



**Ashbourne Local Area Plan  
Amendment No. 1**

**Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment**

**30<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

## Contents

|            |  |           |
|------------|--|-----------|
| <b>1</b>   | <b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>1.1</b> | <b>Background.....</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>1.2</b> | <b>Aim of this Report.....</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2</b>   | <b>OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS .....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>2.1</b> | <b>Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 .....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>2.2</b> | <b>Scope of the LAP Amendment Process .....</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>2.3</b> | <b>Ashbourne – The Plan Area .....</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>3</b>   | <b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>3.1</b> | <b>Formal Guidance.....</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>3.2</b> | <b>Sources of Information Used.....</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>4</b>   | <b>SCREENING OF SITES .....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>4.1</b> | <b>Identification of Natura 2000 sites .....</b>   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>4.2</b> | <b>Reasons For Designation, Site Sensitivities And Threats .....</b>                           | <b>11</b> |
| <b>5</b>   | <b>IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS .....</b>                            | <b>13</b> |
| <b>5.1</b> | <b>Likely Significant effects in isolation and combination.....</b>                            | <b>13</b> |
| <b>5.2</b> | <b>Potential linkages between the Ashbourne LAP and European Sites.....</b>                    | <b>13</b> |
| <b>5.3</b> | <b>Ecological Network Supporting European Site Integrity .....</b>                             | <b>16</b> |
| <b>6.</b>  | <b>PROTECTIVE POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES IN THE MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013-2019 .....</b> | <b>16</b> |
| <b>7</b>   | <b>INTERACTION WITH OTHER PLANS .....</b>  | <b>17</b> |
| <b>8</b>   | <b>SCREENING CONCLUSIONS .....</b>   | <b>19</b> |
| <b>9</b>   | <b>REFERENCES.....</b>   | <b>19</b> |

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Meath County Council proposed to amend the 5 Local Area Plans for Ashbourne, Drogheda Southern Environs, Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace, Dunshaughlin and Dunshaughlin.

Proposed amendments to land use plans must undergo a formal “test” or “screening” to see if they would have likely significant effects on specific sites designated for their nature conservation importance. These sites are those designated under the European Commission’s Natura 2000 network of sites. These sites are designated on the basis of the presence of certain habitats and species that are deemed to be of international importance.

The EC Habitats and Birds Directives are the framework for the designation of these sites. The EC Habitats Directive requires the “screening” of plans and projects under Article 6(3). If the screening process results in a judgement that likely significant effects may occur or cannot be ruled out, then a more detailed ‘appropriate assessment’ (AA) is required. Whilst the structure of this assessment process is not laid down in law, there are guidance documents that are used to provide and indication of how this assessment may be carried out. This Report has been prepared in accordance with the national and international guidance.

In order to ensure that the proposed amended Local Area Plan complies fully with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and all relevant Irish transposing legislation (Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2011), Meath County Council appointed Brady Shipman Martin and Scott Cawley Ltd to prepare the relevant documentation to allow them to carry out the screening of the proposed amendments to see if they required an AA and carry out this assessment if required.

## 1.2 Aim of this Report

The aims of this report are to:

- to identify the Natura 2000 network within the “zone of influence” of the proposed amendments;
- to identify the linkages between the sensitivities of the individual European sites and the implications of the proposed amendments;
- to determine if the implementation of the proposed amendments could result in likely significant effects on the Natura 2000 sites in terms of impacts on their sensitivities (i.e. screening).

This Report will be used by Meath County Council to carry out their own AA Screening and to come to a conclusion as to the presence/absence of a risk of significant effects on the European sites.

## 2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

### 2.1 Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019

Meath County Council adopted the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and it took effect from 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013. The County Development Plan sets out a vision and an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County for a six-year period. It also sets out guiding policies and objectives for the development of the County in terms of physical growth and renewal, economic, social and cultural activity, and most critically for SEA, for protecting and enhancing local assets by preserving the quality of the landscape, open space, natural, architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage and material assets. The County Development Plan takes account of various national and regional strategies and guidelines and also reflects consultation with statutory bodies, the general public and other interested bodies.

### 2.2 Scope of the LAP Amendment Process

Meath County Council proposed to amend the 5 Local Area Plans for Ashbourne, Drogheda Southern Environs, Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace, Dunshaughlin and Dunshaughlin and placed these amendments on public display for a 6 week period.

This process follows on from the making of Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 in May of 2014, which introduced land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of lands (residential land evaluation) in the Ashbourne LAP area.

The introduction of the land use zoning objectives was required pursuant to the Core Strategy objectives contained in the adopted County Development Plan. The land use zoning objectives for the 5 urban centres (including Ashbourne) had previously been contained in their respective Local Area Plans. Variation No. 2 also included the introduction of policies and objectives for each urban centre following the undertaking of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan to inform same.

The Land Use Zoning Objectives and Map, together with the Additional Policies & Objectives and Residential Land Evaluation for the Ashbourne LAP area have already been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment as part of the making of Variation 2 to the Meath County Development Plan, May 2014.

Under Variation 2, the land use zoning objectives map identified the lands required to accommodate the household allocation required to meet the provisions under the Core Strategy. The land evaluation that took place for Ashbourne under Variation 2 is based on a sequential approach to urban expansion, which ensures that development will be directed in the first instance to lands closest to the town centre and adjacent to the built up area of the town. In this context, the requirement for any further release of residential zoned land in Ashbourne will be assessed following the making of the next County Development Plan in line with the population projections contained therein.

The proposed amendments to the 5 LAPs will now ensure that they are consistent with the Development Plan, as varied. The land use zoning objectives map for Ashbourne as included in the proposed amendments is replicated from Volume 5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 as introduced by Variation No. 2, referred to above. No changes to the land use zoning objectives can occur as part of this LAP amendment process.

Therefore, the objective of this amendment process is to ensure consistency between the Ashbourne Local Area Plan (and other 4 LAPs) and the County Development Plan, as varied.

The scope of the proposed amendments was to:

- *Update the narrative / commentary provided in each Local Area Plan to reflect the changes in policy direction contained in the 2013-2019 County Development Plan and 2010-2022 Regional Planning Guidelines (both of which have been adopted since the Local Area Plans were prepared and adopted in 2009), reflect the 2011 Census of Population results, and update school enrolment figures, etc.*
- *Amend the policy direction contained in each Local Area Plan to reflect the revisions to the land use zoning objectives and phasing (Order of Priority) now contained in the County Development Plan for each centre and any other amendment required to ensure consistency with the County Development Plan. This also relates to changes arising from the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan.*

The existing Ashbourne Local Area Plan 2009-2015 was subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment prior to its adoption. The current AA screening applied to the proposed amendments in isolation and also in the context of any changes that have occurred to the baseline environment since the previous AA Screening was undertaken.

In accordance with best practice in the Appropriate Assessment of plans, the screening stage is carried out prior to and during the final drafting of the objectives and policies. This is to allow the objectives and policies to be devised to take into account the relevant environmental safeguards that may be required to avoid posing an adverse impact on the Natura 2000 sites. The Screening Stage is therefore based upon the following documents:

- Land use zoning maps within current Local Area Plans;
- Policies and Objectives within current Local Area Plans;
- Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Reports for the Ashbourne Local Area Plan 2009-2015
- Natura Impact Report for the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.

A Screening Report was issued alongside the proposed Amendment No. 1 on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014. Submissions were then received on the proposed Amendment No.1 and a Chief Executive's report covering the submissions on all five Local Area Plans was published on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015. Proposed alterations to the Amendment were scrutinised for the need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment.

The proposed alterations comprised the following:

- SS OBJ 7: Alteration of objective in relation to the range of uses which are considered permissible.
- Strategic Policy SP (iii): Inclusion of new objective in relation to extant planning permissions.
- INF POL 9: Correct date of publication of NRA Guidelines.
- INF POL 20: Inclusion of new sentence at end of existing policy in relation to water supply. Reference to Irish Water and revised role of MCC also made to the existing policy.
- INF POL 22: Minor amendment in relation to referring to the role of Irish Water.
- INF POL 25: Inclusion of new sentence at end of existing policy in relation to water supply.
- INF OBJ 14: Amendment in relation to referring to the role of Irish Water and their capital investment plans.

- INF POL 27: Minor change re. separate foul and surface water drainage systems.
- INF POL 29: Amendment to the policy in relation to the OPW Flood Guidelines.

No likely significant effects on European sites as a result of these alterations were identified and as such the Amendment was adopted on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2015. This Screening Report is published alongside the adopted amended LAP and is accompanied by an AA Screening Determination issued by Meath County Council, the competent authority in this case.

### 2.3 Ashbourne – The Plan Area

The current Local Area Plan (LAP) for Ashbourne, which was subject to AA Screening, dates from 2009. Subject to limitations set out under Sub-section 1.3 Scope of the LAP Amendment Process (above), Meath County Council now proposes to amend the LAP for Ashbourne. The boundary for the amended Local Area Plan is as provided on the land use zoning map for Ashbourne introduced to the County Development Plan via Variation No. 2 in May 2014.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Formal Guidance

The Screening stage has taken account of guidance contained in the following documents:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities.* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision).
- *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities.* Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10.
- *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2001); hereafter referred to as the EC Article 6 Guidance Document. The guidance within this document provides a non-mandatory methodology for carrying out assessments required under Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive.
- *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2000); hereafter referred to as MN2000.
- *Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC. Clarification of the Concepts of Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence.* Opinion of the European Commission (European Commission, January 2007).
- *Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans Under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive* (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011)

### 3.2 Sources of Information Used

Sources of information relied upon are listed below:

- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from [www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie)
- Online data available on Natura 2000 sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)
- Information on water quality in the area available from [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)
- Information on the River Basin Districts from [www.wfdireland.ie](http://www.wfdireland.ie)
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area available from [www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie)
- *Status of EU Protected Habitats in Ireland.* (National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2008)

- *The Status of Birds in Ireland: An Analysis of Conservation Concern 2008-2013* (Lynas et al, 2007)
- Relevant County Development Plans in neighbouring counties.

## **4 SCREENING OF SITES**

### **4.1 Identification of Natura 2000 sites**

In accordance with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government guidance (DoEHLG, 2010), an initial distance of 15km from Ashbourne was selected for consideration of Natura 2000 sites.

This distance was deemed to be sufficient to cover all likely significant effects which may arise from the implementation of the amendments on European sites. Spatial boundary data on the Natura 2000 network were extracted from the NPWS website on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014.

In addition to examining European sites, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) which fall within 15km of Ashbourne were also examined. Although NHAs and pNHAs do not form part of the Natura 2000 Network, they often provide an important supporting role to the network, particularly when it comes to fauna species which often do not obey site boundaries. For example, a pNHA/NHA that provides regular feeding grounds for a population of Golden Plover for which a separate site is designated as an SPA plays a role in the maintenance of the species at favourable conservation status for that SPA. In other words, in that example, in order to protect the Natura 2000 network it may also be important to protect the pNHA /NHA which provides a supporting role to it. There are however, NHAs and pNHAs that are designated for features that are not important at an international level and may not interact with the Natura 2000 network.

Only one European site falls within 15km of Ashbourne are listed in Table 1 below. Table 2 lists the non-Natura 2000 sites.

**Table 1: Natura 2000 sites found within 15km buffer zone.**

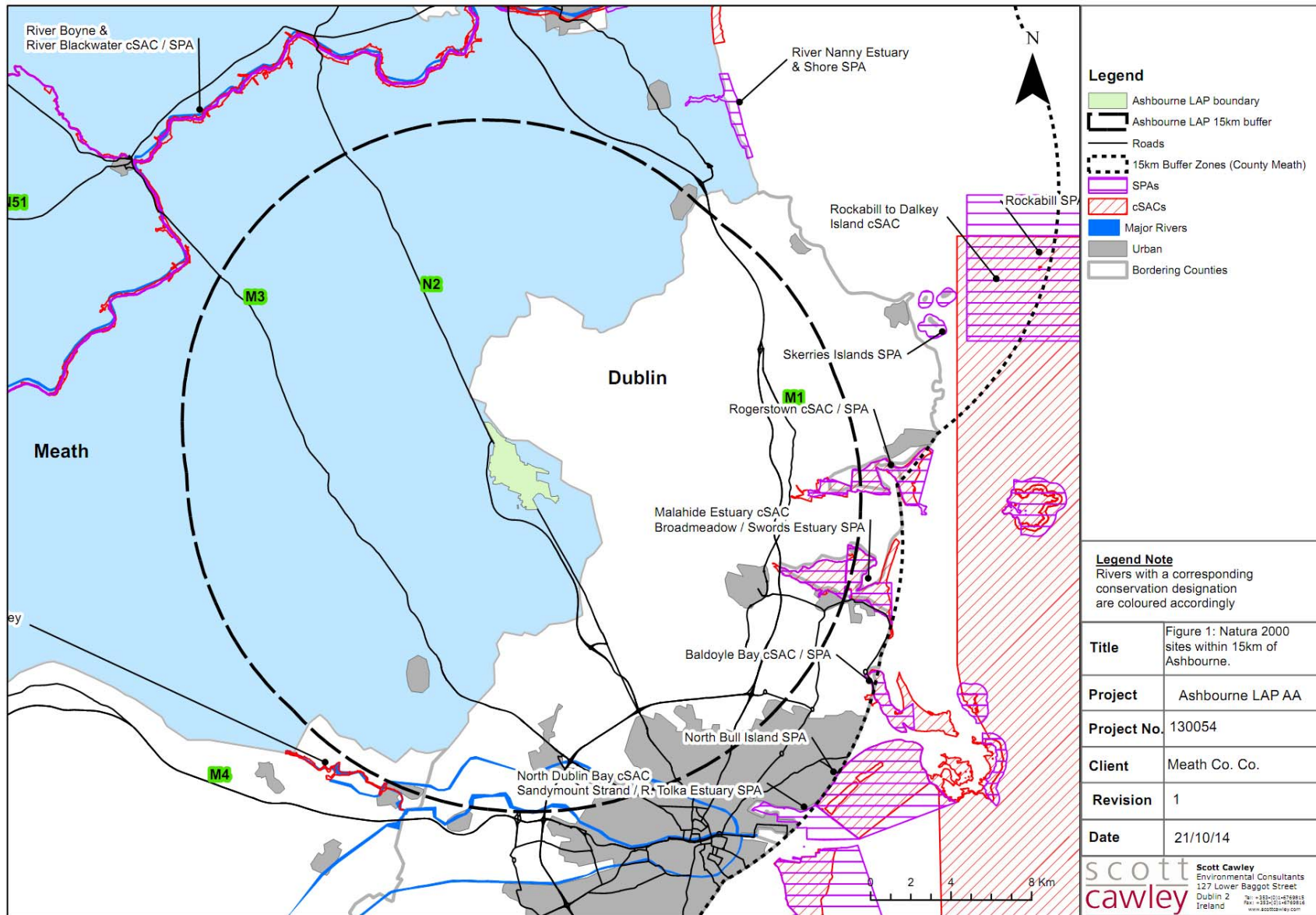
| Candidate Special Areas of Conservation | Special Protection Areas                       |
|---|--|
| Malahide Estuary                        | (Malahide Estuary)Broadmeadow / Swords Estuary |
| Rogerstown Estuary                      | Rogerstown Estuary                             |

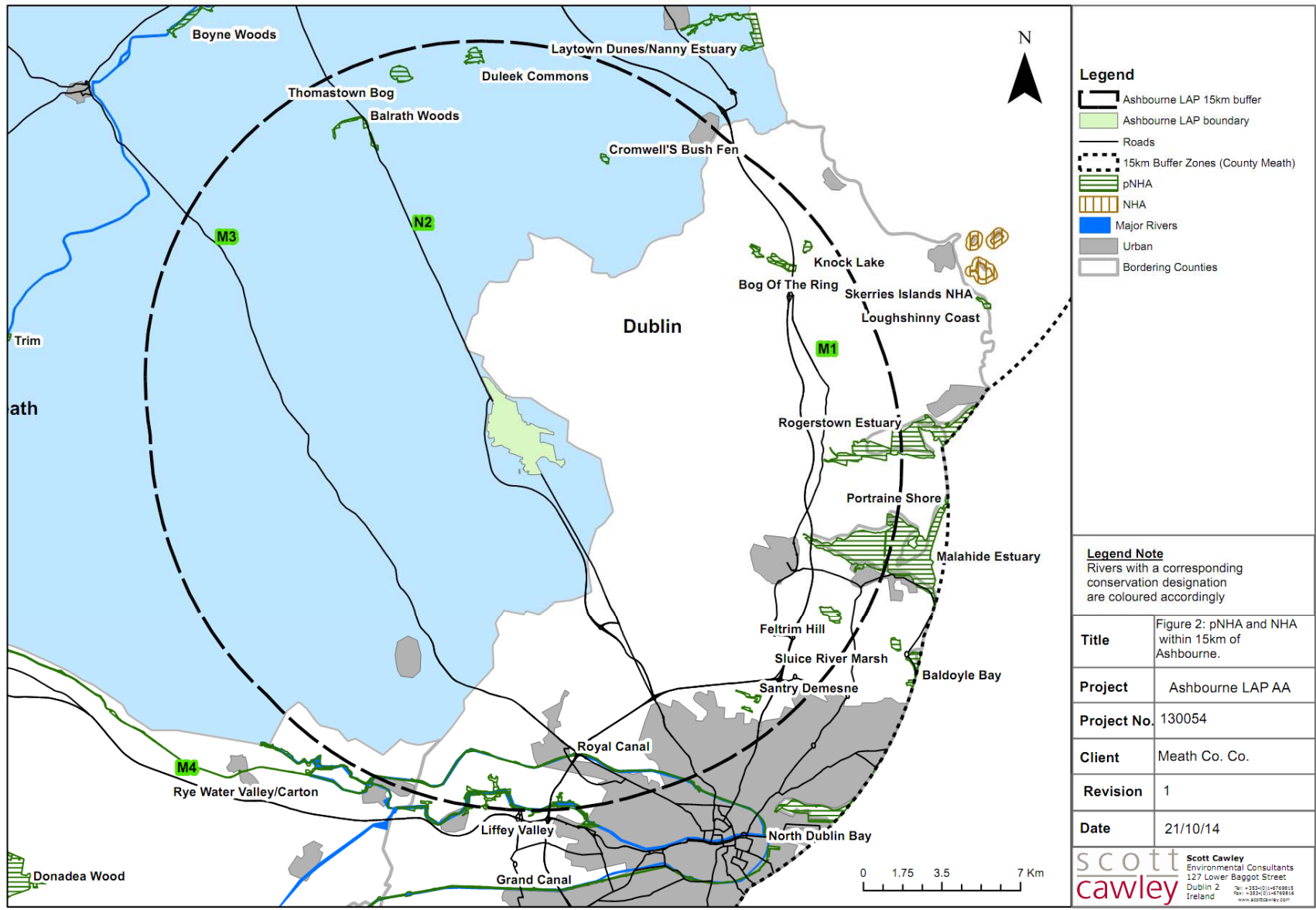
These European sites are presented on Figure 1.

**Table 2: Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas found within 15km buffer zone.**

| Proposed Natural Heritage Areas | Natural Heritage Areas |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Balrath Woods                   | <i>None</i>            |
| Cromwells Bush Fen              |                        |
| Duleek Commons                  |                        |
| Royal Canal                     |                        |
| Thomastown Bog                  |                        |
| Bog of the Ring                 |                        |
| Knock Lake                      |                        |
| Rogerstown Estuary              |                        |
| Malahide Estuary                |                        |
| Feltrim Hill                    |                        |
| Rye Water Valley/Carton         |                        |
| Santry Demesne                  |                        |







## 4.2 Reasons For Designation, Site Sensitivities And Threats

In order to identify those sites that could be potentially affected, it was necessary to describe the European site in the context of why it has been designated (i.e. its “Qualifying Interests”) and the environmental and ecological conditions that maintain the condition of these features. The Qualifying Interests and threats to the sites were extracted from the NPWS website database ([www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)). Threats to sites were also scoped during informal consultation with regional NPWS staff during the AA of the County Development Plan.

The results of this desktop exercise are presented in are listed in Table A1, Appendix A and illustrated in Figure 2a of the Meath County Development Plan Natura Impact Report, Volume IV. In order to identify those sites that could be potentially affected, it was necessary to describe the European Sites in the context of why it has been designated (its “Qualifying Interests”) and the environmental and ecological conditions that maintain the condition of these features. The Qualifying Interests and threats to the sites were extracted from the NPWS website database ([www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)) in 2012 and 2013 as part of the AA of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. The underpinning conditions that are required to maintain the ‘health’ of these features are listed in this table. Reference should be made to Appendix A to guide the reader. All European sites which fall within 15km of the County boundary are listed in Table 1, Volume IV and those that are within 15km of Ashbourne are duplicated below in Table 1 in this AA Screening Report. These sites are also displayed in Figure 2a, Volume IV of the NIS.

Table 3 presents the full list of qualifying interests that are contained within European sites located within 15km of the LAP. The underpinning conditions that are required to maintain the ‘health’ of these features are listed in this table.

**Table 3: Qualifying Interests in the relevant European sites and the underpinning environmental conditions.**

| Qualifying Interests  | Key environmental conditions supporting site integrity  |
|---|---|
| Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)   | Frequency of tidal submergence  |
| Bar-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa lapponica</i> )               | Food availability (intertidal fauna/pasture). Flooding regime of coastal grasslands. Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding areas. |
| Black-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa limosa</i> )                | Food availability (intertidal fauna/pasture). Flooding regime of coastal grasslands. Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding areas. |
| Estuaries   | Supply of riverine freshwater. Unimpeded tidal flow. Shelter from open coasts. Diverse invertebrate communities.                                |
| Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) | Low wind, weakly saline conditions in shelter of <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> dunes. Grazing.  |
| Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> )                | Food availability (intertidal fauna/pasture). Flooding regime of coastal grasslands. Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding areas. |
| Goldeneye ( <i>Bucephala clangula</i> )                     | Food availability (intertidal flora and fauna/pasture/cereal). Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding sites.                       |
| Great Crested Grebe ( <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> )           | Fish/crustacean/vegetation availability in shallow inshore/freshwaters. Undisturbed, ice-free marine/freshwater feeding grounds.                |
| Grey Plover ( <i>Pluvialis</i> )                            | Food availability (intertidal fauna/pasture). Flooding regime of coastal  |

| <b>Qualifying Interests</b>   | <b>Key environmental conditions supporting site integrity</b>   |
|---|---|
| <i>squatarola</i> )   | grasslands. Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding areas.  |
| Greylag Goose ( <i>Anser anser</i> )  | Food availability (intertidal aquatic vegetation/ pasture/ crops).<br>Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding sites. Grazing.       |
| Light-bellied Brent Goose ( <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> )                      | Food availability (intertidal aquatic vegetation/ pasture/ crops).<br>Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding sites. Grazing.       |
| Mediterranean salt meadows ( <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> )                       | Frequency of tidal submergence.   |
| Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide                      | Silt deposits in sheltered estuaries.   |
| Oystercatcher ( <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> )                                  | Food availability (intertidal fauna/pasture). Flooding regime of coastal grasslands. Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding areas. |
| Pintail ( <i>Anas acuta</i> )   | Food availability (intertidal flora and fauna/pasture/cereal).<br>Undisturbed freshwater/coastal roosting sites close to feeding sites.         |
| Red-breasted Merganser ( <i>Mergus serrator</i> )                               | Fish/crustacean prey availability in shallow inshore waters.<br>Undisturbed, ice-free marine/freshwater feeding grounds.                        |
| Redshank ( <i>Tringa totanus</i> )  | Food availability (intertidal fauna/pasture). Flooding regime of coastal grasslands. Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding areas. |
| Ringed Plover ( <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> )                                   | Food availability (intertidal fauna/pasture). Flooding regime of coastal grasslands. Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding areas. |
| Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand                            | Frequency of tidal submergence. Absence of erosion.   |
| Shelduck ( <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> )   | Food availability (intertidal flora and fauna/pasture/cereal).<br>Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding sites.                    |
| Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) | Supply of wind-blown sand.  |
| Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> )   | Food availability (interidal fauna/pasture). Flooding regime of coastal grasslands. Undisturbed coastal roosting sites close to feeding areas.  |
| Spartina swards ( <i>Spartinion maritimae</i> )                                 | Food availability (intertidal flora and fauna/pasture/cereal).<br>Undisturbed freshwater/coastal roosting sites close to feeding sites.         |

The key output of this stage was the identification of the types of threats to the integrity of the European sites. These can then be related to the consequences of implementing the proposed amendments to see if there is a risk of any likely significant effects.

The following generic threats to the European sites were identified and are listed below. It should be noted that many of these activities and their consequences would not be expected to result from the implementation of the proposed amendments (e.g. motorways) due to the nature of the proposed land uses and the geographic location of the settlements concerned.

#### **Rural/Agricultural activities**

- Agricultural Intensification;
- Fertilisation;
- Grazing, (undergrazing /overgrazing);
- Restructuring agricultural land holdings;
- Forestry (afforestation/deforestation);
- Stock Feeding;
- Drainage/flooding;
- Offshore/onshore aquaculture;

- Pesticides, and;
- Peat Extraction.

#### **Economic and Infrastructural Development**

- Golf Courses;
- Roads, motorways;
- Coastal protection works;
- Sewage outflows;
- Housing developments;
- Communications Networks;
- Quarries;
- Canalisation;
- Landfill land reclamation;
- Disposal of household waste;
- River Channel Maintenance, and;
- Invasive Alien Species.

#### **Recreation and Leisure**

- Walking, horse riding and non-motorised vehicles;
- Offshore motorised vehicles;
- Bait Digging, and;
- New Paths and Tracks.

The above list describes generic threats and does not take account of specific sensitivities at the European sites. Section 5 presents the impact types that are deemed to be relevant to the amendment of the Ashbourne Local Area Plan 2009-2015.

Consultation of the NPWS Natura 2000 data forms and liaison with regional staff allowed site-specific sensitivities to be identified. These site-specific sensitivities are presented in the following sections.

## **5 IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS**

### **5.1 Likely Significant effects in isolation and combination**

This section documents the final stage of the screening process. It used the information collected on the sensitivity of each Natura 2000 site and describes any likely significant effects of implementation of the proposed amendments. This assumes the absence of any controls, conditions or assumption of mitigation measures.

### **5.2 Potential linkages between the Ashbourne LAP and European Sites**

Table 4 identifies the sensitivities of the qualifying interests for the European sites that are within 15km of the Ashbourne Local Area Plan. It was clear that nearly all of the qualifying interests were influenced by changes to the aquatic environment and by the potential to give rise to increased recreational pressures.

Construction of the Ashbourne/Ratoath/Kilbride Sewerage Scheme-Stage 2 is complete and has approximately 8,000 p.e. available capacity to serve the combined settlements. The unprecedented level of development that has taken place in these areas in recent years has placed a huge strain on

the existing infrastructure. The new scheme will ensure that Meath County Council is equipped to cater for new development and the projected population while also meeting its obligations under EU Water Quality Regulations. The Killeland waste water treatment plant has been decommissioned and existing development at Churchfields is now connected to the public sewerage system. These measures are deemed adequate to remove any real risk of likely significant effects on the receiving waterbodies and European sites downstream.

Meath County Council is responsible for the provision of public water services in Ashbourne. Currently Ashbourne is served by the East Meath Regional Water Supply Scheme (East Meath RWSS). The river Boyne at Roughgrange is the main source for the East Meath RWSS. The water is treated at Staleen Waterworks and is distributed to the Ashbourne area via Windmill reservoir. The Ashbourne part of the scheme is augmented from a groundwater sources at Curraghera and more recently Rath. The commissioning of the Dunshaughlin water treatment plant in April 2012 has reduced the demand on the East Meath Regional Water Supply by c. 500cu.m/day hence freeing up capacity to help supply Ashbourne and Ratoath. Notwithstanding the foregoing and progress made in relation to water conservation measures, there is limited available capacity in the scheme (1,000 cu. m/day) and ensuring security of supply to Ashbourne is an ongoing challenge. The water treatment plant at Killeland has capacity of 1000cu.m/day which is sufficient to cater for existing residential development at Churchfields. Protective Policy WS SO7 in the Meath County Development Plan ensures that any additional loading on the water supply must undergo AA screening.

It is considered that subject to works adequate services will be available in terms of water supply to cater for the projected level of residential and commercial/industrial development over the plan period. The Water Services Programme 2010-2013 is likely to be superseded in future by a regional orientated investment programme overseen by Irish Water. Protective Policy WS SO7 in the Meath County Development Plan ensures that any additional loading on the water supply must undergo AA screening.

On the basis of this information regarding water supply and water treatment and discharge, it was concluded that there was no real risk of significant effects on the integrity of the European sites.

In Table 5, likely significant effects of the proposed amendments are presented both in isolation and potentially in combination with other plans.

**Table 4: Likely Significant Effects of implementing the proposed Amendments. (in absence of mitigation).**

| Site   | Potential Impacts arising from the proposed Amendments  | Is there a likely risk of a Significant Effect? | Other plans to be considered in Combination? <sup>1</sup>                     | Is there a risk of Significant Impact in combination? |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| <b>CANDIDATE SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION</b>             |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Malahide Estuary cSAC</b>                               | Indirect impacts due to increased levels of recreational activities unlikely given the range of policies and objectives promoting zoning of lands for recreation facilities in the existing LAP and distance (13km) to the coastal sites.   | No  | Fingal and other regional plans and strategies.                               | No  |
| <b>Rogerstown Estuary cSAC</b>                             | Indirect impacts due to increased levels of recreational activities unlikely given the range of policies and objectives promoting zoning of lands for recreation facilities in the existing LAP and distance (13km) to the coastal sites.   | No  | Fingal and other regional plans and strategies.                               | No  |
| <b>SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA</b>                             |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Rogerstown Estuary</b>                                  | Direct impacts on pNHA sites within Meath will be avoided and hence no consequences on population dynamics of birds (Shelduck, Black-tailed Godwit and others). Indirect impacts due to increased levels of recreational activities unlikely given the range of policies and objectives promoting zoning of lands for recreation facilities in the existing LAP and distance (13km) to the coastal sites. | No  | Fingal County Development Plan. River Basin Management Plans.                 | No  |
| <b>(Malahide Estuary)Broad meadow / Swords Estuary SPA</b> | Direct impacts on pNHA sites within Meath will be avoided and hence no consequences on population dynamics of birds (Shelduck, Black-tailed Godwit and others). Indirect impacts due to increased levels of recreational activities unlikely given the range of policies and objectives promoting zoning of lands for recreation facilities in the existing LAP and distance (13km) to the coastal sites. | No  | Dublin City and Fingal County Development Plan. River Basin Management Plans. | No  |

<sup>1</sup>This list is not considered to be exhaustive.

### 5.3 Ecological Network Supporting European Site Integrity

An analysis of the proposed Natural Heritage Areas and designated Natural Heritage Areas in terms of their role in supporting the species using European sites was undertaken. It was assumed that these supporting roles mainly related to mobile fauna such as mammals and birds which may use pNHAs and NHAs as “stepping stones” between Natura 2000 sites.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations 2011 place a high degree of importance on such non-Natura 2000 areas as features that connect the Natura 2000 network. Features such as ponds, woodlands and important hedgerows were taken into account during the rest of the AA process.

**Table 5: Other Ecological designations that may support the Natura 2000 network.**

| <b>Name of Proposed Natural Heritage Area/Natural Heritage Area.</b> | <b>Feature and Habitat Used by Feature</b>                           | <b>Natura 2000 Site potentially linked to the pNHA/NHA Supported</b>  |
|--|--|---|
| Royal Canal (002103)   | Narrow-mouthed and Desmoulin's Whorl Snails and emergent vegetation. | Rye Water cSAC (001398).  |
| Bog of the Ring (001204)   | Whooper Swan and lake/bog  | Lough Derravaragh SPA (004043)  |
|  | Golden Plover and bog  | South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (004024) & Broadmeadow/Swords Estuary SPA (004025) & Baldoyle SPA (004016) |

## 6. PROTECTIVE POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES IN THE MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013-2019.

The screening of the proposed amendments involved the analysis of the proposed policies and objectives and where necessary, the inclusion of mitigation measures to ensure that the implementation of the proposed amendment does not result in adverse impacts on European sites. In doing so, there were several “protective” policies and objectives that existed within the County Development Plan (CDP) - whose specific function was to protect the integrity of the sites and the environmental conditions underpinning them. These were taken into account in the screening of the proposed amendments as these protective policies in the CDP could help to mitigate any potential impacts on designated sites.

Table 6 shows a summary of the Policies and Objectives contained within the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 which act cumulatively to protect the individual European sites. This list does not cover all of the Policies or Objectives of a protective or mitigatory nature but identifies those that address specific sensitivities of the sites.



**Table 6: Policies protecting individual European sites.**

| Site   | Sensitivity/threat                           | Mitigation Policy/Objective                   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Candidate SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION</b> |  |   |
| Malahide Estuary                               | • Recreational activities                    | <b>ED OBJ 2; ED POL 9; NH POL 5; NH OBJ 2</b> |
| Rogerstown Estuary                             | • Recreational activities                    | <b>ED OBJ 2; ED POL 9; NH POL 5; NH OBJ 2</b> |
| <b>SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS</b>                |  |   |
| Malahide Estuary                               | • Indirect effects on shared metapopulations | <b>ED OBJ 2; ED POL 9; NH POL 5; NH OBJ 2</b> |
| Rogerstown Estuary                             | • Indirect effects on shared metapopulations | <b>ED OBJ 2; ED POL 9; NH POL 5; NH OBJ 2</b> |

## 7 INTERACTION WITH OTHER PLANS

The E.C. Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations 2011 require that the impacts on European sites be assessed from the plan or project in question and also in the presence of other plans and projects that could affect the same European sites.

The screening process identified other plans and projects that could act in combination with the Amendments to theoretically pose likely significant effects on European sites. This Section identifies if these other Plans and Projects have undergone an appropriate assessment themselves as it is assumed that if a Plan has been adopted following an AA then it cannot pose likely significant adverse effects on European sites.

The cumulative/in-combination impact assessment focused on the other County Development Plans and Local Area Plans that had the highest potential to affect the same European sites that could be affected by the Amendments. Other higher-level plans that could promote infrastructure are integrated within the County Development Plan 2013-2019 itself and have been assessed as such.

- Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019
  - The AA of the County Development has addressed many of the potential issues arising from the Local Area Plan. The implementation of the amended Local Area Plan will refer to the protective policies in the County Development Plan as a form of mitigation of potential effects on the European Sites. Therefore, assuming that both the County and Local Area Plan are implemented in accordance with the policies and objectives in both Plans then significant adverse effects on European sites will be avoided.
- Fingal County Development Plan 2011-2017
  - Potential for impacts from recreational users of the beach at the River Nanny and Shore SPA are acknowledged and policies integrated to the Plan to ensure the AA is carried out for such proposals. Cumulative impacts caused by increased populations in East Meath and in Fingal, on Rogerstown and Malahide Estuaries have been addressed by mitigation policies in the Fingal County Development Plan.

- 
- Dublin City Development Plan 2011-2017
    - There are no European sites shared by the two Counties. At the screening stage it was purported that there could be indirect impacts if bird populations in Meath SPAs were adversely affected (Shelduck, Black-tailed Godwit, Golden Plover and others).
    - Policies have been proposed to provide for protection of the coastal European sites in Dublin City that could share species with the coastal sites in Meath. As a result there are no predicted cumulative impacts from the implementation of this Plan.
  
  - Eastern River Basin District Management Plan (2008)
    - A review of the Article 6 Assessment indicated that the Measures proposed within the Plan are consistent with the mitigation policies within the County Development Plan and LAP. Key issues such as buffer strips alongside rivers, control of invasive species, upgrade and capacity of wastewater treatment plants lend support for the Policies in the Plan.
  
  - Heritage Capital- Marketing Tourism in Meath 2005 – 2010
    - Whilst the Strategy does not appear to have undergone any AA, there are several recommendations that overlap with protective Policies in the County Development Plan and LAP. Proposals to protect the beaches from parking and to provide adequate parking whilst respecting the need to protect the designated sites, is one such example.
    - It is noted that this Strategy was prepared in the peak of the Celtic Tiger era and that pressures to develop hotel and leisure developments are no longer viable. Such developments could have posed a conflict with the protection of some European sites.
  
  - Regional Planning Guidelines for Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022<sup>2</sup>
    - Section 4.6 of the Habitats Directive Assessment of the Regional Planning Guidelines set out the mitigation measures that have been passed down into the current AA of the Local Area Plan. These include, but are not limited to:
      - GIP2; SIR6: Ensure that plans and projects relating to recreational, leisure or tourism activity which have the potential to negatively impact on European sites undergo a HDA in the early stages of planning. Where mitigation is feasible, measures should be prescribed to actively manage visitor access and ensure that sensitive areas are protected. Where such measures are not feasible or uncertain, mitigation is through avoidance.
      - GIP2; GIP3; GIP4; PIR18; GIR21; GIR22, GIR23: Ensure protection of coastal waters and coastal sites, which have been identified as particularly vulnerable to increased pressure, through integrated coastal zone management and early consideration of Article 6 requirements for all plans and projects potentially impacting on European site.
      - GIP2; FRI; FR4: Ensure protection of Natura 2000 sites supporting rivers or streams by avoiding development on floodplains and ensure that flood risk assessment policies, plans or projects are compliant with Article 6 of the

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rpg.ie/>

---

Habitats Directive and avoid or mitigate negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

- Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022<sup>3</sup>
  - INFP 1, FRP3, ENVP 4, ENVP 5: Ensure the protection of the Natura 2000 sites' supporting rivers and streams by avoiding development in areas at risk from flooding, whilst facilitating the continued growth and expansion of the key urban settlements that are at risk from coastal or fluvial flooding. INFP 1, FRP 1, ENVP 4, and ENVP 5: Ensure that development and local area plans adopt a strategic approach to flood risk management to avoid any negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites. INFP 1, INFP 19, ENVP 4, and ENVP 5: Ensure that all plans and projects associated with the provision of water and sewerage facilities comply with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.
  
- Meath Local Authorities Climate Change Strategy and Energy Management Action Plan 2011-2012<sup>4</sup>
  - The Plan has not undergone an AA but many of the proposed measures would combine with the measures proposed in the current Local Area Plan to reduce the likelihood of any significant effects on the European sites. Many of the policies aiming for better water usage, increased energy efficiency, waste, housing and planning are directly compatible with the Local Area Plan. Only policies that promote cycling at the coast could put increased pressure on the coastline in the form of potential disturbance. However the mitigation measures in the current County Development Plan would offset the potential for such an impact to occur.

## 8 SCREENING CONCLUSIONS

The Screening process has identified that four European sites were within 15km of the Ashbourne LAP boundary. These would be sensitive to changes in the hydrological environment and increased recreational pressures. Analysis of the proposed amendments to the Local Area Plan did not highlight any policies or objectives that would pose a risk of likely significant effects to the integrity of the European sites in terms of both direct impacts in isolation and on a cumulative basis.

## 9 REFERENCES

**DoEHLG** (2010) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Rev Feb 2010)

**Eastern River Basin District** (2009) *South-eastern River Basin District Management Plan 2009*, Available online at <http://www.wfdireland.ie/docs/> [Accessed 26 July 2011]

**European Commission** (2000). *Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle*

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.border.ie/downloads/RPGs/Regional%20Planning%20Guidelines%202010%20-%202022.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.meath.ie/CountyCouncil/Environment/ClimateChange/LargeFileDownload,44533,en.pdf>

---

**European Commission** (2001) *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission Environment Directorate-General,);

**European Commission** (2000) *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2000); hereinafter referred to as "MN2000"

**Environmental Protection Agency** (2011). EPA ENVision Service (internet-based environmental information portal). Available online at: <http://maps.epa.ie/internetmapviewer/mapviewer.aspx> [Accessed 26 July 2011]

**Geological Survey of Ireland** (2011). *GSI Datasets Public Viewer*. Available online at <http://www.gsi.ie/Mapping.htm> [Accessed 28 March 2011]

**Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management** (2006). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment*. Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

**National Parks & Wildlife Service** (2008). *Status of EU Protected Habitats in Ireland*

**NPWS** (2013a) Conservation Objectives: Malahide Estuary SAC 000205. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

**NPWS** (2013b) Conservation Objectives: Rogerstown Estuary SAC 000208. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

**NPWS** Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10 *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, March 2010);

**National Roads Authority** (NRA) 2009. *Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes*.

**NRA** 2005-2009. *Environmental Construction Guidelines Series*, available online at <http://www.nra.ie/Publications/Environment/#d.en.3463> [Accessed December 2010]

**Comhairle Chontae na Mí**

Roimn Pleanáil,  
Teach Buvinda, Bóthar Átha Cliath,  
An Uaimh, Contae na Mí  
Fón: 046 – 9097500/Fax: 046 – 9097001  
R-phost: [planning@meathcoco.ie](mailto:planning@meathcoco.ie)  
Web: [www.meath.ie](http://www.meath.ie)



**Meath County Council**

Planning Department  
Buvinda House, Dublin Road,  
Navan, Co. Meath.  
Tel: 046 – 9097500/Fax: 046 – 9097001  
E-mail: [planning@meathcoco.ie](mailto:planning@meathcoco.ie)  
Web: [www.meath.ie](http://www.meath.ie)

**Tel: 046 9097500**

**Forward Planning Section**

**14<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.**

**Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination under Section 177U (5), Part XAB, Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010**

**Ashbourne Local Area Plan  
Amendment No. 1**

An Appropriate Assessment screening determination has been made by Meath County Council regarding Amendment No. 1 to the Ashbourne Local Area Plan.

This decision has been informed by information prepared by Scott Cawley Ltd. on behalf of the Council - Appropriate Assessment Screening Report dated April 30<sup>th</sup> 2015 and consideration of drawings and other information provided in the Amendment documentation. This AA Screening report described the nature of the proposed amendment, the nature of the European sites within the zone of influence of the LAP and the relationship between the two such that any impact pathways could be identified. It sets out the nature of the proposed works and assesses any potential for direct, indirect or cumulative impacts of the proposed works on all relevant European Sites.

The Council has examined likely significant effects of the proposed works on European Sites within the zone of influence of the proposed works, in light of the specific Qualifying Interests and conservation objectives of all relevant European Sites.

Having reviewed and considered this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and general information on the nature of the amendment, the Council has been able to conclude that there was no likelihood of any significant effects on any European Sites arising from the proposed amendment, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The Council agrees with the Screening process that identified four European sites were within 15km of the Ashbourne LAP boundary. It concurs with the analysis of the proposed amendments to the Local Area Plan which did not highlight any policies or objectives that would pose a risk of likely significant effects to the integrity of the European sites in terms of both direct impacts in isolation and on a cumulative basis.

Therefore it is our view, in relying on the information prepared by Scott Cawley and details in the amendment documentation, that an Appropriate Assessment is not required for the proposed amendment.

**Bernard Greene,**  
Senior Executive Planner.

**Patrick Gallagher,**  
Senior Planner.