

# MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

## SEA STATEMENT

### ON THE

## STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

### OF

## Amendment No. 1 to Ratoath Local Area Plan 2009-2015



BRADY SHIPMAN MARTIN

Landscape, Planning and Environmental Consultants

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**Contents Amendment Record**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose of SEA Statement

This document is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement for Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath Local Area Plan 2009-2015.

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 amendment, 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 strategies;
- Raising awareness of the environmental impacts of the plan's implementation; and
- Encouraging the inclusion of measurable targets and indicators to aid monitoring.

This SEA Statement should be read in conjunction with the SEA Environmental Report and Non-Technical Summary.

### 1.2 Legislative Context

The Strategic Environmental Assessment process is a requirement of European Law. **Directive 2001/42/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27 June 2001, on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment – and referred to hereafter as the 'SEA Directive' – introduced the requirement that SEA be carried out on plans and programmes which are prepared for a number of sectors, including land use planning.

**Article 1** of the SEA Directive states:

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

The SEA Directive was transposed into Irish Law – and became operational on 21 July 2004 – through the introduction of national Regulations, specifically:

- **S.I. No. 435 of 2004** (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by **S.I. No. 200 of 2011** (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011);

and

- **S.I. No. 436 of 2004** (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended by **S.I. No. 201 of 2011** (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

The following sources of guidance have also been used during the preparation of this SEA Statement for the Amendments to the LAP:

- **Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland - Synthesis Report**; Environmental Protection Agency, 2003.
- **Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EEC) Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, Guidelines to Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities on the implementation of the Directive**, The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government; 2004.
- **SEA Pack**; Environmental Protection Agency, 2013
- **SEA Spatial Information Sources**; Environmental Protection Agency, 2014

### 1.3 Content of the SEA Statement

The SEA Directive and the instruments transposing it into Irish Law require that after the adoption of a plan or programme, the plan or programme making authority is required to make a Statement available to the public, the competent environmental authorities and, where relevant, neighbouring countries. This Statement is referred to as an SEA Statement. The SEA Statement includes information summarising:

- 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.

### 1.4 Strategic Environmental Assessment Process

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

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (as it was then) produced national guidelines on how the Strategic Environmental Assessment should be undertaken; *Implementation of SEA Directive 92001/42/EC: Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment – Guidelines for Local Authorities and Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG, 2004). The guidelines inform the content of this Environmental Report. Furthermore, the

EPA has produced detailed guidelines for the SEA process and the topics for inclusion within the SEA; *Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland –Synthesis Report* (EPA, 2003) and the SEA Pack (2013).

## 2 HOW ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS WERE INTEGRATED INTO THE LAP VARIATION








### 2.1 Purpose of SEA Statement

Environmental considerations were integrated into the LAP amendment process at all stages.

This initially comprised updating the baseline situation so as to ensure that the strategy for the implementation of the LAP continued to be either diverted away from the most sensitive areas or that appropriate mitigation measures were integrated into the Plan as it was prepared.

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

**Table 1: Key Stages in the SEA Process**

Stage	Description	Action
<b>Scoping</b>	Scoping of proposed Amendments to the Local Area Plan was carried out in accordance with Article 5 (4) of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and issued to the prescribed Environmental Authorities.  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 proposed Amendments to the Local Area Plan.	Completed 
<b>Consultation with Environmental Authorities</b>	A submission was received from the Environmental Protection Agency.	Completed 
<b>Preparation of Draft Amendments to the Local Area Plan and Draft Environmental Report</b>	The effects on the environment of implementing the objectives and policies as set out in the proposed amendments to LAP were assessed. The proposed amendments were also assessed against the environmental objectives for the plan area. Feedback was incorporated from the on-going amendment and assessment process. Mitigation measures discussed and selected and monitoring incorporated into existing methods.	Completed 
<b>Consultation</b>	Consultation on the Draft Amendments to the Local Area Plan and associated Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessments.	Completed 
<b>Evaluation of submissions</b>	Evaluation of submissions and observations made on the Draft Amendments, Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment.	Completed 
<b>Finalisation of Amendment to Local Area Plan</b>	Completion of the amendment-making and environmental assessment process, including assessment of any proposed material alterations, as appropriate.	Completed 
<b>SEA Statement</b>	Preparation of an SEA Statement identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the amended Local Area Plan.	Completed 
<b>Monitoring the Amended Local</b>	Monitoring significant environmental effects over the lifetime of the amended Local Area Plan	Current

Stage	Description	Action
Area Plan		

## 2.2 Screening

During the initial phase of preparation of Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath LAP was a screening process was undertaken. The screening process assesses the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment and the preparation of an Environmental Report of the impacts of a Plan on the environment.

Under Article 14B of the Planning and Development Regulations, as amended, the requirement for environmental assessment and the preparation is an Environmental Report for the making of a new Local Area Plan or the amending of an existing Local Area Plan applies where ‘the population or the target population of the local area plan is 5,000 persons or more’ (Article 14B(a)).

Therefore, as the Ratoath LAP area has a population of over 9,000 (CSO Census 2011) a Strategic Environmental Assessment and the preparation of an Environmental Report was a mandatory requirement for the amendment of the Ratoath LAP.

## 2.3 Scoping Report and Submissions

The principal purpose of the Scoping stage was to provide an overview of the relevant environmental issues requiring further analysis and consideration in the Environmental Report and ultimately in the making of the amendments to 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.

Furthermore, the scoping aspect involves 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 has been expanded to include:

- The Environmental Protection Agency;
- The Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government,
- The Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs
- The Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food,
- 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 draft plan, – in this case counties include Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly, Kildare and Fingal.

A scoping report was prepared in September 2014 and issued to the statutory consultees. With respect to the Scoping Report for the Ratoath LAP, written submission was received from the Environmental Protection Agency and their attachment of information on SEA guidance, data and sources of information is appreciated. There were no specific comments in relation to the content of the Scoping Report.

## 2.4 Plan Hierarchy

As set out in the amended LAP, the amendment of the Ratoath LAP is not formulated in isolation but instead is framed within a hierarchy of other plans and programmes, most particularly the Meath



County Development Plan 2013-2019 and Variation 1 and Variation 2 to same. A review of higher level plans/programmes, as well as key environmental legislation which informs the environmental protection policies contained within the plan, has been prepared.

## 2.5 Environmental Report

The Draft Environmental Report was prepared alongside the Draft Amendments process and investigates, describes and evaluates the effects on the receiving environment of implementing the amendments. The report also assessed and identified development alternatives for the plan area and identifies the environmentally preferred development strategy.

The preparation of the Environmental Report influenced the formulation of the amendment to the LAP in a number of distinct ways:

- It encourages the wide use of updated background environmental data and formally connects this data to the making of the amendment
- It determined updated 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 amendment.
- It provides greater transparency to the public as to how environmental issues are incorporated and assessed in the plan-making process.

The Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are measures against which the environmental effects of the Amended LAP are tested in order to identify where significant adverse impacts are likely to occur. The Strategic Environmental Objectives are derived from EU and National Strategies and Plans relevant to the development of County Meath.

In accordance with the Directive and SEA Guidelines, the policies and objectives of the Draft Amendments were assessed against the SEOs for likely effects on the environment. The impacts were identified in terms of **quality** of impact, **significance** of impact and **duration** of impact.

The draft Environmental Report was finalised alongside the adopted Amendment No.1 into a Final Environmental Report.

## 2.6 Mitigation

While every effort will be taken to ensure that the impact of the proposed amendment of the LAP is neutral to positive, certain unavoidable negative impacts may occur during the implementation of the LAP. Where appropriate the Environmental Report details mitigation measures to lessen or eliminate identifiable adverse impacts and show the linkages between potential significant effects and proposed mitigation measures.

Similarly, proposals to monitor various environmental receptors of the amended LAP are included. Environmental Indicators present a yardstick against which the plan's success can be monitored.

## 2.7 Consideration of Alternatives

Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 previously introduced the land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of lands (residential land evaluation) for the Ratoath LAP area into the County Development Plan. Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 also underwent full Strategic Environmental Assessment. No changes to the land use zoning objectives could occur as part of this LAP amendment process.

It is noted that SEA Guidelines require that 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. Given that the land use zoning objectives cannot be changed, it is considered that within the scope of the proposed amendment there are no realistic alternatives that are capable of implementation.

## 2.8 Relationship with Appropriate Assessment

The Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath LAP has also undergone Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening as required by Article 6(3) of the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) as implemented in Ireland within the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010* and **S.I. 477 of 2011** (*European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011*). An AA is an assessment of the implications of the plan, alone and in combination with other plans, programmes and projects, on the integrity of Natura 2000 site(s), in view of its(their) conservation objectives.

The findings of the AA are that the amendments will not give rise to likely significant impacts on the Natura 2000 network – refer to separate Appropriate Assessment Report.

### **3 SUBMISSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

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

This section sets out the significant issues that were raised during and after the preparation of the Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath Local Area Plan 2009-2015. Formal submissions were made at the following stages:

- SEA Scoping Consultation: November 2014.
- Public Consultation / Display of Draft Plan and Environmental Report: Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November until Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Each stage is now considered in turn as follows:

#### **3.2 SEA Scoping Consultations: November 2014**

The principal purpose of the Scoping stage was to provide an overview of the relevant environmental issues requiring further analysis and consideration in the Environmental Report and ultimately in the making of the amendments to 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.

Furthermore, the scoping aspect involves 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 2013 the list of statutory consultees has been expanded to include:

- The Environmental Protection Agency;
- The Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government,
- The Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs
- The Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food,
- 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 draft plan, – in this case counties include Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly, Kildare and Fingal.

A scoping report was prepared in September 2014 and issued to the statutory consultees. With respect to the Scoping Report for the Ratoath LAP, written submission was received from the Environmental Protection Agency and their attachment of information on SEA guidance, data and sources of information is appreciated. There were no specific comments in relation to the content of the Scoping Report.

#### **3.3 Public Consultation Draft Stage: 4th November to 16th December 2014**

The Draft Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath LAP 2009-2015, together with accompanying Environmental Report (Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)) and Natura Impact Screening (Appropriate Assessment (AA)), was put on public display from 4th November to 16th December 2014. Written submissions or observations with respect to the Draft Amendment and/or

Environmental Report and/or Appropriate Assessment were invited from members of the public and other interested parties.

The Chief Executive prepared a report on the submissions received, listing the persons or bodies who made submissions, summarising the issues raised and providing a response and making recommendations in relation to the manner in which those issues should be addressed in the Draft Amendments.

Only one submission related to the SEA, this being from the EPA. General comments included:

- There would be merits to including a commitment to link the environmental/SEA related monitoring, to the Plan implementation and reporting procedure.
- Following adoption of the amendments, an SEA statement should be prepared and sent to any environmental authority consulted during the SEA Process.

With regards to the specifics of the Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath LAP the EPA Submission commented

In the Environmental Report, consideration should be given to amending the text of Objective FR OBJ 1 as follows: '**To implement** the recommendations of the Fingal East Meath Flood Risk Assessment Study (FEM FRAMS)...' This was adhered to.

The Chief Executive's Report on submissions to the Draft Amendment No. 1 included SEA review and comments, where required.

## 4 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

The issue of alternatives is a critical function of the SEA process and is necessary to evaluate the likely environmental consequences of alternative development strategies for the plan area within the constraints imposed by environmental conditions.

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.

Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 previously introduced the land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of lands (residential land evaluation) for the Ratoath LAP area into the County Development Plan Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 also underwent full Strategic Environmental Assessment. No changes to the land use zoning objectives could occur as part of this LAP amendment process.

As part of Variation No. 2, all available and undeveloped lands identified with an A2 'New Residential' land use zoning objective were assessed and evaluated against a number of assessment criteria, one of which was environmental impact. In this way, it is considered that alternatives were considered as part of the variation process which was also subject to a separate Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process.

It is noted that SEA Guidelines require that 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. Given that the land use zoning objectives cannot be changed, it is considered that within the scope of the proposed amendment there are no realistic alternatives that are capable of implementation.

## 5 MONITORING OF THE LOCAL AREA PLAN

### 5.1 Introduction

Monitoring of the amended Ratoath 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 LAP. Under Article 10 of the SEA Directive monitoring, must be carried out of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the amended LAP *'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 amended LAP. 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 LAP. 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, The Fisheries Board, as well as others in the pursuit of environmental conservation and protection through existing environmental monitoring procedures.

### 5.2 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 Table 2. The indicators are based on the Strategic Environmental Objectives and have been derived from knowledge of the existing environmental issues within the LAP area and also from legislation, guidelines and higher level Plans. It is acknowledged that some of these monitoring indicators will carry on beyond the lifetime of the current local area plan.

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 amended LAP are well defined with regard to the environment. Conversely where the objectives of the amended LAP have a negative impact on the environment, it may be necessary to review the objectives of the amended LAP 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 amended LAP.

**Table 2: Proposed Monitoring Indicators**

<b>Environmental Category</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Selected indicators</b>	<b>Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)</b>
<b>Biodiversity - Flora and Fauna</b>	No loss of important and/or designated habitats	Number of sites.	Meath County Council / National Parks and Wildlife Service/Inland Fisheries ( <i>depending on available information from relevant statutory authorities</i> )
	No deterioration in the quality of protected areas	Number of sites containing rare or threatened species.	Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's Report on progress.
	No loss of protected species	Number of rare or threatened species.	( <i>subject to available resources</i> ).
	No fish kills during the lifetime of the LAP	Details of major fish kills	
	All actions contained within the Biodiversity Plan to be achieved during the lifetime of the LAP.	Number of actions achieved.	
	No net loss of green linkages established under the Green Infrastructure Strategy.	Net area of new green infrastructure established through the development management process.	
No spread of invasive species within the LAP	Numbers of new cases identified.	Establish baseline, location and extent of invasive species in LAP, to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's Report on progress. ( <i>subject to available resources</i> )	
No adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites	Numbers of planning applications accompanied by Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment	Meath County Council Planning Department	
<b>Population (Human Beings)</b>	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 0.2ha. to be	Number of design statements.	Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's	

Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
	<p>accompanied by Design Statement. Rural housing to accord with Rural Housing Design Guidelines</p> <p>Delivery of residential development in line with Meath County Settlement Strategy</p> <p>Consolidation of Town / Settlement Centre</p>	<p>Number of planning permissions granted in the countryside.</p> <p>Percentage of residential development within each level of the settlement hierarchy</p> <p>Percentage of the residential planning permission target achieved in each settlement</p> <p>Density of development within each residential planning permission</p> <p>Number of planning permissions granted within town / village centre zoned lands</p>	<p>Report on progress. <i>(subject to available resources)</i></p> <p>Meath County Council Planning Department</p> <p>Meath County Council Planning Department</p> <p>Meath County Council Planning Department</p> <p>Meath County Council Planning Department</p>
<b>Soil</b>	<p>No incidences of soil contamination</p> <p>Limited and controlled development of greenfield sites</p>	<p>Number/severity of recorded pollution incidences</p> <p>Area of land lost through greenfield development as per Development Plan process</p>	<p>Meath County Council &amp; EPA</p> <p>Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's Report on progress. <i>(subject to available resources)</i></p>
<b>Water</b>	<p>Implement fully the recommendations of the relevant River Basin Districts River Basin Management Plans.</p> <p>Achieve quality status of surface waters in line with WFD</p> <p>Comply and implement fully the most recent EPA guidelines on Septic Tank use and siting as well as other on-site treatment facilities.</p> <p>Maintain and upgrade where necessary all Local Authority operated WWT plants to comply with the relevant legislation.</p> <p>Improvement in bathing water quality</p>	<p>Number of recommendations achieved.</p> <p>Percentage increase in the overall quality of surface waters.</p> <p>Number of permissions granted complying with the guidelines.</p> <p>Compliance with discharge parameters.</p>	<p>Meath County Council - Planning Department, Water Services Department. Also the Environmental Protection Agency.</p> <p>Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's Report on progress. <i>(subject to available resources)</i></p>



Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
	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 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  Meath County Council Planning Department
<b>Air Quality</b>	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 Chief Executive's Report on progress. <i>(subject to available resources)</i>
<b>Climate change</b>	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 Chief Executive's Report on progress. <i>(subject to available resources)</i>
<b>Material Assets</b>	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  Meath County Council/EPA
	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.	
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	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

Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
	No deterioration in the quality of Architectural baseline No protected structures to be lost through neglect or misuse. 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 Number of additions / deletions to the RPS. Number of monuments impacted by new development.	- Heritage Council Ireland Meath County Council Meath County Council Meath County Council
<b>Built Heritage</b>	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
<b>Landscape</b>	No diminution in the quality of important landscapes.  Implement in full the recommendations of the Landscape Character Assessment for Co. Meath.	Number of developments permitted within landscapes of exceptional value and high sensitivity as per the LCA. Number of recommendations implemented.	Meath County Council  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.

# **MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **Amendment No. 1 to Ratoath Local Area Plan 2009-2015**

### **STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: ADDENDUM REPORT**



**BRADY SHIPMAN MARTIN**  
Landscape, Planning and Environmental Consultants

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AA</b>	Appropriate Assessment
<b>CFRAM</b>	Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management
<b>DoAHG</b>	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
<b>DoCENR</b>	Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
<b>DoECLG</b>	Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
<b>EC</b>	European Community
<b>EEC</b>	European Economic Community
<b>EIA</b>	Environment Impact Assessment
<b>EIS</b>	Environment Impact Statement
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Agency
<b>ER</b>	Environmental Report
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FRA</b>	Flood Risk Assessment
<b>GIS</b>	Geographical Information Systems
<b>IED</b>	Industrial Emissions Directive
<b>IPC</b>	Integrated Pollution Control
<b>IPPC</b>	Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control
<b>NHA/pNHA</b>	Natural Heritage Area / proposed Natural Heritage Area
<b>NIAH</b>	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
<b>NIR</b>	Natura Impact Report
<b>NIS</b>	Natura Impact Statement
<b>NPWS</b>	National Parks and Wildlife Service
<b>OPW</b>	Office of Public Works
<b>P.E.</b>	Population Equivalent
<b>P/P</b>	Plan or Programme
<b>RBD</b>	River Basin District
<b>RBMP</b>	River Basin Management Plan
<b>RMP</b>	Records of Monuments and Places
<b>SAC/cSAC</b>	Special Area of Conservation / candidate Special Area of Conservation
<b>SEA</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment
<b>S.I.</b>	Statutory Instrument
<b>SPA</b>	Special Protection Area
<b>WFD</b>	Water Framework Directive
<b>WWTP</b>	Waste Water Treatment Plant



## GLOSSARY

Appropriate Assessment (and/or Habitats Directive Assessment):	<p>An assessment undertaken in accordance with Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) of the implications of a plan, programme or project, either on its own or in combination with other plans or projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in view of the conservation objectives of that site.</p> <p>In Ireland the Natura 2000 network comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Protection Areas (SPAs) protected under the Birds Directive,</li> <li>• Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) / candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) protected under the Habitats Directive, and</li> <li>• Ramsar sites (wetlands, classified under the Ramsar Convention 1971).</li> </ul>
Aquifers:	A water bearing rock which readily transmits water to wells and springs.
Baseline environment:	A description of the present state of the environment of the plan or programme area.
Biodiversity:	The variability among living organisms from all sources including, <i>inter alia</i> , terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part. This includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. Biological diversity covers all plant and animal species, as well as micro-organisms, genetic diversity within species and the ecosystems/habitats of which they are part.
Birds Directive:	Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds. This Directive has been codified under EU Birds Directive 2009/147/EC of 30 November 2009.
Cumulative effects:	Effects on the environment that result from incremental changes caused by the strategic action together with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. These effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time or space.
Data:	Includes environmental information, proxy information, and any other relevant statistical information.
Designated authority:	An organisation that must be consulted in accordance with the SEA Regulations.
Ecology:	Relating to the study of living organisms, the relationships between organisms and the relationships between organisms and their environment.
Ecosystem:	A dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit. (Article 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992)
Environmental assessment: ( <i>i.e.</i> for the purposes of SEA)	The preparation of an environmental report, the carrying out of consultations, the taking into account of the environmental report and the results of the consultations in decision-making and the provision of information on the decision (in accordance with Articles 4 to 9 of the SEA Directive).
Environmental characteristics:	Environmental resources, issues and trends in the area affected by the plan or programme.
Environmental indicator:	An environmental indicator is a measure of an environmental variable over

	time, used to measure achievements of environmental objectives and targets.
Environmental objective:	Environmental objectives are broad, overarching principles which should specify a desired direction of environmental change.
Environmental receptors:	Include biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological) and landscape as listed in the SEA Directive. This list is not exhaustive, and can include other receptors which may arise for a particular plan or programme.
Environmental Report (ER): (i.e. for the purposes of SEA)	A document required by the SEA Directive as part of a strategic environmental assessment which identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan or programme.
Environmental targets:	A target usually underpins an objective often having a time deadline that should be met and should be accompanied by limits or thresholds.
Groundwater:	All water which is below the surface of the ground in the saturation zone and in direct contact with the ground or subsoil. This zone is commonly referred to as an aquifer which is a subsurface layer or layers of rock or other geological strata of sufficient porosity and permeability to allow a significant flow of groundwater or the abstraction of significant quantities of groundwater.
Greenhouse Gas:	Gaseous constituents of the atmosphere that absorb/trap infrared (thermal) radiation which is mainly emitted by the earth's surface and thereby influence the earth's temperature.
Habitats Directive:	Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna
Hierarchy of plans:	Both higher and lower level plan or programme relevant to the plan or programme being assessed.
Industrial Emissions Directive (IED):	Council Directive 2010/75/EU of 24 November 2010 consolidates seven existing EU Directives, including the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive, the Solvents Directive, the Large Combustion Plants Directive, and the Waste Incineration Directive into a single legislative instrument. The IED seeks 'to achieve a high level of protection for the environment taken as a whole' from harmful effects of industrial activities.
Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive:	Council Directive 2008/1/EC of 15 January 2008 (which replaced the Council Directive 1996/61/EC of 24 September 1996) requires industrial and agricultural activities with a high pollution potential to have a permit. This permit can only be issued if certain environmental conditions are met, so that the companies themselves bear responsibility for preventing and reducing any pollution they may cause. IPPC licencing came into effect in Ireland on the 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2004; however, the IPPC Directive, and licencing requirements, have now been consolidated under, and recast by, the Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75/EU.
Interrelationships:	Associations or linkages, related to environmental impact of the proposed plan or programme usually on environmental receptors.
Key environmental issues:	Those significant environmental issues, which are of particular relevance and significance within a plan or programme area and/or the zone of influence of that plan or programme. These issues should be identified during SEA Scoping process.
Material assets:	Critical infrastructure essential for the functioning of society such as: electricity generation and distribution, water supply, wastewater treatment,

	transportation <i>etc.</i>
Mitigation measures:	Measures to avoid/prevent, minimise/reduce, or as fully as possible, offset/compensate for any significant adverse effects on the environment, as a result of implementing a plan or programme.
Monitoring:	A continuing assessment of environmental conditions at, and surrounding, the plan or programme. This determines if effects occur as predicted or if operations remain within acceptable limits, and if mitigation measures are as effective as predicted. The primary purpose of monitoring is to identify significant environmental effects which arise during the implementation stage against those predicted during the plan or programme preparation stage.
Natural Heritage Area / proposed Natural Heritage Area:	<p>An area which has been designated as such by way of a Natural Heritage Order under Section 18 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, or that, pending a decision by the Minister under Section 17 or 18 of the Act, is subject of a notice under Section 16 of that Act.</p> <p>An area considered important under national legislation for the habitats present or which holds species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection.</p>
Natura Impact Report	(NIR); the report prepared following Appropriate Assessment of potential impact on Natura 2000 sites as required under the Habitats Directive which presents information on the assessment and the process of collating data on a <b>plan or programme</b> and its potential significant impacts on Natura 2000 site(s).
Natura Impact Statement	(NIS); the statement prepared following Appropriate Assessment of potential impact on Natura 2000 sites as required under the Habitats Directive which presents information on the assessment and the process of collating data on a <b>project</b> and its potential significant impacts on Natura 2000 site(s).
Non-technical summary	A summary of the findings of the ER summarised under the headings listed in Annex 1 of the SEA Directive that can be readily understood by decision-makers and by the general public. It should accurately reflect the findings of the ER.
Plan or Programme:	<p>Including those co-financed by the European Community as well as any modifications to them that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government,</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions.</li> </ul>
Post-mitigation residual impact:	Environmental effect that remains after mitigation measures have been employed.
Reasonable alternatives:	Alternatives should take into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme. There can be different ways of fulfilling the plan or programme objectives, or of dealing with environmental problems. The alternatives should be realistic, capable of implementation and should fall within the legal and geographical competence of the authority concerned.
River Basin:	Means the area of land from which all surface water run-off flows, through a sequence of streams, rivers and lakes into the sea at a single river mouth,

	estuary or delta.
River Basin Districts:	Administrative areas for coordinated water management and are comprised of multiple river basins (or catchments), with cross-border basins ( <i>i.e.</i> those covering the territory of more than one Member State) assigned to an international RBD.
Scoping:	The process of deciding the content and level of detail of an SEA, including the key environmental issues, likely significant environmental effects and alternatives which need to be considered, the assessment methods to be employed, and the structure and contents of the Environmental Report.
Screening:	The determination of whether implementation of a plan or programme would be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment. The process of deciding whether a plan or programme requires a SEA.
SEA Directive:	Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment'.
SEA Statement:	A statement summarising:  How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme How the ER, the opinions of the public, and designated authorities, and the results of transboundary consultations have been taken into account The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives.
Significant effects:	Effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.
Special Area of Conservation / candidate Special Area of Conservation:	Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
Special Protection Area:	An area designated under the European Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.
Statutory Instrument:	('secondary legislation') An order, regulation, rule, scheme or bye-law made in exercise of a power conferred by statute and governed by the Statutory Instruments Act 1947.
Surface water:	Means inland waters, except groundwater, which are on the land surface (such as reservoirs, lakes, rivers, transitional waters, coastal waters and, under some circumstances, territorial waters) which occur within a river basin.
Water body:	A discrete and significant element of surface water such as a river, lake or reservoir, or a distinct volume of groundwater within an aquifer.
Water Framework Directive:	(WFD) Council Directive 2000/60/EC of 23 October 2000 establishes a framework for Community action in the field of water policy. Promotes a new approach to water management through river basin planning for inland surface waters, estuarine waters, coastal waters and groundwater.

## NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

### 1 Introduction

Meath County Council adopted the Amendment No. 1 to the Ashbourne Local Area Plan 2009-2015 on 2nd March 2015.

The Amendments have been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Environmental Report on the likely impact of the amendments has been prepared. The purpose of the Environmental Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of the amendments. This report should be read in conjunction with the Ratoath Local Area Plan 2009-2015 incorporating Amendment No.1.


Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic process for predicting, evaluating and mitigating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental effects of a national, regional or local plan before it is adopted. Its purpose is to give the public and other interested parties an opportunity to comment on, and to be kept informed of, decisions about a specific plan and how they are made. It allows for the integration of environmental considerations into decision-making at an early stage.







The Strategic Environmental Assessment process is a requirement of European Law. **Directive 2001/42/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27 June 2001, on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment – and referred to hereafter as the ‘SEA Directive’ – introduced the requirement that SEA be carried out on plans and programmes which are prepared for a number of sectors, including land use planning.

The SEA Directive was transposed into Irish Law – and became operational on 21 July 2004 – through the introduction of national Regulations, **S.I. No. 435 of 2004** (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by **S.I. No. 200 of 2011** (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011); and **S.I. No. 436 of 2004** (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended by **S.I. No. 201 of 2011** (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

This section of the report outlines the key stages in the development of the assessment in accordance with the Directive and the aforementioned regulations.

**Table NTS-1: Key Stages in the SEA Process**

Stage	Description	Action
<b>Scoping</b>	<p>Scoping of proposed Amendments to the Local Area Plan was carried out in accordance with Article 5 (4) of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and issued to the prescribed Environmental Authorities.</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 proposed Amendments to the Local Area Plan.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 

Stage	Description	Action
<b>Consultation with Environmental Authorities</b>	A submission was received from the Environmental Protection Agency.	Completed 
<b>Preparation of Draft Amendments to the Local Area Plan and Draft Environmental Report</b>	The effects on the environment of implementing the objectives and policies as set out in the proposed amendments to LAP were assessed. The proposed amendments were also assessed against the environmental objectives for the plan area. Feedback was incorporated from the on-going amendment and assessment process. Mitigation measures discussed and selected and monitoring incorporated into existing methods.	Completed 
<b>Consultation</b>	Consultation on the Draft Amendments to the Local Area Plan and associated Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessments.	Completed 
<b>Evaluation of submissions</b>	Evaluation of submissions and observations made on the Draft Amendments, Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment.	Completed 
<b>Finalisation of Amendment to Local Area Plan</b>	Completion of the amendment-making and environmental assessment process, including assessment of any proposed material alterations, as appropriate.	Completed 
<b>SEA Statement</b>	Preparation of an SEA Statement identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the amended Local Area Plan.	Completed 
<b>Monitoring the Amended Local Area Plan</b>	Monitoring significant environmental effects over the lifetime of the amended Local Area Plan	<i>Current</i>

## 2 Scope of the Amendments to the Local Area Plan

The over-riding objective of the amendment process is to ensure that the Ratoath LAP is consistent with the County Development Plan as varied, and to incorporate the aspects of the LAP – as already included within Variation 2 to the County Development Plan (adopted May 2014) – into the Amended Local Area Plan. Therefore, the Amendment No.1 to the Ratoath LAP includes:

- the land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of residential and employment lands, and associated policies and objectives;

together with

- the land use zoning objectives map.

The land use zoning objectives map for Ratoath as included in the proposed amendments is directly replicated from Volume 5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 introduced by Variation No. 2 as referred to above. No changes to the land use zoning objectives could occur as part of this LAP amendment process.

The Land Use Zoning Objectives and Map together with the Additional Policies & Objectives and Residential Land Evaluation for the Ratoath 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.

In conclusion, the scope of the amendments is 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.*

Further to the above, the amendments to the LAP also include for minor corrections / updating to the naming / referencing of bodies and documents that have changed since the adoption of the LAP, e.g. to the current County Development Plan 2013-2109; to 2011 Census, to changes in name of Government Department (e.g. to Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht instead of Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government), etc.

## 3 The Plan Area

The current Local Area Plan (LAP) for Ratoath dates from 2009. Subject to limitations set out under Sub-section 2.3 Scope of the LAP Amendment Process (above), Meath County Council proposed to amend the LAP for Ratoath. The boundary for the amended Local Area Plan is as provided on the land use zoning map for Ratoath introduced to the County Development Plan via Variation No. 2 in May 2014.

The population of Ratoath in 2011, as recorded in the CSO Census of Population 2011, was 9,043 persons, an increase of 24% on the 7,249 persons recorded in the 2006 Census of Population.

Ratoath is designated as a Small Town in the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. It is envisaged that Small Towns and Villages will grow on a managed basis in line with services and facilities available (CDP, page 15). In addition it is stated that the *"broad approach of the Development Plan for Small Towns is to manage growth in line with the ability of local services to cater for growth and respond to local demand. Relatively small and locally financed businesses are expected to locate in Small Towns. However, other economic investment opportunities should be considered and supported where sustainable and in keeping with the size and services of the town. Retail is likely to be mainly in the convenience category, with a small supermarket and possible local centres serving only the town and its local catchment area"* (CDP, page 64).

#### 4 Plan Hierarchy

The Environmental Report includes a review of the hierarchy of international, national, regional and local plans, policies and programmes of relevance to the Amendments to the LAP. Principal amongst these is the relationship of the LAP to the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, as varied.

#### 5 Alternatives

Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 previously introduced the land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of lands (residential land evaluation) for the Ratoath LAP area into the County Development Plan. No further changes to the land use zoning objectives could occur as part of this LAP amendment process.

Given that the land use zoning objectives cannot be changed, and that the over-riding objectives of the amendment process is to ensure consistency between the County Development Plan and the Local Area Plan, it is considered that within the scope of this proposed amendment there are no realistic alternatives that are capable of implementation.

#### 6 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) and Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) have been developed for the plan area and these are used to assess the potential environmental impact of the amendments to the LAP. The SEOs provide for assessment indicators for human beings, flora and fauna (biodiversity), air quality and climate, water, flooding, waste water, transport, landscape cultural heritage *etc.* The full listing of these SEOs is provided below:

Environmental Parameter	Ref:	Objective
Biodiversity	B1	Conserve and where possible enhance the diversity of designated and non-designated habitats and species avoiding irreversible losses
	B2	Promote measures to protect biodiversity by creating and improving habitats, where possible
	B3	Provide for protection of internationally and nationally designated sites, including Natura 2000 Sites ( <i>i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) &amp; Special Protection Areas (SPAs)</i> ) and



Environmental Parameter	Ref:	Objective
		Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) & proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs).
	<b>B4</b>	Avoid damage by development to designated wildlife sites and protected species, and associated ecological corridors/ linkages
<b>Population</b>	<b>P1</b>	Improve people's quality of life based on high-quality residential, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns
	<b>P2</b>	Provide opportunities for sustainable public access to wildlife and wild places at appropriate locations
<b>Human Health</b>	<b>H1</b>	Minimise noise, vibration and emissions from traffic, industrial processes and extractive industry
<b>Soil</b>	<b>S1</b>	Maintain the quality of soils
	<b>S2</b>	Maximise the sustainable re-use of brownfield lands, and maximise and prioritise the use of the existing built environment rather than developing greenfield lands
	<b>S3</b>	Minimise the consumption of non-renewable sand, gravel and rock deposits
	<b>S4</b>	Minimise the amount of waste to landfill
<b>Water</b>	<b>W1</b>	Protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystems
	<b>W2</b>	Promote sustainable water use based on a long-term protection of available water resources
	<b>W3</b>	Reduce progressively discharges of polluting substances to waters
	<b>W4</b>	Mitigate the effects of floods and droughts including vulnerability to climate change. (extreme weather, sea level rise, coastal erosion)
<b>Air</b>	<b>A1</b>	Reduce all forms of air pollution
	<b>A2</b>	Minimise emissions of greenhouse gases to contribute to a reduction and avoidance of human-induced global climate change
	<b>A3</b>	Reduce waste of energy, and maximise use of renewable energy sources
	<b>A4</b>	Assess, plan and manage adaptation to climate change impacts
	<b>A5</b>	Reduce the need to travel
<b>Material Assets</b>	<b>MA1</b>	Maximise use of the existing built environment
	<b>MA2</b>	Avoid flood risk and/or coastal erosion in selecting sites and zoning of lands for development
	<b>MA3</b>	Maintain water abstraction, run-off and recharge within carrying capacity (including future capacity) at environmentally

Environmental Parameter	Ref:	Objective
		sustainable levels.
	<b>MA4</b>	Maintain the quality of and access to assets such as aquifers, aggregates, ports, motorways, and all physical and social infrastructures.
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<b>CH1</b>	Promote the protection and conservation of the cultural, including architectural and archaeological, heritage
<b>Landscape</b>	<b>L1</b>	Conserve and enhance valued natural and historic landscapes and their character and features within them

**Table NTS-2 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs)**

In the environmental assessment each policy and objective is individually assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) discussed above. The potential effects within the assessment exercise were categorized, as per the guidelines, into the following broad environmental impacts:

- Potential Positive impact:** A change which improves the quality of the environment.  
**Potential Neutral impact:** A change which does not affect the quality of the environment.  
**Potential Negative impact:** A change which reduces or lessens the quality of the environment.  
**Uncertain impact:** The nature of any impact can not be ascertained at this stage.

## 7 Findings of the Environmental Assessment

The Amendment No.1 to the Ratoath LAP 2009-2015 includes for:

- the insertion of a number of new policies and objectives;
- the amendment of aspects / part of existing policies and objectives, and
- the deletion of a number of existing policies and objectives;
- in some instances for the minor amendment, updating of references, documents, *etc.* within existing policies and objectives

A full assessment of the proposed amendment is set out in Table 7.1 of this Environmental Report. The overall finding of the assessments is that the proposed amendments will have a predominantly neutral or positive environmental effect on the environmental objectives and indicators of the LAP area.

## 8 Mitigation and Monitoring

While every effort was taken to ensure that the impact of the amended LAP is neutral to positive, certain unavoidable negative impacts may occur during the implementation of the LAP. Where appropriate, the Environmental Report details mitigation measures to lessen or eliminate identifiable adverse impacts and show the linkages between potential significant effects and proposed mitigation measures.

Similarly, proposals to monitor various environmental receptors of the amended LAP as it is implemented over the lifetime of the plan are also included.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Meath County Council adopted the Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath Local Area Plan 2009-2015 on 2nd March 2015.

The Amendments have been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Addendum Report on the likely impact of the amendments has been prepared. The purpose of the Addendum Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of the amendments. This report should be read in conjunction with the Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace Local Area Plan 2009-2015 incorporating Amendment No.1 and the Environmental Report prepared for the Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace Local Area Plan 2009-2015.

This Addendum Report / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is carried out in order to comply with the requirements for SEA in Ireland as set out in national Regulations (refer to sub-section 1.3 Legislative Context below).

The Draft Environmental Report went on public display with the proposed Amendments to the Local Area Plan. Submissions were received during this consultation period and were reviewed and an assessment of the environmental impacts of any changes / further amendments was conducted and included in the final Addendum Report as prepared. This report is accompanied with a Non-technical Summary Report and an SEA Statement.

### 1.2 SEA Definition

Strategic Environmental Assessment is a systematic process for predicting, evaluating and mitigating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental effects of a national, regional or local plan before it is adopted. Its purpose is to give the public and other interested parties an opportunity to comment on, and to be kept informed of, decisions about a specific plan and how they are made. It allows for the integration of environmental considerations into decision-making at an early stage.

While Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is generally used for describing the process of environmental assessment which is limited to individual projects, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the term given to the environmental assessment of plans, programmes, and other strategic actions, which set the policy, as well as planning and development, context within which individual developments / projects occur. The objectives of the SEA process are to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to promote sustainable development by contributing to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of specified Plans and Programmes<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.3 Legislative Context

The Strategic Environmental Assessment process is a requirement of European Law. **Directive 2001/42/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27 June 2001, on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment – and referred to hereafter as the ‘SEA Directive’ – introduced the requirement that SEA be carried out on plans and programmes which are prepared for a number of sectors, including land use planning.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)

**Article 1** of the SEA Directive states:

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

The SEA Directive was transposed into Irish Law – and became operational on 21 July 2004 – through the introduction of national Regulations, specifically:

- **S.I. No. 435 of 2004** (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by **S.I. No. 200 of 2011** (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011);

and

- **S.I. No. 436 of 2004** (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended by **S.I. No. 201 of 2011** (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

The following sources of guidance have also been used during the preparation of this Environmental Report for the Amendments to the LAP:

- **Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland - Synthesis Report**; Environmental Protection Agency, 2003.
- **Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EEC) Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, Guidelines to Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities on the implementation of the Directive**, The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government; 2004.
- **SEA Pack**; Environmental Protection Agency, 2013
- **SEA Spatial Information Sources**; Environmental Protection Agency, 2014

#### 1.4 SEA Process

The SEA process is broken down into a number of sequential steps. At each stage of the process the impacts of the amended plan or programme on the environment and the public is assessed. Where it was assessed that the amended plan or programme may conflict with the environmental objectives then mitigation measures are proposed.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment process for the amendments to the LAP is documented throughout this Environmental Report and the scope of the LAP and the methodology employed are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively.

The key stages in the SEA process are highlighted in Table 1.1, together with progress made to date in relation to the assessment of the Amendments to the LAP.

**Table 1.1: Key Stages in the SEA Process**

Stage	Description	Action
<b>Scoping</b>	<p>Scoping of proposed Amendments to the Local Area Plan was carried out in accordance with Article 5 (4) of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and issued to the prescribed Environmental Authorities.</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 proposed Amendments to the Local Area Plan.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 
<b>Consultation with Environmental Authorities</b>	<p>A submission was received from the Environmental Protection Agency.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 
<b>Preparation of Draft Amendments to the Local Area Plan and Draft Environmental Report</b>	<p>The effects on the environment of implementing the objectives and policies as set out in the proposed amendments to LAP were assessed. The proposed amendments were also assessed against the environmental objectives for the plan area. Feedback was incorporated from the on-going amendment and assessment process. Mitigation measures discussed and selected and monitoring incorporated into existing methods.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 
<b>Consultation</b>	<p>Consultation on the Draft Amendments to the Local Area Plan and associated Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessments.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 
<b>Evaluation of submissions</b>	<p>Evaluation of submissions and observations made on the Draft Amendments, Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 
<b>Finalisation of Amendment of Local Area Plan</b>	<p>Completion of the amendment-making and environmental assessment process, including assessment of any proposed material alterations, as appropriate.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 
<b>SEA Statement</b>	<p>Preparation of an SEA Statement identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the amended Local Area Plan.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 
<b>Monitoring the Amended Local Area Plan</b>	<p>Monitoring significant environmental effects over the lifetime of the amended Local Area Plan</p>	<p><b>Current</b></p>

## 2. SCOPE OF AMENDMENTS TO LOCAL AREA PLAN

### 2.1 Introduction

Meath County Council has amended the 5 Local Area Plans for Ashbourne, Drogheda Southern Environs, Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace, Dunshaughlin and Ratoath.

The over-riding objective of the amendment process is to ensure that the 5 LAPs are consistent with the County Development Plan as varied, and to incorporate aspects of the LAPs – as previously included within Variation 2 to the County Development Plan – into the respective amended Local Area Plan.

### 2.2 Background

The Ratoath Local Area Plan 2009-2015 was adopted on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2009. The making of the LAP was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening.

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.

Objective **CS OBJ 2** of the County Development Plan required the Planning Authority:

*To publish a variation to the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 within one year of the adoption of the Development Plan to introduce land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of lands for Ashbourne, Drogheda Environs, Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace, Dunshaughlin and Ratoath. Following the making of this variation, the Planning Authority shall publish amendments to the Local Area Plans of Ashbourne, Drogheda Environs, Dunboyne/ Clonee/Pace, Dunshaughlin and Ratoath to ensure that they are consistent with the Development Plan, as varied, and particularly the settlement strategy, core strategy and household allocations outlined in Table 2.4.*

To give effect to the requirements of CS OBJ 2 outlined above, **Variation No. 2** to the Meath County Development Plan was made on 19th May 2014. The Variation collectively forms Volume 5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 and is entitled '*Written Statement & Development Objectives for Urban Centres*'.

Therefore, Variation 2 introduced land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of lands (residential land evaluation) in the 5 LAP areas, including within the Ratoath area. As noted above the introduction of the land use zoning objectives was required pursuant to the Core Strategy of the adopted County Development Plan. Variation No. 2 also included the introduction of policies and objectives for each of 5 urban centres following the undertaking of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan to inform same. The additional policies and objectives for the LAP area as set out in Variation 2 to the County Development Plan These policies and objectives

(with some changes to policy and objective referencing) are included in the Amendment No.1 to the Ratoath LAP 2009-2015.

Under Variation 2, the land use zoning objectives map also identified the lands in the Ratoath LAP area required to accommodate the household allocation as provided for under the Core Strategy. The land evaluation that took place for the LAP area under Variation 2 was 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 the LAP area will be assessed following the making of the next County Development Plan in line with the population projections contained therein. A similar land evaluation process was prepared for lands identified for employment generating uses and a sequential approach taken to the delivery of such lands.

Variation 2, including the introduction of land use zoning objectives map and an order of priority for the release of lands (residential land evaluation) for the Ratoath LAP area was subject to full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

### 2.3 Scope of the LAP Amendment Process

The over-riding objective of the amendment process was to ensure that the Ratoath LAP (as well as the other 4 LAPs for the urban centres) is consistent with the County Development Plan as varied, and to incorporate the aspects of the LAP – as already included within Variation 2 to the County Development Plan – into the Amended Local Area Plan. Therefore, Amendment No.1 to the Ratoath LAP includes:

- the land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of residential and employment lands, and associated policies and objectives

together with

- the land use zoning objectives map

The land use zoning objectives map for Ratoath as included in Amendments No. 1 is directly replicated from Volume 5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 introduced by Variation No. 2 as referred to above. No changes to the land use zoning objectives could occur as part of this LAP amendment process.

The Land Use Zoning Objectives and Map together with the Additional Policies & Objectives and Residential Land Evaluation for the Ratoath 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.

In conclusion, the scope of the Amendment No. 1 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.*

Further to the above, the amendments to the LAP also include for minor corrections / updating to the naming / referencing of bodies and documents that have changed since the adoption of the LAP, e.g. to the current County Development Plan 2013-2109; to 2011 Census, to changes in name of Government Department (e.g. to Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht instead of Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government), etc.

## 2.4 The Plan Area

The current Local Area Plan (LAP) for Ratoath, which was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening, dates from 2009. Subject to limitations set out under Sub-section 2.3 Scope of the LAP Amendment Process (above), Meath County Council proposed to amend the LAP for Ratoath. The boundary for the amended Local Area Plan is as provided on the land use zoning map for Ratoath introduced to the County Development Plan via Variation No. 2 in May 2014. Additional Policies & Objectives and the Residential Land Evaluation used for establishing the land use zoning objectives for Ratoath – as already included within Variation 2 to the County Development Plan 2013-2019. These policies and objectives (*with some changes to policy and objective referencing*) are included in the Draft Amendment No.1 to the Ratoath LAP 2009-2015.

The population of Ratoath in 2011, as recorded in the CSO Census of Population 2011, was 9,043 persons, an increase of 24% on the 7,249 persons recorded in the 2006 Census of Population.

Ratoath is designated as a Small Town in the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. It is envisaged that Small Towns and Villages will grow on a managed basis in line with services and facilities available (CDP, page 15). In addition it is stated that the *“broad approach of the Development Plan for Small Towns is to manage growth in line with the ability of local services to cater for growth and respond to local demand. Relatively small and locally financed businesses are expected to locate in Small Towns. However, other economic investment opportunities should be considered and supported where sustainable and in keeping with the size and services of the town. Retail is likely to be mainly in the convenience category, with a small supermarket and possible local centres serving only the town and its local catchment area”* (CDP, page 64).

The County Development Plan includes the following specific objectives in relation to Small Towns (CDP, page 65):

<b>SS OBJ 12</b>	To ensure that Small Towns develop to cater for locally generated development and that growth occurs in tandem with local services, infrastructure and demand.
<b>SS OBJ 13</b>	To ensure that Small Towns grow in a manner that is balanced, self sustaining and supports a compact urban form and the integration of land use and transport.
<b>SS OBJ 14</b>	To ensure that in Small Towns, no proposal for residential development should increase the existing housing stock (including permitted units) of the town by more than 15% within the lifetime of the Development Plan.

### 3. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment Process

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

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (as it was then) produced national guidelines on how the Strategic Environmental Assessment should be undertaken; *Implementation of SEA Directive 92001/42/EC: Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment – Guidelines for Local Authorities and Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG, 2004). The guidelines inform the content of this Environmental Report. Furthermore, the EPA has produced detailed guidelines for the SEA process and the topics for inclusion within the SEA; *Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report* (EPA, 2003) and the SEA Pack (2013).

#### 3.2 Screening

During the initial phase of preparation of Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath LAP a screening process was undertaken. The screening process assesses the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment and the preparation of an Environmental Report of the impacts of a Plan on the environment.

Under Article 14B of the Planning and Development Regulations, as amended, the requirement for environmental assessment and the preparation is an Environmental Report for the making of a new Local Area Plan or the amending of an existing Local Area Plan applies where ‘the population or the target population of the local area plan is 5,000 persons or more’ (Article 14B(a)).

Therefore, as Ratoath has a population of 9,043 (CSO Census 2011) a Strategic Environmental Assessment and the preparation of an Environmental Report is a mandatory requirement for the amendment of the Ratoath LAP.

#### 3.3 Scoping Report and Submissions

The principal purpose of the Scoping stage is to provide an overview of the relevant environmental issues requiring further analysis and consideration in the Environmental Report and ultimately in the making of the amendments to 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.

Furthermore, the scoping aspect involves 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 has been expanded to include:

- The Environmental Protection Agency;
- The Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government,
- The Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs
- The Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food,
- 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 draft plan, – in this case counties include Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly, Kildare and Fingal.

A scoping report was prepared in September 2014 and issued to the statutory consultees. With respect to the Scoping Report for the Ratoath LAP, written submission was received from the Environmental Protection Agency and their attachment of information on SEA guidance, data and sources of information is appreciated. There were no specific comments in relation to the content of the Scoping Report.

### 3.4 Draft Environmental Report and Submissions

The Amendment No.1 was assessed for likely impacts on the environment as a result of implementation of the amended plan and a draft Environmental Report was prepared. This draft Environmental Report was put on public consultation alongside the proposed Amendments to the Local Area Plan. Submissions received during this period were considered and recommendations made were contained within the Chief Executives Report.

### 3.5 SEA Addendum Report

Following adoption of Amendment No.1 to the Local Area Plan by the Council, this SEA Addendum Report was prepared to outline the SEA process undertaken and how the SEA process has influenced the Amendment No.1. In addition proposed mitigation and monitoring indicators are outlined to ensure the continued protection of the environment during the implementation of the amended Plan.

### 3.6 Relationship with Appropriate Assessment

The Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath LAP has also undergone Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening as required by Article 6(3) of the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) as implemented in Ireland within the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010* and **S.I. 477 of 2011** (*European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011*). An AA is an assessment of the implications of the plan, alone and in combination with other plans, programmes and projects, on the integrity of Natura 2000 site(s), in view of its (their) conservation objectives.

The findings of the AA Stage 1 Screening are that the amendments will not give rise to likely significant impacts on the Natura 2000 network – refer to separate Appropriate Assessment: Stage 1 Screening Report.

### 3.7 Plan Hierarchy

As set out at sections 1.2 and 1.3 above, the Amendment No. 1 of the Ratoath LAP is not formulated in isolation but instead is framed within a hierarchy of other plans and programmes, most particularly the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and Variation 1 and Variation 2 to same. A review of higher level plans/programmes, as well as key environmental legislation which informs the environmental protection policies contained within the plan, has been prepared.

### 3.8 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs)

Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, which introduced the land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of residential and employment lands in the Ratoath LAP area, underwent full Strategic Environmental Assessment. The policies and objectives contained within the proposed amendment to the Ratoath LAP will be assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) contained within the adopted Environmental Report of Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.

### 3.9 Consideration of Alternatives

As set out at Section 2 of this report, it is noted that Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 previously introduced the land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of lands (residential land evaluation) for the Ratoath LAP area into the County Development Plan. Variation 2 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 also underwent full Strategic Environmental Assessment. No changes to the land use zoning objectives could occur as part of this LAP amendment process.

It is noted that SEA Guidelines require that 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. Given that the land use zoning objectives cannot be changed, it is considered that within the scope of this proposed amendment there are no realistic alternatives that are capable of implementation.

### 3.10 Environmental Assessment of Amendments

The principal component of the SEA involves a broad environmental assessment of the policies and objectives of the Plan, where appropriate. The proposed methodology utilizes the concept of matrices both to assess the environmental impact and to present the conclusions. Each policy and objective will be individually assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) discussed above.

The potential effects within the assessment exercise were categorized, as per the guidelines, into the following broad environmental impacts:

<b>Potential Positive impact:</b>	A change which improves the quality of the environment.
<b>Potential Neutral impact:</b>	A change which does not affect the quality of the environment.
<b>Potential Negative impact:</b>	A change which reduces or lessens the quality of the environment.
<b>Uncertain impact:</b>	The nature of any impact can not be ascertained at this stage.

Finally a discussion is provided on the objectives and policies and on the significance (profound, moderate, imperceptible) of the identified impact; the duration (temporary, short-term, medium-term, long-term or permanent) of the identified impact; the type (cumulative, irreversible, synergistic) of the identified direct or indirect impact, in accordance with EPA guidelines.

### 3.11 Mitigation and Monitoring

While every effort was taken to ensure that the impact of the amendment of the LAP is neutral to positive, certain unavoidable negative impacts may occur during the implementation of the amended LAP. Where appropriate the Environmental Report details mitigation measures to lessen

or eliminate identifiable adverse impacts and show the linkages between potential significant effects and proposed mitigation measures.

Similarly, proposals to monitor various environmental receptors of the amended LAP are included. Environmental Indicators present a yardstick against which the plan's success can be monitored.

### **3.12 Difficulties Encountered**

A sizeable volume of information was available given the data collected in the recent review of the County Development Plan and in the making of Variation 2 to the County Development Plan. No particular difficulties were encountered in the strategic environmental assessment process or in the preparation of this environmental report.

## 4. REVIEW OF RELEVANT PLANS POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

### 4.1 Introduction

The Amendment No.1 to the Ratoath LAP 2009-2015 is framed within a hierarchy of spatial plans which range from the international down to site specific level. These plans are informed by International, National and Regional level policy guidelines. This hierarchy of plans, programmes, policies, strategies, etc. sets the legislative and policy framework by which the LAP must be formulated. The National, Regional and County strategies and policies play a central role in establishing higher level agendas and the county level plan objectives. The Ratoath LAP is required to conform to and translate the objectives of these higher levels plans, in particular the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, to a town level basis.

### 4.2 Relevant Plans, Policies and Programmes

The following plans, programmes, policies, strategies and guidelines are relevant to the making of the amendment to the LAP.

#### 4.2.1 Planning and Development

##### **National Development Plan (NDP) Transforming Ireland: A Better Quality of Life for All 2007-2013**

The objective of this investment development plan is to deliver a better quality of life for all within a strong and vibrant economy that maintains International competitiveness and promotes regional development, social justice and environmental sustainability

##### **National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020**

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

It is noted that in Feb 2013 the Department announced the Government's intention to abandon the National Spatial Strategy and replace it with a revised strategy.

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

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

##### **Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area - National Transport Authority, (2011-2030)**

The draft strategy document constitutes a strategic transport plan for the GDA for the next 20 years. A number of fundamental tenets underlie the draft strategy objectives. These include the adoption of a hierarchy of transport users with pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the top of

the hierarchy and consequently these users should have their safety and convenience needs considered first. A second key principle is the requirement that land use planning and transport planning need to be considered together in the overall development of the GDA region.

#### **Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, as varied**

To ensure that development is co-ordinated with the provision of necessary public infrastructure and implementation of strategic planning policies such as the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, the LAP must comply with the Core Strategy which is contained within the Meath CDP 2013-2019.

Reflecting the development themes of the Meath CDP 2013-2019 and Variation No.1, the purpose of the Core Strategy is to provide a medium to longer term quantitatively based strategy for the spatial development of the towns and villages within the County.

The Meath County Development Plan, as varied and its relevance to the proposed Amendment to the LAP are discussed in greater detail under Chapter 2 Scope of Amendments to Local Area Plan above.

#### **Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns & Villages) (2009)**

The aim of these guidelines is to set out the key planning principles which should be reflected in development plans and local area plans, and which should guide the preparation and assessment of planning applications for residential development in urban areas. The guidelines highlight the importance of energy efficiency in building and development and sets out a series of high level aims for successful and sustainable residential development in urban areas

#### **Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005**

The Rural Housing Guidelines seek to ensure that sustainable housing development patterns are supported in rural areas.

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

This 2007 policy statement provides for an integrated approach to housing and planning in Ireland. The policy recognises that continued strong demand for housing presents major challenges in respect of the planning of new housing and associated services.

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

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

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

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

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

This document represents the transport policy for Ireland for the period 2009-2020. The key goals are to reduce overall travel demand, to maximise the efficiency of the transport network, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, to reduce transport emissions and to improve the accessibility of transport. The policy sets out 49 Key Actions for achieving sustainable transport.



## 4.2.2 Environmental Plans and Policies

### Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) as amended

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC) seeks to improve or maintain the ecological and physico-chemical quality of all waterbodies – rivers, lochs, groundwater, transitional waters (estuaries) and coastal waters. Its ultimate objective is to achieve “good ecological and chemical status” for all Community waters by 2015.

### Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)

The Directive aims to establish a common framework for assessing and reducing the risk that floods within the European Union pose to human health, the environment, property and economic activity. This Directive requires Member States to assess if all water courses and coast lines are at risk from flooding, to map the flood extent and assets and humans at risk in these areas and to take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce this flood risk.

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

This directive establishes a regime which sets underground water quality standards and introduces measures to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater. The directive establishes quality criteria that takes account local characteristics and allows for further improvements to be made based on monitoring data and new scientific knowledge. The groundwater directive complements the Water Framework Directive.

### EC Bathing Water Quality Directive, (2006/7/EC) 2006

This Directive strengthens the rules guaranteeing bathing water quality. It supplements the Water Framework Directive on water protection and management.

### Shellfish Directive, (2006/113/EC), 2006

The Directive concerns the quality of shellfish waters, i.e. the waters suitable for the development of shellfish (bivalve and gastropod molluscs). It applies to those coastal and brackish waters which need protection or improvement in order to allow shellfish to develop and to contribute to the high quality of shellfish products intended for human consumption.

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

This Directive ensures far-reaching protection for all of Europe's wild birds, identifying 194 species and sub-species among them as particularly threatened and in need of special conservation measures.

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

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

In conjunction with the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive forms the backbone of EU nature protection legislation. The main goal of the Habitats Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain, protect or restore natural habitats, animal and plant species to a favourable conservation status, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance. In Ireland, these habitats include raised bogs, active blanket bogs, turloughs, sand dunes, machair (flat sandy plains on the north and west coasts), heaths, lakes, rivers, woodlands, estuaries and sea inlets.

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

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

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

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

This Directive requires plan-makers to carry out an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before the plan or programme is adopted. There are two statutory instruments which transposed the SEA Directive into Irish Law. See Chapter 3 of this report for further detail.

#### **Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC) (97/11/EC),**

Under the Directive Member States are required to carry out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) of certain public and private projects, before they are authorised, where it is believed that the projects are likely to have a significant impact on the environment. The Directive of 1985 and its amendments have been codified by Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011.

#### **European Landscape Convention 2000**

The 2000 European Landscape Convention, adopted in Florence (and was ratified by Ireland in 2002), requires a commitment to introduce policies on landscape protection and management.

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

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

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

#### **Fingal East Meath Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study 2012 (FEM FRAMS)**

Fingal County Council along with project partners Meath County Council and the Office of Public Works (OPW) commissioned the Fingal East Meath Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (FEM FRAMS) in 2008 to investigate the high levels of existing flood risk in the Fingal East Meath area. The study included detailed hydraulic modelling of 23 rivers and streams, 3 estuaries and the Fingal and Meath coastline. The watercourses are defined as High Priority Watercourses (HPW) or Medium Priority Watercourses (MPW) and modelled in according detail.

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

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

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

In relation to planning the guidelines require planning authorities to:

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

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

Submitted under Article 4 of Directive 2009/28/EC this plan sets out Ireland's renewable energy targets to be achieved by 2020. Ireland's overall target is to achieve 16% of energy from renewable sources by 2020.

#### **Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009**

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

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

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

#### **Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, as amended**

The Wildlife Act is Ireland's primary national legislation for the protection of wildlife. It covers a broad range of issues, from the designation of nature reserves, the protection of species, regulation of hunting and controls in wildlife trading. The Act provides strict protection for nearly all birds, 22 other animal species, and 86 plant species. These species are protected from injury, or from disturbance / damage to their breeding or resting place wherever these occur.

#### **Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)**

The 2004 guidelines were reissued in 2011 following the transfer of architectural heritage protection functions to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Part IV of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2011 sets out the legislative provisions for the protection and conservation of our architectural heritage.

### **National Climate Change Strategy (2007-2012)**

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

### **Draft National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2014-2024**

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has published a Draft National Landscape Strategy for Ireland. This strategy is being prepared in compliance with the European Landscape Convention. The main objective of the Strategy will be to set out a framework which seeks the right balance between management, planning and protection of the landscape.

### **North East Regional Waste Management Plan (2005-2010)**

Meath is located in the North East region of the country in terms of waste management planning. The Waste Management Plan sets out the proposed policy for integrated waste management within the region and places an emphasis on waste prevention and minimisation through source reduction, producer responsibility and public awareness and the management of recovery/recycling/disposal of regional waste.

Following the amalgamation of three waste regions, Dublin, North East and Midlands, Dublin City Council is the lead authority progressing the preparation of a new waste management plan. The public consultation phase for this plan has commenced.

### **County Meath Heritage Plan (2007-2011)**

The first County Meath Heritage Plan sets out 77 actions to be carried out over the five year Plan period to protect, manage and conserve the heritage of the county. The Heritage Plan seeks to complement the statutory land use plans *e.g.* through the collection of relevant data, and by undertaking actions to ensure that heritage policy is effectively implemented.

### **County Meath Biodiversity Action Plan (2008-2012)**

The County Meath Biodiversity Action Plan was adopted in April 2010 and provides a framework for the conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage throughout the county. The Biodiversity Action Plan sets out a range of actions in terms of the biodiversity of County Meath.

### **County Meath Wetlands and Coastal Habitats Survey**

This survey was carried out to determine and map the type, extent and condition of wetlands and coastal habitats in the county. The study focuses on sites which lie outside of designated areas and as such do not currently receive protection from either the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 or under the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997. This project is an action of the County Meath Heritage Plan 2007-2011.

## 5. ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE OF THE PLAN AREA

### 5.1 Introduction

A description of the environmental baseline was provided in the Environmental Assessment for the drafting of the Ratoath LAP in 2009. In the following a summary of the baseline environment is provided with updates provided as appropriate.

### 5.2 Human Beings

Ratoath is designated as a 'Small Town' in the settlement hierarchy of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and the population in 2011 was 9,043 persons (CSO Census of Population), an increase of over 24% on the 2006 census. Previously the town experienced a period of exceptional growth between 2002-2006, when the population almost doubled from 3,794 to 7,249 persons.

Settlement Strategy Objectives SS OBJ 12 to 14 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013- 2019 seeks to ensure that Small Towns develop to cater for locally generated development in tandem with local services infrastructure and demand. Small Towns should also grow in a balanced self-sustaining manner supporting a compact urban form and the integration of land use and transport.

At the time of the preparation of the 2013-2019 County Development Plan, the Ratoath LAP, as adopted in 2009, contained approximately 26.3 hectares of available and uncommitted residentially zoned land. In addition, there were further extant planning permissions. On the basis of the amount of residentially zoned lands required to accommodate the household allocation for Ratoath of 311 units as contained in the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan (Table 2.4 refers), there remained a surplus of 16.7 hectares.

Therefore, as Ratoath will continue to grow, Variation 2 to the County Development Plan (May 2014) identified the lands needed to accommodate the household allocation set out in the provision for residential units under the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan. Variation 2 introduced land use zoning objectives and an order of priority for the release of lands (residential land evaluation) in the Ratoath LAP area. This identification was 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 existing built up area of the town. A similar land evaluation process was undertaken for employment land uses.

Human Health is a consideration under the SEA Directive however the availability of data is limited. It is proposed to assess this aspect of the environment in terms of the interaction between humans and the relevant environmental issues such as drinking water quality, air quality, *etc.*

### 5.3 Flora and Fauna (Biodiversity)

The Biodiversity of the area is not only valuable in terms of its intrinsic worth to the inhabitants of the area, it also plays a role in the provision of clean air and water, healthy soils, food, building materials and medicines. The principal habitat types within the LAP area include, but are not limited to, agricultural grassland and cultivated land, open spaces, river valley, trees and hedgerows.

The Broadmeadow River which flows through the town is an important natural heritage asset to Ratoath. Likewise the group of preserved trees on Main Street helps to create a unique setting emphasising the rural context of the town's setting.

It is noteworthy that the LAP lands - or any lands within 10km of the LAP lands - do not include any areas designated as Natura 2000 sites (*i.e.* Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA)). Likewise there are no Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) or proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) within or close the study lands.

#### 5.4 Soil and Geology

Like most of County Meath, the Ratoath area is underlain by Carboniferous limestone. While the carboniferous limestone often consists of impure argillaceous limestone of shale (Calp), the limestone is purer in some areas, including in the Ashbourne / Dunshaughlin / Dunboyne region. The limestone is overlain with a complicated pattern of glacial tills and fluvio-glacial gravels and sands, with shale enriched compact till of Irish Sea provenance common across all of east Meath.

Topography is generally flat to gently undulating and the Local Area Plan area lies on grey brown podzolics. The lighter texture grey brown podzolics are good all-purpose soils, while the heavier textured members are highly suited to pasture production.

#### 5.5 Air Quality & Climatic Factors

The Environmental Protection Agency is involved in air quality monitoring and has installed a number of air quality monitoring stations throughout Ireland. There is no detailed information available for the plan area with the one monitoring station, for Co. Meath, being located in Navan. The County of Meath is primarily located within Zone D (primarily smaller settlements and rural areas outside of cities and major centres).

Road traffic has now become the greatest source of air pollution generally. In urban areas, concern has clearly shifted to a range of pollutants associated with this source which may be considered relatively new in the context of air quality control. The most important of these pollutants are NO<sub>2</sub>, particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM<sub>10</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO) and a wide variety of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), including carcinogens such as benzene. Advances in engine technology and fuel development will, it is predicted, offset any rise in tail pipe emissions from increased car usage due to an increased population. The context to the plan area is rural in nature where travel is an essential part of daily life. Therefore it is important that a good quality road infrastructure is provided and indeed alternatives to the private car are encouraged where possible.

The Climate Change Strategy and Energy Management Action Plan 2011-2012 prepared by the Meath Local Authorities sets out the strategy for County Meath in mitigating and adapting to climate change. It aims to clearly identify the solutions to the challenge of reducing energy related emissions. It also outlines the actions to be taken to meet the requirements as set out in the National Climate Change Strategy. In this context land use changes can and will have far-reaching implications for climate change that could include changes to commuter patterns with the building of further housing developments and the resultant increase in GHGs, SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, VOC and other pollutant emissions.

#### 5.6 Groundwater, Water Quality and Surface Water

Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The Water Framework Directive establishes a framework to protect all waters through integrated management and assessment of the interactions between different water types. One of the conditions of this Directive is that Member States keep a Register of all the water bodies that must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how the water is used by people and by

wildlife. It is therefore necessary to protect the rivers, loughs and coastal waters within the Plan area for the purpose and use of drinking, fishing, nature conservation, bathing and other water-related activities. Surface run-off from a variety of activities can adversely impact upon local water bodies and resources.

Water quality is a significant issue for a host of reasons, including human health, wildlife conservation, amenity and recreational use *etc.* and is therefore a central focus in striving for sustainable development. Wastewater disposal can be a significant constraint to development due to the deleterious effect it may have on the quality of water bodies within the Plan area.

Ratoath sites on the boundary between the Swords and Lusk-West WFD Groundwater bodies. The former is poorly productive, while the latter is productive fissured bedrock. The aquifers are local important and moderately productive.

The groundwater vulnerability for the Local Area Plan shows that the area overlies an aquifer classed as predominantly low vulnerability with an area of moderate/high vulnerability passing east – west through the centre of the town.

The elimination of surcharges and overflows from the sewer networks will assist in improving the water quality in the Broadmeadow River thereby enhancing the amenity value of the river as it flows through Ratoath and Ashbourne.

## 5.7 Water Supply

Ratoath is currently served by the East Meath Regional Water Supply Scheme (RWSS). The River Boyne at Roughgrange is the main source for the East Meath RWSS. The water is then treated at Staleen waterworks and is distributed to the Ratoath area via Windmill Hill reservoir. The scheme is augmented from a groundwater source at Curragha 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.

Irish Water is taking over water services operations from Local Authorities on a phased basis which is to be completed by the end of 2017.

## 5.8 Waste water

Construction of the Ashbourne/Ratoath/Kilbride Sewerage Scheme - Stage 2 is complete and has approximately 8,000 p.e. capacity available to serve the combined settlements. The objective of the scheme is to improve the overall wastewater collection and transfer facilities for Ashbourne, Ratoath, Kilbride and environs with due regard to the future physical development strategy for the area. The Scheme has been designed to provide a modern, efficient and effective wastewater collection and transfer system for the immediate and long-term requirements of the development areas of Ashbourne, Ratoath and Kilbride.

## 5.9 Flooding

As part of Variation 2 to the County Development Plan a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out for Ratoath which identifies areas affected by flooding within the development boundary. Land use zoning objectives / development zonings have had regard to the findings of the Flood Risk Assessment and have already been amended accordingly.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment & Management Plan undertaken as part of Variation No. 2 of the County Development Plan indicated that the majority of lands identified for development in Ratoath were not at risk of flooding. Exceptions to this related to lands primarily in the vicinity of Moulden Bridge arising from fluvial flooding from the Broadmeadow River.

The FEM FRAMS highlighted possible risk from conveyance/blockage from the R125 bridge and a culvert on the tributary of the Broadmeadow River. Any Flood Risk Assessments undertaken in this area at development management stage is to include consideration of the residual flood risk related to blockage.

## **5.10 Material Assets**

### **5.10.1 Transportation**

The location of Ratoath at the junction of the R155 and R125 regional roads and the increasing use of this road network as an outer orbital route for Dublin City has resulted in significantly increased traffic and particular HGV traffic passing through the centre of the town. In line with trends for increasing car ownership and economic development, it is anticipated that these levels will continue rise. In addition increasing traffic levels between the R155 and Ashbourne using the Ballybin Road and connecting Ratoath with Ashbourne has recently created a new traffic desire line.

The growth in population and especially the increase in the number of vehicles on the roads are resulting in pressure on road infrastructure. The pivotal location of Ratoath within the County and its proximity to Dublin means that improvements to the existing road network are of critical importance to the economic development of Ratoath and the quality of life for its inhabitants.

Ratoath is not served by an operational rail link and the main type of public transport operating to and from Ratoath are public bus services.

### **5.10.2 Waste**

The Local Authorities of Meath, Louth, Cavan and Monaghan form the North East region with respect to Waste Management Planning. The current Waste Management Plan for the region is the replacement North East Regional Waste Management Plan 2005 – 2010. The objective of the Waste Management Plan is to develop a sustainable approach to managing resources, by minimising the waste that is generated in a safe and environmentally sound manner and disposing of wastes in accordance with current National and EU waste legislation and policies.

There are no licensed waste facilities within the plan area however there are a number within the county in Gormanston and Duleek. In addition, a recovery and disposal facility for inert Construction & Demolition waste is under development at Gormanston in County Meath. A Waste to Energy facility at Carranstown has also been developed in line with the North East Regional Waste Management Plan.

## **5.11 Landscape**

The Ratoath area has a high quality landscape much of it of notable cultural and historical significance. Furthermore the natural diversity of the landscape coupled with cultural features such as the archaeological monuments, stonewalls, hedgerows, woodlands, field patterns, settlements and buildings has given the area and the county its distinctive character.

A group of mature trees in the main street of Ratoath are protected. There are no protected views or prospects which affect the plan area.



## 5.12 Cultural and Architectural Heritage

The origins of Ratoath date from early Christian times. The establishment of a Norman settlement is indicated by the striking presence of the Motte and Bailey (Monument No. ME044-00701) in the centre of the town. The enclosures associated with these settlements have given the centre of Ratoath its unique curved road pattern with an intricate network of laneways, many overgrown or derelict, connecting the original enclosures with areas to the north on the Curragha Road and to the south on the Fairyhouse Road.

The town core forms part of an area of Archaeological Interest and apart from the Motte and Bailey there are 3 other historical site/monuments identified in the Sites and Monument's Record for County Meath: a Cross Site (Mon. No. ME044-005); a Church Site (Mon. No. ME044-006) and a Town/Font (Mon. No. ME044-034).

In addition, there are 11 structures in Ratoath which are registered as protected structures in the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and these act as focal points for the town. The Protected Structures, which are listed in Table 8 of the LAP include Holy Trinity Church, Parochial House and Outbuildings; Ratoath Church of Ireland; Ratoath Glebe House; and Ratoath Manor (Nursing Home).

## 6. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES, TARGETS AND INDICATORS

### 6.1 Introduction

Article 5 of the SEA Directive requires the identification of environmental protection objectives. These Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) assist in the prediction, description and monitoring of impacts on the environment as a result of the Local Area Plan.

The Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) provide a basis for the assessment of the environmental effects of the Amendment to the LAP. The SEOs are distinct from the objectives and policies contained within the LAP; they are framed in such a way as to enable the amendments to be fully assessed in environmental terms. The SEOs are set out in Table 6.1.

Environmental Parameter	Ref:	Objective
<b>Biodiversity</b>	<b>B1</b>	Conserve and where possible enhance the diversity of designated and non-designated habitats and species avoiding irreversible losses
	<b>B2</b>	Promote measures to protect biodiversity by creating and improving habitats, where possible
	<b>B3</b>	Provide for protection of internationally and nationally designated sites, including Natura 2000 Sites ( <i>i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) &amp; Special Protection Areas (SPAs)</i> ) and Natural Heritage Areas ( <i>NHAs</i> ) & proposed Natural Heritage Areas ( <i>pNHAs</i> ).
	<b>B4</b>	Avoid damage by development to designated wildlife sites and protected species, and associated ecological corridors/ linkages
<b>Population</b>	<b>P1</b>	Improve people's quality of life based on high-quality residential, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns
	<b>P2</b>	Provide opportunities for sustainable public access to wildlife and wild places at appropriate locations
<b>Human Health</b>	<b>H1</b>	Minimise noise, vibration and emissions from traffic, industrial processes and extractive industry
<b>Soil</b>	<b>S1</b>	Maintain the quality of soils
	<b>S2</b>	Maximise the sustainable re-use of brownfield lands, and maximise and prioritise the use of the existing built environment rather than developing greenfield lands
	<b>S3</b>	Minimise the consumption of non-renewable sand, gravel and rock deposits
	<b>S4</b>	Minimise the amount of waste to landfill
<b>Water</b>	<b>W1</b>	Protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystems

Environmental Parameter	Ref:	Objective
	<b>W2</b>	Promote sustainable water use based on a long-term protection of available water resources
	<b>W3</b>	Reduce progressively discharges of polluting substances to waters
	<b>W4</b>	Mitigate the effects of floods and droughts including vulnerability to climate change. (extreme weather, sea level rise, coastal erosion)
<b>Air</b>	<b>A1</b>	Reduce all forms of air pollution
	<b>A2</b>	Minimise emissions of greenhouse gases to contribute to a reduction and avoidance of human-induced global climate change
	<b>A3</b>	Reduce waste of energy, and maximise use of renewable energy sources
	<b>A4</b>	Assess, plan and manage adaptation to climate change impacts
	<b>A5</b>	Reduce the need to travel
<b>Material Assets</b>	<b>MA1</b>	Maximise use of the existing built environment
	<b>MA2</b>	Avoid flood risk and/or coastal erosion in selecting sites and zoning of lands for development
	<b>MA3</b>	Maintain water abstraction, run-off and recharge within carrying capacity (including future capacity) at environmentally sustainable levels.
	<b>MA4</b>	Maintain the quality of and access to assets such as aquifers, aggregates, ports, motorways, and all physical and social infrastructures.
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<b>CH1</b>	Promote the protection and conservation of the cultural, including architectural and archaeological, heritage
<b>Landscape</b>	<b>L1</b>	Conserve and enhance valued natural and historic landscapes and their character and features within them

Table 6.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs)

## **7. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF AMENDEMENT TO LOCAL AREA PLAN**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this section of the Environmental Report is to highlight the potential conflicts, if they are present, between the stated policies and objectives contained in the amended Local Area Plan with the Strategic Environmental Objectives. Furthermore the assessment examines the potential impact arising from the Plan's implementation of its policies and objectives on sensitive environmental receptors.

In some instances there is little or no relationship between the various policies / objectives of the LAP and the respective environmental receptor. Where this occurs no further discussion is deemed necessary. This has been determined through an initial screening of the Local Area Plan policies and objectives which ascertains if policies are likely to have a positive, negative or neutral impact on the environment. This process allows the assessment to focus more efficiently on the pertinent issues.

Assessment tables are provided indicating where the screening process has in the first instance identified an impact which may potentially arise due to the implementation of policy / objective contained within the LAP. Similarly where a conflict exists between a Strategic Environmental Objective and a Policy/Objective this is noted and discussed.

### **7.2 Environmental Assessment**

The Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath LAP 2009-2015 includes for:

- the insertion of a number of new policies and objectives;
- the amendment of aspects / part of existing policies and objectives, and
- the deletion of a number of existing policies and objectives;
- in some instances for the minor amendment, updating of references, documents, *etc.* within existing policies and objectives

An environmental assessment of the likely impact of inserting new policies and objectives, together with amending aspects / parts of existing policies and the likely impact of deleting existing policies and objectives is provided in the Assessment Table 7.1.

An overall environmental assessment of the likely impact of minor amendments, updating of references, documents, *etc.* is provided in the Assessment of Minor Amendments / Updates Table 7.2. The environment impacts of all of these amendments are neutral, neutral/positive or positive.

### **7.3 Environmental Assessment of Draft Plan Policies & Objectives**

This phase of this assessment identified the potential impact on the environment as a result of the policies and objectives of the Local Area Plan.

Table 7.1 - Assessment of Policies and Objectives with Mitigation Assessment

Town Plan Objective/Policy	Human Beings	Soil and Geology	Biodiversity	Surface Water	Groundwater	Flooding	Air Quality	Climate Change	Noise	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Energy	Wastewater	Water	Transport	Waste Management	Comments / Mitigation
SP 1 (i)																	Mitigated by INF POL 20, 25 & 30 and HER POL 1-11
SP 1 (ii)																	Mitigated by INF POL 20, 25 & 30 and HER POL 1-11
SS POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SS POL 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SS OBJ 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SS OBJ 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SS OBJ 3																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SS OBJ 4																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
DEV MAN POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
FP OBJ 1																	Mitigated by INF POL 30 and HER POL 1-11
FP OBJ 2																	Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
FP OBJ 3																	Mitigated by INF POL 30 and HER POL 1-11
RES POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 3																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 4																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 5																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 6																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 7																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 8																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 9																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 10																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 11																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 12																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES POL 13																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES OBJ 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES OBJ 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RES OBJ 3																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
ECON DEV POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
ECON DEV POL 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
ECON DEV POL 3																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
ECON DEV POL 4																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
ECON DEV OBJ 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
ECON DEV OBJ 2																	Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
ECON DEV OBJ 3																	Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
ECON DEV OBJ 4																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
ECON DEV OBJ 5																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
ECON DEV OBJ 6																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
ECON DEV OBJ 7																	Mitigated by HER POL 1-11, INF POL 3-4 and SS POL 2
ECON DEV OBJ 8																	Mitigated by HER POL 1-11 and SS POL 2
ECON DEV OBJ 9																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
TOU POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
TOU OBJ 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
TOU OBJ 2																	Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
TOU OBJ 3																	Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
TOU OBJ 4																	Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
RET DEV POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RET DEV POL 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RET DEV POL 3																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RET DEV POL 4																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RET DEV OBJ 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
RET DEV OBJ 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
PET STAT 1																	Mitigated by INF POL 3, 4, 20, 25 & 30 and HER POL 1-11
RET DEV POL 5																	Mitigated by assessment criteria in Policy
RET DEV POL 6																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SHOP POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SHOP POL 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SHOP POL 3																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
DER POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
DER POL 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 3																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 4																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 5																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 6																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 7																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 8																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 9																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 10																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER POL 11																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
HER OBJ 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 2																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 3																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 1																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact

Table 7.1 - Assessment of Policies and Objectives with Mitigation Assessment

Town Plan Objective/Policy	Human Beings	Soil and Geology	Biodiversity	Surface Water	Groundwater	Flooding	Air Quality	Climate Change	Noise	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Energy	Wastewater	Water	Transport	Waste Management	Comments / Mitigation
SOC OBJ 2	Green						Green										Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 3	Green																Mitigated by INF POL 30 and HER POL 1-11
SOC OBJ 4	Green		Blue			Blue				Blue							Mitigated by INF POL 30 and HER POL 1-11
SOC POL 4	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 5	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 6	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 7	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 5	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 6	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 8	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 9	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 7	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 10	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 11	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 12	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 13	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 14	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 8	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 9	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 10	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 11	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 12	Green		Blue							Blue							Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
SOC OBJ 13	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 14	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 15	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 16	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 15	Green		Blue							Blue							Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
SOC OBJ 16	Green		Blue							Blue							Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
SOC OBJ 17	Green		Blue							Blue							Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
SOC OBJ 18	Green		Blue							Blue							Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
SOC POL 17	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 18	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 19	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 20	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 21	Green									Green	Green						Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC POL 22	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
SOC OBJ 19	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 1			Blue							Blue	Blue				Green		Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF POL 2															Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 3															Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 4															Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 5															Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 6															Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 7															Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 8															Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 9	Green		Blue							Blue					Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 10	Green		Blue							Blue					Green		Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF POL 11	Green		Blue							Blue					Green		Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF POL 12	Green		Blue							Blue					Green		Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF POL 13	Green		Blue							Blue					Green		Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF POL 14	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 15	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 16	Green			Green		Green				Green					Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 17	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 18	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 19	Green									Green					Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 20	Green												Green	Green	Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 21	Green												Green	Green	Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 22	Green												Green	Green	Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 23	Green												Green	Green	Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 24	Green												Green	Green	Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 25	Green												Green	Green	Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 26	Green												Green	Green	Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 27	Green			Green	Green	Green									Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 28	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 29	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 30	Green			Green	Green	Green									Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 31	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 32	Green			Green	Green	Green									Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 33	Green			Green	Green	Green									Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 34	Green			Green	Green	Green									Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 35	Green										Green				Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 36	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 37	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 38	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 39	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 40	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 41	Green														Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact

Table 7.1 - Assessment of Policies and Objectives with Mitigation Assessment

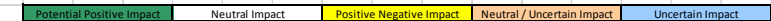
Town Plan Objective/Policy	Human Beings	Soil and Geology	Biodiversity	Surface Water	Groundwater	Flooding	Air Quality	Climate Change	Noise	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Energy	Wastewater	Water	Transport	Waste Management	Comments / Mitigation
INF POL 42	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 43	Green									Blue							Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 1	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 2	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 3	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 4	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 5	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 6	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 7	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 8	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 9	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 10	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 11	Green	Blue				Blue				Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11 and SS POL 2
INF OBJ 12	Green	Blue				Blue				Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11 and SS POL 2
INF OBJ 13	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 14	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 15	Green		Green		Green					Green							Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 16	Green									Blue							Mitigated by HER POL 1-11
INF OBJ 17	Green												Green	Green			Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 18	Green												Green	Green			Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 19	Green												Green				Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 20	Green		Green	Green	Green		Green										Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 21	Green		Green	Green	Green												Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 22	Green		Green	Green	Green											Green	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 23	Green										Green						Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 24	Green	Blue								Blue	Blue						Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 25	Green	Blue			Blue					Blue	Blue						Mitigated by INF POL 30 and HER POL 1-11



### 7.4 Environmental Assessment of Proposed Amendments to the Draft Plan Policies & Objectives

Following on from public consultation of the draft amendments to the LAP, and consideration of submissions received, a number of minor amendments were proposed. These were further assessed for potential impacts in the context of the implementation of the LAP.

Town Plan Objective/Policy	Human Beings	Soil and Geology	Biodiversity	Surface Water	Groundwater	Flooding	Air Quality	Climate Change	Noise	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Energy	Wastewater	Water	Transport	Waste Management	Comments / Mitigation
SP (iii)	Green																Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 20													Green	Green			Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 25													Green				Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 26													Green				Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF POL 29																	Overall Neutral / Positive Impact
INF OBJ 18														Green	Green		Overall Neutral / Positive Impact



In general the potential impacts of the amendments is predominately positive or neutral for all environmental factors as the amendments are consistent with higher level plans – especially the County Development Plan – provide for consolidation of the town; clarity and order on the release of residential and employment lands, and incorporate flood risk assessments in land use objectives.

## **8. MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Article 5 of the SEA Directive requires that mitigation measures be proposed for all significant adverse effects on the environment as a result of the implementation of the amended Local Area Plan. The SEA is an iterative process prepared in tandem with the formulation of the policies and objectives of the Amendments to the Local Area Plan. While not always possible to achieve, it is the aim of the process to ensure that sensitive environmental receptors are given adequate and appropriate consideration throughout.

### **8.2 How the SEA has Influenced the amendments to the Local Area Plan**

As environmental considerations have informed all stages of the preparation of the Ratoath Local Area Plan, the amendments to the policies and objectives of the Plan have been framed to ensure that potential adverse impacts are avoided, eliminated or lessened to an acceptable level. As a result of this informed iterative process, it is the finding of the assessment of the amendment to the Local Area Plan as presented in Chapter 7 of this Addendum Report, that the full implementation of the Plan, will have a neutral to positive impact on the environment as a whole.

Integration between SEA and the preparation of the amendments to the Plan was achieved through reviews of the emerging amendments and through workshop meetings at the key stages with relevant SEA and Plan team members. This process allowed for an iterative and proactive approach to the preparation of the amendments with preliminary and on-going assessment and review of the emerging and the final adopted amendments.

### **8.3 Mitigation Measures**

In all instances potential uncertainties or negative impacts have been be mitigated against by the protective policies already contained within the Plan, the SEA and the County Development Plan. The assessment found that there would be no residual adverse environmental impacts as a result of implementing Amendment No. 1 to the Ratoath LAP 2009-2015.



## 9. MONITORING OF THE LOCAL AREA PLAN

### 9.1 Introduction

Monitoring of the Ratoath 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 LAP. Under Article 10 of the SEA Directive monitoring, must be carried out of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the LAP *'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 LAP. 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 LAP. 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, The Fisheries Board, as well as others in the pursuit of environmental conservation and protection through existing environmental monitoring procedures.

### 9.2 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 Table 9.1. The indicators are based on the Strategic Environmental Objectives presented in Chapter 6 and have been derived from knowledge of the existing environmental issues within the LAP area and also from legislation, guidelines and higher level Plans. It is acknowledged that some of these monitoring indicators will carry on beyond the lifetime of the current local area plan.

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 LAP are well defined with regard to the environment. Conversely where the objectives of the LAP have a negative impact on the environment, it may be necessary to review the objectives of the LAP 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 LAP.

Table 9.1: Proposed Monitoring Indicators

Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
<b>Biodiversity - Flora and Fauna</b>	No loss of important and/or designated habitats	Number of sites.	Meath County Council / National Parks and Wildlife Service/Inland Fisheries ( <i>depending on available information from relevant statutory authorities</i> )
	No deterioration in the quality of protected areas	Number of sites containing rare or threatened species.	Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's Report on progress. ( <i>subject to available resources</i> ).
	No loss of protected species	Number of rare or threatened species.	
	No fish kills during the lifetime of the LAP	Details of major fish kills	
	All actions contained within the Biodiversity Plan to be achieved during the lifetime of the LAP.	Number of actions achieved.	
	No net loss of green linkages established under the Green Infrastructure Strategy.	Net area of new green infrastructure established through the development management process.	
No spread of invasive species within the LAP	Numbers of new cases identified.	Establish baseline, location and extent of invasive species in LAP, to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's Report on progress. ( <i>subject to available resources</i> )	
No adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites	Numbers of planning applications accompanied by Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment	Meath County Council Planning Department	
<b>Population (Human Beings)</b>	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 0.2ha. to be accompanied by Design Statement.	Number of design statements.	Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's Report on progress. ( <i>subject to</i>	

Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
	Rural housing to accord with Rural Housing Design Guidelines	Number of planning permissions granted in the countryside.	<i>available resources)</i>
	Delivery of residential development in line with Meath County Settlement Strategy	Percentage of residential development within each level of the settlement hierarchy	Meath County Council Planning Department
		Percentage of the residential planning permission target achieved in each settlement	Meath County Council Planning Department
	Consolidation of Town / Settlement Centre	Density of development within each residential planning permission	Meath County Council Planning Department
<b>Soil</b>	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 Chief Executive's Report on progress. ( <i>subject to available resources</i> )
<b>Water</b>	Implement fully the recommendations of the 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.
	Achieve quality status of surface waters in line with WFD	Percentage increase in the overall quality of surface waters.	Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's Report on progress. ( <i>subject to available resources</i> )
	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. Improvement in bathing water quality	Compliance with discharge parameters.	
	Reduction in development subject to Flood Risk	Number of residential planning applications / permission granted on sites identified as being	Meath County Council Planning Department

Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
<b>Air Quality</b>	Improvement in the concentrations of measured parameters such as Particulate Matter, Sulphur Dioxide and nitrogen oxides.	in Flood Risk Zone A or B Gross Floor Area (GFA) of employment development located on sites identified as being in Flood Risk Zone A or B  Measurable reductions in concentrations.	Meath County Council Planning Department  EPA Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the Chief Executive's Report on progress. ( <i>subject to available resources</i> )
<b>Climate change</b>	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 Chief Executive's Report on progress. ( <i>subject to available resources</i> )
<b>Material Assets</b>	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
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	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

Environmental Category	Targets	Selected indicators	Data Sources, Responsibility and Frequency (subject to available resources)
	No deterioration in the quality of Architectural baseline No protected structures to be lost through neglect or misuse. 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 Number of additions / deletions to the RPS. Number of monuments impacted by new development.	Meath County Council Meath County Council Meath County Council
<b>Built Heritage</b>	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
<b>Landscape</b>	No diminution in the quality of important landscapes. Implement in full the recommendations of the Landscape Character Assessment for Co. Meath.	Number of developments permitted within landscapes of exceptional value and high sensitivity as per the LCA. Number of recommendations implemented.	Meath County Council 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.