



**Planning Report for the proposed extension
to
Meath County Council Headquarters
at Buvinda House,
Navan, Co Meath.**

November 2022

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Section 1

Introduction and Background

County Meath occupies a strategic location within the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly area (EMRA) and is uniquely positioned along the national motorway network with 4 national motorways routed through the county. The EMRA region has a population of more than 2.3 million people. This Region is the economic engine of the state providing more than 1 million jobs. The proximity of Meath to Dublin has been a central factor in the growth experienced in the county, which saw the population increase by 78% between 1996-2016 and the housing stock increase by 134% during the same period. The population of County Meath was recorded at 220,296 in Census 2022 representing an increase of 25,252 (+12.9%) since 2016. In Census 2016 the portion of the County's population residing in urban areas was 58.6%, therefore 41.4% were living in rural areas. One of the central elements of the Meath Economic Development Strategy, 2015-2022 is the intention to address the high rate of outbound commuting in the county. Census 2016 recorded almost 22,000 people travelling to Dublin City and Suburbs on a daily basis. The county is home to the third youngest population in the state, with an average age of 35.2 years (national average is 37.4 years). However, over 10% of the population is over 65 years, this will increase in the future, posing additional challenges for service provision.

The Local Government Reform Act, 2014 gives legislative effect to the proposals contained in 'Putting People First' and provides for a range of changes to the organisation and work of Local Authorities. Arising out of the significant increase in Meath's population in tandem with the expanded role of Local Authorities Meath County Council had outgrown its existing headquarters on Railway St. in the town centre. It was essential that the Council was accommodated in modern, fit for purpose accommodation of sufficient size to provide a central focal point for service delivery. In 2013, Meath County Council acquired an unoccupied office building in the IDA business park in Johnstown in order to provide a new Council headquarters. The building was originally constructed as a call centre, the building was renovated to provide bespoke office accommodation, public counter services etc. The Council Chamber remained in use in Railway Street. It was intended that a Council chamber as the focal point for local democracy would be provided as a later phase of development at Buvinda House.

This application seeks planning permission for a 2 and 3 storey extension of 3220 sqm with a 692sqm Council Chamber and 111sqm of associated circulation areas, the remainder of the building comprises of 2,417 sqm of office space. The proposed layout of the chamber is intended to foster an atmosphere which supports co-operation and healthy debate between the Elected Representatives and the Council Executive. Its form allows for the Elected Representatives to receive a presentation by a single person, or small group face-to-face facilitating interaction between the Elected Representatives and presenter(s). The chamber is designed to allow meetings to be held in a traditional format, with Elected Representatives, Council Executive, members of the public and media in attendance. The design is future proofed as meetings can held in a hybrid or remote format, presentations can be delivered in person or remotely. The Chamber is of sufficient scale to allow for the current cohort of 40 Elected Representatives to attend in person and has sufficient capacity to facilitate larger meetings including regional meetings of Council Executives/ Elected Representatives etc. The chamber can also function as a venue for heritage, community, arts events etc.

The application also seeks planning permission for additional office space. Meath County Council has the lowest level of staffing per capita of the 31 Local Authorities as the table below sets out. Staff numbers have been increasing since 2014, resulting in the need for additional office accommodation even with the availability of blended working and other initiatives likely into the future. For example,

currently there are 50 members of staff dispersed in various buildings throughout the county. As Meath County Council staffing numbers are well below the national average, it is likely that staff numbers will continue to rise, resulting in accommodation challenges in the short to medium term.

Year	Meath County Council	¹ National Average – Mean
2014	621.98	864.74
2015	631.87	857.08
2016	645.91	866.40
2017	674.70	883.23
2018	696.35	913.16
2019	728.23	940.73
2020	736.87	958.64
2021	767.75	973.36

Whole Time Equivalent staffing number (at 31st December each year)

Section 2

Site Description

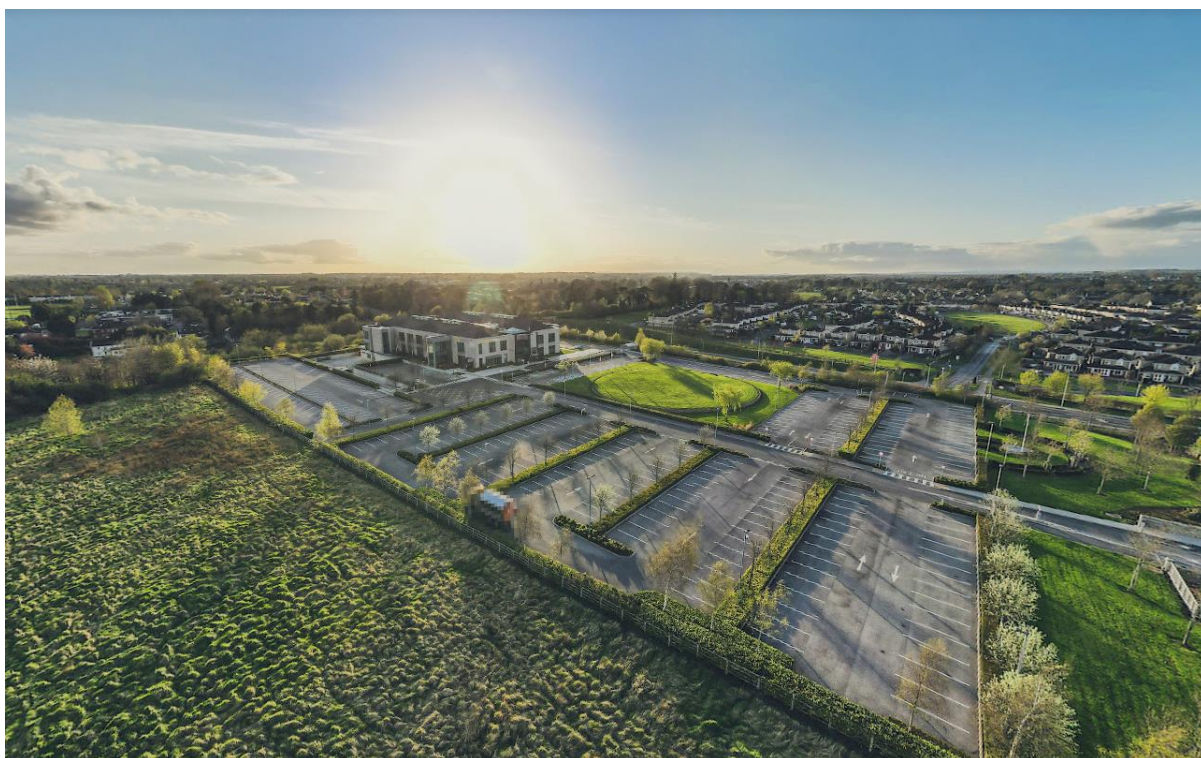
The application site is situated in Athlumney, circa 1km north-west of Johnstown Village and 2km south-east of Navan town centre in Navan IDA Business Park. The site is occupied by Buvinda House, the headquarters of Meath County Council, an existing 2 storey office building of 7,710 sqm and associated car and cycle parking. The site is accessed from the existing entrance off the internal business park access road.

The site is bounded to the west by the River Boyne and adjoining river bank/ floodplain. There are two Natura 2000 sites within 15 km of the proposed development - River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA. The River Boyne is within 100m of the proposed development. A summary of the qualifying interests, general and more detailed conservation objectives is presented in the NIS which accompanies this application. To the east and south is undeveloped employment lands in the IDA park and to the north is the Local Distributor Road (Bóthar Sion). Athlumney Abbey, Athlumney Wood and Riverview residential developments are also to the north on the other side of Bóthar Sion. As noted in the archaeology report which accompanies this application, most of the western part of the site was a 20th century sand pit.

The Ecological Impact Assessment notes that the vast majority of the site is of limited ecological value being comprised of habitats such as “Built Land and Artificial Surfaces (BL3) and Amenity Grassland (GA2).

The site sits elevated above the N3 and Bóthar Sion, Buvinda House is visible on approach from the town centre and Dublin road. The western site boundaries consist of palisade fencing and a steep embankment down to the tree covered river bank. The northern boundary is defined by a line of trees, as detailed in the Arborist report accompanying the application, a stone wall and iron railings. Beyond the existing trees is a steep embankment towards Bóthar Sion.

¹ Average over all Local Authorities in the State



Section 3

Development Description

The proposed development consists of:

- 2 and 3 storey extension of 3220 sqm comprising of a Council Chamber, ancillary Councillor facilities and office accommodation;
- Associated bicycle parking;
- Associated landscaping including a garden courtyard;
- Site drainage works;
- All associated site development works including a site construction compound, lighting.

The application is accompanied by the following documentation:

- Natura Impact Assessment (NIS)
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)
- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report
- Arborist Report
- Architectural Design Statement
- Draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
- Mobility Management Plan
- Traffic Statement
- Engineering Planning Report
- Sustainability and Energy Statement
- Archaeology Report

The proposed extension is to be located on the northern side of the existing building and is linked to the existing building at both the eastern and western sides. A new public entrance is proposed to facilitate access to the Council chamber including the public gallery.

The proposed design is considered innovative and contemporary and contrasts in a positive way with that of the existing building.

A palette of external finishes is set out in detail on the accompanying drawings and architectural design statement. The architectural design statement sets out the rationale for the proposed palette of materials having regard in particular to the exposed nature of the northern elevation.

Section 4

Planning History

- NA/60537 The construction of 1 no new build call centre including site works on this 8-acre site. The building shall; have a ridge height of 15 metres above finished ground floor level and be 7370m² in gross floor area. The building will be 2 stories with a lower ground level, providing ancillary accommodation at the southern elevation; cut into the site with service ramp and yard at this level. The site will be landscaped and include 500 no parking spaces for staff and visitors. A new single site entrance shall be formed off a new link road between the R153/N3 Distributor link and the existing roundabout within the IDA park. **(Permission granted – 07/02/2007)**
- 95/1020 Planning permission granted to Forfas for site development work for an industrial and business park including a revised road layout and revised site entrance **(Permission granted in May 1996).**

Section 5

Planning Policy

5.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2018-2040 is the overarching planning framework in Ireland and is underpinned by the current National Development Plan. The primary purpose of these national policies is to guide development and investment in Ireland. The NPF is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040. It is a requirement for these overarching policies to be considered at a regional and local level by taking account of the general context set out by the NPF. This consideration allows for decision-making to be properly aligned with planning, that can assist in achieving the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) identified in the NPF.

The NPF aims to create a single vision, a shared set of goals for every community across the country. These goals are expressed as NSO's. The following NSO's are considered relevant to the proposed project.

NSO 1 – Compact Growth

Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages will add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work. All our urban settlements contain many potential development areas, centrally located, and frequently publicly owned, that are suitable and capable of re-use to provide housing, jobs, amenities and services, but which need a streamlined and co-ordinated approach to their development, with investment

in enabling infrastructure and supporting amenities, to realise their potential. Activating these strategic areas and achieving effective density and consolidation, rather than more sprawl of urban development, is a top priority Combined with a focus on infill development, integrated transport and promoting regeneration and revitalisation of urban areas, pursuing a compact growth policy at national, regional, and local level will secure a more sustainable future for our settlements and for our communities.

NSO 5 – A strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills

This will depend on creating places that can foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. It can be achieved by building regional economic drivers and by supporting opportunities to diversify and strengthen the rural economy, to leverage the potential of places. Delivering this outcome will require the coordination of growth and place making with investment in world class infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and in skills and talent to support economic competitiveness and enterprise growth.

NPO 1c Eastern and Midland Region: around 320,000 additional people in employment, i.e. 1.34 million in total;

NPO 2a A target of half (50%) of future population and employment growth will be focused in the existing five Cities and their suburbs.

NPO 5 Develop cities and towns of sufficient scale and quality to compete internationally and to be drivers of national and regional growth, investment and prosperity.

NPO 11 In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.

5.2 Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy (RSES)

There are three regional assemblies in Ireland, namely; the Southern, Eastern and Midlands and Northern and Western regions. These regional assemblies have a primary function to identify regional policies and coordinate initiatives that support the delivery of national planning policy. The primary driver for this, is the implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES). The RSES provides regional level strategic planning and economic policy in support of the implementation of the NPF and provides a greater level of focus around the NPOs and NSOs of the NPF.

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) sets out a framework to direct future growth of the region over the medium to long term.

The RSES is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape the future development of the region to 2031 and beyond. Navan is identified as a Key Town in the RSES. Key towns are defined as ‘*Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres.*’

The RSES has identified 5 strategic employment sites within the county, one being Navan (IDA Business & Technology Park). The selected sites reflect those areas with the highest incidence of outbound commuting combined with a high-quality skill set profile.

Navan's designation as a Key Town presents a unique opportunity for the town to grow on a sustainable platform of regeneration assisted by multi-modal access.

It is a key principal of the strategy to;

RPO 4.46: Key Towns shall act as economic drivers and provide for strategic employment locations to improve their economic base by increasing the ratio of jobs to workers.

The RSES fully supports the Council's approach to economic development which established the central importance of 'live work' communities as a panacea to positively manage the extent of outbound commuting from the Mid-East.

5.3 Meath County Development Plan, 2021-2027

County Development Plans are the most important Corporate policy document produced by any Local Authority. These plans have significant citizen input and set out a Council's development priorities over a 6-year period in the context of the National Development Plan, National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 22 September 2021 and took effect on 03 November 2021. Further details can be accessed at: www.meath.ie.

The County Development Plan (CDP) sets out the following vision:

'To continue to support the creation of socio-economically progressive vibrant, dynamic, and healthy communities throughout the County and ensure that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development that delivers a high -quality living and working environment that meets the needs of all residents, in accordance with National and Regional Guidance.'

Chapter 4 sets out the Council's economic strategy. This seeks to rebalance the provision of jobs so that residents of Navan have access to opportunities for employment within easy distance from their homes, thereby reducing levels of commuting in the area as a whole. The IDA Business and Technology Park within Navan is a key strategic employment sites identified by the CDP. These lands have the potential to accommodate both people and product intensive economic activity including E1 High Technology – knowledge orientated services and manufacturing.

ED OBJ 24: *'To promote the Key Town of Navan as a primary centre of employment in the County so that its significant residential population will have employment opportunities within easy distance of their homes, thereby reducing outbound commuting.'*

ED OBJ 30: *'To promote the further development of the Navan IDA Business & Technology Park as one of the strategic sites for economic investment in Meath as identified in the Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022.'*

Chapter 11 contains details of the development management standards and land use zoning objectives. The following are considered the most relevant objectives.

General Standards applicable to all Development Types

Energy Efficiency

'The Council's approach to encouraging gains in energy efficiency is based on the following concepts:

- Focus on compact sustainable growth as set out in the National Planning Framework;*
- Increased energy efficiency in the design of buildings,*
- Increased promotion of sustainable mobility measures in order to achieve significant future reductions in energy demands.'*

DM POL 2: *'Appropriate energy conservation strategies should be employed in location, design, mass, orientation and the choice of materials of all new and renovated developments.'*

DM OBJ 5: *'Building design which minimises resource consumption, reduces waste, water and energy use shall be incorporated where possible, in all new and renovated developments.'*

DM OBJ 6: *'Building design shall maximise natural ventilation, solar gain and daylight, where possible, all new and renovated developments.'*

DM OBJ 7: *'Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) measures are required to form part of the design of all developments.'*

Access for all

DM OBJ 8: *'The Council will seek to encourage the implementation of best practice standards with regard to access in both indoor and outdoor environments.'*

Public Lighting

DM POL 3: *'All public lighting proposals shall be in accordance with the Councils Public Lighting Technical Specification & Requirements, June 2017, and the Council's Public Lighting Policy, December 2017, (or any updates thereof).'*

DM OBJ 9: *'A separation distance of 5 metres between the lighting column and the outside of the crown is required for the lighting to work as designed. Trees or vegetation shall not be planted within 7 metres of a public light column.'*

DM OBJ 10: *'The design of all new developments shall take into consideration the layout of the proposed public lighting column locations and the proposed landscape design. Both layouts should achieve the 7 metres separation between all trees and public lighting columns.'*

Trees and Hedgerows

Trees and Hedgerows are an important consideration with all developments, and it is considered that the retention of trees and hedgerows should be considered as part of any relevant planning application. (Please refer to policies contained in Section 8.9.7 Woodlands, Hedgerows and Trees in this regard).

DM OBJ 11: *'Existing trees and hedgerows of biodiversity and/or amenity value shall be retained, where possible.'*

Site Coverage

Site coverage standards seek to avoid adverse effects of over-development particularly in urban areas thereby safeguarding sunlight and daylight within or adjoining a proposed layout of buildings. Site coverage relates to the percentage of the development site covered by buildings and structures (excluding the public roads and footpaths) and is calculated by dividing the total area of ground covered by buildings by the total ground area within the site.

DM OBJ 16: *'Site coverage shall generally not exceed 80%. Higher site coverage may be permissible in certain limited circumstances such as adjacent to public transport corridors; to facilitate areas identified for regeneration purposes; and areas where an appropriate mix of both residential and commercial uses is proposed.'*

Building Height

The Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines (2018) require that Development Plans identify and provide policy support for specific geographic locations where increased building height is a fundamental policy requirement. In this regard in accordance with SPPR1 of the Guidelines, the following locations have been identified as suitable to accommodate increased building height in the County:

- Dunboyne at both Dunboyne Central and Pace rail stations,
- Maynooth Environs,
- Drogheda Environs,
- Navan

DM OBJ 25: *'To require development with increased building height at the following locations;*

- *Dunboyne Central rail station*
- *Pace Rail Station*
- *Maynooth Environs*
- *Drogheda Environs*
- *Navan*

In all cases all proposals for buildings in excess of 6 stories at these locations shall be accompanied by a statement demonstrating compliance with the Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), or any updates thereof.'

Boundary Treatment

DM POL 9: *'To support the retention of field boundaries for their ecological/habitat significance, as demonstrated by a suitably qualified professional. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, mitigation by provision of the same boundary type will be required.'*

Employment Development Standards

DM OBJ 61: *Any Planning application for industrial, office, warehousing and Business Park Development shall address the following development assessment criteria:*

- *To require innovative contemporary designs for new industrial, office, warehousing and business park developments.*
- *External finishes shall be suitable for the local/natural landscape*

- *That indicative site coverage for industrial/commercial development on greenfield sites is 50% coverage unless the design characteristics of the scheme, proposed uses and mobility management plan indicate support for higher coverage.*
- *In town centre locations, in order to encourage and facilitate the development of a compact town centre, and to achieve desirable massing and heights of buildings, plot ratio and site coverage of 1.5 and 70% respectively will generally be the norm.*
- *To require that full details of the proposed use(s), including industrial processes involved are provided.*
- *To require that full details of the hours of operation be provided.*
- *To require that details of suitable access arrangements, internal roads layout including details of footpaths, turning areas, loading bays be provided.*
- *Boundaries which are visible from the public road should be of a high architectural quality. Palisade fencing to the front of any building line shall not be permitted.*
- *The use of retention ponds as an urban design feature within business parks will be encouraged to enhance the setting, subject to compliance with all relevant safety requirements.*
- *To require that proposals for and location of onsite areas for storage and disposal (if applicable) of waste be provided as part of any planning application. All external storage including bin storage, oil tanks, etc, shall be visually screened from public areas.*
- *To require that waste and recycling areas be covered, screened and enclosed from public view and wind, compliant with the Council's Waste Management Strategy.*
- *All over ground oil, chemical storage tanks should be adequately bunded to protect against spillage.*
- *To require that a survey of any existing vegetation onsite and a suitable landscaping scheme prepared by an appropriately qualified professional, taking account of same, be submitted as part of any planning application to enhance the development.*
- *Open space shall be provided in suitable locations as part of the development in order to enhance the development and provide amenity and passive recreation for future employees.*
- *To require that all significant Industrial, Office, Warehousing and Business Park Development incorporate works of public art in the form of outdoor sculptures, special architectural and landscape features or other appropriate art work in the development.*
- *To require that all planning applications for Industrial, Office, Warehousing and Business Park Development on sites in excess of 0.5 hectares are accompanied by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).*

- *To require that all new developments with over 100 employees shall have a Mobility Management Plan.*
- *To encourage the provision of supporting facilities for employees including childcare facilities, leisure uses and coffee shops in business parks.*
- *To encourage research and development activities as an ancillary part of all new and existing business parks in the County in conjunction with 3rd level Institutions.'*

Light and Overshadowing

Daylight and sunlight levels should, generally, be in accordance with the recommendations of Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice (B.R,209,2011), and any updates thereof.

Car Parking

DM OBJ 89: *'Car parking shall be provided in accordance with Table 11.2 and associated guidance notes.*

Offices – 1 per 25sq.m. gross floor area. where the floor area exceeds 1,500sq.m gross floor area, 1 space per 50sq.m. gross floor area. '

The standards set out in Table 11.2 shall apply to all new developments, be it new construction or a new extension or a material change of use of existing buildings.

Accessible car parking spaces shall be provided at a minimum rate of 5% of the total number of spaces, for developments requiring more than 10 car parking spaces, with a minimum provision being one space (unless the nature of the development requires otherwise). Such spaces shall be proximate to the entry points of buildings and comply with the requirements of the building regulations.

Age Friendly car parking spaces should generally be provided, where possible, in all developments;

DM OBJ 90: *'The dimension of parking bays shall comply with table 11.3'*

Table 11.3 Car Parking Bays

Parking dimensions (Perpendicular to Kerb)	5.0m x 2.5m
Where space is adjacent to a wall or other obstruction	5.0m x 2.75m
Parking dimensions (Parallel to Kerb)	6.0m x 2.5m
Accessible Parking Bay to comply with Building Regulations.	5.0m x 2.5m + 1.2m to the sides and rear of each space
Loading Bay	6.0m x 3.0m
Circulation Aisles	6.0m in width

EV Charging Points

- DM OBJ 94:** *‘All car parks shall include the provision of necessary wiring and ducting to be capable of accommodating future Electric Vehicle charging points, at a rate of 20% of total space numbers.*
- DM OBJ 95:** *‘In any car park in excess of 20 spaces where public access is available, four fully functional charging points for Electric Vehicles shall be provided in accordance with IEC 61851 Standard for Electric Vehicle Conductive Charging Systems.’*

Cycling Parking

The council will require an appropriate amount of cycle parking facilities to be provided with new development.

- DM OBJ 96:** *To require the provision of cycle parking facilities in accordance with the Design Standards for New Apartments (March 2018) and Table 11.4 Cycle Parking Standards.*
- DM OBJ 97:** *Cycle parking facilities shall be conveniently located, secure, easy to use, adequately lit and well sign posted. All long-term (more than three hours) cycle racks shall be protected from the weather.*
- DM OBJ 98:** *To establish and implement Cycle Parking Standards for new developments in the county.*

As stated in Table 11.4 Cycle Parking Standards for office development is 10% of employee numbers subject to minimum of 10 bicycle places or one bile space for every car space, whichever is the greater.

5.3.1 Zoning

The site has an E1 – Strategic Employment Zones (High Technology Uses) land use zoning 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 generation activity with associated commercial development located adjacent to or in close proximity to high frequency public transport corridors. This will apply to suitable lands in Navan, Drogheda, Dunboyne, Maynooth Environs, Kells, Trim, Ashbourne, Enfield and Laytown.

Permitted Uses

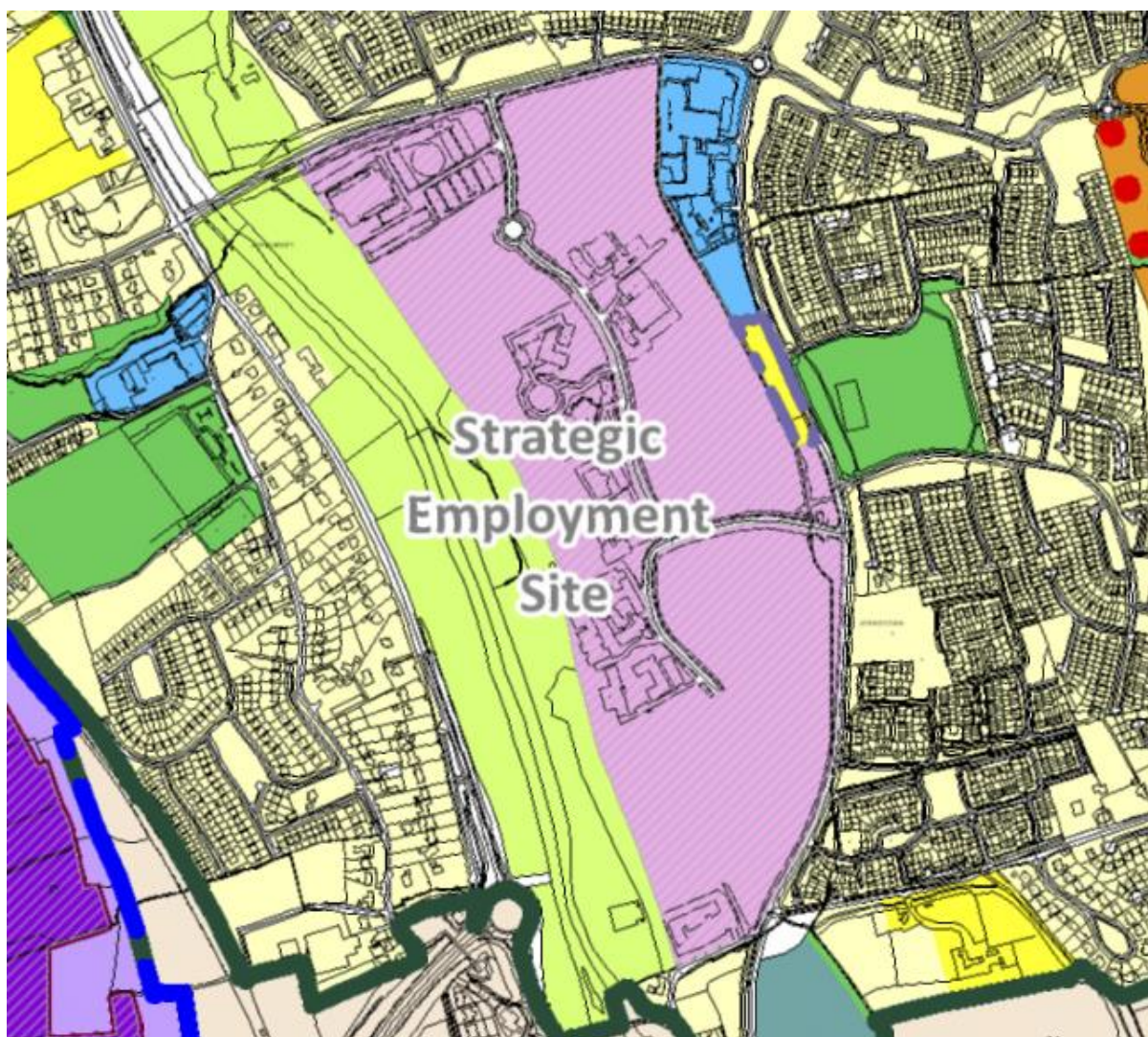
Bio Technology manufacturing, Cell centres, Childcare Facility, Convenience Outlet, Café, Leisure facilities, Data Centres, Green/ Clean Light Industries, Education (third level) High Technology Manufacturing, Information Communication Technologies, International and National Traded Services, Knowledge Based Economic Development, Offices 100 to 1,000sq.m, Offices > 1,000sq.m, Medical and Related Uses (includes Hospital), Research & Development, Science & Technology Based Enterprise, Telecommunication Structures, Utilities, Public Park.

Open for Consideration Uses

Conference/Event Centre, Education, Enterprise/ Training Centre, Hotel / Aparthotel, Industry – Light, Transport Depot / Logistics, Warehousing.

Uses which are 'open for consideration' or not identified as 'permitted' under the E1 zoning objective will only be considered where they do not comprise the objective of the overall zoning objective of E1 lands, as a strategic employment zone for high technology uses.'

The proposed development is compliant with the E1 land use zoning objective as set out above.



Land use zoning map (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)

Navan Written Statement Volume 2, CDP

NAV OBJ 7 'To promote Navan as the primary centre for enterprise and employment in the County.'

NAV OBJ 8 'To promote the further development of the Navan IDA Business & Technology Park as one of the key strategic sites for employment in Meath as identified in the Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022 for County Meath.'

5.3.2 Cultural Heritage

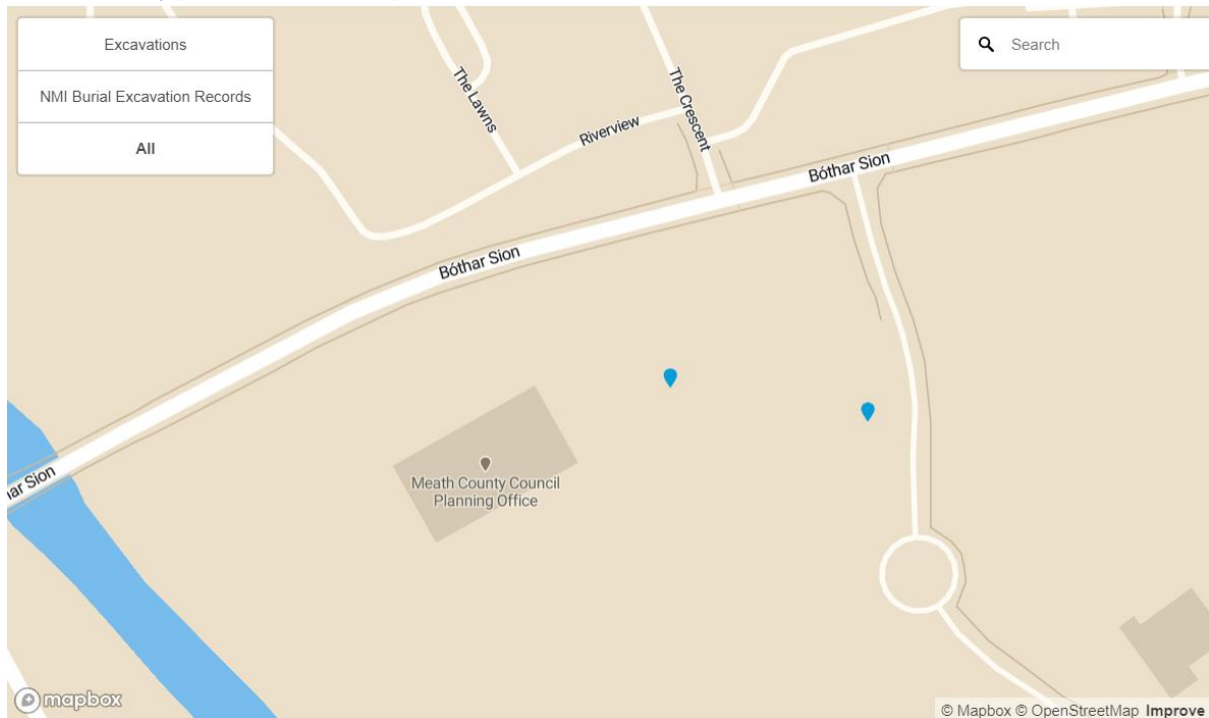
The application site is not located within or near an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). There are no protected structures on or adjacent to the application site.

5.3.3 Archaeology

The site was subject to large-scale archaeological investigations in 2007 as part of planning application, NA/60537. The site incorporates an archaeological complex, ME025-049, which consists of three souterrains, a fourth possible souterrain and several large contemporary ditches which were

excavated by Carleton Jones (on behalf of Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd) in 1999. Excavation was also carried out by Melanie McQuade (Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd) in 2006, in an area directly to the east of the current site. The results from this excavation yielded evidence for multi-period settlement which was characterised by a series of cooking pits, a large sub-rectangular ditched enclosure, the remains of three structures, a circular enclosure and several other pits and linear ditch features. Dating evidence indicates that there were four phases of occupation on the site dating to the Final Neolithic/Early Bronze Age, Bronze Age and early medieval periods.

[Excavations Map \(Source excavations.ie\)](#)



The application is accompanied by an archaeological report which sets out details of previous excavations at this location. The report concludes that *'The presumed archaeological impact of the Buvinda House project is considered to be minimal. Presumably most of the services can be accommodated within the 0.70m (minimum) deep soils that overlie any archaeological remains. However, where works are predicted to go down below 0.70m where they are not within the zone of the previous quarry pit then these will require archaeological monitoring.'*

Archaeological monitoring requirements as set out in this report will be carried out in full.

5.3.4 View & Prospects

A list of the protected views and prospects proximate to the site are detailed overleaf.



Identified views & Prospects (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)

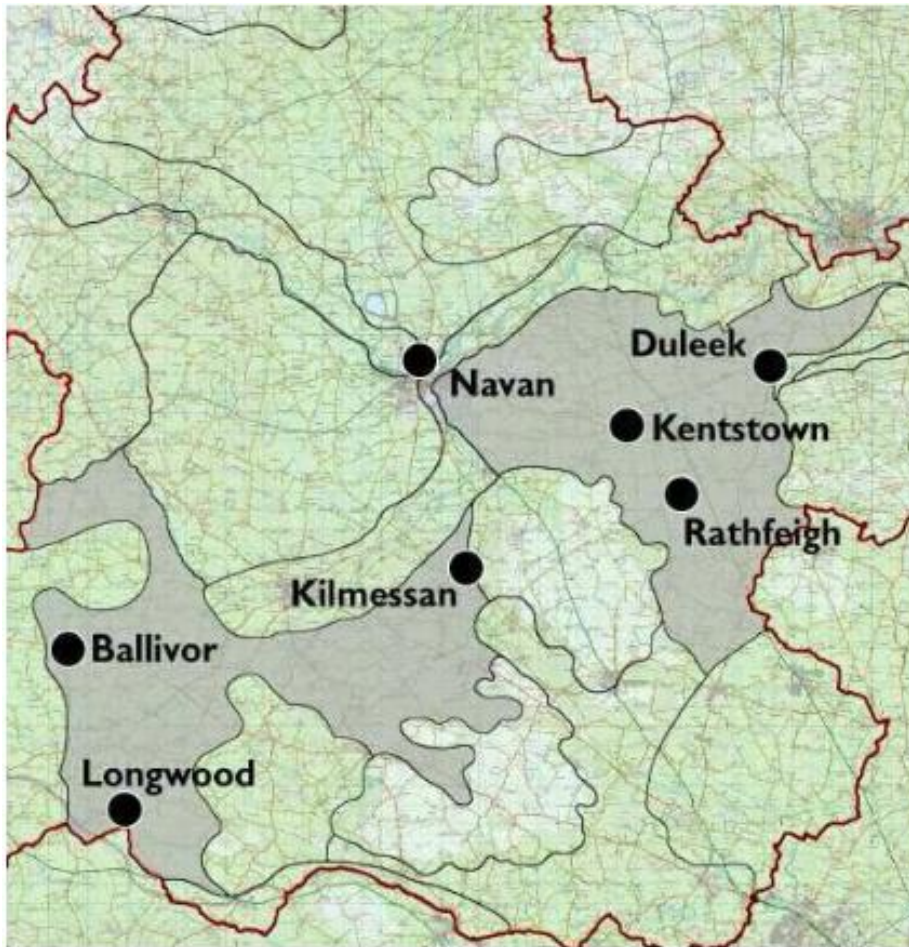
Description of identified Views & Prospects (Source Meath CDP 2021-2027)

View Ref. No.	Location	Description	Significance
33	At Proudstown Crossroads on R162	Extensive eastward view to distant location across settled landscape. Dense urbanisation on right hand side of view. More open but still undeveloped left-hand side.	Local
38	At Carne Hill on county road to north of Casey's Crossroads on R153	Southwest view to very distant horizon across settled landscape with visual settlement, infrastructure, and housing on the outskirts of Navan.	Local
39	At Johnstown on county road to south of Casey's Crossroads on R153	Extensive view to north-east across working landscape with visible infrastructure (powerline, major road) and scattered residential development.	Local
40	On road to south of Cannistown Church and M3	Extensive view mainly to southeast and south over settled landscape with infrastructure (motorway), powerlines, playing fields and houses.	Local

The proposed development will not have an adverse impact on any of these protected views.

5.3.5 Landscape Character Assessment

The application site is located within the LCA 6 Central Lowlands in the Meath LCA.



LCA 6 Central Lowlands, (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)

This LCA extends over a large land area and includes the western edge of Navan. The landscape characteristics are as follows:

Landscape Value: High

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

Landscape Importance: Regional

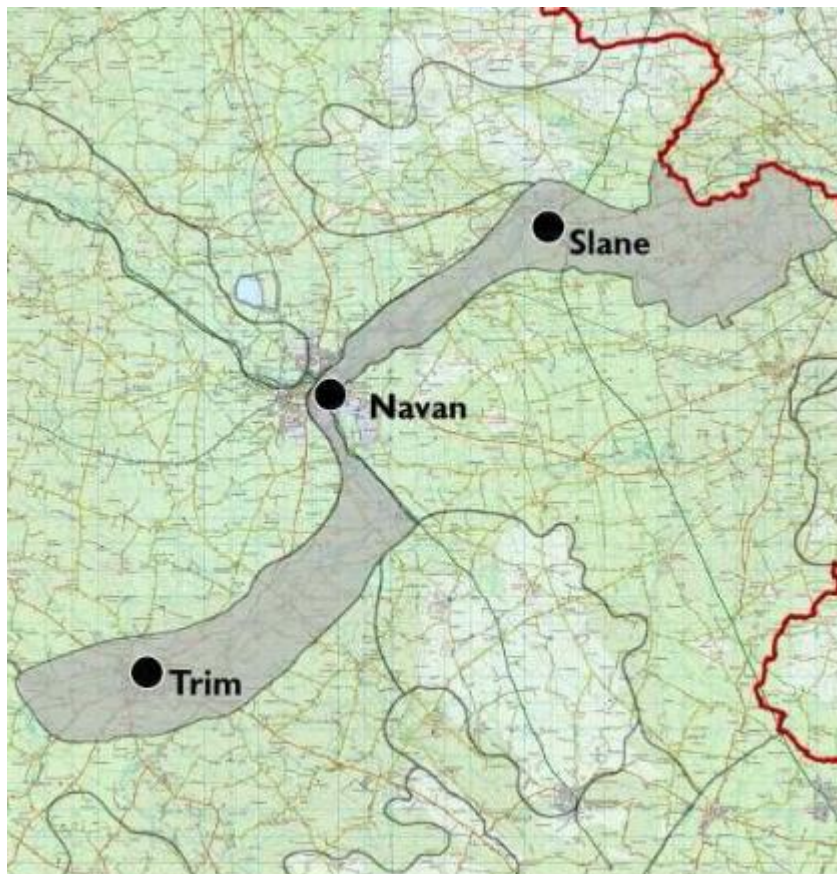
The site abuts LCA 5 Boyne Valley, the landscape characteristics are as follows:

Landscape Value: Exceptional

Landscape Sensitivity: High

Landscape Importance: International

The key settlements in this LCA are southern fringes of Navan, Trim and Slane.

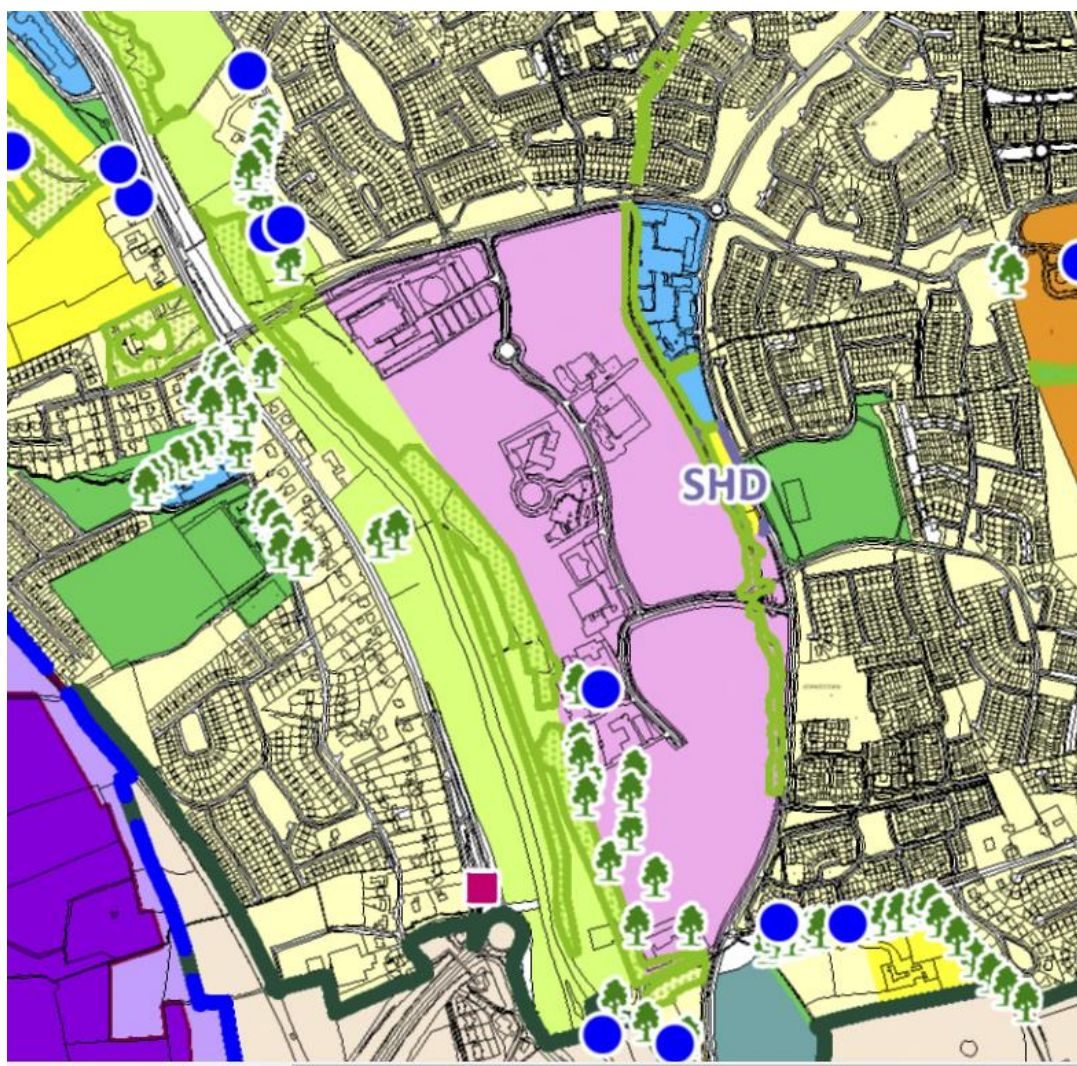


LCA 5 Boyne Valley (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)






5.3.6 Tree Preservation

The CDP has identified series of trees or groupings of trees as being of particular importance or value to an area. As a means of protecting these area of planting, Tree Preservations Orders (TPOs) have been made for a number of sites.

There are no trees within the site or the immediate surrounding areas that are subject to statutory trees preservation orders in the current CDP.



Cultural and Natural Heritage

-  MCC Architectural Conservation Area
-  Stand of Trees to be Preserved
-  R - Record of Protected Structure
-  Trees to be Protected
-  Protected Views and Prospects

An arborist report accompanies the application which details that the existing northern planted boundary will be removed to facilitate fire tender access to the extended building. The existing boundary comprises of Oak, hornbeam, birch, ash, lime, willow, cherry and rowan in the early mature age class. The group of trees at the western boundary of the site and the trees at the main entrance will be unaffected by the proposed development. The impact on trees of the proposed development is shown on Arborist drawing TBUV001 102 Arboricultural Impact. Tree protection measures recommended for retained trees are shown on drawing TBUV001 103 Tree Protection. The application

is accompanied by a landscape plan for the development site area. These details the proposed replanting of the northern site boundary with a combination of 30 larger trees and whips. The existing oak trees within the northern site boundary will be removed and relocated elsewhere with the overall lands prior to the commencement of construction, the landscape plan suggests that these be relocated to the west of the extension.

NORTH BOUNDARY PLANTING MIX

LARGER TREES :

12no. *Quercus Robur* 18-20cm girth

overall ht.2.5m

8no. feathered *Betula pubescens*

multistems rootballed

10no. *Pinus sylvestris*, 3m high,

rootballed

WHIP PLANTINGS:

Mixture of (1=1) whips at 1.5 plants

/ m²

(10%) *Rosa canina*,

(20%) *Crataegus monogyna*

(5%) *Prunus spinosa*

(10%) *Corylus avellana*

(5%) *Ilex aquifolium*

(20%) *Viburnum opulus*

(30%) *Quercus robur*

Planting schedule for northern boundary as set out in the landscape plan.

A landscaped courtyard is proposed between the existing building and the extension, this also accommodates an outdoor meeting area. The landscaping plan provides details of the proposed planting for this area.

5.3.7 Flooding

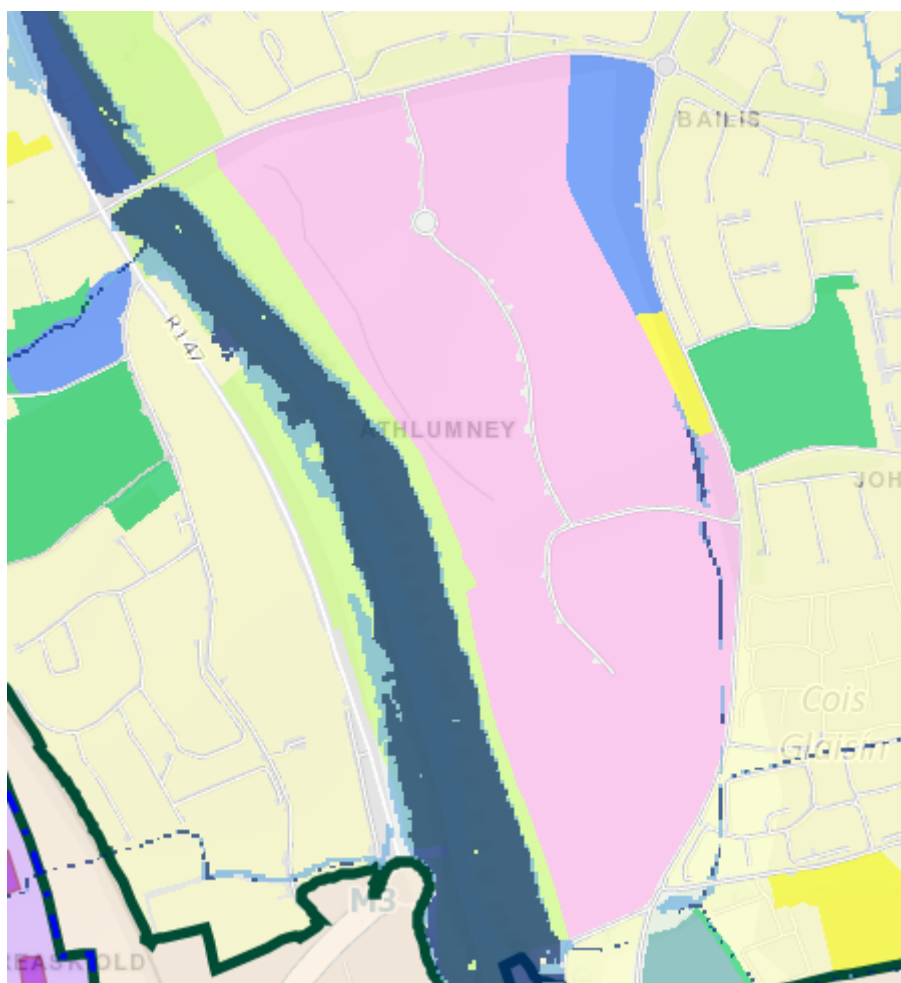
The CDP states that planning applications will be assessed in accordance with 'The Planning and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities'. It notes that 'The Council will ensure that only developments consistent with the overall policy and technical approaches of these Guidelines will be approved and permission may be refused where flood issues have not been, or cannot be, addressed successfully and where the presence of unacceptable residual flood risks to the development, its occupants or users and adjoining property remains.' The policies in respect of flooding include:

INF POL 18: *'To have regard to the "Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoEHLG/OPW, 2009) through the use of the sequential approach and application of the Justification Tests for Development Management and Development Plans, during the period of this Plan.'*

INF POL 20: *'To ensure that a flood risk assessment is carried out for any development proposal, where flood risk may be an issue in accordance with the "Planning System and Flood Risk Management –*

Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoECLG/OPW, 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to the potential development.’

The proposed development site is located in Flood Zone C. This zone 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).

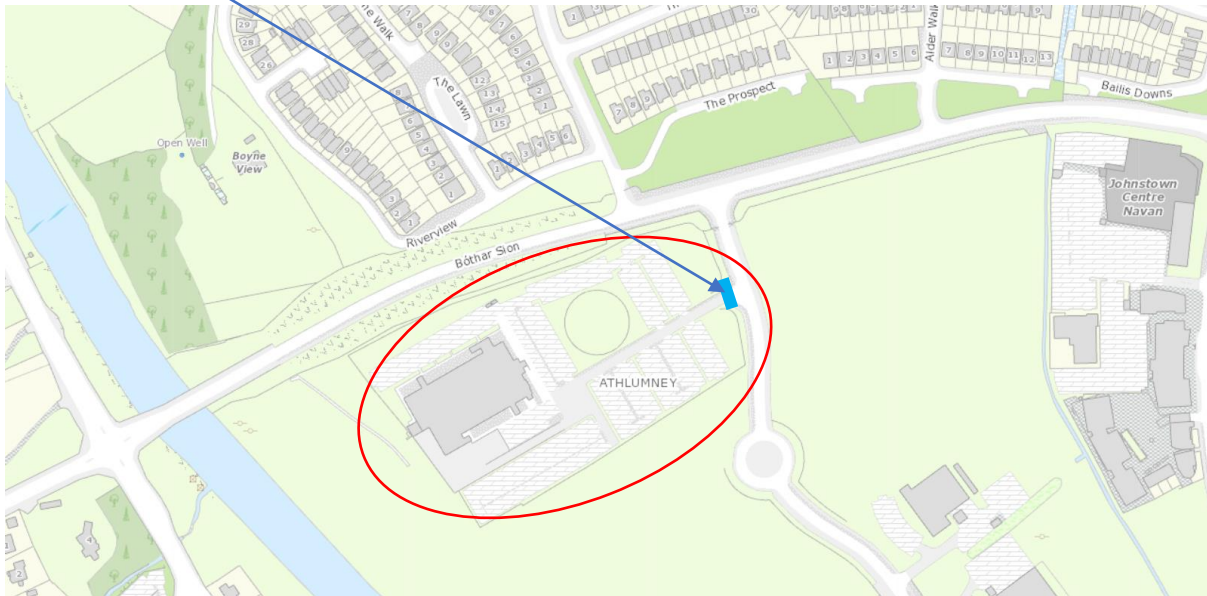


Strategic flood risk assessment (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)

Section 6 Access

The application is accompanied by a traffic statement prepared by Punch and Partners. The development will use the existing entrance off the access road within the IDA Business Park.

Existing Entrance



The existing entrance has sufficient capacity to cater for existing and proposed traffic predicted to be generated by the extended office.

The Council headquarters has a car park of 518 no. spaces, permitted by NA/60537. 130 car parking spaces will be removed to facilitate the extension therefore 389 spaces will remain. As set out in section 5 above the CDP requires car parking provision at a rate of 1 per 50sqm of office space where the building exceeds 1,500sqm, the existing office plus extension will have a floor area of 10,930 sqm, thus generating a requirement for 218 spaces.

The site is served by 48 existing cycle parking spaces. The development proposal includes the retention of 8 of these spaces with 40 to be relocated. A secure staff cycle parking area which will accommodate 54 spaces is proposed to the western side of the building which is proximate to the staff shower facilities available in the basement of the existing building. 12 new public cycle parking spaces are proposed, 6 adjacent to the new pedestrian entrance proposed as part of this application.

The Council's Active Travel unit is implementing a programme of sustainable travel measures including increased provision of dedicated cycling facilities in Navan. Buvinda House enjoys the benefits of an excellent bus service with both local and regional bus services available from the bus stops beside the entrance to the business park on Bóthar Sion. The local service connects with the Kennedy Plaza bus interchange (Navan Town Centre) which facilitates onward travel throughout the hinterland and county (Flexi bus, Bus Eireann services). There are existing designated cycle lanes on Bóthar Sion and Metges Road which will connect to proposed cycle lanes along the R147 thus connecting Johnstown to the town centre. The IDA business park road is traffic calmed and can accommodate cyclists. The application is accompanied by a mobility management plan prepared by Punch and Partners which sets out the measures proposed to encourage use of sustainable travel options. The Council has a

Smarter Travel Workplace co-ordinator in place who would likely be suitable to assume the role of MMP co-ordinator for the proposed development.

Section 7 Site Services

An Engineering planning report has been prepared by Punch and Partners. The proposed development will be served by an extension of the water supply and wastewater network which serves the existing building. There is a foul pumping station located to the south of the existing building which requires additional storage capacity to cater for the extension. This forms part of this application. The development will connect to the existing water supply network. A confirmation of feasibility of these proposals has been received from Irish Water, a copy of which is submitted with the application documentation.

Surface water from the existing building is currently attenuated into an existing underground tank to the north west of the site and then discharged to the River Boyne. This tank will be replaced with a larger tank as part of this development which will cater for surface water from the existing building and the proposed extension. The existing surface water flow is controlled by hydro brake, a new hydro brake is proposed. Suds measures will be incorporated as detailed in the engineering report, therefore surface water flow from existing and proposed development combined will not exceed that of the existing development. No alterations are proposed to the existing outfall to the River Boyne.

Section 8 Environmental Assessments

A stage one and stage two Appropriate Assessment has been prepared by Forest, Environmental Research and Services Ltd. (Fers). The NIS concludes as follows:

‘Following the identification of a potential impact(s) upon one or more Natura 2000 sites through an Appropriate Assessment Screening exercise, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the proposed development has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC). The information to enable the Competent Authority to perform its statutory function in this regard is presented within this NIS.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, and applying the precautionary principle, it is the professional opinion of the authors of this report that there will be no adverse impacts (including cumulative and/or residual) on the integrity of any of relevant Natura 2000 sites, assuming the implementation of all mitigation/preventative measures as outlined. Consequently, there will be no risk of adverse effects on Qualifying Interest habitats or species, nor the attainment of specific conservation objectives, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, for the relevant Natura 2000 sites. The ecological integrity of the Natura 2000 sites concerned (connected with qualifying interests for which the sites have been designated) will not be significantly impacted.’

An Ecological Impact Assessment, (EclA), has been prepared by Forest, Environmental Research and Services Ltd. (Fers) which includes assessment of potential impacts on bats, please refer to section 2.2.4.2 Bat surveys.

The EclA concludes that *'the proposed development will not have any significant negative ecological impacts, assuming mitigation measures are implemented, and the proposed development is undertaken in accordance with the Wildlife Act (1976) as Amended.'*

The EclA contains a number of recommendations regarding future habitat management at the site:

- *'In order to enhance the overall biodiversity and conservation significance of the site, it is recommended that a biodiversity and habitat management plan be drawn up and implemented such as to maximise benefits to local ecology – for example management of some grassland areas within the site such as to encourage the development of semi-natural grassland';*
- *An Alien Invasive Plant Control and Management Plan has been included as a component of the CEMP in order to ensure that species such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam or Giant Hogweed are not imported to the site during construction; '*
- *The River Boyne and adjacent habitats immediately adjacent to the proposed development are of high importance for bats. It is recommended that a Bat Conservation Management Plan be drawn up and implemented for the study area in order to ensure that any development within the study area is conducive to the continued use of the habitats by bats.'*
- *It is recommended that annual monitoring, to include a baseline assessment prior to construction, to include the River Boyne and habitats between the River Boyne and the proposed development site be undertaken in order to assess any potential impacts on the local bat population.'*

An Environmental Impact Assessment screening report of the proposed development has been prepared by Forest, Environmental Research and Services Ltd. (Fers). This report concludes, *'having regard to the criteria specified in Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as Amended); the context and character of the site and the receiving environment; the nature, extent, form, and character of the proposed development; this Environmental Impact Assessment Screening concludes that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report of the proposed development is not required.'*

Section 9 Conclusion

The proposed development is consistent with National, Regional and Local planning policies as set out above and gives effect to and facilitates the implementation of planning policy in the County Development Plan. The proposed development will provide a contemporary Council chamber and a vibrant and attractive office facility which will enhance the service provided by Meath County Council into the future.