBJ 7: To create a design brief for shop fronts and streetscapes that would offer a suggested complementary palette of colours, designs, signage and lettering for property owners.

TOUR OBJ 8: To identify a high quality and appropriate design and style of civic furniture that will consistently be adhered to befitting the Heritage Town status of the Kells.

TOUR OBJ 9: To develop and enhance the roundabouts and entrances to the town as effective gateways into a Heritage Town.

Prevention of Major Accidents Policies

PMA POL 1: To comply with the Seveso II Directive in reducing the risk and limiting the potential consequences of major industrial accidents.

PMA POL2: To permit new Seveso development only in low risk locations within acceptable distances from vulnerable residential, retail and commercial development.

PMA POL 3: To have regard to the advice of the Health & Safety Authority when proposals for new SEVESO sites are being considered or modifications to existing SEVESO sites are being considered.

PMA POL 4: Attach to any grant of permission for new warehouse or similar industrial buildings, a condition to exclude use/storage of SEVESO substances (or require a separate permission for it).

Chapter 4 Town Centre

Key Aims for the Town Centre in Kells

1. To strengthen and protect the role of the town centre as the primary retail area and centre of the local community.
2. To address the significant retail expenditure leakage from the town by providing the means to strengthen the range and quality of its retail offer in line with its status as a Level 3 Retail Centre serving a large rural hinterland.
3. To facilitate the orderly expansion of the town centre commercial core into the Backlands and / or Frontlands.
4. To enhance the physical appearance and attractiveness of the town centre over the period of this development plan.

Town Centre Policies & Objectives

TOWN CENTRE POL 1: To create a vibrant and commercially successful retail sector for the town of Kells and its hinterland.

TOWN CENTRE POL 2: To encourage the development of the retail and service role of Kells as a self sustaining Moderate Growth Town in accordance with the policies contained in the County Development Plan, the County Retail Strategy and the Greater Dublin Area Retail Planning Guidelines 2011.

TOWN CENTRE POL 3: To protect and enhance the vitality of Kells town centre and to promote the orderly expansion of the town centre in a manner which provides permeability between the existing town centre and designated expansion areas.

TOWN CENTRE POL 4: To facilitate the development of lands to the east of Farrell street / Bective Street / Kenlis Place, known locally as the “Backlands”, as the preferred area for retail led mixed use expansion of the town centre in accordance with the design guidance set out in Section 4.2 of this plan and the Backlands Framework Plan contained in Appendix E. Any proposed scheme shall provide a mix of uses within the overall agreed phasing programme and an overall design and layout that provide strong connectivity / linkages to the historic town centre. The Planning Authority will consider retail and other commercial development as part of Phase I with other uses being included in subsequent phases. All subsequent applications for development shall be accompanied with a design statement demonstrating compliance with the design guidance contained in this Development Plan.

TOWN CENTRE POL 5: To facilitate the development of lands to the west of Bective Street / Bective Square / Suffolk Street as an alternative area for retail led mixed use expansion of the town centre

subject to the preparation of a Framework Plan and adherence to the design guidance set out in Section 4.2 of this plan. Any proposed scheme shall provide a mix of uses within the overall agreed phasing programme and an overall design and layout that provide strong connectivity / linkages to the historic town centre. The Planning Authority will consider retail and other commercial development as part of Phase I with other uses being included in subsequent phases. No application for development within the subject lands will be considered in the absence of the required Framework Plan having first being agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. When prepared, all subsequent applications for development shall be accompanied with a design statement demonstrating compliance with the Framework Plan.

TOWN CENTRE POL 6: The Planning Authorities will consider the substitution of flood risk / plain to adjoining lands with the written consent of the relevant land owner to facilitate the creation of more regular shaped development sites. In such instances where accompanied by Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and subject to the written agreement of the Planning Authority at pre planning consultation stage, the incorporation of additional lands in such circumstances within the town centre expansion areas within development proposals shall not be considered to constitute a material contravention of this Development Plan. There shall be no net increase in development site area arising from such compensation measures.

TOWN CENTRE POL 7: To facilitate the appropriate expansion of the lands adjoining the Aldi Discount Foodstore on the Cavan Road for the provision of retail warehousing / car showrooms / service areas generally in accordance with the agreed Framework Plan for the extent of lands now zoned. In addition, future development proposals will be subject to a Traffic & Transport Assessment (TTA), where appropriate, in relation to the potential impact of any specific development on the national road network in the area.

TOWN CENTRE POL 8: To encourage and work with landowners, retailers and developers to realise the considerable potential of existing vacant premises in the town centre core area and identified “Opportunity Sites” in the town centre and edge of centre locations for retail and other town centre uses.

TOWN CENTRE POL 9: To ensure that no more than 50% of comparison retail development permitted over the life of the Development Plan occurs outside of the existing town centre included within the designated retail core area (in order to ensure that the existing levels of vacancy in the commercial core will reduce and not be further exacerbated).

TOWN CENTRE POL 10: New retail and commercial development shall be integrated with the traditional retail areas of the town and should be sympathetic to the heritage and character of Kells.

TOWN CENTRE POL 11: To promote and facilitate the provision of additional cafés, bars, restaurants and gift / tourist shops in the town centre, particularly in the proposed Cultural Quarter (See TOUR OBJ 2) in order to attract tourists to the town centre and provide a link with the retail provision in the town.

TOWN CENTRE POL 12: To encourage and facilitate the development of a combined and unique heritage, retailing and tourism experience within Kells that enhances the economic profile of Kells Heritage Town.

TOWN CENTRE POL 13: To encourage and facilitate the development of independent / individual speciality or niche retail outlets in the town centre that will create a strong and unique sense of character and shopping experience for visitors.

TOWN CENTRE POL 14: To assess all planning applications for large retail developments in accordance with the criteria set out in the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (when adopted) and the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012.

TOWN CENTRE POL 15: To encourage the further diversification in the retail offer in Kells and ensuring that the assessment of planning applications allows flexibility to allow for the expansion or creation of larger floorplate retail units to accommodate the demands of retailers within the defined retail core area whilst respecting the built heritage and form of the town.

TOWN CENTRE POL 16: To require the creation of high quality retail and commercial units with attention to the public realm in order to enhance the visual appearance of Kells.

TOWN CENTRE POL 17: “Living over the shop” or other commercial use shall be encouraged in the town centre to enhance its overall vibrancy.

TOWN CENTRE POL 18: Non retail uses at ground floor within the identified Primary Retail Streets of Farrell Street and Cross Street will be discouraged in order to strengthen the shopping function of Kells and to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the primary retail area.

TOWN CENTRE POL 19: Any land development proposed as a result of Town Centre policies and objectives will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment.

TOWN CENTRE OBJ 1: To assist in the delivery of the identified town centre sites which will include the use of all statutory powers bestowed to the Planning Authority including the use of compulsory acquisition of sites to facilitate access to or the creation of the pedestrian / cyclist connections identified on the land use zoning objectives map.

TOWN CENTRE OBJ 2: To undertake a comprehensive upgrade of Farrell Street and Cross Street over the life of the Development Plan to include the enhancement of the public realm, the provision of public spaces, high quality landscaping and street furniture, reconfiguration of car parking spaces including the discontinuation of angled spaces and other measures which would attract shoppers and visitors to the Primary Shopping Streets of the town.

TOWN CENTRE OBJ 3: To incorporate design guidelines for shop frontages and upper floors of buildings into the Kells Development Plan within 1 year of the plan coming into effect. The design guidelines should include the promotion of a range of high quality styles, materials and finishes which contribute to an aesthetically pleasing streetscape. Careful consideration of signage is required to protect signature buildings along the street and to reduce visual clutter. The retention and upgrade of existing traditional shop fronts and timber sash windows in upper floors should be encouraged.

TOWN CENTRE OBJ 4: To undertake a feasibility study regarding the development of a town centre management initiative for Kells involving local business owners. This may include the setting up of a town centre management committee or a local ‘BID’ or Business Improvement District.

TOWN CENTRE OBJ 5: Pedestrian facilities and connections shall be enhanced to encourage greater pedestrian movement within the town’s retail core.

TOWN CENTRE OBJ 6: To enhance the pedestrian and cyclist linkages between the existing retail developments (Kells Shopping Centre, anchored by Supervalu and Aldi) at an edge of centre location to the north of the town and the town centre.

Chapter 5 Housing

Key Housing Aims for Kells

1. Promote the development of sustainable residential communities to cater for a range of housing needs and tenures and avoiding social segregation.
2. Promote residential uses on upper floors of buildings within the town centre.
3. Promote the consolidation of the existing built up areas by facilitating high quality appropriate infill development.
4. Protect the amenities of existing residential areas and ensure new development has access to appropriate amenity space so as to ensure that these areas are attractive places to live.

Housing Policies

HS POL 1: To encourage and foster the creation of attractive mixed use sustainable communities which contain a variety of housing types and tenures with supporting community facilities, public realm and residential amenities.

HS POL 2: To require a high standard of design in all new residential schemes that are built in a style and scale that is appropriate to the landscape setting.

HS POL 3: To promote residential developments which;

- a) Support public transport, walking and cycling
- b) Provide for well-designed neighbourhoods of high architectural quality with dwelling sizes and layouts which provide good quality liveable homes,
- c) Ensure that open space, health and recreation needs are met.

HS POL 4: To recognise the need for people with special needs to enjoy a decent living environment in Kells and to support local communities, health authorities and other agencies involved in the provision of facilities to people with special needs including supporting the voluntary sector in the development of housing.

HS POL 5: To encourage the provision of adequate small, self-contained living units within a complex of facilities for persons with special needs to maintain privacy and independence whilst having the protection of a more sheltered environment.

HS POL 6: To promote social inclusion and take account of the needs for older people and people with disabilities in the design of new residential developments.

HS POL 7: To permit the suitable extension of an existing dwelling to accommodate the elderly or people with a disability in the family home, subject to normal planning requirements.

HS POL 8: To ensure that all new housing is designed in a way that is adaptable and flexible to the changing needs of the homeowner, with regard to the Lifetime Homes guidance contained in Section 5.2 of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government 'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities – Best Practice Guidelines for Delivering Homes for Sustaining Communities, (2007)'.

HS POL 9: To require as part of all new residential and commercial developments, and in existing developments, where appropriate, provision to be made for facilities including local/neighbourhood shops, childcare facilities, schools and recreational facilities and to seek their provision concurrent with development.

HS POL 10: To ensure that new developments are permeable for walking and cycling and that parking or servicing arrangements do not compromise walking or cycling.

HS POL 11: To require that developers comply with Part V of the Planning & Development Acts, 2000-2011 (as amended), through the following options or by a combination thereof at the discretion of Kells Town Council/Meath County Council:

- (a) Financial contributions (as provided for under section 96(3) (vi) of the Planning & Development Act.
- (b) Direct provision of the housing units on completion as determined in accordance with the strategy, integrated as part of the overall development of a site.

The transfer of a portion of the site or the disposal of a number of fully or partially serviced sites within the subject site to the Council to provide the appropriate number of units thereon in satisfaction of the requirements of the Housing Strategy or the transfer to the Planning Authority of the ownership of any other land within the functional area of Kells Town Council/Meath County Council.

HS POL 12: To provide and facilitate the provision of accommodation to meet the needs of the elderly and to encourage the provision of a range of housing options for the elderly persons in central, convenient and easily accessible locations and to integrate such housing with mainstream housing where possible.

HS POL 13: To provide and facilitate the provision of accommodation to meet the needs of those with disabilities through the provision and/or adaptation of appropriate accommodation.

HS POL 14: Development proposed as a result of Housing policies will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment.

Housing Objectives

Social & Affordable Housing

HS OBJ 1: It is an objective, on lands zoned for residential use or lands zoned for a mixture of residential/housing and other uses, to require 16% of all new residential developments, to be reserved for social and affordable housing in accordance with the principles, policies and programmes for action set out in the Housing Strategy. This figure may be modified in line with any revision of the Housing Strategy carried out during the period of this Development Plan.

HS OBJ 2: To provide appropriate accommodation for Travellers through the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 - 2013 and any subsequent Programme adopted during the life of this Development Plan.

Community Facilities – Policies & Objectives

SOC POL 1: To encourage and support the work of community groups in Kells.

SOC POL 2: To ensure that all developments make adequate provision for community, recreational and amenity facilities that are located where they can best meet the needs of the entire community that the facility is intended to serve and to seek their provision concurrent with development.

SOC OBJ 1: To ensure that provision is made for such community facilities as the Councils deem appropriate in consultation with relevant local interested parties and to assist in the provision of community and resource centres by identification and reservation of suitable sites including land banks within Local Authority ownership.

SOC OBJ 2: To utilise the Councils powers under the Development Contribution Scheme to fund investment in community facilities, which will form a basis for the improvement of existing facilities and the funding of new community facilities.

Childcare Policies & Objectives

SOC POL 3: To encourage, promote and facilitate the provision of quality affordable childcare facilities in accordance with national policy and relevant guidelines.

SOC POL 4: To permit childcare facilities in existing residential areas provided that they do not have a significant impact on the character or amenities of an area, particularly with regard to car parking, traffic generation and noise disturbances. Where proposed facilities relate to properties which have been designed and built as dwellings, and are surrounded by other houses, a significant residential element should be retained.

SOC POL 5: To require the provision of childcare facilities of an appropriate type and scale in suitable locations within Kells. In particular, the development of childcare facilities at the following locations will normally be required and supported:

- Areas of concentrated employment and business parks
- Neighbourhood centres
- Large retail developments and retail warehouse parks
- In schools or major educational facilities
- Adjacent to public transport nodes, and within new and existing residential developments

SOC OBJ 3: To monitor and assess in conjunction with the Meath County Childcare Committee, the continuing needs of children and related facilities and review progress on the provision of same, during the period of this development plan.

SOC POL 6: Planning permissions for childcare facilities should, where appropriate, include a condition that allows for the flexible expansion of childcare numbers at the facility commensurate to its size.

Healthcare Policies & Objectives

SOC POL 7: To co-operate with the Health Service Executive and other relevant agencies in the provision of appropriate health care facilities to serve Kells.

SOC POL 8: To encourage the integration of healthcare facilities with new and existing communities and to discourage proposals that would cause unnecessary isolation or other access difficulties, particularly from the disabled, the elderly and children. The preferred location for healthcare facilities is within or adjoining the town centre.

SOC POL 9: To encourage, support and facilitate the provision of services for the aged population. The Councils are committed to accommodating the needs of older people by the facilitation of nursing home developments in appropriate locations.

SOC POL 10: Any land development proposed as a result of Social policies will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment.

SOC OBJ 4: To facilitate the development of a new Primary Health Care Facility on the designated sites (permitted Pri Med development site or lands within HSE NE ownership) along the Navan Road

which have been identified with a G1 community land use zoning objective. This accords with the designation of Kells as a location for the provision of a primary care centre under the Government's 2012 Stimulus Package.

Education Policies & Objectives

SOC POL 10: To ensure that adequate lands are zoned and serviced to meet the educational requirements of Kells. The Councils continue to support the concept of multi campus educational facilities.

SOC POL 11: To support and encourage the development of Gaelscoil facilities in Kells.

SOC POL 12: To continue to work closely with the Department of Education & Skills to identify existing and future educational requirements, identify and reserve suitable sites for educational purposes, if required, for future school provision in order to ensure that the necessary increased capacity in school provision is provided in a timely manner and as an integral part of the development of an area.

SOC OBJ 5: To facilitate the relocation of Eureka Secondary School to a new purpose built site on the Cavan Road or other suitable site identified and acceptable to the Department of Education & Skills such as adjoining the existing educational campus at Jim Brunnock Road.

SOC POL 13: In identifying new sites for educational needs, regard shall be had to the Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas as they relate to education provision and the Joint Code of Practice on Provision of Schools and the Planning System (August 2008).

SOC POL 14: To encourage, support and development opportunities to open up new and existing educational facilities to wider community use, subject to normal proper planning and sustainable development considerations.

Open Space & Recreation Policies & Objectives

SOC POL 15: To ensure that high quality open space is provided to serve the active and passive recreational needs of the population of Kells.

SOC POL 16: To support and encourage local sports and community groups in the provision and development of outdoor and indoor community facilities.

SOC POL 17: To maintain free from development lands that are subject of a deed of dedication or identified in a planning permission as open space to ensure the availability of community and recreational facilities for the residents of the area.

SOC POL 18: To protect and improve existing recreational facilities and public open space, for which the Councils have responsibility, and to protect such areas from development or change of use, and to improve linkages between such facilities and new development.

SOC POL 19: To seek opportunities to improve the quality and capacity of existing recreation and amenity facilities, through initiatives with both the public and private sector (sports governing bodies, local community partnerships and private development proposals) and where appropriate, the Councils will use its powers under Section 48 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2011 (as

amended) to require development levies to achieve the enhancement of these facilities and the provision of new facilities.

SOC POL 20: To reserve the lands identified with F1 Open Space land use zoning objective on the Navan Road in order to facilitate the provision of sports playing fields required to serve the population of Kells and to desist from allowing sporting organisations to relocate such facilities outside of the town development plan envelop.

SOC OBJ 6: To develop the lands in Council ownership at the Tower of Lloyd for passive and active recreation purposes whilst acknowledging that the topography does not lend itself to be developed for sports playing pitches. This shall also require the investigation and provision (subject to finances permitting) for the extension of the existing wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure along the Oldcastle Road to the People's Park area.

SOC OBJ 7: To develop a walking trail from the Tower of Lloyd via Clavin's Bridge along the Blackwater to Mabels Bridge and to explore the extension of a linear riverside walk from Mabels Bridge to the Headfort Road.

SOC OBJ 8: To develop river corridors as natural amenity corridors, connecting the different parts of the town and linking up with established amenity areas whilst ensuring that the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites are protected.

SOC OBJ 9: To continue to reserve lands adjoining the existing graveyard on the Navan Road to ensure that sufficient lands are available to accommodate necessary expansion.

SOC OBJ 10: To continue to reserve lands adjoining the existing Fire Station at Clumber Hall to ensure that sufficient lands are available to accommodate necessary expansion.

SOC OBJ 11: To preserve and protect for the common good, existing public rights of way which give access to lands at Lloyd and to the Blackwater riverbank as identified in the map contained in Figure 6.

SOC POL 21: To continue to expand and improve the library service in Kells to meet the needs of the community in line with the objectives and priorities of the Library Development Plan for County Meath and subject to the availability of finance.

SOC POL 22: To support the development and provisions of arts and cultural facilities in Kells.

SOC POL 23: To liaise with the County Arts Officer on any development proposal that is likely to have a significant impact on the Arts in Kells.

Green Infrastructure Policies

GI POL 1: To recognise the economic, social, environmental and physical value of Green Infrastructure.

GI POL 2: To protect existing Green Infrastructure within the town and environs and to provide additional infrastructure, where possible.

GI POL 3: To seek a net gain in green infrastructure through the protection and enhancement of existing assets, through the provision of new green infrastructure as an integral part of the planning process, and by implementing the measures included in the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Kells.

GI POL 4: To require all new development to contribute positively to the protection and enhancement of existing green infrastructure and the delivery of new green infrastructure, as appropriate.

GI POL 5: To require all proposals for major developments in Kells to submit a green infrastructure plan as an integral part of the planning application detailing how any green infrastructure proposed as part of the development such as open spaces, hedgerows, tree lines shall contribute positively to the development and protection of Green Infrastructure assets.

GI POL 6: To seek to enhance connectivity for people through the provision of parks, open space and recreational facilities.

GI POL 7: To provide attractive and safe routes linking key green space sites, parks and open spaces and other foci such as cultural sites and heritage assets as an integral part of new green infrastructure provision, where appropriate and feasible.

GI POL 8: To ensure that any proposed walking and cycle routes along the River Blackwater are sited and designed to ensure the protection of the river corridor's heritage including its biodiversity and landscapes.

GI POL 9: To ensure that the creation of SuDS features and associated enhancement of wetlands reflects and enhances landscape character.

Green Infrastructure Objectives

GI OBJ 1: To implement, where practicable, the Green Infrastructure measures set out in the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Kells.

GI OBJ 2: To encourage, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.

Key Infrastructure Aims for Kells

1. Seek the upgrade of the existing Kells Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant to cater for the towns anticipated growth levels.
2. Ensure that adequate water supply is available to serve the growing needs of the town.
3. Ensure that all waste discharges are adequately treated.
4. Ensure new development complies with the requirements of 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009'

Water Services Policies

INF POL 1:

(a) To continue the development and upgrading of the water supply system serving Kells to ensure that an adequate, sustainable and economic supply of safe and secure piped water of suitable quality is available for the sustainable development of Kells as finances permit. The Planning Authority shall ensure that adequate and appropriate water supply is in place prior to the granting of future development in the plan area.

(b) To promote and require the use of water conservation techniques, where practicable, in new developments within the town so as to provide for the sustainable investment and continued availability of water supply for the ongoing population and business needs of the town.

INF POL 2: To continue the development and upgrading of the waste water system serving Kells to ensure that an adequate treatment capacity is available for the sustainable development of Kells as finances permit. The Planning Authority shall ensure that adequate and appropriate wastewater treatment capacity is in place prior to the granting of future development in the plan area.

INF POL 3: Any development proposed as a result of Infrastructure policies will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment according to Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive

Surface Water Policies & Objectives

INF POL 4: To protect, maintain and improve the natural character of all watercourses, tributaries and streams within the Plan area.

INF POL 5: All developments in the Newrath Stream catchment shall comply with the recommendations of the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS). Surface water drainage infrastructure shall be provided by the developer/s as the initial phase of development in this area, to facilitate orderly development and to ensure that the 'developed state' is properly served. Developers shall submit maintenance and management plans for their surface water drainage proposals as part of relevant planning applications.

INF POL 6: To ensure that all new developments should incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in accordance with the recommendations of the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) and sufficient storm water attenuation will be required for all such developments to ensure that the rate of run-off equates to predevelopment greenfield run off rates.

INF OBJ 1: To generally provide support for the funding of, and to improve and extend, surface water disposal infrastructure to serve the planned levels of growth, during the lifetime of this Plan, in order to facilitate development and subject to the availability of funding.

INF OBJ 2: To facilitate the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Kells Stormwater Drainage Study as provided for in the adopted Section 49 Supplementary Contributions Scheme to facilitate the permitted mixed use town centre development in the Backlands.¹

INF POL 7: To ensure that the potential of flood risk in the identified flood risk areas associated with existing development in the general Headfort Road area (downstream of the preferred town centre expansion area) are not exacerbated by any new surface water drainage works required pursuant to the recommendations of the Kells Stormwater Drainage Study.

¹ The permitted mixed use development to Kells Development Company Ltd. (planning register ref. no. KT800014 / An Bord Pleanála PL49 .234285) requires the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Kells Stormwater Drainage Study, 2006. The Kells Stormwater Drainage Study demonstrated how this area could be developed having regard to the extent of town centre land use zoning objective which then applied.

INF POL 8: To protect groundwater resources having regard to the County Meath Groundwater Protection Plan.

INF OBJ 3: To ensure through the implementation of the River Basin Management Plans and their associated programmes of measures, and any other associated legislation, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground waters within the development plan envelop and beyond. The implementation of this Development Plan shall not conflict with the aims and objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

INF POL 9: In assessing planning applications for development, the Councils will consider the impact on the quality and quantity of ground water and will have regard to the recommended approach 'Groundwater Protection Schemes' (and the Response Matrices) published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Geological Survey of Ireland.

Waste Policies

INF POL 10: To implement the policies and objectives of the North East Waste Management Plan 2005-2010 or any replacement waste management plan for the north east region as relevant to Kells.

INF POL 11: To promote education and awareness on all issues associated with waste management, both at industry and community level. This will include the promotion of waste reduction by encouraging the minimization, re-use, recycling and recovery of waste within the town and environs.

INF POL 12: To encourage the development of waste infrastructure and associated developments in appropriate locations, as deemed necessary in accordance with the requirements of the Regional Waste Management Plan as relevant to Kells.

INF POL 13: To facilitate the provision of appropriate waste recovery and disposal facilities in accordance with the principles set out in the appropriate Waste Management Plan applicable from time to time made in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996.

INF POL 14: To require developers to prepare construction and demolition waste management plans for new construction projects over certain thresholds and such plans shall meet the relevant recycling/recovery targets for such waste in accordance with the national legislation and national and regional waste management policy.

INF POL 15: Any waste infrastructure proposed will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment according to Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive.

INF POL 16: Where practicable, and particularly in areas of new development, floor levels shall be a minimum of 300mm above adjacent roads and hard standing areas to reduce the consequences of any localised flooding.

INF POL 17: To ensure that adequate measures are put in place to deal with residual risks, proposals shall demonstrate the use of flood-resistant construction measures that are aimed at preventing water from entering a building and that mitigate the damage floodwater causes to buildings. Alternatively, designs for flood resilient construction may be adopted where it can be demonstrated that entry of floodwater into buildings is preferable to limit damage caused by floodwater and allow relatively quick recovery.

Flood Risk Policies & Objectives

INF POL 18: To have regard to the requirements of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG/OPW, 2009) in the assessment of development management proposals and in the preparation of any Framework Plans required during the period of this Plan.

INF OBJ 4: In areas where there is a high probability of flooding – Zone A refers – it is an objective of this plan to avoid development other than ‘water compatible development’ as described in Section 3 of the ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ issued in November 2009 by the DoEHLG.

INF OBJ 5: In areas where there is a moderate probability of flooding – ‘Zone B and Residual Risk Scenarios refers – it is an objective of this plan to avoid ‘highly vulnerable development’ described in Section 3 of ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ issued in November 2009 by the DoEHLG.

INF POL 19: The Planning Authority will require a site specific flood risk assessment to be carried out for all development proposals falling within areas identified as being at risk of flooding in accordance with the Kells Strategic Flood Risk Assessment recommendations.

INF POL 20: To have regard to the recommendations of the Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study when finalised and approved.

INF POL 21: To protect water courses, banks and bankside vegetation from interference by inappropriate bridging, draining, culverting or other works which would be detrimental to fisheries, biodiversity and the qualifying interests of Natura 2000 sites.

Chapter 8 Traffic & Transportation

Key Traffic and Transportation Aims for Kells

1. To promote the concept of modal change to more sustainable forms of public and private transportation in the town such as walking and cycling.
2. To enhance the town centre experience for locals and visitors alike whereby traffic which doesn't require to access the historic town centre area is discouraged from doing so.
3. To improve facilities for bus usage in the town, and encourage the development of adequate park and ride facilities.

Traffic & Transport Policies & Objectives

TRAN OBJ 1: To implement the sustainable transport measures set out in the Kells Local Transport Plan subject to finances.

TRAN POL 1: To promote land-use planning measures which aim for transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the use of public transportation.

TRAN OBJ 2: To implement a Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) through traffic ban from accessing the town centre area on selected routes. Such strategic traffic should utilise the existing alternative by-pass routes outlined in the Kells Local Transport Plan.

TRAN OBJ 3: To implement the specific Traffic Management measures for the town centre as outlined in the Kells Local Transport Plan in order to significantly improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists and to prioritise public transport movements. The National Transport Authority shall be consulted on the introduction of the revised traffic management measures outlined in the plan.

TRAN POL 2: To require the submission of a Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) and Road Safety Audit as part of a development proposal, where expected traffic movements will have a material impact on the safety and free flow of traffic on a national or regional route. Developers should refer to the NRA's "Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines" in the preparation of TTA's in this regard.

TRAN POL 3: To require the preparation of a Mobility/Workplace Travel Plan with planning applications for proposed trip intensive developments including retail and business/industrial proposals. Workplace Travel Plans will be required if an existing or proposed development has the potential to employ over 100 persons. A Workplace Travel Statement may also be required at the discretion of the Planning Authority for developments which employ less than 100 persons.

TRAN POL 4: To ensure that in the design of new development adjoining or near National Roads, account is taken of the need to include measures that will serve to protect the development from the adverse effects of traffic noise for the design-life of the development.

TRAN POL 5: To support, improve and enhance, where feasible, the existing public bus services and infrastructure serving Kells Town & Environs.

TRAN OBJ 4: To facilitate the provision of a bus park & ride facility within the plan area in co-operation with the National Transport Authority and Bus Éireann.

TRAN OBJ 5: To provide, in co-operation with other agencies, bodies and developers/landowners, an integrated network of designated walking and cycling routes to provide safe, convenient and pleasant routes between the town's main residential areas, schools, the town centre and business park areas.

The network will, wherever possible, be developed as a segregated, traffic free, sustainable transport facility incorporating best practice design and shall be integrated with the network of Green Infrastructure.

TRAN OBJ 6: Any proposed new cycle paths in the vicinity of the River Blackwater will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment according to Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive.

TRAN OBJ 7: To review the existing Section 49 Supplementary Contributions Scheme (N3 – N52 Urban Collector / Distributor Road Link and Newrath Stream Culvert Replacement Scheme) following the adoption of the 2013 – 2019 Kells Development Plan

Chapter 9 Telecommunications & Energy

Key Aims for Telecommunications & Energy in Kells

1. Facilitate the development of a modern, cost effective, high quality telecoms system.
2. To promote energy conservation through appropriate land use and building standards and to reduce the demand for energy and fossil fuels.

3. Encourage a modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport.
4. Support the development of renewable energy facilities where appropriate.

Telecommunications & Energy Policies

TE POL 1: The Councils will seek to provide a framework for sustainable development through the provision of quality telecommunications infrastructure and energy use efficiency and encourage the facilitation of an increase in the use of renewable energy in buildings.

TE POL 2: To promote energy conservation and efficiency measures and facilitate innovative building design that promotes energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources in accordance with national policy and guidelines.

TE POL 3: To support the National Climate Change Strategy and, in general, to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

TE POL 4: To seek to improve the energy efficiency of the town's existing building stock and to promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of all new buildings in Kells, in accordance with the Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel & Energy).

TE POL 5: To support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of Kells.

TE POL 6: To support the review and implementation of the actions of the Meath County Council Climate Change Strategy and Energy Management Action Plan 2011-2012 'Think Globally Act Locally'.

TE POL 7: To co-operate and liaise with statutory and other energy providers in relation to power generation in order to ensure adequate power capacity for the existing and future needs of Kells.

TE POL 8: To ensure that energy transmission and communications infrastructure follows best practice with regard to siting and design, particularly to ensure the protection of all important recognised views and prospects.

TE POL 9: To have regard to the following in considering proposals for the development of telecommunication masts, antennae and ancillary equipment:

- The visual impact of the proposed equipment on the natural, built and historic environment.
- The removal or modification of features of architectural/archaeological importance.
- The impact any such development may have on protected structures or their setting.
- The potential for co-location of equipment on existing masts.
- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government "Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, July 1996"

TE POL 10: To generally avoid, where practicable, the location of overhead lines in Natura 2000 sites unless it can be proven that they will not affect the integrity of the site in view of its conservation objectives i.e. by carrying out an appropriate assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive.

TE POL 11: To require that all planning applications for significant new development provide for the delivery of broadband infrastructure in tandem with each phase of development.

TE POL 12: To normally require, save in exceptional circumstances, that the location of local energy and communications services such as electricity, telephone, broadband and cable TV be placed underground, where possible.

TE POL 13: To secure the expansion of high quality broadband and telecommunication infrastructure within the town and its environs, in the interests of promoting economic growth and competitiveness.

TE OBJ 1: To ensure that all plans and projects associated with the generation or supply of energy or telecommunication networks will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment Screening and those plans or projects which could, either individually or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site (or sites) undergo Appropriate Assessment.

Chapter 10 Heritage & Environment

Key Aims for Heritage and Environment in Kells

1. Protect and enhance the built and natural heritage resources of the town and its surrounds.
2. Ensure that the overall environmental impact of present and future development is sustainable and appropriate to the assimilative capacity of the receiving environment.

Heritage Policies & Objectives

HER OBJ 1: To implement the County Heritage Plan and the County Biodiversity Action Plan, and any revisions thereof, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and the community

HER POL 1: To protect and enhance the quality of the natural and built heritage of Kells, to safeguard it as a resource in its own right and ensure that future generations can understand and appreciate their heritage.

HER POL 2: To interpret and promote the importance and cultural significance of natural and built environment and it's potential in the promotion of tourism and enhancing the image of Kells as a place to live and visit.

Heritage Policies

HER POL 3:

a) To protect and enhance the quality of the natural heritage of Kells and to safeguard it as a resource in its own right and ensure that future generations can understand and appreciate their heritage.

b) To promote best practice in the control of invasive species in the carrying out of development.

HER POL 4: To protect, interpret and promote the natural heritage of Kells and its potential in the promotion of tourism and enhancing its image as a place to live and visit.

Natural Heritage Objectives

HER OBJ 2: To protect the ecological integrity of all natural heritage sites designated or proposed for designation under National and European legislation. This includes Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas.

HER OBJ 3: All plans and projects which would be likely (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) to give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the

integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, shall not be permitted on the basis of this Plan unless imperative reasons of overriding public interest can be established and there are no feasible alternative solutions.

HER OBJ 4: It is an objective of the plan to provide protection to all legally protected plant and animal species.

HER OBJ 5: It is an objective of the plan to protect, and where possible, minimise the impact of new development on habitats of biodiversity value that are features of the town's ecological network. These features include tree lines, groups of trees and veteran trees, old walls, parkland, hedgerows, intertidal areas, rivers, streams and wetlands.

HER OBJ 6: In association with HER OBJ 2 - 5, the respective Planning Authority will;

- Carry out screening to determine the potential for all proposed plans and projects authorised by the Councils to impact (directly or through indirect cumulative impact) on Natura 2000 sites.
- Carry out appropriate level of ecological/environmental assessment for all proposed plans and projects to ensure the implementation of the policies set out above.

HER OBJ 7: The Planning Authority will consult with the prescribed bodies and appropriate government agencies, when considering, undertaking or authorising developments or other activities which are likely to affect protected sites or species.

HER OBJ 8: To co-operate with statutory authorities and others in support of measures taken to manage designated nature conservation sites and protected species in order to achieve their conservation objectives.

Tree Protection Policies

HER POL 5 (i): To preserve and enhance the general level of tree cover in the town, to ensure that development proposals do not compromise important trees and include an appropriate level of new tree planting and where appropriate to make use of tree preservation orders to protect important trees or groups of trees which may be at risk.

HER POL 5 (ii) It is also a policy, where practicable, to protect mature tree/groups of mature trees and mature hedgerows identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy map that are not formally subject to Tree Protection Preservation Orders in development management proposals.

HER POL 6:

- i) To protect (in situ where practicable or as a minimum, preservation by record) all monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places (including those newly discovered)
- ii) To seek to protect, where practicable, the setting of and access to sites, in securing such protection the Councils will have regard to advice and recommendations of the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- iii) To require archaeological assessment where it is considered a development could have an effect on a recorded monument, zone of archaeological potential or as yet undefined element of archaeological heritage or their setting.
- iv) Where remnants of burgage plots do remain intact, development proposals on such plots should reflect this character within the design and layout of proposals. In order to promote the renewal of such areas, design guidance will be provided, if necessary, for such sites at pre-planning stage.

HER OBJ 9: To protect the site of the medieval town wall alignment as an area of high archaeological sensitivity from new development through the implementation of a buffer zone which will be assessed on a site by site basis.

HER OBJ 10: To promote archaeological heritage as a resource for educational and tourism purposes and to increase public awareness about Kells archaeological heritage.

HER POL 7: To conserve, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of Kells and to ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to the historic character of Kells

HER POL 8: To preserve the character of the following Architectural Conservation Areas in Kells: (a) Historic Core ACA; (b) Headfort Place ACA

HER POL 9: To support and encourage the refurbishment of buildings within the ACA's in accordance with good conservation practice.

HER POL 10: To retain where practical any structure which contributes in a positive manner to the character of the ACA.

HER POL 11: Within the Architectural Conservation Areas, the Councils will have regard to the following:

(a) The impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Architectural Conservation Area in terms of the height, and massing of built forms, and the compatibility of design, materials, colour and finishes. (b) The impact of proposed development on the character and integrity of the area and the approaches thereto, and will promote compatible uses within compatible forms of infill development; (c) The need to retain important architectural and townscape elements such as shop fronts, sash windows, gutters and downpipes, decorative plasterwork, etc.

Tentative World Heritage Site Policies

HER POL 12: To support, promote and encourage the nomination of the Columban Monastic Site in Kells for designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site status.

HER POL 13: To protect the tentative World Heritage Site in Kells from inappropriate development.

Protected Structure Policy

HER POL 14:

- (a) To resist demolition of protected structures, in whole or in part;
- (b) To resist removal or modification of features of architectural importance;
- (c) To resist interventions that would negatively affect the character of a structure, either externally or internally.
- (d) To resist development that would adversely affect the setting of a protected structure.

Views & Prospects Objective

HER OBJ 3: The following views shall be protected as illustrated on Map 3 in this Plan.

View No. 1: View from Headfort Place looking to the Round Tower and Church Yard.

View No. 2: View from the top of Church Lane looking east over Kells.

View No. 3: View from the junction of Bective Street, Farrell Street and Suffolk Street looking back towards the Round Tower.

View No. 4: View from proposed town centre expansion in the Frontlands towards the Mural Tower of the Kells Town Wall, the Round Tower and St. Columba's Church. The manner in which this view shall be framed and protected shall be indicated in the agreed Framework Plan.

Town Wall Policies

HER POL 15: To protect the integrity and setting of the Kells town wall defences include all walls (whether ancient or on the line of ancient walls), gates, towers, earthen banks and fosses (ditches), bastions, outworks and other features.

HER POL 16: To encourage the enhancement of the setting of town defences and the improvement of signage and public utilities structures, etc. where these affect the visual amenity of the defences.