

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION STATEMENT

FOR THE LOUTH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

for: Louth County Council

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Millennium Centre
Dundalk
County Louth



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Section 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for the Louth County Development Plan. The obligation to undertake AA derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC as transposed into Irish legislation by, inter alia, the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action (such as a plan or programme) or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of any European Site in view of its conservation objectives. This AA Conclusion Statement should be read in conjunction with the Plan and associated documents including the AA Natura Impact Report (NIR).

1.2 Legislative Requirements in relation to AA

In carrying out the AA for the Plan, Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, requires, inter alia, that the Council considers the matters arrayed in the first column on Table 1.1 below. The second column identifies how these issues have been addressed.

Table 1.1 Matters taken into account by the AA

| Matter specified by the Regulations | How addressed by AA |
|--|--|
| (a) the Natura Impact Report | An AA NIR accompanies this AA Conclusion Statement and the Plan |
| (b) any supplemental information furnished in relation to any such report | This AA Conclusion Statement accompanies the NIR that provides additional detail on European Sites. |
| (c) if appropriate, any additional information sought by the authority and furnished by the applicant in relation to a Natura Impact Report | |
| (d) any information or advice obtained by the public authority | Submissions made during the Plan preparation/AA process that were relevant to the AA resulted in updates being made to the AA NIR. |
| (e) if appropriate, any written submissions or observations made to the public authority in relation to the application for consent for proposed plan or project | Proposed Material Alterations were screened for the need to undertake Stage 2 AA (Stage 2 AA was undertaken on certain alterations). |
| (f) any other relevant information | |

In addition to the above, the Regulations require that the Council makes available for inspection a determination regarding the outcome of the assessment with respect to whether or not the Plan would adversely affect the integrity of a European site (a copy of this determination is provided at Section 4).

1.3 AA Conclusion Statement

Non-Statutory AA guidance (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009) states that (Section 4.14) it "is recommended that planning authorities include a clear and discrete AA Conclusion Statement as a distinct section in the written statement of the plan separate to the SEA statement." This guidance recommends that the following issues are addressed by the AA Conclusion Statement:

- Summary of how the findings of the AA were factored into the Plan (see Section 2);
- Reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered as part of the AA process (see Section 3);
- A declaration that the Plan as adopted will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of European Sites (provided at Section 4); and
- The NIR (the AA NIR is accompanied by this AA Conclusion Statement and has informed the AA Determination – see Section 4).

As recommended, this AA Conclusion Statement addresses the above issues.

Section 2 How the findings of the AA were factored into the Plan

The SEA and AA team worked with the Plan-preparation team at the Council in order to integrate requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan.

The Plan was prepared in an iterative manner whereby the Plan and AA documents have informed subsequent versions of the other. The findings of the AA were integrated into the Plan through mitigation measures. These mitigation measures ensure that there will be no significant effects to the ecological integrity of any European site from implementation of the Plan. The mitigation measures most relevant to the protection of European sites are identified in Table 2.1 below.

Furthermore, the detailed Plan preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department combined with specialist input from the SEA and AA process facilitated zoning that avoids inappropriate development being permitted in areas of high ecological sensitivity.

Table 2.1 Mitigation relating to AA

| Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in: | |
|---|--|
| 1.7.5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION | <p>The development objectives in the development plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment. The accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes have informed the preparation of the Plan (Volume 5 of the plan provides associated documents detailing the findings). All recommendations made by these processes have been integrated into this Plan and this will contribute towards environmental conservation and protection within the County and beyond.</p> <p>Ecosystems Services Approach and Natural Capital</p> <p>In preparing the Plan and developing policy objectives, the Council have followed these Ecosystem Services¹ Approach principles:</p> <p>a) Consideration of natural systems - by using knowledge of interactions in nature and how ecosystems function (including at Plan Chapters 8 and 11);</p> <p>b) Taking into account of the services that ecosystems provide - including those that underpin social and economic well-being, such as flood and climate regulation (including at Plan Chapters 8, 10 and 12), resources for food, fibre or fuel (including at Chapters 5 and 11), or for recreation, culture and quality of life (including at Plan Chapters 4, 6, 9 and 11);</p> <p>c) Involving people - those who benefit from the ecosystem services and those managing them need to be involved in decisions that affect them. Public consultation has informed the preparation of the Plan which will be further refined before adoption, taking into account submissions/observations made on the Plan during public display.</p> <p>The Council shall promote an Ecosystem Services Approach, following the above principles, in its decision-making processes, including those relating to the preparation of statutory land use plans.</p> <p>In recognition of the need to manage natural capital², provisions have been integrated into the Plan that will contribute towards management of air quality, noise pollution, light pollution, water quality and integrated catchment management.</p> |
| Designated and Non-Designated Sites | <p>NBG 1 To promote the implementation of the draft Louth Heritage Plan 2021-2026 and any subsequent Louth Heritage Plan endorsed during the life of this Plan.</p> <p>NBG 2 To promote and implement the objectives of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021 -2026 and any subsequent Louth Biodiversity Action Plan published during the life of this Plan.</p> <p>NBG 3 To protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives.</p> <p>NBG 4 To ensure that all proposed developments comply with the requirements set out in the DECLG "Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2010"</p> <p>NBG 5 To ensure that no plan, programme, or project giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan, either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects³</p> <p>NBG 6 To ensure a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) on all plans and projects and or Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (NIR/NIS) where appropriate, is undertaken to make a determination. European Sites located outside of the County but within 15 km of the proposed development site shall be included in such screenings as should those to which there are pathways, for example, hydrological links for potential effects.</p> <p>NBG 7 To co-operate with the Regional Planning Assembly and adjoining local authorities, public agencies and community interests to protect regionally significant heritage assets, environmental quality, and to identify threats to existing environmental quality in a transboundary context throughout the region including Northern Ireland.</p> <p>NBG 8 To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, taking account of their views and any licensing requirements, when undertaking, approving or authorising development, which is likely to affect plant, bird or other animal species protected by law.</p> <p>NBG 9 To ensure that proposals for development, where appropriate, protect and conserve biodiversity sites outside designated sites and require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professionals to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such sites.</p> <p>NBG 10 To ensure that development proposals, where relevant, improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 Network of European Sites and encourage the retention and management of landscape features as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>NBG 11 Where feasible, ensure that no ecological networks, or parts thereof, which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity, are lost without remediation as a result of implementation of this Plan.</p> |

¹ Ecosystems are multifunctional communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. Ecosystems provide a series of services for human well-being (ecosystem services) either directly or indirectly contributing towards human wellbeing

² Renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals)

³ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

| Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in: | |
|---|--|
| <p>NBG 12 Prevent and control the spread of invasive plant and animal species within the County.</p> <p>NBG 13 Development sites must be investigated for the presence of invasive species, which if present must be treated and/or eradicated in accordance with best practice. Where appropriate, Invasive Species Management Plans will be prepared for such development proposals.</p> <p>NBG 14 To protect from inappropriate development and maintain the character, integrity and conservation value of those features or areas of ecological interest listed as pNHA or that may be designated as NHA, during the lifetime of this Plan.</p> <p>NBG 15 To ensure that any development within or adjacent to a NHA or pNHA is designed and sited to minimise its impact on the ecological value of the site and to resist development that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats or a disturbance of species.</p> <p>ENV 37 To consider the preservation of any tree, trees or groups of trees or woodland of special amenity or environmental value by use of Tree Preservation Orders.</p> <p>ENV 38 To retain and protect significant stands of existing trees/ hedgerows/woodlands, and seek increased planting of native trees, where appropriate, in new developments</p> <p>ENV 39 Protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where their removal is necessary during the course of road works or other works seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species indigenous to the area.</p> <p>ENV 32 To encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on European sites (SACs and SPAs) and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality.</p> | |
| Peatlands, Wetlands, Watercourses | |
| <p>NBG 19 To ensure that an appropriate level of ecological assessment is carried out for proposals involving drainage, infill or reclamation of wetland habitats.</p> <p>NBG 20 To protect and enhance wetland sites that have been rated A (International), B (National), C+ (County), C and D importance in the Louth Wetland Surveys and any subsequent versions thereof.</p> <p>NBG 21 To support the implementation of recommendations included in the Louth Wetland Survey and any subsequent versions thereof.</p> <p>NBG 22 To support the implementation of recommendations contained in the National Peatlands Strategy 2015 and any subsequent strategies.</p> <p>NBG 44 To protect, maintain, and enhance the natural and organic character of the watercourses in the County, including opening up to daylight where safe and feasible. The creation and/or enhancement of riparian buffer zones will be required where possible. All proposed coastal walkways will be required to comply with the Habitats, EIA and SEA Directives</p> <p>NBG 57 To ensure that no development, including clearing or storage of materials, takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each bank of any river, stream or watercourse.</p> | |
| Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows | |
| <p>NBG 29 To protect trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders and seek to designate additional Tree Preservations Orders (TPO), where appropriate.</p> <p>NBG 30 To protect trees and woodlands of special amenity value. Review and where appropriate, make Tree Preservation Order(s), in relation to trees of special amenity value.</p> <p>NBG 31 Where in exceptional circumstances, trees and or hedgerows are required to be removed in order to facilitate development, this shall be done outside nesting season and there shall be a requirement that each tree felled is replaced at a ratio of 10:1 with native species and each hedgerow removed is to be replaced with a native species. In Drogheda and Dundalk, replacement trees will be required at a ratio of 5:1 where the removal of trees is required in order to facilitate development.</p> <p>NBG 32 To investigate the identification and addition of suitable trees and woodlands of special amenity value for inclusion in Tables 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 8.10 where appropriate, during the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>NBG 33 To assess the implications of proposed development on significant trees and hedgerows located on lands that are being considered for development, seeking their incorporation into design proposals where appropriate and in compliance with procedures detailed in Appendix 6.</p> <p>NBG 34 To increase native tree coverage in the County to also act as carbon sinks by promoting the planting of suitable native trees and hedgerows along public roads, residential streets, parks and other areas of open space.</p> <p>NBG 35 To encourage initiatives supporting private and community driven native tree and woodland planting schemes throughout the County, utilising available funding schemes.</p> | |
| Green Infrastructure | |
| <p>NBG 41 To support the green infrastructure network of County Louth and ensure its implementation in the assessment of all development proposals to prevent adverse impact on the ecological connectivity of County Louth's Core Areas.</p> <p>NBG 42 To require the use of and develop the green infrastructure network, and support re-establishing connectivity to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and as a supplementary guide for the protection and conservation of the European Sites in County Louth.</p> <p>NBG 45 To prepare specific Green Infrastructure Strategies for the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and integrate into the local area plan for each settlement.</p> <p>NBG 46 To develop linear parks, particularly along waterways, and to link existing parks and open spaces in order to provide green chains that promote permeability for pedestrians and cyclists in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.</p> <p>NBG 47 To support the existing features of interest in the Level 3 and 4 Settlements of County Louth and promote and facilitate any areas identified for green infrastructure enhancement.</p> <p>NBG 48 All future development proposals shall require, within the overall design scheme, the integration of environmental assets and existing biodiversity features including those identified in Table 9 of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Appendix 8, Volume 3, to enhance the quality, character and design of the proposal.</p> <p>NBG 49 To require the integration of green infrastructure and inclusion of native planting schemes in all development proposals in landscaped areas, open spaces and areas of public space.</p> <p>Objective SS 32: To develop a network of green areas throughout the town, building on existing green infrastructure, and advancing the delivery of the Great Eastern Greenway along the coast incorporating the delivery of greenway and pedestrian infrastructure on both sides of the Castletown River, while maintaining the integrity of the Dundalk Bay Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>Policy Objective SS 18 as follows: To develop a network of green areas throughout the town including the delivery of a greenway along the north and southern banks of the River Boyne stretching from Townley Hall to Baltray and Oldbridge to Mornington in County Meath while maintaining the integrity of the Boyne Natura 2000 sites..</p> | |
| Invasive Species | |
| <p>NBG 12 Prevent and control the spread of invasive plant and animal species within the County.</p> <p>NBG 13 Development sites must be investigated for the presence of invasive species, which if present must be treated and/or eradicated in accordance with best practice. Where appropriate, Invasive Species Management Plans will be prepared for such development proposals.</p> | |
| Light Pollution | |
| <p>ENV 8 To ensure that all external lighting whether free standing or attached to a building shall be designed and constructed so as not to cause excessive light spillage, glare, or dazzle motorists, and thereby limiting light pollution into the surrounding environment and protecting the amenities of nearby properties, traffic and wildlife.</p> <p>ENV 9 To require all details of on-site lighting associated with all future development are submitted to and agreed with the planning authority.</p> <p>ENV 10 To promote the use of low energy LED (or equivalent) lighting in support of Climate Action.</p> | |

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| <p>Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in:</p> <p>ENV 11 To implement a hierarchy of light intensity zone as required in development schemes to ensure that environmental impact is minimised as far as possible particularly in areas proximate to ecological corridors.</p> |
| <p>Increases in visitor numbers</p> <p>TOU 18 To enable, facilitate and encourage the growth and sustainability of the tourism sector through the provision of tourism enterprise developments in rural areas subject to the provision of adequate infrastructure and compliance with normal planning considerations.</p> <p>TOU 19 To co-operate with the relevant authorities and government agencies north and south of the Border in the provision of Narrow Water Bridge.</p> <p>TOU 20 To promote the sustainable development of County Louth as a quality tourist destination in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and associated agencies themed on heritage, culture and an unspoilt natural environment and support innovative tourism projects that would boost employment and promote County Louth as a tourism destination subject to compliance with the requirements of the Development Zones as detailed in Chapter 3.</p> <p>TOU 34 To seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance and ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</p> |
| <p>Soil Protection and Contamination</p> <p>ENV 14 To ensure that adequate soil protection measures are undertaken where appropriate. Adequate and appropriate investigations shall be carried out into the nature and extent of any soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development work, where brownfield development is proposed.</p> |
| <p>Geology and Quarries</p> <p>NBG 16 Support the designation of qualifying sites of geological interest listed in Table 8.4 as Natural Heritage Areas.</p> <p>NBG 17 In consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland, protect from inappropriate development and maintain the character, integrity and conservation value of those features or areas of geological interest listed in Table 8.4 of the Plan.</p> <p>NBG 18 To promote awareness, where appropriate, of areas of geological interest, including the provision of access and interpretation where desirable and feasible.</p> <p>ENV 41 To ensure that all existing and proposed quarries comply with the requirements of the document Quarry and Ancillary Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (DECLG) 2004 or any replacement document and to promote a whole of life plan for an extractive location, including a post-closure remediation plan.</p> <p>ENV 43 To prevent development that would hinder the efficient or effective recovery of the County's aggregate resources.</p> <p>ENV 45 To ensure that the extraction of stone and mineral materials is carried out in a manner that is sustainable and does not significantly impact on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing and proposed European Sites; • Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna; • Areas of significant archaeological potential; • In the vicinity of a recorded monument; • County Geological Site; • Sensitive Landscapes • World Heritage Sites • Tentative World Heritage Sites <p>ENV 47 To refer any application for development to the Geological Survey of Ireland, where it relates to mineral extraction, quarrying developments/extensions and any development involving excavations greater than 50,000m³ in volume or one hectare in area.</p> |
| <p>Coastal and Riverbank Erosion</p> <p>ENV 50 To require that all proposed developments within 100m of the coastline of Louth, outside the main settlements submit a Coastal Erosion Assessment Report. New developments will be prohibited, unless it can be objectively established based on the best scientific information at the time of the application, that the likelihood of erosion at a specific location is minimal taking into account, inter alia, any impacts.</p> <p>ENV 51 To recognise the concept of coastal evolution and fluvial flooding as part of our dynamic physical environment, and adopt an adaptive approach to working with these natural processes. The focus of a flood management strategy should not solely be driven by conservation of existing lands. It should recognise that marshes, mud flats and other associated eco-systems evolve and degenerate and appropriate consideration should be given to the realignment of defences and use of managed retreat and sacrificial flood protection lands to maintain such habitats as part of an overall strategy.</p> <p>ENV 52 To ensure the County's natural coastal defences (beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands) are protected and to ensure they are not put at risk by inappropriate works or development.</p> <p>ENV 53 To explore, where coastal erosion is considered a threat to existing properties, the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of coastal adaptation and coastal retreat management options.</p> <p>ENV 54 To employ soft engineering techniques as an alternative to hard coastal defence works, wherever possible.</p> <p>ENV 55 To identify, prioritise and implement necessary coastal protection works subject to the availability of resources, whilst ensuring a high level of protection for natural habitats and features, and ensure due regard is paid to visual and other environmental considerations in the design of any such coastal protection works.</p> <p>IU 25 To ensure that no development including clearing or storage of materials takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each bank of any river, stream or watercourse.</p> |
| <p>Water Quality/Status</p> <p>ENV 15 To implement the recommendations contained in the River Basin District Management Plans for Ireland 2018-2021 or any subsequent plan adopted during the lifetime of the Plan. Proposed plans, programmes and projects shall not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface waters, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated woodlands. Also, to have cognisance of, where relevant, the EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Document No. 20 and 36 which provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>ENV 16 To increase awareness through educational and other means so as to inform the public of the need and importance of maintaining the highest possible water quality standards.</p> <p>ENV 17 To implement the recommendations contained in any Groundwater Protection Scheme prepared under EU Ground Water Directives and to protect ground water resources in County Louth, nutrient sensitive areas and the designated shellfish growing areas within Carlingford Lough and Dundalk Bay.</p> <p>ENV 18 To protect fisheries in all rivers in the County, where appropriate, including relevant species as contained in Annex II of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>ENV 19 To implement the requirements of the Groundwater Protection Scheme to protect known and potential ground water reserves.</p> <p>ENV 20 To ensure compliance with and to implement the provisions of the Nitrates Directive in so far as it falls within the remit of the Council to do so.</p> <p>ENV 21 To assess agricultural developments and associated agricultural waste matters within the County in accordance with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017 for the purpose of preventing or eliminating the entry of polluting matters to waters.</p> <p>ENV 22 To encourage the use of catchment-sensitive farming practices, in order to meet Water Framework Directive targets and comply with the River Basin Management Plan.</p> <p>ENV 23 To implement the relevant provisions of the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011, and the European Communities (Amendment to Planning and Development) Regulations 2011, which require planning permission be sought where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares, or where such works may have a significant</p> |

Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in:

- effect on the environment.
- ENV 33 To encourage forestry and forestry related development, as a means of diversifying from traditional agriculture activity with a preference for native species.
- ENV 34 To encourage access to forestry and woodlands, including private forestry, in cooperation with stakeholders for walking routes, bridle paths, mountain biking, nature walks, orienteering, hiking, recreational areas and other similar facilities.
- ENV 35 To promote the avoidance of deforestation or commercial afforestation within European sites unless directly relating to the management of the site for its qualifying interests.
- ENV 36 To support the development of appropriate and sustainable tourism development within forestry locations, while retaining adequate tree cover in the general area.
- ENV 37 To consider the preservation of any tree, trees or groups of trees or woodland of special amenity or environmental value by use of Tree Preservation Orders.
- ENV 38 To retain and protect significant stands of existing trees/ hedgerows/woodlands, and seek increased planting of native trees, where appropriate, in new developments
- ENV 39 Protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where their removal is necessary during the course of road works or other works seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species indigenous to the area.
- ENV 40 In accordance with the National Climate Action Plan 2019 (or any subsequent Plan) Louth County Council shall promote sustainable forestry development of appropriate scale within the County in order to address climate action directly through carbon sequestration and indirectly through the displacement of fossil fuel.
- ENV 41 To ensure that all existing and proposed quarries comply with the requirements of the document Quarry and Ancillary Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (DECLG) 2004 or any replacement document and to promote a whole of life plan for an extractive location, including a post-closure remediation plan.
- ENV 42 To facilitate adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the County and the wider region while addressing key environmental, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation.
- ENV 43 **To prevent development that would hinder the efficient or effective recovery of the County's aggregate resources.**
- ENV 44 To ensure that extractive developments do not adversely impact on environmental quality, including water quality, tourism value, existing infrastructure, residential amenity or the amenity value of neighbouring lands.
- ENV 45 To ensure that the extraction of stone and mineral materials is carried out in a manner that is sustainable and does not significantly impact on the following areas:
- Existing and proposed European Sites;
 - Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna;
 - Areas of significant archaeological potential;
 - In the vicinity of a recorded monument;
 - County Geological Site;
 - Sensitive Landscapes
 - World Heritage Sites
 - Tentative World Heritage Sites
- ENV 46 To ensure that developments associated with the extractive industry minimise adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the full cost of road improvements, including during operations and at time of closure which were necessary to facilitate such development are borne by the extractive industry.
- ENV 47 To refer any application for development to the Geological Survey of Ireland, where it relates to mineral extraction, quarrying developments/extensions and any development involving excavations greater than 50,000m³ in volume or one hectare in area.
- ENV 48 To implement the policies and objectives as set out within the National Maritime Spatial Plan to support the effective management of marine activities and more sustainable use of our marine resources.
- ENV 49 To support and accommodate any change to the marine spatial planning system which is proposed under the Marine Planning and Development Management Bill 2019 (or any subsequent Bill) once enacted into law.
- ENV 50 To require that all proposed developments within 100m of the coastline of Louth, outside the main settlements submit a Coastal Erosion Assessment Report. New developments will be prohibited, unless it can be objectively established based on the best scientific information at the time of the application, that the likelihood of erosion at a specific location is minimal taking into account, inter alia, any impacts.
- ENV 51 To recognise the concept of coastal evolution and fluvial flooding as part of our dynamic physical environment, and adopt an adaptive approach to working with these natural processes. The focus of a flood management strategy should not solely be driven by conservation of existing lands. It should recognise that marshes, mud flats and other associated eco-systems evolve and degenerate and appropriate consideration should be given to the realignment of defences and use of managed retreat and sacrificial flood protection lands to maintain such habitats as part of an overall strategy.
- ENV 52 **To ensure the County's natural coastal defences (beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands) are protected and to ensure they are not put at risk by inappropriate works or development.**
- ENV 53 To explore, where coastal erosion is considered a threat to existing properties, the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of coastal adaptation and coastal retreat management options.
- ENV 54 To employ soft engineering techniques as an alternative to hard coastal defence works, wherever possible.
- ENV 55 To identify, prioritise and implement necessary coastal protection works subject to the availability of resources, whilst ensuring a high level of protection for natural habitats and features, and ensure due regard is paid to visual and other environmental considerations in the design of any such coastal protection works.
- ENV 56 To protect the special character of the coast by preventing inappropriate development, particularly on the seaward side of coastal roads. New development, wherever possible, shall be accommodated within existing developed areas and be climate resilient in their design.
- ENV 57 To strictly control the nature and pattern of development within coastal areas and ensure that it is designed and landscaped to the highest standards, and sited appropriately so as not to detract from the visual amenity of the area. Development shall be prohibited where the development poses a significant or potential threat to coastal habitats or features, and/or where the development is likely to result in altered patterns of erosion or deposition elsewhere along the coast.
- ENV 58 To prohibit development along the coast outside existing urban areas where such development is not adequately safeguarded over the lifetime of the development without the need to construct additional coastal defences.
- ENV 59 To protect the excellent status classification of identified bathing water areas within County Louth.
- ENV 60 To encourage proposals that promote sustainable development of water-based sports and marine recreation in coastal areas and on river systems across the County providing there is no cause of significant adverse impacts on the environment, visual amenity and heritage.
- ENV 61 To support proposals that improve access to marine and coastal resources for tourism activities and sport and recreation, where appropriate, at the applicable scale.
- ENV 62 To facilitate sustainable tourism and recreation activities where appropriate, particularly where this creates diversification or additional utilisation of related facilities beyond typical usage patterns.
- ENV 63 To require that new developments take into account the potential for impact on tourism in the area and demonstrate how potential negative impacts to tourism in communities have been minimised. This must include assessment of how the benefits of what is proposed are not outweighed by potential negative impacts identified.
- ENV 64 To support proposals for sustainable tourism development that seek to optimise facilities and use space whilst minimising environmental impact by taking a cross-sectoral development approach that provides for multiple activities.
- ENV 65 To resist development along the coast which would detract from its visual appearance or conflict with its recreational and leisure

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| Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in: | |
| functions. | |
| ENV 66 | To continue to work with local communities, relevant stakeholders and with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine to ensure the proper and successful implementation of the Shellfish Waters Directive along County Louth's coastline. |
| Sustainable urban drainage systems and Surface Water | |
| IU 19 | To require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of SuDS measures be incorporated in all new development (including extensions to existing developments). All development proposals shall be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment including run-off quantity, run off quality and impacts on habitat and water quality. |
| IU 20 | To require all development proposals meet the design criteria, (adjusted to reflect local conditions), and material designs contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS) and demonstrate how runoff is captured as close to source as possible with subsequent slow release to the drainage system and watercourse. |
| IU 22 | To ensure all new development incorporates appropriate measures to protect existing water bodies, through appropriate treatment of runoff. In particular, discharges from car parks shall be appropriately treated so as to remove pollutant materials. |
| IU 23 | To ensure all new developments provide for separated drainage systems. |
| IU 24 | To encourage particularly in buildings of increased height the provision of green roofs and green walls as an integrated part of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and which provide benefits for biodiversity, wherever possible. |
| IU 25 | To ensure that no development including clearing or storage of materials takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each bank of any river, stream or watercourse. |
| Flood Risk Management | |
| IU 26 | To reduce the risk of new development being affected by possible future flooding by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Avoiding development in areas at risk of flooding and · Where development in floodplains cannot be avoided, taking a sequential approach to flood risk management based on avoidance, reduction and adaptation to the risk. |
| IU 27 | To ensure all proposals for development falling within Flood Zones A or B are consistent with the "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" 2009. Proposals for development identified as being vulnerable to flooding must be supported by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment and demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the development, and its infrastructure, will avoid significant risks of flooding and not exacerbate flooding elsewhere. In Flood Zone C, where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1%), site-specific Flood Risk Assessment may be required and the developer should satisfy themselves that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. The County Plan SFRA datasets and the most up to date CFRAM Programme climate scenario mapping should be consulted by prospective applicants for developments in this regard and will be made available to lower-tier Development Management processes in the Council. Applications for development in flood vulnerable zones, including those at risk under the OPW's Mid-Range Future Scenario, shall provide details of structural and non-structural risk management measures, such as those relating to floor levels, internal layout, flood-resilient construction, emergency response planning and access and egress during flood events. |
| IU 28 | Where a site specific Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates that there are significant residual flood risks to a proposed development or its occupiers in conflict with "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" 2009, planning permission will normally not be granted unless the requirements of Section 5.28 'Assessment of minor proposals in areas of flood risk' can be satisfied. |
| IU 29 | To implement the Flood Risk Management Measures as detailed in the Neagh Bann Flood Risk Management Plan, the Eastern Flood Risk Management Plan and the Dunleer Flood Risk Management Plan, ensuring that proposals for development support and do not impede the progression of these measures. Louth County Council will, in partnership with the Office of Public Works (OPW) deliver the following Flood Relief Schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundalk , Blackrock and Ardee; • Drogheda and Baltray; and • Carlingford and Greenore. |
| IU 30 | To work with the Office for Public Works in the development and implementation of catchment-based strategies for the management of flood risk – including those relating to storage and conveyance. |
| IU 31 | To contribute towards the improvement and/or restoration of the natural flood risk management functions of flood plains subject to compliance with the environmental legislation and availability of resources. |
| Air Quality | |
| ENV 3 | To seek to achieve European and National standards in relation to air, noise and water quality in the County and apply BAT standard (Best Available Techniques) |
| ENV 12 | To promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011) (or any updated/superseding documents). |
| Noise | |
| ENV 3 | To seek to achieve European and National standards in relation to air, noise and water quality in the County and apply BAT standard (Best Available Techniques) |
| ENV 6 | To implement the Louth County Council Noise Action Plan 2018-2023 in order to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to environmental noise exposure. |
| ENV 7 | To require that where new development is proposed within the limits of the noise maps for the designated sections of roads in the County, appropriate mitigation measures are undertaken so as to prevent harmful effects from environmental noise. |
| Water Services and Surface Water | |
| IU 1 | To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water in identifying, prioritising and progressing the implementation of water and wastewater projects throughout County Louth over the lifetime of the Plan, in accordance with the Core and Settlement Strategies. |
| IU 2 | To work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect and make climate resilient existing water and wastewater infrastructure, to maximise the potential of existing capacity and to facilitate the timely delivery of new water and wastewater services infrastructure, to facilitate existing and future growth. |
| IU 4 | To support the provision, extension and upgrade of high quality water and wastewater services infrastructure for both existing and |

| Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in: |
|--|
| <p>future developments within County Louth, consistent with the principles of sustainability, prioritising those centres where serious deficiencies are in evidence or where further sustainable development can be reasonably anticipated.</p> <p>IU 5 To support the extension or upgrading of existing water services infrastructure within the county (including those listed in the IW Investment Programme) and the provision of water services infrastructure in unserved settlements to assist in the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.</p> <p>IU 6 To require all new developments connect to the public supply where public water and wastewater infrastructure is available or likely to be available and which has sufficient capacity.</p> <p>IU 7 To support the development and proper management of Group Water Schemes subject to appropriate level of treatment being provided and suitable robust arrangements being put in place.</p> <p>IU 8 To discourage the use of pump stations for conveyance of sewage unless the proposed pump station will cater for a significant catchment of zoned development lands that otherwise cannot be serviced. Where deemed appropriate, in consultation with Irish Water, temporary pumping arrangements may be considered as an interim measure, pending the provision of more permanent arrangements within a reasonable timeframe. All arrangements for same will be as per the requirements and agreement of Irish Water.</p> <p>IU 9 To support the commitment to water conservation and leakage reduction in accordance with best practice, and through the implementation of the National Leakage Reduction Programme in order to conserve valuable resources and reduce wastage.</p> <p>IU 10 To support Irish Water in promoting public awareness and involvement in water conservation measures by households, business and industry.</p> <p>IU 11 To encourage new developments incorporate water conservation measures such as rain water harvesting to minimise wastage of water supply.</p> <p>IU 12 To promote and support the development and proper management of Group Water Schemes in the County, subject to an appropriate level of treatment being provided and suitable robust operational arrangements being put in place.</p> <p>IU 13 To require that all development taking place within an area served by a public wastewater treatment system connects to that system.</p> <p>IU 14 To require that on lands identified for non-domestic development where no public waste water facility exists or is proposed, that the wastewater be adequately treated and discharged to suitable receiving water, subject to a discharge licence.</p> <p>IU 15 To promote rain water harvesting and grey water use in all developments and in particular for larger developments, as an alternative to attenuation.</p> <p>IU 16 To require that proper supervision, installation and commissioning of on-site wastewater treatment system by requiring site characterisation procedures and geotechnical assessments, be carried out by competent professionally indemnified and suitably qualified persons.</p> <p>IU 17 To require that the construction and installation of all wastewater treatment systems are supervised and certified by a suitably qualified competent person as fit for the intended purpose and complies with the Council's requirements.</p> <p>IU 18 To require that private wastewater treatment systems for individual houses where permitted, comply with the recommendations contained within the EPA Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems, Population Equivalent ≤ 10 (2021).</p> |
| <p>Waste Management</p> <p>ENV 24 To implement and support the provisions of the Eastern-Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 or any subsequent plan and EU Directives/Policies.</p> <p>ENV 25 To support the development of an additional recycling centre in the Mid – Louth Area.</p> <p>10.11.12 Waste Management and Disposal: All future developments should seek to minimise waste through reduction, re-use and recycling. Waste management and disposal should be considered as part of the construction process and in the operation of the development when completed.</p> <p>10.11.13 Construction Waste: Construction related waste accounts for a significant proportion of total land filled waste in Ireland. Therefore, developers and builders should minimise construction waste generated in development projects. During the construction process measures should be implemented to minimise soil removal (as part of the scheme design process), properly manage construction waste and encourage off-site prefabrication where feasible.</p> <p>10.11.14 Domestic Waste: Everyday domestic waste produced by future residents and businesses shall be minimised through reduction, reuse and recycling. All new developments should provide for occupants to comply with the Louth County Council Segregation, Storage and Presentation of Household and Commercial Waste Bye-laws, 2019, whereby people must segregate their waste into dry recyclables, food waste and residual domestic waste. New developments should facilitate a three bin system in each unit.</p> |
| <p>Agriculture and Nitrates</p> <p>ENV 20 To ensure compliance with and to implement the provisions of the Nitrates Directive in so far as it falls within the remit of the Council to do so.</p> <p>ENV 21 To assess agricultural developments and associated agricultural waste matters within the County in accordance with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017 for the purpose of preventing or eliminating the entry of polluting matters to waters.</p> <p>ENV 22 To encourage the use of catchment-sensitive farming practices, in order to meet Water Framework Directive targets and comply with the River Basin Management Plan.</p> <p>ENV 23 To implement the relevant provisions of the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011, and the European Communities (Amendment to Planning and Development) Regulations 2011, which require planning permission be sought where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares, or where such works may have a significant effect on the environment.</p> |
| <p>Tourism and Infrastructure Capacity</p> <p>TOU 35 To consider the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.</p> |
| <p>Landscape Features</p> <p>NBG 24 To ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements, which contribute to their distinctiveness such as scenic quality, habitats, settlement pattern, historic heritage and land use.</p> <p>NBG 26 To explore the designation of Landscape Conservation Areas as appropriate, in conjunction with the relevant Government Department and stakeholders to protect specific important landscapes and particularly in respect of Carlingford Mountain SAC.</p> <p>NBG 37 To protect the unspoiled rural landscapes of the Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ) from inappropriate development for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.</p> <p>NBG 38 Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views and prospects listed in Tables 8.14 – 8.18 of this Plan that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape, from inappropriate development.</p> |

Section 3 Consideration of Alternatives

3.1 Alternatives for Settlement Hierarchy

Description of Alternatives for Ardee and Dunleer

- (A) Designate Ardee and Dunleer as Self-Sustaining Growth Towns
- (B) Designate Dunleer as Self-Sustaining Towns

Summary of Assessment

Both Ardee and Dunleer are two towns which display many attributes including a good level of jobs and services catering for both the resident population but also a wider catchment area, a broad range of services and facilities and transport links. They have the capacity for continued commensurate growth in terms of population and employment and to become more self-sustaining. Both towns have opportunities to accommodate compact growth within their development envelopes in accordance with national and regional policy.

By facilitating population and employment growth commensurate to the attributes of Ardee and Dunleer, Alternative A would provide for a more sustainable Settlement Hierarchy and a greater level of sustainable development at a County level. Alternative A would help to facilitate a more compact form of development at these settlements that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. Alternative A would not increase pressure in lower level settlements, which are generally less well-serviced and less-well connected, and the open countryside— and would, as a result, avoid potential adverse significant effects on various environmental components.

By limiting population growth in the two towns, Alternative B would fail to provide viable alternatives to the large towns of Drogheda and Dundalk as a place to live and work and would result in increased pressure in the lower level settlements and the open countryside. It would also militate against the future compact growth of the settlements. As a result, Alternative B would be likely to result in a greater extent of significant effects on various environmental components and would not be as sustainable as Alternative A.

Selected Alternative

- (A) Designate Ardee and Dunleer as Self-Sustaining Growth Towns

Description of Alternatives for Dromiskin

- (A) Designate Dromiskin as a Small Town and Village
- (B) Designate Dromiskin as a Self-Sustaining Town

Summary of Assessment

Alternative A would focus on localised sustainable growth and employment related development that would strengthen and support the local base and reduce commuting to and from Dromiskin. It would also provide a realistic and suitable alternative to one off housing in the countryside.

By facilitating population and employment growth commensurate to its attributes, Alternative A would provide for a more sustainable Settlement Hierarchy and a greater level of sustainable development at a County level and at a town level in Dromiskin. Alternative A would help to prevent further linear sprawl at this settlement which would not be adequately serviced by the town. As a result, Alternative A would avoid potential adverse significant effects on various environmental components.

Designating Dromiskin as per Alternative B, would not be in line with the remainder of the settlements identified as **Self Sustaining towns as although Dromiskin's population is higher than many of the other settlements in this category**, it is characterised by elongated, linear development along a north-south axis, with very limited services, a weak employment base and displaying a lack of compact growth. A greater level of sprawl and higher dependence on outbound commuting for employment means that Alternative B would be likely to result in a greater extent of significant effects on various environmental components and would not be as sustainable as Alternative A.

Selected Alternative

- (A) Designate Dromiskin as a Small Town and Village

Description of Alternatives for 2 Potential "Rural Villages"

- (A) Designate 24 (no.) Level 5 Settlements, "Rural Villages" dispersed throughout the County to meet rural generated housing needs.
- (B) Do not designate 24 (no.) Level 5 Settlements, settlements to remain in the Open Countryside
- (C) Designate 21 (no.) "Rural Villages" but designate Tinure, Lordship and Greenore as "Small Towns and Villages"

Summary of Assessment

The 24 Level 5 settlements are primarily residential in nature. Some of these villages are served by public mains water and/or waste water supply, whilst there are others that are unserved. The purpose of these settlements is to assist in satisfying rural generated housing needs within a low-density environment as an alternative to scattered one of housing in the open countryside. In accordance with the Settlement Typology as identified in the Eastern and Midland RSES, it is considered appropriate that these settlements are identified as Rural Villages. As part of the

strategy of strengthening the fabric of villages and creating sustainable communities, the Plan has identified the lands within these settlements as suitable to meet rural generated housing needs.

Alternative A, by providing focus to and targeted policies/objectives for the Rural Villages, would facilitate a viable alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside. Development within these settlements would be more likely to be served by infrastructure (including water services infrastructure) and more likely to protect the environment including the status of ground and surface waters, water used for drinking water, human health, biodiversity and flora and fauna and the landscape. Development would be required to be subject to siting, design, protection of residential amenities and normal development management criteria, subject to the satisfactory provision of infrastructure and services and in keeping with the character of the settlement.

Not designating a wide selection of rural villages throughout the County would result in a consequential increase in the unsustainable provision of one-off housing in the open countryside. This would further erode these small settlement centres and diminish the opportunity to provide for focused, compact development within small rural villages and which would in turn threaten community cohesion and quality of life. Alternative B, by not providing a focus to and targeted policies/objectives for Rural Villages would be less likely to provide a viable alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside. Development within the open countryside would be less likely to be served by infrastructure (including water services infrastructure) and less likely to protect the environment including the status of ground and surface waters, water used for drinking water, human health, biodiversity and flora and fauna and the landscape. Alternative B would be the least sustainable of all alternatives and would be most harmful to the environment.

The settlements of Tinure and Lordship, albeit displaying a higher resident population and Greenore with a strong economic base are very limited in terms of services and capacity to absorb additional development. Some of the rural villages do have water services in place while others are not fully serviced. Including these villages in the higher tier would not be sustainable and would be harmful to the environment, resulting in adverse environmental impacts associated with the absence of waste water treatment in a number of instances (including effects on water, drinking water, human health). Designating the other 21 (no.) settlements as Rural Village would result in the positive environmental effects as detailed under Alternative A.

3.2 Alternatives for Population Allocations

Description of Alternatives

- (A) Concentrate future growth in the settlements in the upper tiers of the settlement hierarchy, in particular the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer, with a more limited level of growth in the smaller settlements and open countryside.
- (B) Continued growth of Drogheda and Dundalk with dispersed pattern of growth across the smaller settlements and the open countryside.

Summary of Assessment

The concentration of growth in the larger settlements in the County i.e. Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee, and Dunleer will ensure there are settlements suitably located in the County with the capacity to grow at a sustainable level where there are opportunities to consolidate development in the existing urban footprint through infill and brownfield development. These settlements have a number of positive attributes including a broad range of services, transport links, a strong employment base, and capacity to facilitate population and economic growth. By providing for a concentration in the larger settlements in the County, Alternative A would result in lower levels of commuting, benefiting efforts to improve sustainable mobility and meet greenhouse gas emission reduction targets the most. Development in these centres would be better serviced and there would be a reduced need for greenfield development (and associated adverse environmental effects) in less well-served, less-well connected and more sensitive locations in the County, including the open countryside and smaller settlements.

A more dispersed pattern of development as identified in Alternative B that would result in the expansion of the smaller towns and villages in the County. Development is more likely to be on greenfield lands as there are few infill and brownfield sites available. Services and public transport are more limited and there would be a greater dependence on commuting for employment. Alternative B would result in higher levels of commuting, conflicting with efforts to improve sustainable mobility and meet greenhouse gas emission reduction targets the most. Alternative B would provide for higher levels of greenfield development (and associated adverse environmental effects) in less well-served, less-well connected and more sensitive locations in the County, including the open countryside and smaller settlements. This type of development would result in a higher adverse environmental impact, including effects on water, drinking water, human health, ecology and landscape designations. Alternative B would not be sustainable and would conflict with environmental protection and management.

Selected Alternative

- (A) Concentrate future growth in the settlements in the upper tiers of the settlement hierarchy, in particular the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer, with a more limited level of growth in the smaller settlements and open countryside.

3.3 Alternatives for Rural Areas

Description of Alternatives

- (A) Retain the 6 Development Control Zones for the County as set out in the CDP 2015-2021
- (B) **Consolidate the 6 Development Control Zones into 2 'Rural Policy Zones' as follows:**
 - Rural Policy Zone 1 – Area under strong urban influence and of significant landscape value;
 - Rural Policy Zone 2 – Area under strong urban influence
- (C) Have a single Rural Policy Zone for the entire County as follows: Rural Policy Zone – Area under strong urban influence

Summary of Assessment

An analysis of data from the Census 2016 identified a strong relationship between large urban centres and the rural areas in Louth with high volumes of commuting to Dundalk, Drogheda, and the Dublin Metropolitan Area. Based on this analysis the entire County has been identified as an 'Area Under Strong Urban Influence.'

Restricting development in rural areas that are under strong urban influence would positively impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The restrictions would help to both reduce levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and encourage brownfield development within existing centres.

Rural development would be directed towards appropriate rural areas and urban development would be directed towards established settlements. This approach would prevent low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

In the 2015-2021 County Development Plan, 6 'Development Control Zones' in the County were identified. The qualifying criteria varied in each Control Zone varied, and was based on the environmental sensitivities of each Zone, with a more stringent criteria in the more environmentally sensitive locations. Alternative A involves the retention of these 6 zones. Although these zones contribute towards the protection and management of the environment, they do not provide as coherent or as universally interpretable an approach as would be the case with Alternative B.

Alternative B condenses the 6 Control Zones into 2 'Rural Policy Zones' and reduces any confusion regarding the qualifying criteria in each of the Zones. This assists in interpreting and implementing the qualifying criteria whilst also ensuring the policy is sufficiently robust to protect the most sensitive landscapes in the County. Alternative B provides the most coherent approach to environmental protection and management and sustainable development.

Option 3 proposes a single Rural Policy Zone for the County 'Rural Area Under Strong Urban Influence'. Whilst this policy zone would take account of the pressures the countryside is under from potential urban generated development this option does not differentiate between the more sensitive rural landscapes in the County and therefore could potentially result in the erosion of such sensitive landscapes.

Selected Alternative

- (B) **Consolidate the 6 Development Control Zones into 2 'Rural Policy Zones' as follows:**
 - Rural Policy Zone 1 – Area under strong urban influence and of significant landscape value;
 - Rural Policy Zone 2 – Area under strong urban influence

3.4 Alternatives for Densities

Descriptions of Density Alternatives for Ardee and Dunleer

- (A) Densities applicable to the Settlements are min 35/ha in the town centre and min 25/ha at the edge of centre
- (B) Densities in line with the larger settlements of Drogheda and Dundalk
- (C) Densities in line with the lower-Level settlements

Summary of Assessment

Within the Settlement Hierarchy, Ardee and Dunleer occupy a lower level than the two towns of Drogheda and Dundalk but still provide the opportunity for higher densities. The densities provided for allow for securing compact growth and consolidating development within the town centre commensurate with the existing pattern of development and the character of the area, while the lower densities on the more peripheral areas allows for a variety in residential development to cater for a wide range of needs and desires.

Densities in line with Drogheda and Dundalk might lead to over-development and detract from the character and pattern of development established within these more moderate sized towns.

Lower densities within these towns would undoubtedly fail to realise compact growth, would generate urban sprawl and fail to maximise the return on infrastructure investment.

Selected Alternative

- (A) Densities applicable to the Settlements are min 35/ha in the town centre and min 25/ha at the edge of centre

Descriptions of Density Alternatives for Sustaining Towns and Small Towns and Villages

- (A) The density of development will be reflective of the character of the settlement and the existing pattern of development in the area
- (B) A defined density applicable to all the designated settlements

Summary of Assessment

Whilst all developments should strive to achieve recommended densities it is acknowledged that there will be cases where there are specific constraints (such as topography) that will restrict the scale of development that can be delivered. It is essential in these settlements that the character of the settlement and the existing pattern of development is considered in future proposed development. In such cases a lower density than that prescribed may be considered acceptable.

Selected Alternative

The density of development will be reflective of the character of the settlement and the existing pattern of development in the area.

3.5 Alternatives for Land Use Zoning

Land use zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES.

The Council have identified realistic alternatives for certain settlements, where these are available taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES. These realistic alternatives are described on Table 3.1 with a summary of assessment provided.

Table 3.1 Land Use Zoning Alternatives and Summary Assessment

| Town | Alternative (selected alternatives in bold) | Summary of Assessment |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Dundalk (Set 1) | New Residential Zoning: A. North, to the north of Castletown River | Alternative A does not provide for sequential development of the town and is not linked as well as Alternative B for movement to and from services. |
| | New Residential Zoning: B. Along Mount Avenue | Alternative B provides for sequential development of the town, closes to the existing town centre. Funding has been secured for movement infrastructure |
| | New Residential Zoning: C. South, to the south of Oriel Park | Alternative C does not provide for sequential development of the town and is not linked as well as Alternative B for movement to and from services. |
| Dundalk (Set 2) | General Employment Zoning: A. Northern site, along N52 | Alternative A provides access to the Motorway through the Inner Relief Road – this issue would not hinder the sustainable development of these lands and the town. |
| | General Employment Zoning: B. North Western site along R177 | There is no direct access to the Motorway from this site. As a result, development of the site could be hindered and pressures may present elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands – and associated adverse environmental effects. |
| Drogheda (Set 1) | A. Site (within Flood Zone A) along the Boyne zoned as New Residential | New Residential would be an inappropriate use for these lands and would be unlikely to be in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. Due to the elevated flood risk, the development of this site would be hindered and development pressures may present elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands – and associated adverse environmental effects. |
| | B. Site (within Flood Zone A) along the Boyne zoned as Open Space | Open Space would be an appropriate use for these lands and would be to be in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. New Residential lands could be zoned elsewhere in the settlement on lands with low levels of flood risk. Such residential development would reduce the need for development elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands – and associated adverse environmental effects. |
| Drogheda (Set 2) | Westgate Area Zoning A. Town or Village Centre | The regeneration of Westgate is essential to the sustainable development of Drogheda. Development of this area would be more likely to occur and receive funding under Alternative A – less likely under Alternative B. |
| | Westgate Area Zoning B. Regeneration | The purpose of the 'Regeneration' zoning is to encourage and facilitate opportunities for regeneration and place making. The lands or areas are strategically located within settlements and consist of vacant or under-utilised buildings or land with significant potential to stimulate the rejuvenation of an area or neighbourhood. The primary objective is to support regeneration, make a positive contribution to urban spaces, and improve quality of life for all. Development of Westgate would reduce the need for development elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands – and associated adverse environmental effects. |
| Drogheda (Set 3) | Site to the north west of the M1/R168 roundabout A. Tourism and Leisure | There is a planning need identified for Tourism and Leisure Uses on an adequately sized site. Placing such uses at this location would not provide for the sequential development of the town and would not provide for the compact development of the town – this site is removed from the existing development envelope and is the other side of the Motorway. |
| | Site to the north west of the M1/R168 roundabout | There is no established planning need for such a retail development as would be provided by Alternative B. Placing a retail park at this location would not provide for the sequential development of the town and would not provide for the compact development of the town – |

| Town | Alternative (selected alternatives in bold) | Summary of Assessment |
|---------------------|---|---|
| | B. Retail Park | this site is removed from the existing development envelope and is the other side of the Motorway. A retail park would undermine and reduce the viability of the existing retail offering in the town centre. |
| | Site to the north west of the M1/R168 roundabout C. Do not include in the settlement plan boundary | Not developing this site would help to ensure that compact and sequential development of Drogheda is achieved. |
| Drogheda (Set 4) | Site to the north west of the N51/R132 roundabout A. Tourism and Leisure | There is a planning need identified for Tourism and Leisure Uses on an adequately sized site. Although the development of such a site would have potential adverse impacts, it would contribute to the overall sustainable development and available service offering in Drogheda. Although this site is removed from the existing development envelope, it is adjacent to planned residential uses in an area where there is limited services available. |
| | Site to the north west of the N51/R132 roundabout B. Retail Park | There is no established planning need for such a retail development as would be provided by Alternative B. A retail park would undermine and reduce the viability of the existing retail offering in the town centre. |
| | Site to the north west of the N51/R132 roundabout C. Do not include in the settlement plan boundary | There is a planning need identified for Tourism and Leisure Uses on an adequately sized site. Although the development of such a site would have potential adverse impacts, it would contribute to the overall sustainable development and available service offering in Drogheda. Although this site is removed from the existing development envelope, it is adjacent to planned residential uses in an area where there is limited services available. |
| Ardee (Set 1) | Zoning for sites in the north of the settlement: A. New Residential for eastern site (with open space provided in flood areas), Strategic Reserve for western site | Alternative A provides for sequential development of the town and is better linked than Alternative B to and from the existing town centre and development envelope. |
| | Zoning for sites in the north of the settlement: B. Strategic Reserve for eastern site (with open space provided in flood areas), New Residential for western site | Alternative B does not provide for sequential development of the town and is not linked as well as Alternative B to and from the existing town centre and development envelope. |
| Dunleer (Set 1) | General Employment Zoning: A. Site adjoining the south west of the existing settlement envelope | This is adjacent to the Motorway providing the potential for easy and efficient access. Employment uses are appropriate to this location which is likely to experience elevated levels of noise. |
| | General Employment Zoning: B. Site adjoining the north east of the existing settlement envelope | This site is further out from the town centre and more detached from the Motorway. |
| Baltray (Set 1) | A. Sites (within Flood Zone A) along the Boyne Estuary zoned as New Residential | New Residential would be an inappropriate use for these lands and would be unlikely to be in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. Due to the elevated flood risk, the development of this site would be hindered and development pressures may present elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands. |
| | B. Sites (within Flood Zone A) along the Boyne Estuary zoned as Open Space | Open Space would be an appropriate use for these lands and would be to be in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. New Residential lands could be zoned elsewhere in the settlement on lands with low levels of flood risk. Such residential development would reduce the need for development elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands. |
| Carlingford (Set 1) | A. Site (within Flood Zone A) along Carlingford Lough zoned as New Residential | New Residential would be an inappropriate use for these lands and would be unlikely to be in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. Due to the elevated flood risk, the development of this site would be hindered and development pressures may present elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands. |
| | B. Site (within Flood Zone A) along Carlingford Lough zoned as Open Space | Open Space would be an appropriate use for these lands and would be to be in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. New Residential lands could be zoned elsewhere in the settlement on lands with low levels of flood risk. Such residential development would reduce the need for development elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands. |
| Clogherhead (Set 1) | General Employment Zoning: A. Site adjoining the west of the existing settlement envelope | Site Alternative A has less sensitivities than site alternative A – including flood risk, ecological and visual sensitivities. |

| Town | Alternative (selected alternatives in bold) | Summary of Assessment |
|---------------------|--|---|
| | B. Site adjoining the south of the existing settlement envelope and coast | Site Alternative B has more sensitivities than site alternative A – including flood risk, ecological and visual sensitivities. |
| Tallanstown (Set 1) | A. Site (within Flood Zone A) adjacent to centre zoned as New Residential | New Residential would be an inappropriate use for these lands and would be unlikely to be in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. Due to the elevated flood risk, the development of this site would be hindered and development pressures may present elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands. |
| | B. Site (within Flood Zone A) adjacent to centre zoned as Open Space | Open Space would be an appropriate use for these lands and would be to be in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. New Residential lands could be zoned elsewhere in the settlement on lands with low levels of flood risk. Such residential development would reduce the need for development elsewhere in the County, on less well-serviced, less-well connected, more sensitive lands. |

3.6 Reasons for choosing the alternatives for the Plan in the light of the other reasonable alternatives

The selected alternatives were developed by the Planning Team, placed on public display and adopted by the Council having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects, including those relating to ecology and European sites, which were identified by the SEA and are summarised above; and
2. Planning - including social and economic - effects that also were considered by the Council.

Section 4 AA Determination



Comhairle Contae Lú
Louth County Council

Appropriate Assessment Determination

under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended,
for the

Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

In order to comply with the requirements of Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether or not a plan or project would adversely affect the integrity of any European site(s), this Appropriate Assessment determination is being made by Louth County Council relating to the potential for the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 that is being adopted to have effects on the integrity of European sites.

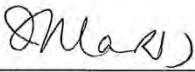
In carrying out this Appropriate Assessment (AA), the Council is taking into account the matters specified under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

As part of the AA, it was identified that the Plan may, if unmitigated, have significant effects on 13 (no.) European sites. Factors that could potentially affect the integrity of European sites include:

- Provisions for sectors such as transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, community facilities, utilities, natural resource, coastal, tourism and recreation development that introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions and disturbance effects; and
- Loading pressures from the operational phase of developments – these sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation.

The undersigned agrees with and adopts the reasoning and conclusions presented in the NIR Reports and determines that:

- Implementation of the Plan would have had the potential to result in effects to the integrity of European sites, if unmitigated.
- The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and conservation objectives of the European sites have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of effects in the first place and reliably mitigate effects where these cannot be avoided. In addition, any lower-level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Plan will themselves be subject to AA when further details of design and location are known.
- In-combination effects from interactions with other plans and projects have been considered in this assessment and the mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Plan – these measures are robust and will ensure there will be no effects on the integrity of European sites as a result of the implementation of the Plan either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects.
- Having incorporated mitigation measures, the Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any effect on the integrity of European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects¹. This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species, for which these sites have been designated.

Signed: 
Name: JOAN MARTIN
Date: 30/9/21

¹ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

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