



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

East Meath Local Area Plan 2014-2020

**Bettystown / Laytown / Mornington East / Donacarney /
Mornington**



Strategic Environmental Assessment: Statement



Contents Amendment Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Revision	Description	Date	Prepared by	Checked by
01	00	SEA Statement FINAL	23/07/2014	ST	TB

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1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction and Background

The Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2013–2019 sets out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county over a six year period. The plan has a critical role to play in ensuring that the needs of future population growth are planned for. The CDP settlement strategy has been informed by the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) and the environmental sensitivities of the county. It is based on building strong urban centres while protecting the rural hinterlands. The plan also emphasises the need to protect the built heritage, unique landscape, natural heritage and biodiversity of the county for their intrinsic value and as a resource for the tourist economy of the future.

The designation of Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East as a Small Town and Donacarney-Mornington as a Village is reinforced in the CDP settlement strategy with the towns and villages being targeted for consolidated growth. By consolidating development the towns and villages will develop in a self-sufficient manner, reducing commuting levels and ensuring sustainable levels of population and economic growth, while providing a full range of local services adequate to meet local needs.

Over the last 20 years, Bettystown- Laytown- Mornington East and Donacarney-Mornington have experienced unprecedented expansion in comparison with other settlements in the county. The majority of this development has been residential in nature, and comprising large housing estates. These estates reflect the role of towns and villages as dormitory settlements arising from improved rail and road links to Dublin City. Bettystown- Laytown-Mornington is designated as a town in the most recent census of population therefore the preparation of a local area plan for the area is a statutory requirement of Meath County Council. It is highlighted that Donacarney-Mornington East are included within the definition of Laytown- Bettystown-Mornington as a census town.

The Local Area Plan is the guiding document for development within the Plan area over the next 6 years. Environmental aspects have been considered throughout the plan-making process and have been incorporated into the Plan with the aim of improving the environment of the plan area. The Environmental Report is the primary element in the SEA process and is published alongside the Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East, Donacarney and Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020.

1.2 Purpose of the SEA Statement

This document is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement for the Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East, Donacarney and Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020.

The main purpose of the SEA Statement is to provide information on the decision-making process and to document how environmental considerations, the views of statutory consultees and other submissions received during the consultation phases have been taken into account in the adopted LAP, together with the arrangements put in place for monitoring, thereby bringing more transparency to the decision-making process.

The SEA process thereby assists in and improves the quality of the plan making process by:

- Facilitating the identification and appraisal of alternative LAP strategies;
- Raising awareness of the environmental impacts of the LAP's implementation; and
- Encouraging the inclusion of measurable targets and indicators to aid monitoring.

1.3 Legislative Context

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

Under this legislation member States of the EU are obliged to assess the likely significant environmental effects of plans and programmes prior to their adoption thus providing for the assessment of strategic environmental considerations at an early stage of the decision making process.

Article 1 of the SEA Directive states:

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

The Directive came into effect in an Irish context in July 2004. Since then SEA must be prepared for plans and programmes, including:

- Regional Planning Guidelines;
- City and County Development Plans;
- Development Plans made by Town Councils, where the population of the area is 10,000 or more; or
- Local Area Plans for towns with a population of 5,000 or more.

The Regulations state that SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds. Where plans or programmes fall below or outside of the specified thresholds, a screening report is required to be carried out to determine whether the making and implementation of a particular plan will or will not, lead to significant environmental consequences for the plan area.

Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington is designated as a town in the most recent census of population therefore the preparation of a local area plan for the area is a statutory requirement of Meath County Council.

1.4 SEA Process

The Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East, Donacarney and Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020 required Strategic Environmental Assessment, in accordance with the legislation as outlined above. An Environmental Report prepared to accompany the LAP is submitted for consideration together with the LAP. The Environmental Report provides an understanding of the consequences for the environment of carrying out the LAP as proposed.

Submissions on the LAP and Environmental Report were evaluated at each stage in the process of making the LAP. This enabled the proper assessment of the effect on the environment of proposed changes and amendments. The Elected Members of Meath County Council are obliged to take the Environmental Report into account in making the LAP.

The legislation and guidelines governing the SEA process state that the processes of preparing the LAP, SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) should be integrated and prepared in an iterative manner. The Environmental Report (ER) outlines the how the SEA process was carried out in tandem with the preparation of the LAP and its accompanying AA. The SEA process, which included Strategic Review meetings and SEA/AA/Variation workshops, ensured that the LAP was informed by environmental considerations from the outset. The SEA Team were fully involved in the analysis of development options and were in a position to make suggestions throughout the process of the LAP preparation to ensure that environmental considerations and environmental effects were considered in the formulation of strategic goals and development objectives.

Section 13(I) (1) of S.I. 436 of 2004 sets out the requirements of the SEA Statement as follows:

- how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan,
- how the following has been taken into account during the preparation of the plan:
 - the environmental report;
 - submissions and observations made on the Draft Plan and Environmental Report; and
 - consultations with other Member States (if any).
- the reasons for choosing the plan, as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with, and
- the measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan.

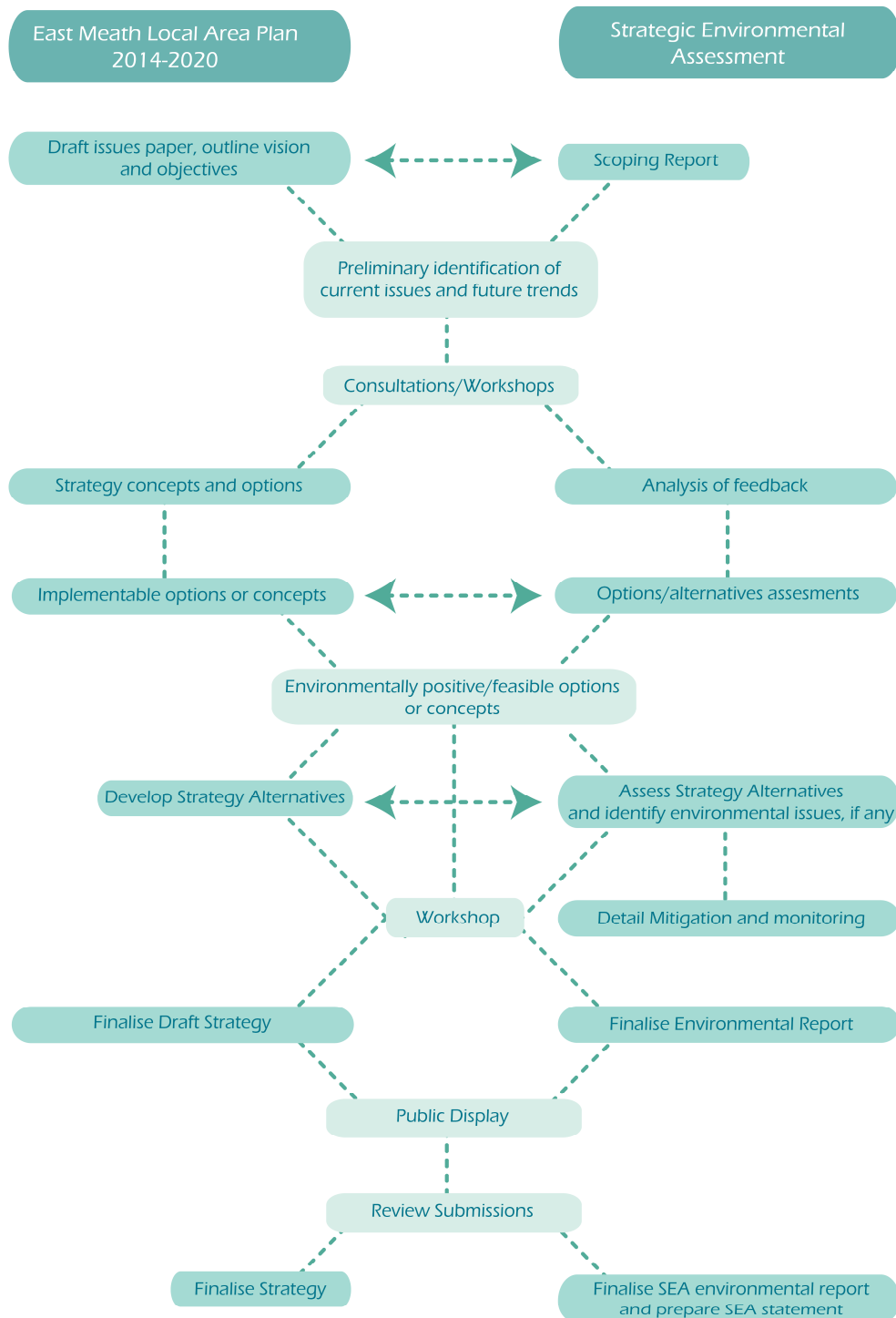
The SEA has also been informed by guidance issued by statutory authorities, namely

- *Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report* (Environmental Protection Agency, 2003),
- *Implementation of SEA Directive 92/001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment – Guidelines for Local Authorities and*

Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004), and

- *SEA Pack (2013)* (Environmental Protection Agency, 2013)

Figure 1 (below) provides a summary of the integrated nature of the LAP preparation and SEA process.



2.0 Integration of Environmental Considerations into the Plan

2.1 Purpose of SEA Statement

Environmental considerations were integrated into the Local Area Plan making process at all stages.

This initially comprised reviewing the baseline situation and mapping of environmental constraints and sensitivities so as to identify any new considerations or information available from the baseline situation as was most recently presented for the area in the Meath County Development Plan.

As the LAP developed, environmental considerations were directly considered at a number of stages in the SEA process as set out in Table 2.1.

Stage	Description
Screening	The screening process is the first stage of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. Screening assesses the need to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Under the Planning and Development Act 2000-2013 full Strategic Environmental Assessment is mandatory for the Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East, Donacarney and Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020. Therefore no Screening was undertaken.
Scoping	<p>The Scoping of the Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East, Donacarney and Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020 was carried out in accordance with Article 5 (4) of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).</p> <p>The principal purpose of the Scoping stage is to decide upon the range of issues and level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report. An overview of the relevant environmental issues requiring further analysis are given and consideration in the Environmental Report and ultimately in the Local Area Plan itself. By highlighting some of the significant issues at an early stage, it ensures that the issues are firmly to the forefront when considering each of the policies and objectives of the Plan and reduces the possibility of relevant issues not being addressed.</p>
Consultation with the Environmental Authorities	<p>Submissions were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Protection Agency • Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resource
Scoping Report	Submissions received from Environmental Authorities were reviewed and incorporated into the process where warranted.
Preparation of ER & Local Area Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-disciplinary team was established to create policy consistent documents and to examine the effects on the

	<p>environment of implementing the objectives and policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives created in Local Area Plan assessed in ER and Development options examined. • Feedback from on-going Plan preparation process & ER preparation. • Mitigation measures discussed and chosen. • Monitoring incorporated into existing methods.
Monitoring the Local Area Plan	Monitoring significant environmental effects over the lifetime of the Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East, Donacarney and Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020.

Table 1 Key Stages of SEA**2.2 Screening**

Screening assesses the need to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Under the Planning and Development Act 2000-2013 full Strategic Environmental Assessment is mandatory for the Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney-Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020. Therefore no Screening was undertaken.

2.3 Scoping

The Scoping of the Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney-Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020 was carried out in accordance with Article 5 (4) of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).

The principal purpose of the Scoping stage is to decide upon the range of issues and level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report. An overview of the relevant environmental issues requiring further analysis are given and consideration in the Environmental Report and ultimately in the LAP itself. By highlighting some of the significant issues at an early stage, it ensures that the issues are firmly to the forefront when considering each of the policies and objectives of the Plan and reduces the possibility of relevant issues not being addressed.

The scoping aspect involved consultation with the statutory consultees, providing an opportunity to comment on the highlighted issues and the proposed methodology. Under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 the list of statutory consultees includes:

- The Environmental Protection Agency.
- The Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government.
- The Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs.
- The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
- The Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.
- Any adjoining planning authority whose area is contiguous to the area of a planning authority which prepared a plan, – in this case counties includes Fingal, Kildare, Offaly, Westmeath, Monaghan, Cavan, Louth and Drogheda.

In compliance with the SEA (Amendment) Regulations 2011 Meath County Council gave notice to the aforementioned Environmental Authorities of its intention to prepare a new LAP for the area. A Scoping Report was prepared in order to facilitate consultation with statutory consultees and consultees were requested to review the content of the report and to comment on aspects they believe may require particular emphasis in the Local Area Plan and associated SEA Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment documentation.

2.4 Statutory Consultation

Submissions were received from the following statutory consultees:

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resource
- Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine

Table 6 below outlines the issues raised and the response or how the issue was addressed within the preparation of the Environmental Report:

Consultee and Comments	Response
Environmental Protection Agency	
Acknowledges Scoping for Local Area Plan and draws attention to EPA Checklist, Guidance on SEA and SEA Scoping Pack as well as updated SEA Regulations / Circulars. The Agency also lists the Environmental Authorities to be notified.	Noted.
EPA makes specific comments that the Plan should provide for:	
• Protection and improvement as appropriate of water quality (including both surface and ground water)	Noted.
• Protection of designated sites (national and EU), undesignated sites and ecological corridors / linkages	Noted.
• Appropriate zoning and development of lands to ensure sustainable development in accordance with the Regional Planning Guidelines.	Noted.
• In particular the <i>Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> (OPW / DEHLG, 2009) should be fully integrated as appropriate.	Noted.
• Consideration should be given in the scoping report to including a map showing the proposed Plan area and highlighting the key environmental sensitivities within and adjacent to the Plan area, as it is unclear in the scoping report what the issues are.	Noted.
• In <i>Section 2.6 Plan Hierarchy</i> , consideration should be given to updating the table of relevant Plans and Programmes to refer to the new guidance <i>Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies</i> (SEAI, 2013). The reference to the EPA's Ireland's Environment Report should be updated to reflect the most up to date publication for 2012.	Noted.
• In addition, there would be merits in referring to the Greater Dublin Area Draft Transport Strategy (National Transport	

<p>Authority), the Louth County Development Plan and also the Pollution Reduction Programme for the Balbriggan / Skerries Shellfish waters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3 – Environmental Receptors and Key Environmental Issues in the Plan area It is noted that there appears to be a significant excess of zoned lands within the Plan above what is required for development over the Plan period. Consideration, in this context, should be given to phasing, re-zoning, de-zoning, and strategic land reservation of available excess lands to ensure sustainable development is promoted in accordance with the core strategy approach advocated by the Regional Planning Guidelines and the County Development Plan. While the list of Natura 2000 sites to be assessed for likely significant effects is noted in Section 3.3 Flora and Fauna (Biodiversity), consideration should be given to describing what distance the zone of influence of the plan area covers. In Section 3.5, consideration should be given to providing specific detail on the actual baseline environment within/adjacent to the Plan area. It is noted that the water quality status of the River Nanny, adjacent to the Plan area is currently classified as being Poor under both the EPA and WFD classifications which should be referred to. Water quality status is also listed as being of poor status. 	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Agreed.</p>
<p>EPA notes that consideration should be given to amending a number of SEOs in Table 2.7 Strategic Environmental Objectives (of the SEA Scoping Report) as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend B1 “Conserve and where possible enhance the diversity of habitats and protected species...” Amend B3 “Provide opportunities for sustainable public access to wildlife and wild places at appropriate locations” Amend B4 “Avoid damage by development to designated wildlife sites and protected species, and associated ecological corridors/linkages” Amend S2 “...maximise and prioritise the use of existing environment rather than developing greenfield lands” Amend MA2 “Avoid flood risk and/or coastal erosion in selecting sites and zoning of lands for development” Amend MA3 “Maintain water abstraction, run-off and recharge within carrying capacity (including future capacity) at environmentally sustainable levels” 	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>Agreed.</p>
<p>Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources: Geological Survey of Ireland</p>	
<p>Acknowledges Scoping for Local Area Plan. Draws attention to online resource for Geological Heritage Data. Offer to discuss and possible mitigation measures, if applicable. Notes geological data gaps. GSI would welcome complementary data collected as well as copies of reports detailing any site investigation be made available to GSI.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine: Climate Change Section	
Acknowledges Scoping for Local Area Plan. No submissions or observations in regard to same	Noted.

Table 2: Summary of Scoping Comments**2.5 Public Consultation*****Pre-Draft Non Statutory Public Consultation***

The preparation of the LAP included a number of opportunities for members of the public's involvement and input by making written submissions on the LAP. Section 20 of the Planning Act states that:-

'a Planning Authority shall take whatever steps it considers necessary to consult the Minister and the public before preparing"... "a local area plan, including consultations with any local residents, public sector agencies, non-governmental agencies, local community groups and commercial and business interests in the area'.

The following measures were taken to consult with the public at this stage of the plan making process.

- An Issues Paper was prepared to stimulate, guide and encourage debate and discussion on the issues in the community and wider environs, to flag important factors and to encourage and assist the public in making submissions and observations to the Planning Authority in respect of the preparation of the Draft LAP.
- A public notice was placed in the Meath Chronicle stating that a non-statutory pre-draft consultation phase was taking place regarding the new LAP. The intention of this notice was to invite interested parties or individuals to make submissions, observations, suggestions or forward ideas in advance of the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan. Submissions/observations were to be made either by post or e-mail over a 4 week period.
- A public information event took place in Coláiste na hInse to further engage the general public and other stakeholders in the consultation process. Representatives of the Council were in attendance to answer queries with respect to the LAP process and the specific LAP area.
- The posters from the public information event were available to view on the County Council's website.
- A pro-forma form was prepared for people to make submissions, for convenience.
- In advance of the public information open day, an informal briefing session was held with the Slane Area Councillors.

These measures assisted in providing insights into the local issues and helped to shape the Draft LAP and Environmental Report.

Draft Stage & Alterations to Draft LAP

The Draft LAP was published and placed on display for a minimum 6 weeks during which time submissions and observations were invited from the public and the interested parties. A report summarising the issues raised and the Manager's recommendation was presented to the Elected Members not later than 12 weeks after publication of the notice. The Elected Members considered the report and amended the Draft LAP.

Material Alterations to the Draft LAP then went on public display for a further period of not less than 4 weeks. A report summarising the issues raised and the Chief Executive recommendations (formerly referred to as 'manager's recommendations') was presented to the Elected Members and agreed by resolution at the council meeting on 07th July 2014. The LAP came into effect four weeks from that date.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report accompanied the draft LAP and amendments to the Draft LAP during the public display periods. Submissions with regards to the SEA were received from the EPA and comments incorporated accordingly.

2.6 Environmental Report

The type of information to be provided in the Environmental Report is set out in Annex I of the SEA Directive - reproduced in Schedule 2B of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as inserted by article 12 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004).

The Environmental Report is prepared alongside the LAP process and investigates, describes and evaluates the effects on the receiving environment of implementing the LAP. The report also assesses and identifies development alternatives and identifies the environmentally preferred development strategy.

The preparation of the Environmental Report influenced the formulation of the Local Area Plan in a number of distinct ways:

- It encouraged the wide use of background environmental data and formally connects this data to the making of the plan
- It determined the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) against which the policies and objectives of the plan were assessed.
- The Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) will form the basis for the future on-going monitoring of the Local Area Plan.
- The Environmental Report determined the identified development strategy option provides the most sustainable and appropriate environmental approach to the future development of the area's settlements, when assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives.
- It provides greater transparency to the public as to how environmental issues are incorporated and assessed in the plan-making process.

Key issues were identified in the Environmental Report across each of the environmental areas. These were largely based on the environmental baseline and the issues raised during the Scoping stage, as set out in Table 2 above. The full review of key issues is set out in Chapter 4 of the Environmental Report.

The Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are measures against which the environmental effects of the varied Development Plan are tested in order to identify where significant adverse impacts are likely to occur. Following statutory consultations amendments have been incorporated into the SEOs.

SEA of the Draft Plan

The Draft Plan was considered for its possible impacts on the environment and the following Amendments were proposed prior to the Draft Plan being published:

Chapter	Objective /Policy	Type	Comments/Amendments
Strategic Vision, Core Strategy & Themes	SH 3	Insertion of New Policy	To recognise the importance of the Natura 2000 and environmentally designated sites within the plan area with particular reference to the coastline, beaches and connecting waterbodies and to ensure that any proposals for development or uses which could compromise these natural assets are carefully considered and subject to Appropriate Assessment as required.
Economy & Employment	EED POL 1	Suggested Amendment	To ensure that adequate lands and services are available to facilitate employment generating uses in appropriate suitably identified locations throughout within the plan area subject to relevant environmental considerations .
Tourism Development	TD POL 13	Insertion of New Policy	To promote the development of sustainable tourism and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to satisfactory location, siting and design criteria, the protection of designated environment sites and areas identified as sensitive landscapes in the Landscape Character Assessment in the County Development Plan.
	TD POL 14	Insertion of New Policy	To protect and conserve those natural, built and cultural heritage features that form the basis of the East Meath area's tourism attraction and seek to manage and restrict development which would be detrimental to scenic and identified natural and cultural heritage assets.
Water Supply	WSU POL 3	Suggested Amendmentrequirements for the area. All such plans or projects will be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, as required.
Wastewater	WSU OBJ 4	Suggested Amendment	Remove 'generally'.
Flood Risk Management	WSU POL 27	Suggested Amendmentand are subject to Appropriate Assessment as required.

Cultural Heritage, Natural Assets & Green Infrastructure	HER POL 3	Comment	Policy needs to be reviewed in terms of relevance to plan area.
	HER OBJ 3	Suggested Amendment	Protect and where possible minimise the impact of new development on habitats of biodiversity value that are features of the plan area's ecological network. These features include tree lines, groups of trees and veteran trees, old walls, parkland, hedgerows, intertidal areas, rivers, streams, estuaries, coastal area and wetlands.
	HER POL 19	Insertion of New Policy	To protect the landscape character, quality and local distinctiveness of East Meath in accordance with relevant government policy and guidelines and the recommendations included in the Meath County Development Plan and to require that any necessary assessments, including landscape and visual impact assessments, are provided when undertaking, authorising or approving development.
	GI POL 10	Suggested Amendment	To recognise the importance of the coastal sand dune system and beach as both a natural habitat and as recreational and tourist assets, and to pursue their protection or development for recreational use facilitate any recreation development proposals in a manner that protects their intrinsic environmental importance.

General Comment on Key Aims for each Chapter		Comment	Should reflect and strengthen consideration of issues in the exiting communities and environment.
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These proposed amendments informing the Draft Plan were arrived at following both the submissions received during Scoping Consultation in addition to the assessment of the draft Plan Policies and Objectives against the established SEO's.

SEA Screening of Alterations to Draft LAP

Following the display of the Draft East Meath Local Area Plan (Bettystown / Laytown / Mornington East / Donacarney / Mornington) 2014-2020 and the public consultation period, the Chief Executive prepared and distributed to the elected members of Meath County Council, a report on the submissions and observations received, including an opinion on issues raised within submissions and any recommended amendments to the draft plan. The Chief Executive's recommended amendments were screened in terms of SEA and AA to identify any likely significant effects on the environment at this stage in the process. This was documented within the Chief Executive's Report.

The following represents the SEA and AA Screening of Proposed Amendments:

Primary Land Use Zoning Categories

Amendment 1 (Section 3.2 page 36)

(a) Amendment to Section 3. 2 A2 New Residential Zoning Objective:

No likely SEA / AA impact

(b) Amendment to Section 3. 2 B2 Retail Warehouse Park Zoning Objective:

No likely SEA / AA impact

(c) Insert new H1: High Amenity Zoning Objective at Section 3.3.

Any potential negative impact is adequately protected by existing Policies and Objectives, in particular TM OBJ 26; HER OBJ 2; HER POL 3; HER OBJ 7 and GI OBJ 3,

No likely SEA / AA impact

Evaluation of Residentially Zoned Lands

Amendment 2 Text Amendments Consequent of Alterations to Residential Evaluation Process

Amend text and tables at Section 2.4 Evaluation of Residentially Zoned Lands (commencing at page 22) of the Draft LAP. Amend all corresponding maps contained within Volume 2 Appendix B Residential Evaluation Maps to correspond to changes contained within this amendment. See also Amendment nos. 16.2, 16.4 and 16.6.

The effect of the proposed amendment is to provide for update and clarification in terms of committed residential units and strategy for residentially zoned lands. The amendment does not affect the findings for the top ranked sites.

No likely SEA / AA impact

Employment and Economic Development

Amendment 3 (Section 4.1 page 44)

Amend Policy EED POL 5.

Proposed amendment provides for clarification.

No likely SEA / AA impact

Amendment 4 (Section 4.1 page 44)

Amend Policy EED POL 6.

Proposed amendment provides for clarification.

No likely SEA / AA impact or potentially positive environmental effect.

Tourism Development

Amendment 5 (Section 4.2 page 46)

Amend the last paragraph of Section 4.2 on page 46 of the Draft LAP.

Proposed amendment provides for clarification on existing situation.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Amendment 6 (Section 4.2 page 46)

Amend Section 4.2 'Tourist Infrastructure' of the Draft LAP.

Proposed amendment provides for clarification on existing situation and recognises potential opportunities subject to appropriate environmental consideration and protection.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Amendment 7 (Section 4.2 page 48)

Amend Section 4.2 'Tourism Development Strategy' of the Draft LAP.

Proposed amendment provides for clarification on existing situation and related opportunities.

In considering likely SEA / AA impact reference is made to existing protective policies and objectives, in particular to: TD POL 5; TD POL 14; HER POL 5; HER OBJ 6 and GI POL 10.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Community Infrastructure

Amendment 8 (Section 4.5 page 66)

Insert new text at section 4.5 (paragraph 3 of section entitled 'Education'), of the Draft LAP.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Recreation and Open Space

Amendment 9 (Section 4.6 page 70)

Insert new text at section 4.6 (first paragraph of section entitled 'Recreation & Open Space Infrastructure') of the Draft LAP.

Proposed amendment provides for clarification on existing situation.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Amendment 10 (Section 4.6 Page 72)

Insert a new objective ROS OBJ 5 to be introduced after ROS OBJ 4 at Section 4.6 (Recreation & Open Space Policies & Objectives).

Protective measures are inherent in the proposed amendment.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Water Services and Utilities

Amendment 11 (Section 4.7 page 76)

To amend first line of section entitled 'Surface Water Drainage',
and

To amend Policy WSU POL 13.

Proposed amendment provides for improved environment protection.

Likely positive SEA / AA impact.

Transportation and Movement

Amendment 12 (Section 4.8)

Omit section of pedestrian cycleway connecting the proposed North/South Spine Road to the Coast Road beside Brookside Stream.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Amendment 13 (Section 4.8)

Amend Section 4.8 by omitting TM OBJ 4 and omit strategic road objective from corresponding land use maps (please refer to land use zoning map with amendment denoted).

TM OBJ 4 was subject to further environmental surveys and assessment in any case.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Cultural Heritage, Natural Assets & Green Infrastructure

Amendment 14 (Section 4.9 Page 103)

Inclusion of an additional policy GI POL 13 at section 4.9 of the LAP, after GI POL 12.

Likely positive SEA / AA impact.

Miscellaneous

Amendment 15

Correct referencing to local road name.

Proposed amendment provides for clarification.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Land Use Zoning Map

Amendment 16

Proposed amendment provides for clarification.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Amendment 16.1

Proposed amendment provides for clarification.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Amendment 16.2

To be read in conjunction with proposed Amendment No. 2.

No likely SEA / AA impact

Amendment 16.3

Proposed amendment provides for clarification.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Amendment 16.4

To be read in conjunction with proposed Amendment No. 2.

The effect of the proposed amendment is to provide for update and clarification in terms of committed residential units and strategy for residentially zoned lands. The amendment does not affect the findings for the top ranked sites.

No likely SEA / AA impact

Amendment 16.5

No likely SEA / AA impact

Amendment 16.6

To be read in conjunction with proposed Amendment No. 2 of this report.

The effect of the proposed amendment is to provide for update and clarification in terms of committed residential units and strategy for residentially zoned lands. The amendment does not affect the findings for the top ranked sites.

No likely SEA / AA impact

Amendment 16.7

No likely SEA / AA impact

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

Amendment 17

- (a) Insert text into Section 6.2 of the SFRA.
- (b) Amend Section 6.3.2 and 6.3.3 of the SFRA.
- (c) Insert text into Sections 6.5.1 & B.2.2 of the SFRA

Proposed amendment provides for clarification.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Amendment 17.1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

Amend the extent of Flooding on the Flood Zone Mapping contained within the SFRA (Volume 3- Appendix C) with consequent changes to maps and appendices accordingly.

Proposed amendment provides for clarification.

No likely SEA / AA impact.

Strategic Environmental Statement (SEA)

Amendment 18

- (a) Amend Section 1.11 Mitigation Measures.
- (b) Monitoring frequencies will be incorporated in the SEA.

Proposed amendment provides for clarification.- No likely SEA / AA impact.

2.7 Consideration of Alternatives

The SEA Directive (Article 5) recommends that alternative development scenarios for the plan are included for assessment. Alternatives need to be '*realistic and capable of implementation*' and should represent a range of different approaches within the statutory and operational requirements of the particular plan.

The consideration of alternatives was restricted by the statutory requirement to comply with the Core Strategy of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. On this basis, the evaluation of residentially zoned lands identified 7 undeveloped sites located within Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington East and 11 within Donacarney-Mornington which were identified and assessed as the most suitable sites to achieve the preferred future development scenario to accommodate growth within the town as required by the Core Strategy. The sites were ranked based on stated criteria and the most favourable sites to meet the yield required were identified for zoning.

An assessment was undertaken to identify any potential issues in relation to these sites that may not have been identified as part of the initial alternatives assessment ranking procedure. This essentially is a thorough review of the sites from an environmental perspective. This assessment was used to inform the overall residential strategy for zoning of lands to serve the town. This is discussed further in Section 3.

2.8 Mitigation

Section (g) of Schedule 2B of the SEA Regulations require information on the mitigation measures that will be put in place to minimise/eliminate any significant adverse impacts due to the implementation of the Local Area Plan. Chapter 9 of the Environmental Report highlights the mitigation measures that will be put in place to counter identified significant adverse impacts due to the implementation of the Plan. As stated previously the formulation of the Plan and the development of the SEA is an iterative process and therefore many of the potential negative aspects of the Plan have been removed.

Thus the objectives and policies contained within the Plan are considered robust and environmentally sustainable. However some unavoidable residual issues may remain and therefore mitigation measures are required. Chapter 9 details the mitigation measures necessary to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Plan.

2.9 Monitoring

Article 10 of the SEA Directive sets out the requirement that monitoring is to be carried out of the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East, Donacarney and Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020 in order to identify at an early stage any unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.

Chapter 10 outlines the monitoring requirements for the Bettystown, Mornington East, Laytown, Donacarney and Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020. Methods of monitoring and indicators of change in the environment have been proposed with set targets to be reviewed over the duration of the LAP.

3.0 Consideration of Alternatives

3.1 Introduction

The issue of alternatives is a critical function of the SEA process and is necessary to evaluate the likely environmental consequences of a range of alternative development strategies for the county within the constraints imposed by environmental conditions. The alternatives were considered at an early stage of the process and through an iterative process with the Local Area Plan, SEA and AA teams the most appropriate scenario was selected.

3.2 Legislative context

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

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

In accordance with SEA guidelines the alternatives put forward should be reasonable, realistic and capable of implementation. They should also be in line with the appropriate strategic level at which the Plan will be implemented within the national and county planning hierarchy. The Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarne- Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020 is framed within a policy context set by a hierarchy of National, Regional and County level strategic plans as well as the Irish and European legislative framework. Therefore the options for alternatives are limited, and a scenario such as the 'do-nothing' situation has not been included as it is neither reasonable nor realistic.

The alternatives proposed have been assessed against the relevant Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) established for the key aspects of the environment likely to be affected by the Plan's implementation. The evaluation process resulted in the identification of potential impacts and informed the selection of the preferred development scenario for the Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarne-Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020. This determination sought to understand whether each alternative was likely to improve, conflict with, or have a neutral interaction with the environment of the plan area.

3.3 Methodology for the Selection of Alternatives

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

Particular reference is drawn to the Core Strategy of the Meath County Development Plan which must be complied with. The Core Strategy allocates stated numbers of residential units to be developed within each settlement in the county over its lifespan for the years 2013 – 2019 based on their designation within the County Settlement Hierarchy.

- Allocation of zoned land in each settlement in accordance with Table 2.4 of the County Development Plan;
- Removal from Phase I of development, all residentially zoned sites that are located in Flood Zone A or B;
- Maintaining zoning in Phase I of all sites subject to an extant planning permission;
- The setting of residential density standards in the County Development Plan for the various levels of the Settlement Hierarchy.

These policies of the underlying Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 set the context for the development of the county and limit the range of alternatives that are available for consideration and their method of selection.

The Core Strategy allocates 100 residential dwellings to the plan area (80 unit housing allocation to Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington East and 20 unit housing allocations to Donacarney-Mornington) to be developed over its lifespan for the years 2013 – 2019 based on their designation within the County Settlement Hierarchy. This 100 residential dwelling allocation includes the 50% headroom.

The Core Strategy also states that the extent of committed units (*i.e.* units for which planning permission has been granted but which have not yet been built) must also be taken into account. There are currently 146 ha of available land zoned in the 2005 East Meath LAP at Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington East and Donacarney-Mornington which allows for residential development. Given that the Core Strategy of the Meath CDP 2013– 2019 allocates an additional 100 housing units over the period of this Plan in addition to the extant planning permissions ((1,414 no. units), it is evident that there is a significant excess of land zoned to accommodate residential development within the plan area.

The average residential density considered appropriate in this context is 25 units per hectare in Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East and 20 units per hectare in Donacarney-Mornington. Applying the average density per hectare results in a requirement of 3.2 hectares in Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East and 1.0 hectare in Donacarney-Mornington being available to accommodate the allocated number of units. After these units have been provided for there is a resultant excess zoning of 113.7 hectares in Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East and 28.0 hectares in Donacarney-Mornington remaining. In order to align with the Core Strategy, it will be a requirement to reduce the quantity of land zoned to accommodate residential development.

On this basis, 7 undeveloped sites located within Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington East and 11 within Donacarney-Mornington have been identified and assessed to achieve the most suitable sites for the preferred future development scenario to accommodate growth within the town as required by the Core Strategy.

The evaluation of the development areas therefore excluded:

- Sites identified within the SFRA which are located with flood zones A & B (corresponding with the 1:100 year and 1:1,000 year flood event) and are considered inappropriate for vulnerable development. The SFRA for the LAP is included in Appendix C of this plan which was prepared by JBA Consulting on behalf of Meath County Council.
- Those sites less than 0.5 hectares in extent as it is not considered necessary to include sites which could bring forward less than 10 no. units in the same manner as it has not been considered necessary to include small scale brownfield sites in the town centre/edge of town centre. It is not considered that a Core Strategy needs to be prescriptive to this minute level of detail.
- The evaluation excluded the consideration of sites containing existing uses which are unlikely to change over the course of the next plan.
- All sites with the benefit of an extant permission.

The following factors have been used to determine the suitability of specific lands for residential development which constitute the proper planning and sustainable development of the town:

- Proximity to the Bettystown town centre and Donacarney village centre;
- Proximity to the schools;
- Availability of Public Transport - to maximise public transport investment, it is important that land use planning underpins its efficiency by sustainable transport patterns. This includes promoting higher densities within 400m metres walking distance of a bus stop and proximity to the rail station (800m);
- Regeneration/Renewal of residential areas or other brownfield sites;
- Environmental Constraints – proximity to and potential impact on the qualifying interests of the adjoining Natura 2000 sites;
- The need to provide new roads infrastructure to facilitate development.
Consideration as to whether a site could be considered an infill opportunity as opposed to extending the urban footprint further from the town centre.
Leapfrogging beyond other available sites will not be considered favourably.

3.4 Assessment of Alternatives

Sites were rated based on the above factors and ranked in order of preference for zoning to residential use as part of the Local Area Plan preparation process. This assessment has been reviewed from a Strategic Environmental Assessment perspective to ensure that the identified environmental factors are in agreement with the findings. Each of the identified sites proposed for zoning were assessed on the basis of environmental criteria of the SEA Environmental Objectives as set out in Chapter 8 of the Environmental Report in order to identify any potential negative environmental effects in relation to these sites. The results are presented in Table 3.

[illegible]

Table 3: Assessment of Alternative Zonings

This assessment was undertaken to identify any potential issues in relation to these sites that may not have been identified as part of the initial alternatives assessment ranking procedure. This essentially is a thorough review of the sites from an environmental perspective. This assessment was used to inform the overall residential strategy for zoning of lands to serve the town.

The potential uncertainties identified in the assessment relate to localised impacts which may occur as a result of the development of these sites. However these potential uncertainties will be dealt with at planning application stage and are mitigated against by protective policies contained in the Plan with regards to flooding, biodiversity and landscape.

4.0 Local Area Plan Monitoring

4.1 Introduction

Under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 - 2013, the Local Authority is required to prepare a progress report on the implementation of the Plan. Given the environment is a significant consideration, then the progress report will include the key findings of the environmental monitoring programme as outlined in this chapter of the Environmental Report.

Monitoring of the Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington East-Donacarney-Mornington Local Area Plan and its implications on the environment is paramount to ensure that the environment is not adversely affected through the implementation of the Plan. Under Article 10 of the SEA Directive monitoring must be carried out of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the Plan *“in order to, inter alia, identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.”* The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Guidelines on SEA recommends that monitoring does not require new research activity; existing sources of information can be used and the task of data collection can be shared.

While considerable environmental data is directly available to the Council such as water quality, recycling rates etc., other sources of information will be accessed to provide a comprehensive view of the impact of the Plan. In this regard the Local Authority will work with other agencies with environmental mandates to gather data for the purposes of monitoring the implementation of the Plan. Therefore, while monitoring specific elements of the environment is not strictly the preserve of the Council, the Council will continue to liaise and work with the Environmental Protection Agency, The National Parks and Wildlife Service, Inland Fisheries, as well as others in the pursuit of environmental conservation and protection through existing environmental monitoring procedures.

4.2 Monitoring Indicators

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

Environmental indicator assessment during monitoring can show positive/neutral impacts or negative impacts on the environment. Where an indicator value highlights a positive/neutral impact on the environment, it is likely that the policies and objectives of the Plan are well defined with regard to the environment. Conversely where the objectives of the Plan have a negative impact on the environment, it may be necessary to review the objectives of the Plan or to take some other form of intervention. For example, if an objective or policy is having a significant adverse impact, a variation may be considered during the lifetime of the Plan.

Table 4 Monitoring

Note: In the following table (Table 4.1)
 Additions are in **Red Text**
 Deletions are in ~~Blue Strikethrough Text~~

Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
Biodiversity - Flora and Fauna	<p>No loss of important and/or designated habitats</p> <p>No deterioration in the quality of protected areas</p> <p>No loss of protected species</p> <p>No fish kills during the lifetime of the plan</p> <p>All actions contained within the Biodiversity Plan to be achieved during the lifetime of the County Development Plan.</p> <p>No net loss of green linkages established under the Green Infrastructure Strategy.</p> <p>No spread of invasive species within the County</p> <p>No adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites</p>	<p>Number of sites.</p> <p>Number of sites containing rare or threatened species.</p> <p>Number of rare or threatened species.</p> <p>Details of major fish kills</p> <p>Number of actions achieved.</p> <p>Net area of new green infrastructure established through the development management process.</p> <p>Numbers of new cases identified.</p> <p>Numbers of planning applications accompanied by Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment</p>	<p>Meath County Council/National Parks and Wildlife Service/Inland Fisheries (depending on available information from relevant statutory authorities)</p> <p>Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress. (subject to available resources)</p> <p>Establish baseline, location and extent of invasive species in the county, to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress. (subject to available resources)</p> <p>Meath County Council Planning Department</p>

Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
Population (Human Beings)	Decrease in journey times to work, education and recreation.	Distance and mode of transport to work	Meath County Council - Housing, Planning and Roads sections.
		Number and proportion of residential units permitted within 400m of centre of Settlement	Meath County Council Planning Department
		Gross Floor Area (GFA) and proportion of employment use permitted within 400m of public transport stop.	Meath County Council Planning Department
	Applications for new developments in excess of fifteen residential units or over 0.02 Ha to be accompanied by Design Statement. Rural housing to accord with Rural Housing Design Guidelines	Number of design statements.	Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress. (subject to available resources)
	Delivery of residential development in line with Meath County Settlement Strategy	Number of planning permissions granted in the countryside.	
		Percentage of residential development within each level of the settlement hierarchy	Meath County Council Planning Department
Soil		Percentage of the residential planning permission target achieved in each settlement	Meath County Council Planning Department
		Density of development within each residential planning permission	Meath County Council Planning Department
	Consolidation of Town / Settlement Centre	Number of planning permissions granted within town / village centre zoned lands	Meath County Council Planning Department
	No incidences of soil contamination	Number/severity of recorded pollution incidences	Meath County Council & EPA
	Limited and controlled development of greenfield sites	Area of land lost through greenfield development as per Development Plan process	Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress. (subject to available resources)

Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
Water	Implement fully the recommendations of the three relevant River Basin Districts River Basin Management Plans.	Number of recommendations achieved.	Meath County Council - Planning Department, Water Services Department. Also the Environmental Protection Agency. Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress.(subject to available resources)
	Achieve 'good' quality status of surface waters in line with WFD	Percentage increase in the overall quality of surface waters.	
	Comply and implement fully the most recent EPA guidelines on Septic Tank use and siting as well as other on-site treatment facilities.	Number of permissions granted complying with the guidelines.	
	Maintain and upgrade where necessary all Local Authority operated WWT plants to comply with the relevant legislation.	Compliance with discharge parameters.	
	Improvement in bathing water quality	Achieve and maintain Green Flag status on all beaches.	
	Reduction in development subject to Flood Risk	Number of residential planning applications / permission granted on sites identified as being in Flood Risk Zone A or B	Meath County Council Planning Department
		Gross Floor Area (GFA) of employment development located on sites identified as being in Flood Risk Zone A or B	Meath County Council Planning Department
Air Quality	Improvement in the concentrations of measured parameters such as Particulate Matter, Sulphur Dioxide and nitrogen oxides.	Measurable reductions in concentrations.	EPA Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress. (subject to available resources)
Climate change	Increase in permissions granted for residential development within acceptable distance of public transport hubs.	Percentage of housing developments within specified distance to transport hubs.	Review of EPA standards and data to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress. (subject to available resources)

Material Assets	Increase access to public transport from households.	Provision of walking and cycle infrastructure as proposed under LAP.	Meath County Council
	Increase re-use of brownfield sites for development in preference to greenfield sites.	Ratio of brownfield site development to greenfield sites.	Meath County Council
	Improved treatment at established wastewater treatment facilities.	Compliance with discharge limits.	Meath County Council/EPA
	Reduction in the tonnage of overall waste produced and an increase in the percentage of waste recycled.	Tonnage of waste produced and recycled.	Meath County Council/EPA
Cultural Heritage	No loss of features of architectural or archaeological Importance	Number of recorded features lost.	Meath County Council, The Archaeological Survey monitoring programme, Ireland; Buildings at Risk Register - Heritage Council Ireland
	No deterioration in the quality of Architectural Conservation Areas	Condition of ACAs	Meath County Council
	No impact on the integrity or setting of monuments contained on the Record of Monuments by development granted planning permission.	Number of protected structures impacted by new development.	Meath County Council
	No protected structures to be lost through neglect or misuse.	Number of deletions to the RPS.	Meath County Council
Built Heritage	Reduction in impacts on Built Heritage	Number of planning permission affecting Protected Structures, Structures on the Record of Monuments and Places, Architectural Conservation Areas or NIAH Designed Landscapes	Meath County Council Planning Department

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Landscape	No diminution in the quality of important landscapes.	Number of developments permitted within landscapes of exceptional value and high sensitivity as per the LCA.	Meath County Council
	Implement in full the recommendations of the Landscape Character Assessment for Co. Meath.	Number of recommendations implemented.	Meath County Council

Note on Frequency of Monitoring

It is recommended that data based on planning application data is monitored on an annual basis.

It is recommended that data related to environmental emissions, such as water, air, noise and soil quality are reviewed at two-yearly intervals.

5.0 Conclusion

The Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East, Donacarney, Mornington Local Area Plan 2014-2020 its policies and supporting objectives are key to the future sustainable development of the County. The Plan aims to balance the needs of the future population with the preservation and conservation of environment as prescribed in the County Development Plan. The Plan has a strong focus towards sustainability.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment process has been carried out in conjunction with the Appropriate Assessment of the Plan and the preparation of the Plan itself. This allows for an early indication of the potential environmental effects likely to occur as a result of the implementation of the Plan. As a result changes or alterations to the Plan are made throughout the course of its preparation. Through this process of assessment and re-assessment, it was identified that particular objectives or policies could potentially have a negative environmental impact on particular environmental receptors or indeed on a number of them simultaneously.

In summary, the assessment of the Plan has concluded that its policies and objectives are acceptable and represent a balanced and fair approach to the sustainable development of Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington East, Donacarney and Mornington. Monitoring of the Plan throughout its lifetime will ensure that any potential adverse environmental impacts, unforeseen at this stage will be identified early, so as to prevent any deterioration of the environment. This Plan, as currently presented, balances growth with environmental protection and can deliver a sustainable future for the inhabitants of the area.