

# Castletown Geoghegan LAP Adopted 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012



Forward Planning Section



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# **Castletown Geoghegan Village Plan 2012-2018**

## **1 Introduction**

The need for this plan has arisen because of the requirement for appropriate development in the Castletown Geoghegan area and the need to properly plan for the future of the village in a co-ordinated and sustainable manner.

The purpose of the plan is to inform the general public, statutory authorities, the community and other interested bodies and set out a framework for the future development of the village over the plan period 2012 to 2018.

This Plan takes the form of a Written Statement, and accompanying Zoning and Proposals Map. If any conflict or ambiguity arises between the written statement and the supporting plans, the written statement will take precedence.

### **1.1 Goal of the LAP**

To provide for the consolidation and limited sensitive development of Castletown Geoghegan village to cater for the needs of the settlement's population and its wider role in servicing the surrounding area, having regard to the need for sustainability, quality of life, social cohesion and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage along with wider environmental assets.

## **2 Statutory context**

This Plan has been prepared as a Local Area Plan in accordance with sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

### **2.1 Consultation**

2.1.1 Pre draft public consultation was undertaken between 14<sup>th</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> July 2008. Three submissions were received and are summarised as follows:

- Provide for improved road safety features for the existing primary school
- Provide for an element of residential need
- Provide for sizeable element of recreational/commercial/enterprise activity
- Consolidate and enhance the village pattern.
- Facilitate the provision of tourism related developments
- Improvement of footpaths and cycle ways
- Provision of playground
- Provision of bus stop and parking facilities
- Support local enterprise
- Protection of land marks from over development of the village

- Housing estates should be limited with a range of housing options being provided.
- Significant trees should be considered for protection.

2.1.2 A further pre draft meeting was held on the evening of 17<sup>th</sup> December 2009. The comments received at the meeting are summarised as follows:

- There was not much demand for estate housing within the village.
- Low density road frontage development/infill was more appropriate rather than backland development .
- A mixture of uses within village core.
- A location for industrial/employment type uses should be identified on the outskirts of the village.
- Footpath linking to GAA grounds.
- Alternative use for the carpark in the village centre which is currently an eyesore.

### **3 Planning Context**

#### **3.1 National Spatial Strategy**

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is a twenty year planning framework designed to deliver more balanced social, economic and physical development between regions in Ireland. It outlines measures through which rural potential can be developed, building upon local strengths in tourism, agriculture and local services.

#### **3.2 Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas- (Cities Towns and Villages) Guidelines for Planning Authorities -2009**

This document sets down standards for delivering appropriately designed residential development in Local Area Plans. It acknowledges that smaller towns and villages are a very important part of the country's identity, and for them to thrive and succeed, their development must strike a balance in meeting the needs and demands of modern life but in a way that is sensitive and responsive to the past. The scale of development in the smaller towns and villages should be in proportion to the existing development within the village or town.

#### **3.3 The Provision of Schools and the Planning System- A code of Practice for Planning Authorities 2008**

This Code of Practice sets out best practice approaches that should be followed by planning authorities in ensuring that the planning system plays its full part in facilitating the timely and cost-effective roll-out of school facilities by the Department of Education and Science and in line with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

### **3.4 Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022**

The intention of the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) is to ensure the coordination of national policy at regional level and inform policy formulation at county and local levels. A key role of the RPGs is therefore to ensure the integration of plans at national, regional, county and local levels in order to achieve balanced regional development.

With the exception of part of the eastern part of the county, Westmeath lies within the identified Central Development Area (CDA) within the MRPGs. The CDA consists of portions of County Offaly and Westmeath and contains the linked gateway towns of Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar. Within this development area Castletown Geoghegan would fall within the fourth settlement tier, below the linked gateway towns and urban core, as a settlement within the rural hinterland.

The Guidelines specify a population target for the county and future housing land requirements to meet the targets and the major population growth is prioritised in settlements where the appropriate treatment of waste water is feasible. The Guidelines specify land use zoning for residential purposes should take account of the following:

- Sequential development of land.
- Efficient use of existing and proposed infrastructure.
- Ensure that the wasteful over provision of zoned land is avoided so that investment priorities in the provision of physical and social infrastructure can be easily identified and coordinated.
- Development shall be consistent with population targets and projected housing demand.
- Where required a phased approach to land use zoning.

### **3.5 County Development Plan 2008-2014**

The County Development Plan identifies a framework for the sustainable physical development of the County, while ensuring the conservation and protection of the built environment.

The development strategy for the County is consistent with the NSS and RPGs in seeking to direct growth to the County's largest settlements, those being Mullingar and Athlone, as well as to towns and serviced villages with the capacity to absorb further development.

Castletown Geoghegan is in the fourth tier in the Settlement Hierarchy as set out in the Westmeath County Development Plan and described as centres with limited development potential.

## **4 Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment**

### **4.1 Strategic Environment Assessment**

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan/programme before a decision is made to adopt the plan/programme; the procedures for which are set out in the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004.

The preparation of a full SEA is not mandatory for Local Area Plans with a population of less than 10,000 persons such as the Castletown Geoghegan Village/Local Area Plan. Nonetheless, in accordance with the above SEA Regulations, the planning authority must determine whether or not the implementation of such a proposed plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment and hence require SEA.

In making this determination, the planning authority is required to consult with the prescribed Environmental Authorities; the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR) and to take account of the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations 2004; in what is called a 'screening process'. A 'Screening Report' outlining the relevant considerations for the proposed Castletown Geoghegan Village/LAP was prepared and issued to the prescribed authorities for their consideration.

A response was received from the DoEHLG - Applications unit regarding the impact of the proposed LAP on the architectural heritage of the locality. Policy G4 within the draft LAP has been revised to ensure a design framework for the village will be considered. No other responses were received to the SEA screening.

### **4.2 Appropriate Assessment:**

Circular letter SEA 1/08 and NPWS 1/08 issued by the DoEHLG on February 2008 requires all consent authorities, including planning authorities to undertake Appropriate Assessment of the ecological implications of any plan or project on a Natura 2000 site, whether within or outside a Natura 2000 site, which does not directly relate to the management of the site but may impact upon its conservation objectives. As part of the screening and assessment process the National Parks & Wildlife Services of the Department were consulted.

A response was received from the Department in which it was noted the LAP lies approximately 3km from Lough Ennell SAC/SPA and Nure Bog NHA and it was considered adherence to the plan should not impact on either

designated site and consideration should be given to any likely impacts on wildlife habitats in the greater countryside and measures to minimise disturbance relating to riverside walks for example.

#### **4.3 Conclusion:**

Having regard to the responses received from the prescribed authorities to the draft LAP, and to all of the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations; and Circular letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08, the Planning Authority have determined that the draft LAP would not be likely to have a significant effect on the environment and does not require an environmental report or appropriate assessment. The SEA and AA screening, determination and concluding statements are contained with the appendices of this Plan.

#### **4.4 ADOPTION OF LAP**

The draft LAP was adopted by Members on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012 following a period of public consultation. Following consideration of the Manager's report, Members recommended two amendments to the draft LAP.

These amendments included the following:

##### **Section 6.5**

##### **Policy R3: (A new policy)**

With regard to the land currently in use as a car park which is zoned residential, the use of part of this area as a playground shall be facilitated pending the development of the lands for residential purposes. If and when these lands are subsequently developed for housing purposes, any playground provided in the interim shall be relocated to a suitable site as part of the development.

##### **Section 6.7 Education and Community Facilities**

##### **Policy EC1: (revisions to policy highlighted in black)**

Provide an area close to the village core for a future primary school site **and or a community facility** of 2.5 hectares (approx 6.5 acres) to accommodate an 8 classroom school **and or a community facility** with parking, playing facilities etc. **as appropriate**. The existing hedgerow boundaries shall be retained as part of any development of the site.

Delete Policy EC2 and rename Policy EC3 as Policy EC2.

**Policy EC2:** On developing the site for a school any residual land would be used for a community facility.

The Planning Authority determined the amendments were minor in nature and therefore unlikely to have significant effects on the environment or adversely affect the integrity of a European site.



## 5. Profile of Castletown Geoghegan

### 5.1 Location

Castletown Geoghegan is situated in the south west of County Westmeath. The roads from Mullingar, Kinnegad, Kilbeggan and Loughnavalley all meet at the northern crossroads of the village. It is approximately 14 kilometers south of Mullingar and 9.7 kilometers north of Kilbeggan. Lough Ennell, Lilliput pitch and putt course and Nure Bog are approximately 3km to the east of the village. The R389 regional road extends through the village.

**Figure 1: Regional context**



### 5.2 Description

The settlement of Castletown Geoghegan is predominantly linear in nature with clustering at either end of the village around a crossroads and Y junction. The village has experienced extensive ribbon development on the roads which radiate from the two junctions beyond the established speed limits.



**Figure 2: Aerial photograph of the village**

The village has a rural character with a strong social infrastructure including a church, health centre, community hall several public houses, a post office, sports field and school to facilitate the population of the village and its hinterland.

### **5.3 Shape of the village:**

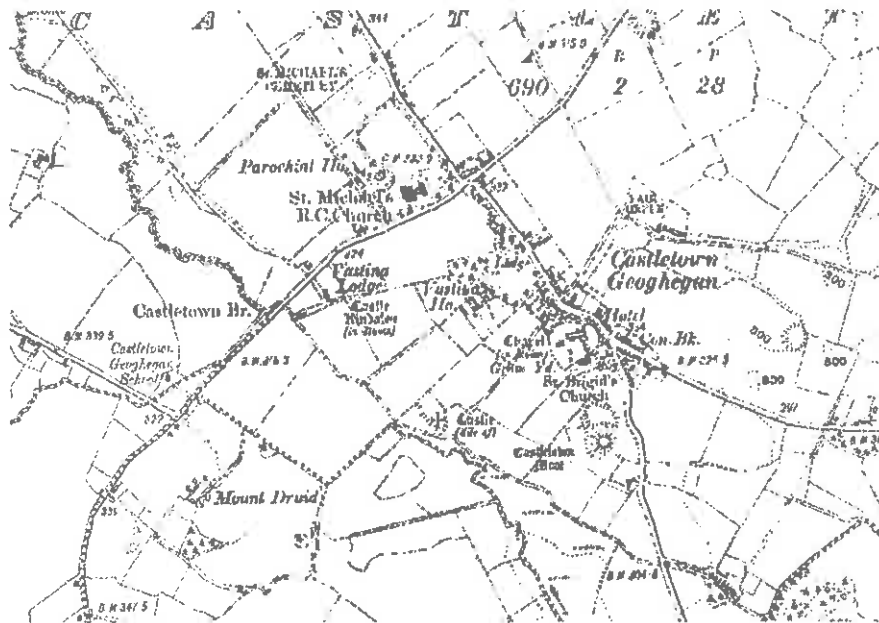
Historically the core of the village was clustered around the Y Junction around the former Abbey, Protestant Church, Garda Station (former police barracks), and school house. There was intermittent development beyond the Y junction to the north along the main street around Vastina House (a former Glebe house). The shape of the village was and to a great extent still is predominantly fragmented and linear in shape.

The north western end of the village developed when the existing Roman Catholic church was built in the late 1800s. The southern part of the village beyond the Y junction has been developed in more recent years.

**Map1: Layout of the village 1837**



**Map 2: Layout of the village 1911**



The pattern of development on the eastern side of the regional road in Map 2 is similar to the present day layout. It is evident the visible archaeology within the centre of the village has greatly determined the village layout and shape.

## **5.4 History of the Village**

The village's current name reflects the influence of the MacEochagain (Geoghagan) family - Baile chaisleain na nGeoghagain – the town of the castle of the Mac Eochagain. Jamestown house to the north west of the village was the residence of some members of the MacGeoghagan family. There is evidence that members of the Mac Eochagain clan are buried in the old graveyard.

## **5.5 Village functions**

Castletown Geoghegan provides a number of services to the residents of the village and the surrounding hinterlands. Village functions include retail, religious, educational, health, and recreational.

The predominant use within the core of the village is mixed with commercial, residential and community uses, with the church, 3 public houses, a shop and petrol filling station, a post office, car park and community centre along the main street. In the south eastern end of the main street is the garda station with an adjoining garden centre, a metal work business and Montessori day care. The southern part of the village beyond the Y junction is predominantly residential but includes a health centre and a wood business.

## **5.6 Social Infrastructure**

### **School:**

There is a national school Mhochil Naofa along School road to the west of the village occupying a site of approximately 0.2 hectares (including parking area) with an enrolment of approximately 80 children. The school is currently a 4 classroom school with a need for a fifth classroom. There are 7 fulltime teachers including 3 special needs and 2 shared teachers providing resource and learning support. The school grounds are limited and an extension to the school would encroach the existing play ground. Parking is restricted and limited to the frontage of the site.

### **Community Hall:**

There is a community hall within the centre of the village which holds friendship clubs on a weekly basis, scor meetings and has a Comhaltas Ceoltoiri branch. There is limited parking along the frontage of the hall.

### **Health Centre:**

The Health centre is located in the south eastern part of the village and is open Monday to Friday with allocated parking within its curtilage.

### **Church:**

St. Michael's Catholic church is located in the northern end of the village and has a graveyard to the north of the church.

### **GAA pitch:**

There is a GAA playing pitch which caters for the village and surrounding townlands to the east of the core of the village along the L- 1235. There is a need to link this facility to the village by means of a footpath.

### **Public park provision:**

There are incidental open seating areas within the main street of the village and at the Y junction next to the garda station which contributes to the character and provides passive open space. There is a large open space area for use by the residents of Woodside Park to the south east of the village but no dedicated public park for the village.



*Seating provision within village*

### **Graveyard**

There is an historic graveyard in the centre of the village containing a national monument (remains of a church and abbey). St. Michael's church has a graveyard to the north east of the parochial house, there is adequate provision within the grounds of the church to extend the existing graveyard.

### **Car park**

There is a public car park along the north eastern side of the main street next to the garden centre. Within the car park area are the village recycling facilities and a vacant building. The car park has no delineated spaces and is often used as an over night parking facility for commercial vehicles.



*Car park along main street*

## **5.7 Tourism**

There are a number of tourist facilities close to the village including Lough Ennell and Lilliput. The Westmeath Way passes along an area of working bogland in Nure and Lilliput but does not link to the village. The Failte Ireland Mullingar cycle route extends through the village along the R391 to Lilliput. The reopening of Middletown House as a hotel and restaurant provides accommodation and facilities for the area.



Lilliput park, Kilbeggan racetrack, Lockes Distillery in Kilbeggan, Belvedere House and Forest Park Golf course are all in close proximity to the village.

## 5.8 Population Profile

There are no central census statistics for Castletown Geoghegan village but statistics are available for the DED of Castletown, which extends southwards from the R391 and Dysart to Middleton and has a total area of 2,610 hectares.

The DED population of Castletown showed an increase in 2002 of 12% but has increased in the last inter censal period to 2006 at a much more steady rate.

**Table 1: Population change from 2002-2011 in Castletown DED**

DED	Population				
	2002	2006	% change 2002-2006	2011	%change 2006-2011
	671	693	3.1%	749	8.2%

**Source: Central Statistics Office:**

The Geo directory for the village as shown within the area identified on map 3 below has a much smaller population of 35 households only (population equivalent of 88 based on 2.5 persons per household). The area in red on this map extends from St. Michael's church to Woodside housing estate and is considered as being the village.

**Map 3: Area identified in geo directory**



## 5.9 Built Environment:

### Historic development of the village

The village gets its name from its earlier settlers the McGeoghegans clan, chiefs of Moycashel and the old graveyard in the village holds the remains of some of the Mc Geoghegan clan. In Lewis' Topographical Dictionary 1837 it is

noted the village consisted of 36 houses, a constabulary police station and there was a patent for fairs, but none were held at that time.

Historically the village has developed around the Motte and Bailey, abbey and garda station at the southern end of the main street of the village. The north western part of the village developed around the Catholic church which was built in 1885 and is evident on the 1911 map. At the eastern end of the village the area behind the existing car park was previously used for a market fair. Overtime the village has expanded south eastwards beyond the Y junction, as well as the other approach roads into the village.

While the village still has a small core, there are many houses within the outlying areas, along the approach roads which has given the central core a fragmented structure.

**Map 4: Present day layout of the village**



#### **Character areas:**

There are three distinct areas with associated facilities within the village core. At the north western end of the village is the church and Claffeys public house and shop. The Drake Inn, post office and Brennan's public house in the centre of the main street, and the garda station and sitting out area at the Y junction at the south eastern end of the main street as identified in the above.

#### **Cross roads at the north western end of the village :**

This section of the village is positioned on a busy cross roads. The regional R389 road and the crossroads is characterised by the church and the stone walls. To the north east of the main street is Claffeys public house which provides a focal point at this junction and acts as an 'end stop' when viewed from the main street.

The northern end of the main street at this junction is more open with detached modern single storey houses on large plots. The gaps along the main street weaken the tight fabric achieved by the older buildings. There is no footpath along this stretch of the main street with a hedge being the boundary to the street.



*View along L-5230 (nw end of junction)*



*View from main street of Claffey's pub*



*Absence of footpath along the northern side of the main street*

### Main Street:

Most of the older development in this part of the village is two storeys high with pitched roofs, built close to the road frontage in the form of small terraces, such as The Drake Inn on the southern side and Brennan's public house on the northern side. The uses along this part of the street are mixed. The character of the built form however is tight and enclosed and typical of a rural Irish village.



*Terraced properties on north side and terraced properties on south side of main street.*



The area to the south of the main spine of the village has remained unaltered due to the archaeology, Vastina house and its grounds, and the graveyard and church and abbey ruins.



***Vastina gate Lodge on southern side of the main street with sylvan aspect to the rear***

There are opportunities within the main street for infill to strengthen the core of the village, particularly on the eastern side.

#### Y junction:

The convergence of roads at this location has created a triangular cluster of development at this junction. This area is characterised by older established buildings such as the garda station and an old shed which has been in use as a workshop in the past. A public seating out area has been created at the junction. The tight grain of the main street is lost at this section due to the openness of the public carpark to the west of the garda station.



***Sitting out area at Y junction***



***Garda station- a protected structure***

#### South eastern end:

This is the newer end of the village, characterised by modern detached bungalows in single plots and by the modern two storey houses in Woodside housing estate with additional buildings currently under construction to complete the estate, of single and two storey houses around an existing green. This end of the village is dominated on the southern side of the street by the Motte and Bailey.



*View of southern end of village taken from the Motte and Bailey.*

### **Built Form:**

The village has a varied built form which has evolved over the years. Castletown Geoghegan is a relatively small village with its layout determined by the Motte and Bailey and graveyard within the centre. A few of the older buildings dating from the 19th and 20th century still survive. Although the functions of the buildings have changed over the years many of the original openings remain in these buildings.

The design of the buildings within the central core of the village comprise in the main two storey terraced properties with commercial and residential uses that follow the pattern of the street. The walls and finishes of the older buildings remain and have roughcast render or dash. The roofs are generally pitched but most of the buildings have not retained their natural slates. The older building lines usually front the road directly, with little or no garden frontage.

There are gaps in the built form along the main street of the village which would benefit by development and infilling to create a greater sense of a central core to the village.

The more modern houses located beyond the village core to the south of the Y junction, are set back further from the road to accommodate parking and tend to be single storey detached or semi detached in spacious plots, with the exception of the two storey housing estate development.

### **Vernacular style**

#### Materials:

There is no predominant vernacular material within the village. The older buildings within the centre tend to comprise two storey rough cast or smooth rendered walls with pitched slate/artificial roofs. A Foras Forbartha report in 1974 of the county records several thatched cottages within the village. The new buildings tend to be rendered or in brick.



*The Drake Inn in the centre of the village was built as a former hotel in circa 1840*



*Boundary walls to Vastina house along School road*



*Boundary walls along R389*

Boundary stone walls are built throughout the village and provide a distinctive character to it. Recent works to the boundary of Vastina House have upgraded the existing stone walls along the School road.

### **Village Streetscape:**

The village is linear in pattern and layout and has altered little from the layout indicated on the 1911 map. The older properties within the central core of the

village and at the two junctions of the main street define the village streetscape, characterised by small groups of terraces with building frontages onto the street, interspersed with views and glimpses of the surrounding farmlands. There are a group of buildings clustered around the Y junction on the southern end of the main street which creates a 'stop end' to this part of the street. The regional road which runs through the village is relatively straight but curves along the southern end of the village around the old graveyard and Vastina House with the surrounding lands rising significantly on the western side of the main street at the Motte and Bailey. The Motte and Bailey dominate this end of the village and provides exceptional views of Lough Ennell and the surrounding countryside from the top.



*Trees to Vastina house.*

*Cluster of buildings at Y junction*

### Vastina House

Vastina House is set back from the main street of the village in extensive mature grounds with a series of outbuildings including a gatelodge and the associated Church of Ireland church to the south east (now a workshop). The house is a well-proportioned late Georgian house which retains its early form and character. This building remains of particular social importance in the locality as a former Church of Ireland rectory, sponsored by the Board of First Fruits (c.1711-1833).

The gatelodge is visible from the street and forms part of a tree lined avenue to the main house. The grounds to the house wrap around the existing buildings along the main street and extend to Vastina lodge along the school road. Although the house is not visible from the main street its extensive landscaping and historical link to the graveyard and former church of Ireland provides a strong presence to the streetscape.



***Vastina House***



***View of Vastina and cluster of outbuildings***

On the same side of the street as Vastina House is the former Church of Ireland graveyard. The graveyard is historically important and has been a focal point for the local community since the medieval period. There is a fine collection of cut stone grave markers, both upright and recumbent, the majority of which date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A number of the grave markers mark the burials of members of the McGeoghegan family, including the grave of a David McGeoghegan, who died in 1778 and there is evidence of a mortuary chapel dated 1671.



***Graveyard dominates the southern end of the main street.***

Vastina House, the former Church of Ireland church and graveyard are part of the historical makeup of the village and contribute to the sense of openness to the western side of the village.

The village would benefit with extending the new and old footpaths throughout the village to make the central core more cohesive. The GAA grounds in particular are not accessible from the village by a footpath.

Overhead wires run through the village and any future development within the village should consider cabling underground to enhance the village.



## 5.10 Record of Protected Structures

There are 3 structures within Castletown Geoghegan area which are currently listed in the Councils Record of Protected Structures (RPS), in the County Development Plan as follows:

B220	Jamestown Court
B241	Middleton Park House
B345	Garda Station

In addition to these structures, which are included in the RPS, there are 15 further structures in Castletown Geoghegan recommended for inclusion by the Minister for Environment Heritage and Local Government as set out in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) report. These include the Roman Catholic church, buildings on the main street, including Vastina House and The Drake Inn as well as items such as water pumps, graveyards and a gate pier to the former fair green. It is the intention of the Council to consider the inclusion of other structures listed in the NIAH onto the RPS register, on a priority basis.



*St. Michael's church on the NIAH list.*

## 5.11 Archaeology

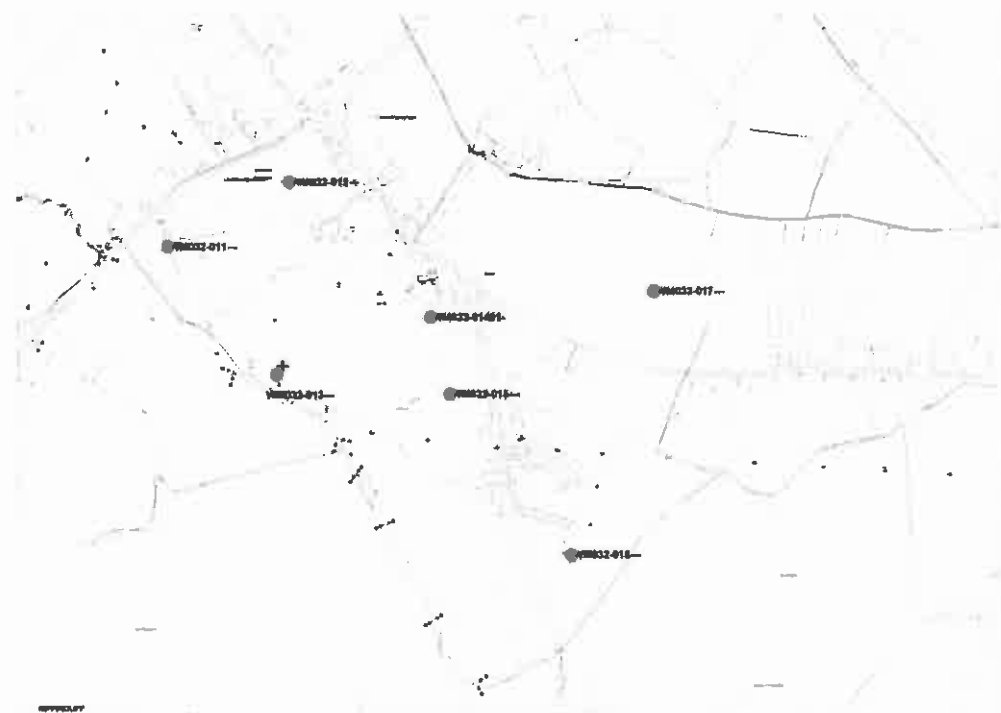
Castletown Geoghegan has a long history of settlement with a considerable amount of visible archaeology. The centre of the village is dominated by the large Motte and Bailey. The Motte is a prominent historical and archaeological feature of the village's landscape. Next to the Motte and Bailey is the old churchyard which is accessed from the main street and associated with the former church of Ireland.

Where development impacts upon recorded or as yet unknown archaeological objects or sites the policy of the County Development Plan and National Monuments legislation will be followed.

Castletown Geoghegan village contains a number of Recorded National Monuments, which are as follows:

Monument Number	Townland	Classification
WM032-011	Castletown	Castle
WM032-012	Castletown	Earthwork
WM032-013	Castletown	Earthwork
WM032-015	Castletown	Motte & Bailey
WM032-017	Castletown	Ringfort –Rath castle
WM032-018	Castletown	Earthwork
WM032-01401	Castletown	Chapel
WM032-01402	Castletown	Graveyard

**Figure 3 Monuments in the Village (in blue).**





*Headstones within graveyard*

*Long distance view of the Motte*

## **5.12 Natural Environment**

### **Natural Environment and biodiversity**

Casteltown Geoghegan lies 2.2km to the west of Nure Bog a designated Natural Heritage Area (NHA) which is a raised bog and provides a walkway. Beyond the bog is Lough Ennell. Lough Ennell is a designated Natural Heritage Area (NHA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and is a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds.

The Jonathon Swift Park at Lilliput on the shores of Lough Ennell provides a public amenity area for residents of the village and contains a Par 3 Golf course and adventure centre. The County Development Plan identifies Lilliput as an opportunity area for further consolidation of sensitive and compatible activity development and a location to create links with the Westmeath Way.

### **Broad Landscape Setting & Features**

The surrounding landscape to the village is relatively flat agricultural land with the exception of the Motte and Bailey.

Trees are a part of the village character particularly around Vastina house and there are opportunities for further planting within the village itself to create a greater sense of enclosure and space along the main street. There is a significant number of trees on the roads which radiate from the central core. In particular there is a cluster of trees along Lake Road which is considered worthy of a tree preservation order as they are of substantial amenity value on this approach into the village. In the past these trees may have formed part of the Middleton estate.





***Trees along Lake Road***



***Group of trees around Vastina House***

### **Important Views and Vistas**

The core of the village can be appreciated close up from the approach roads and the view from the top of the Motte and Bailey of the surrounding area is exceptional, with Nure Bog and Lough Ennel visible. It would be important to maintain the views of and from the Motte and avoid development encroaching on the views of this landmark which is a key natural feature of the village.

***View of Lough Ennell from Motte and Bailey.***



### **Open Spaces**

With the exception of a few seating areas along the main street and at the Y junction of the village there are no designated public open spaces within the village core. The GAA pitch is a large open space area with public access

located to the north of the village. The housing estate on the south eastern side of the village has an open space area for the residents of the estate.

The Motte and Bailey and graveyard within the centre of the village provide an area of open space and are an important aspect of the visual character of the village. They provide an opportunity for a designated open space area within the village core. The graveyard however would require restoration works.

## **5.13 Physical Infrastructure and Servicing**

### **Water Supply**

Water supply is available within all the public roads within Castletown Geoghegan. The village is supplied by the Mullingar high level supply.

### **Foul Drainage**

A recently constructed waste water treatment plant has been built within the village with a capacity of 500 persons. All existing residents and businesses are connected to septic tanks and 48 households have been requested to connect to the new plant.

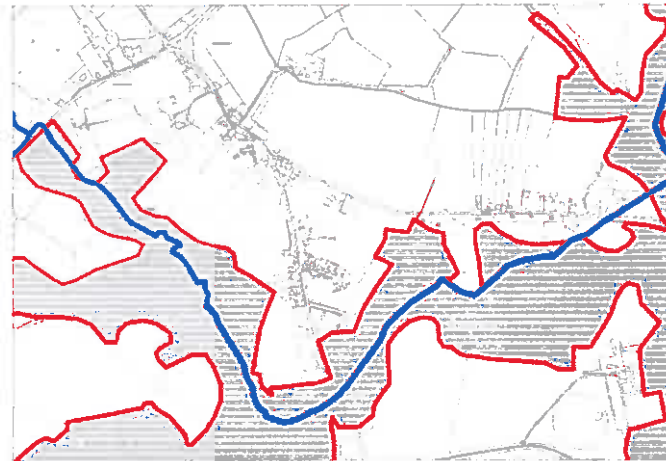
### **Surface Water Drainage**

A surface water sewer running the length of the main street was constructed at the same time as the foul sewer. Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) and other attenuation measures will be provided in the case of any new greenfield development. Existing watercourses will be kept open as much as possible and can be incorporated into the landscaping of developments.

### **Flooding**

The map below identifies the extent of benefitting lands which extend along the river Monaghstown to the west of the village. Benefitting land maps were prepared as part of the design of the OPW Arterial Drainage Schemes and identified lands that were poorly drained and would benefit from drainage.

**Benefitting lands in Castletown Village following the River (outlined in red)**



(Source OPW web site).

The Plan can contribute substantially to the management of flooding related issues by showing consistency with guidelines issued by the DoEHLG, 'Flood Risk & Development' which state that development that is sensitive to the effects of flooding will generally not be permitted in flood prone or marginal areas.

### **Transportation**

There are no public transport facilities within the village. The disused Mullingar to Athlone railway line is to the north of the village and extends parallel with the R391 and there is an objective to open this railway again within the County Development Plan 2008-2014. There is a former station stop close to the village known as Castletown Station which could provide a future walkway /cycleway along the railway line, until such time as it is opened.

South Westmeath Rural Transport Association will be facilitated in providing means of rural transportation to serve the village and surrounding area. Their services are scheduled to link with public and private transport services locally.

Footpath coverage in the area is poor and existing footpaths are generally in need of improvement. There are no cycle lanes in the village.



*Section in village with no footpath*

There is a small area within the village dedicated to off street parking. The recycling facilities are contained within this area and there is a portable chip van and derelict building on the site. This area would benefit from landscaping and resurfacing or it may be suitable for an alternative use.



*Public car park and recycling facility within village core.*

### **Traffic Safety:**

The R389 goes through the centre of the village and although there are speed limits on the approach to the village the wide crossroads to the north of the village does not cause cars to reduce speeds significantly. Historically this junction was staggered and much narrower as can be seen from the historic maps below.



*Figure 4: 1837 map of junction*



*Figure 5: 1911 map of junction*

There is a need to realign or tighten the radii to this junction and create a pinch point particularly at the junction of the L-1235-0 (Mullingar Road) with the R-389, to reduce traffic speeds at this junction and signify entry into the village and give the village a 'sense of place'. To reinforce the 'sense of place' at the junction any new development should be located close to the road, reducing the expanse and size of the junction and assist in enclosing the space. In doing so there is potential to create a wider public space to the front of the pub (southern side for a sitting out area.)



*Present day pictures of junction.*

## **6 Village Plan Goals, Policies and Objectives**

Development within the area of the village plan will be subject to the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan. The goal of this plan is to cater for the needs of the existing and future population of the village and its surroundings, having regard to sustainability, quality of life, social cohesion, and retention of the village's character through the protection of its built and natural heritage.

### **6.1 Development History**

There has been little development within the central core of the village over the past 50 years (as referenced in Lewis' topographical dictionary), which contrasts with the significant and relatively recent ribbon development experienced on the roads leading into the village from the west, east and south. The main street of the village still maintains a strong commercial and community element which would benefit from strengthening. It is recognised that the form of development which has occurred is a consequence of a number of constraints including the existing archaeology within the village itself. The extension of the village on the radial roads from the core is primarily residential one off housing. This pattern of development will over time impact adversely on the objective of enhancing the village core. There is a need to make the village more compact and maintain the vitality of the core and to offer a range of housing types to avoid the proliferation of single houses on the radial roads outside the village.

### **6.2 Opportunities and Constraints**

The village has a strong community, with a number of facilities including community hall, health centre, church, GAA grounds and school. The existing school site is limited to enable the school to expand and provide adequate parking facilities but there are opportunities to provide for a new school closer to the village core. A new school in the core of the village close to the GAA grounds would enable dual usage of both areas to be considered and the possibility of sharing facilities maximised.

The village core has shifted from the south eastern side (Y junction) to the north western end of the village close to the church. It is important to maintain and strengthen the village core and consolidate it along the main street. The central core of the village has a variety of uses comprising commercial and residential. The central core is deficient of open space provision and the parking area along the main street provides an unsightly gap in the main village core.

There is a high incidence of visible archaeology within the village and it is the Council's policy to protect archaeology and promote public awareness of the

archaeological heritage of the County. The graveyard requires maintenance and upkeep and its proximity to the Motte and Bailey provides an opportunity to link both areas and create access to both. This area of the village provides an important historical nucleus to the village. (Refer to Appendix 1 for Opportunity/Constraints map).

There are several family run business and service type activities close to and within the village centre which provides some local employment. There is the capacity within the village to facilitate an element of small scale employment land without impacting on residential amenity.

The Failte Ireland cycle route which has 3 cycle routes around Mullingar and forms part of the National Cycle Network throughout Ireland, has a route which extends to the village. This route opens up the potential for an increase in tourism to the village.

### **6.3 General Policy**

The following policies will be applied to all new development within the village, in the interest of orderly planning and sustainable development.

**Policy G1:** To guide and control new development, a zoning plan has been prepared. Existing land uses will not be affected by this plan. All applications for new development in the village will be subject to the policies, objectives and development management standards of the County Development Plan.

**Policy G2:** To maintain and consolidate the central core of the village as identified within the proposals map.

**Policy G3:** Design proposals for new development should adapt to the site and respect the local characteristics of the site and its wider context, by working with key features including the existing contours and established boundaries and provide linkages to other areas.

**Policy G4:** To prepare an urban design framework plan / village design statement for the village which shall take account of and make specific provision for conservation and design.

**Policy G5:** To encourage the reuse of existing buildings which contribute to the village character rather than demolition and replacement.

**Policy G6:** To encourage the appropriate redevelopment of derelict, underused and unsightly sites within the village in order to maintain and improve the village character.

**Policy G7:** Innovative designs which offer the potential for new developments to benefit from renewable energy sources will be considered favourably.

#### **Justification:**

The County Development Plan within its settlement hierarchy identified Castletown Geoghegan as a Tier 4 centre with limited development potential. Therefore the amount and type of development is dependent on the needs of the area. The village has an established central core and it is important to



maintain and enhance the centre of the village, and maintain the mixed use nature to provide the services to the village and its hinterland.

Castletown Geoghegan has a unique rural character which it is important to maintain. Therefore in order to enhance local distinctiveness new development needs to respond to the local character and respect the visual context of the plan area. In this regard there is a need to develop an architectural framework for the village which will guide development within the village and ensure good quality urban design which will enhance the public realm.

## **6.4 Core of the village**

**Policy VC1:** To reinforce and consolidate the village core, development will be on a sequential basis and will be encouraged in the area identified on the Proposals/Zoning Map for mixed use village core purposes, approximately 0.77 hectares of which no more than 50% would be for residential purposes.. Any development of this area shall have regard to the existing structure, scale, shape and character of the village.

**Policy VC2:** Development of this area shall have regard to the setting of St. Michael's church, and shall be no higher than 2/3 storeys, with a road frontage to the main street.

**Policy VC3:** The area identified for a future public park shall be provided in lieu of public open space standards for residential development.

**Policy VC4:** The scale of new development will be in proportion to existing development, and shall provide for easy connectivity, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, to existing facilities.

**Policy VC5:** A variety of dwelling types and sizes will be encouraged.

**Policy VC6:** Existing hedgerows and natural features within these areas shall be retained where possible.

### **Justification:**

The village has a defined core which extends from the north western junction to the Y junction of the main street, which it is important to maintain and strengthen. New development in this location should be of a density that consolidates and strengthens the core of the village. The existing traditional buildings within the core are two storeys in height, fronting the street and further development within this area should be consistent with the established form and character to reinforce a defined sense of place.

Recent development within the village has tended to be on the edge of the village which has fragmented the village core. The census data indicates that the population increase in recent years has occurred in the surrounding DED rather than the village itself and there is pressure for one off houses in the area. It is important therefore to maintain the services and community facilities within the village to service the residents of the village and its wider hinterland. There is a need in accordance with the DoEHLG's Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas to adopt a sequential



approach to the zoning of lands extending outwards from the centre of the village.

Traditionally the uses along the main street have been of a mixed use nature including commercial and residential use. In order to maintain this type of use the area identified as mixed use village core on the map shall have a mixture of uses, allowing for an element of residential. The area identified within the village core would assist in supporting the existing and future village economy.

In general apartment developments are not considered acceptable in Castletown Geoghegan. However in certain mixed use schemes individual apartments may be appropriate.

There are specific features both natural and manmade in this area such as the hedgerows, trees and stone walls identified in the opportunities/constraints map in Appendix one which add to the 'rural' character and setting of the village and should be retained wherever possible.

## **6.5 Residential within the village core**

**Policy R1:** Proposals for residential development in this location will not increase the existing housing stock in the village by more than 10-12 houses over the lifetime of the Plan.

**Policy R2:** A suitable distance from the Monaghanstown river shall be maintained along the eastern boundary of the zoning area with the existing gate entrance to the former fair green maintained.

**Policy R3:** With regard to the land currently in use as a car park which is zoned residential, the use of part of this area as a playground shall be facilitated pending the development of the lands for residential purposes. If and when these lands are subsequently developed for housing purposes, any playground provided in the interim shall be relocated to a suitable site as part of the development.

### **Justification:**

There is pressure for single houses in this area, and proposals for lower density would be considered acceptable in this location in order to offer people who would otherwise seek to develop a house in an unserved area, the option to self build/develop in the village where services are available within walking and cycling distance and to match the scale and grain of existing development within the village boundary. Given the site's position within the village, it maybe appropriate to accommodate for the older population in the area on this site. It is considered developing this central area within the village would enhance and strengthen the viability of the local shops and public services within the village core.

An area has been identified, and in the event of the site being developed an area shall be reserved for a future public park in this location. Future development of these lands would incorporate a public park in lieu of public open space requirements for residential development. The provision of a park in this location would further enhance a green and permeable link through the village from the Motte and Bailey, to the future school site and the GAA grounds.

The Department of Environment Heritage & Local Government 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' Guidelines recommend the sequencing of development in small villages to avoid development of new residential areas taking place at some distance from the village and the scale of new residential schemes for development should be in proportion to the pattern and grain of existing development.

It is important that the village expands at an appropriate rate and reflects the existing character of the village which has developed slowly and organically over time. The redevelopment of this area would provide the potential to develop the village in a sequential manner and enhance the village core by providing a public park and the opportunity to redevelop the car park area.

## **6.6 The Edge of the Village Core**

**Policy EVC1:** Development in the mixed use areas on the edge of the village shall be on a sequential basis following the development of available land in the village core with the exception of the lands identified for enterprise and employment use.

### **Justification:**

It is important to maintain and strengthen the village core and consolidate the village prior to expanding on the village edge, unless it has been demonstrated that the lands in the village core cannot be developed. These areas are to provide for enterprise and employment, particularly local enterprise within the village.

## **6.7 Education and community facilities**

**Policy EC1:** Provide an area close to the village core for a future primary school site and or a community facility of 2.5 hectares (approx 6.5 acres) to accommodate an 8 classroom school and or a community facility with parking and playing facilities etc., as appropriate. The existing hedgerow boundaries shall be retained as part of any development of the site.

**Policy EC2:** An assessment of the existing school's capacity shall be undertaken in the event of a future substantial residential development.

### **Justification:**

The school as a result of historical consequence is a substantial distance from the village core. The existing site is confined and limited in size for future

expansion and the car parking area at the school requires cars to reverse onto the main road. Further expansion of the existing school would encroach onto the school playing area.

The area identified for the school is within the village core and would provide an essential community facility within the village and maximise the opportunity for pupils to walk and cycle to school creating a pedestrian route from the village to the school. The area identified would accommodate an 8 classroom school in accordance with The Provision of Schools and the Planning System- A Code of Practice for Planning authorities issued by the Dept. of Education and Science and DoEHLG. The proximity of the site within the core would enable the use of the school for dual use and community activities.

## **6.8 Employment**

**Policy EM1:** Local employment generating uses of a scale appropriate to the village, in the form of incubator units/start up units will be accommodated within the enterprise and employment zoning and the mixed use village zoning.

**Policy EM2:** Any future development of the lands identified for employment and enterprise within the zoning map shall incorporate a landscape buffer to the southern edge of the lands.

### **Justification:**

There are a number of service type activities in the village centre, which provide some local employment. It is considered that a significant amount of land has been zoned for employment generating uses in the nearby settlements of Kilbeggan, Rochfortbridge and Kinnegad and in the larger settlements of Mullingar and Athlone. Any new large-scale employment generating development, shall be in line with the policies of both the County Development Plan and Regional Planning Guidelines, and should be directed towards the principal towns.

Whilst employment generating uses can be facilitated within the mixed use zoning in the village it is considered appropriate that there would be a modest enterprise and employment zoning, accessed directly from the public road. To ensure that this development does not negatively impact upon the adjoining residential properties, or the strategic employment zoning in adjacent towns, it is considered appropriate that the employment type should be in the form of small scale incubator/light industrial type units for start up businesses and which can be carried out without impacting on the surrounding residential area.

## **6.9 Recreation, Amenity and Open Space**

**Policy RAO1:** Provide an area of open space within the village to facilitate a future playground/public open space area.

**Policy RAO2:** The Council will facilitate access to the Motte and Bailey and graveyard within the village.

**Justification:**

Although the centre of the village has a sense of openness due to the presence of the Motte and Bailey, graveyard and Vastina House's grounds there is no public open space. The GAA grounds and the open space for Woodside housing estate are located on the perimeter of the village with little provision within the village core. The existing carpark within the village appears to be underutilised and detracts from the attractive appearance of the village. The future use of part of this area as a playground/openspace with appropriate landscaping and linking to the future mixed use/residential lands would provide an area within the village core for the community.

Facilitating public access to the Motte and Bailey and graveyard would assist in building up the village's attractions and provide an open space area/short walkway within the village. It would further facilitate their upkeep and provide a heritage trail which could attract tourism to the village core, subject to consultation with the Department of Environment's Historic Monument section.

**6.10 Tourism**

**Policy T1:** The Council will facilitate the development of appropriate sustainable tourism developments within the village to incorporate the Failte Ireland cycle route, Westmeath Way, access to the Motte and Bailey, graveyard, Nure bog and Lilliput, subject to prior consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Justification:**

The village is in close proximity to a number of tourist facilities including Lough Ennell, Lilliput adventure centre, Westmeath Way and Nure Bog which could be linked to the village by extending the Westmeath Way walk into the village. The Failte Ireland cycle route extends to the village which in turn would enable the village to benefit from increased visitors and footfall and link the graveyard and Motte to the Westmeath Way. The village and surrounds display considerable potential for tourism development. A build up of attractions that play on the village's strengths including public access to the Motte and Bailey is encouraged within this Local Area Plan, subject to consultation with the Department of Environment 's Historic Monument section.

**6.11 Movement and Transport**

**Policy MT1:** A coordinated programme to increase pedestrian safety through adequate provision of street lighting, pavements and cycle paths, particularly in the vicinity of widely used public areas such as the church, community hall, health centre, public house, car park and the GAA grounds.

**Policy MT2:** Improve the junction at the north western end of the village to reduce traffic speeds into the village.

**Justification:**

The footpath coverage within the village is poor and new footpaths are required in several locations within the village to improve pedestrian safety.

The junction at the western end of the village is wide and tends not to encourage vehicles to slow down effectively. The wide sweep of the junction permits vehicles to park in this area which reduces the visibility at this junction.

Future development within the village shall have regard to the DoEHLG's guidelines on 'Delivering homes, Sustaining Communities'(2007) and A Sustainable Transport Future- A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020, including the relationships and linkages between the areas to be developed and established neighbourhoods.

**6.12 Preservation and conservation**

**Policy P1:** Archaeological sites, monuments, protected structures and their setting will be protected from inappropriate development in accordance with policy in the County Development Plan.

**Policy P2:** To protect the Motte and Bailey and graveyard and provide a buffer around these areas in accordance with the National Monuments Act.

**Policy P3:** To consider adding the NIAH recommendations to the Record of Protected structures, and protect the natural environment.

**Policy P4:** To protect the distinctive sense of place and identity of the village in particular structures and buildings with their settings and attendant grounds.

**Justification:**

There are structures of significant architectural and historic merit that require protection within the village. It will be the Council's policy to preserve such buildings and to protect them from inappropriate types of development.

There are a number of buildings and structures within the NIAH list which add to the historical and archaeological history of the village and their preservation would further enhance the village's historical context.

**6.13 Natural environment**

**Policy E1:** To support the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the relevant River Basin Management Plans so that a high standard of surface and ground water quality may be achieved. There shall be no discharge to the River Monaghanstown other than by licence.

**Policy E3:** All development shall have regard to the Eastern Regional Fisheries Board Requirements for the protection of fisheries habitats during construction and development works at river sites, and a statement of how it is

intended to comply with same shall be submitted with any application for permission.

**Justification:**

It is important to protect groundwater from contamination which is an important water source for private wells, group schemes and local authority supplies. If groundwater becomes contaminated, surface water quality can also be affected and so the protection of groundwater resources is an important aspect of sustaining surface water quality.

## **6.14 Flooding**

**Policy F1:** Development of any lands subject to flooding will not be permitted, except where there is no alternative, i.e. appropriate sites are not available in areas at lower risk.

**Justification :**

The map in section 5.13 indicates the areas on either side of the River to the west of the village identified as benefitting lands. Benefitting lands are those which has benefited from an existing flood relief scheme to reduce the probability of flooding. All development on such lands would be subject to the requirements in the DoEHLG's Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Flood Risk Management (2009). The Plan does not propose zoning any lands within flooded areas.

## **6.15 Specific Objectives**

**Objective 1:** To make provision within the village core for a future school site and facilitate a community centre use on the land zoned Institutional and Educational.

**Objective 2:** To provide a footpath from the village to the GAA pitch.

**Objective 3:** Refurbishment of footpaths within the village in a coordinated manner and further village enhancements such as tree planting along the main street and public open space provision.

**Objective 4:** Protection of the graveyard and seek to facilitate its upkeep.

**Objective 5:** Provide a pedestrian link between the graveyard and Motte and Bailey and seek to achieve an increase in tourism within the area and linkages within the various sectors such as Failte Ireland and linking Westmeath Way to the village.

**Objective 6:** To facilitate the provision of an amenity space within the village.

**Objective 7** Seek to connect increase the uptake of domestic connections Middleton House to the main sewerage network.

**Objective 8:** Identify groups of trees for protection within the village and its immediate area, including Vastina House and the Lake road.

**Objective 9:** Walkway along the river shall be subject to prior consultation with National Parks & Wildlife Service.

**Objective 10:** Redesign junction.

**Objective 11:** Seek to provide a footpath along the south side of the School road from village to the school; pedestrian crossing at the school and set back lighting along the School road.

## **6.16 Part V**

The Council's policy is to reserve 20% of lands zoned for residential use or mixed development for social and affordable housing in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000-2010 (Part 5) and the Housing Strategy for County Westmeath 2008-2014. Accordingly Westmeath County Council will require a 20% quota of social/ affordable housing to be provided on each housing development within the county on lands zoned or reserved for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses. This policy shall apply within the Village Plan area.

## **6.17 Development Contributions**

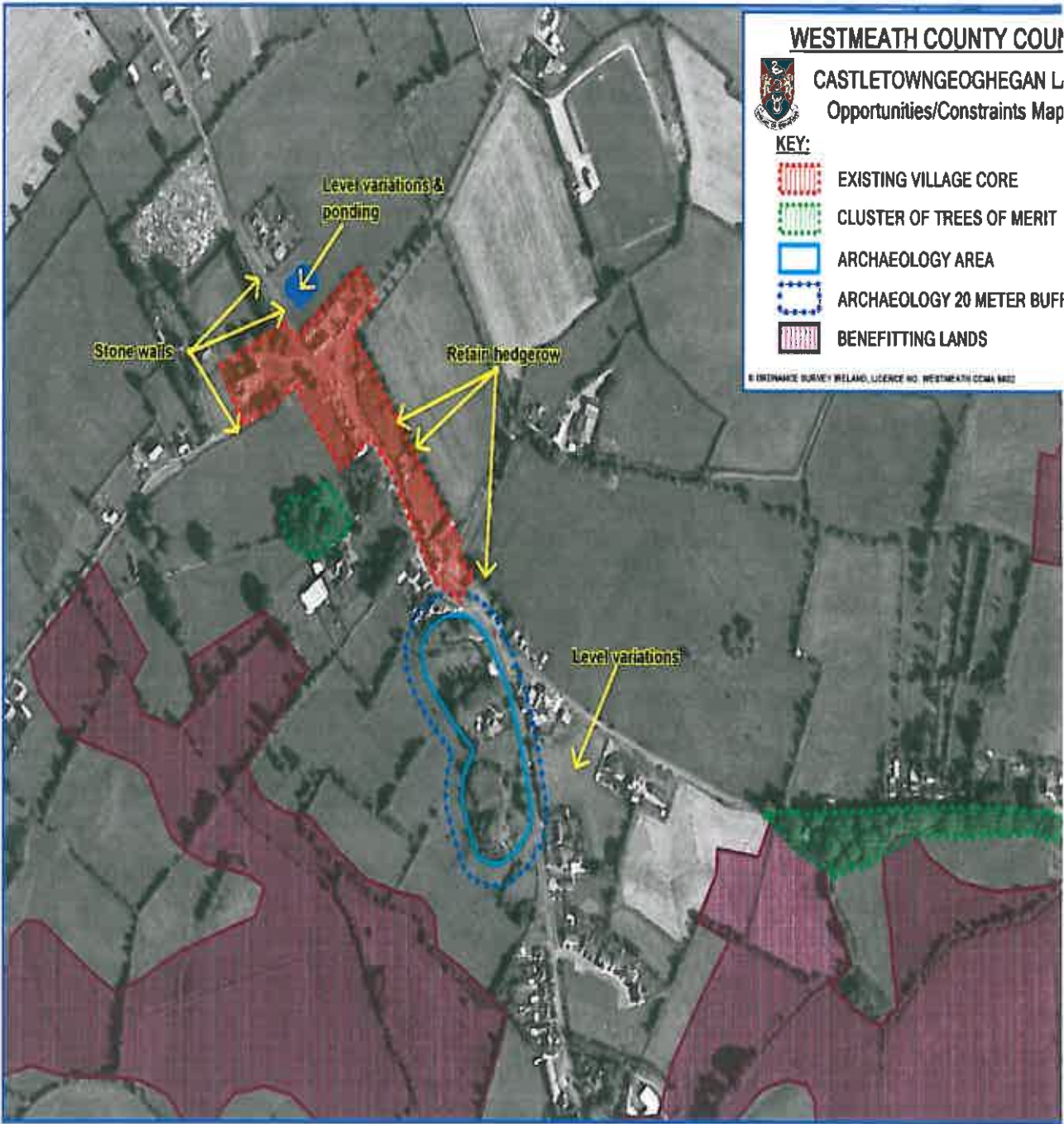
The Council will when granting a permission under S 34 include conditions requiring the payment of contributions in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in its area and that is provided, or that is intended will be provided, by or on behalf of the Local Authority, in accordance with a Development Contribution Scheme made under S 48 (2) of the Planning And Development Act 2000-2010 as amended.

In addition to the terms of the scheme, the Planning Authority will require the payment of a special contribution in respect of a particular development where specific exceptional costs not covered by a scheme are incurred by any Local Authority in respect of public infrastructure and facilities which benefit the proposed development.

Wherever appropriate, the Council may require payment of a contribution in respect of any public infrastructure service or project in accordance with the terms of S.49 (2) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010 as amended.



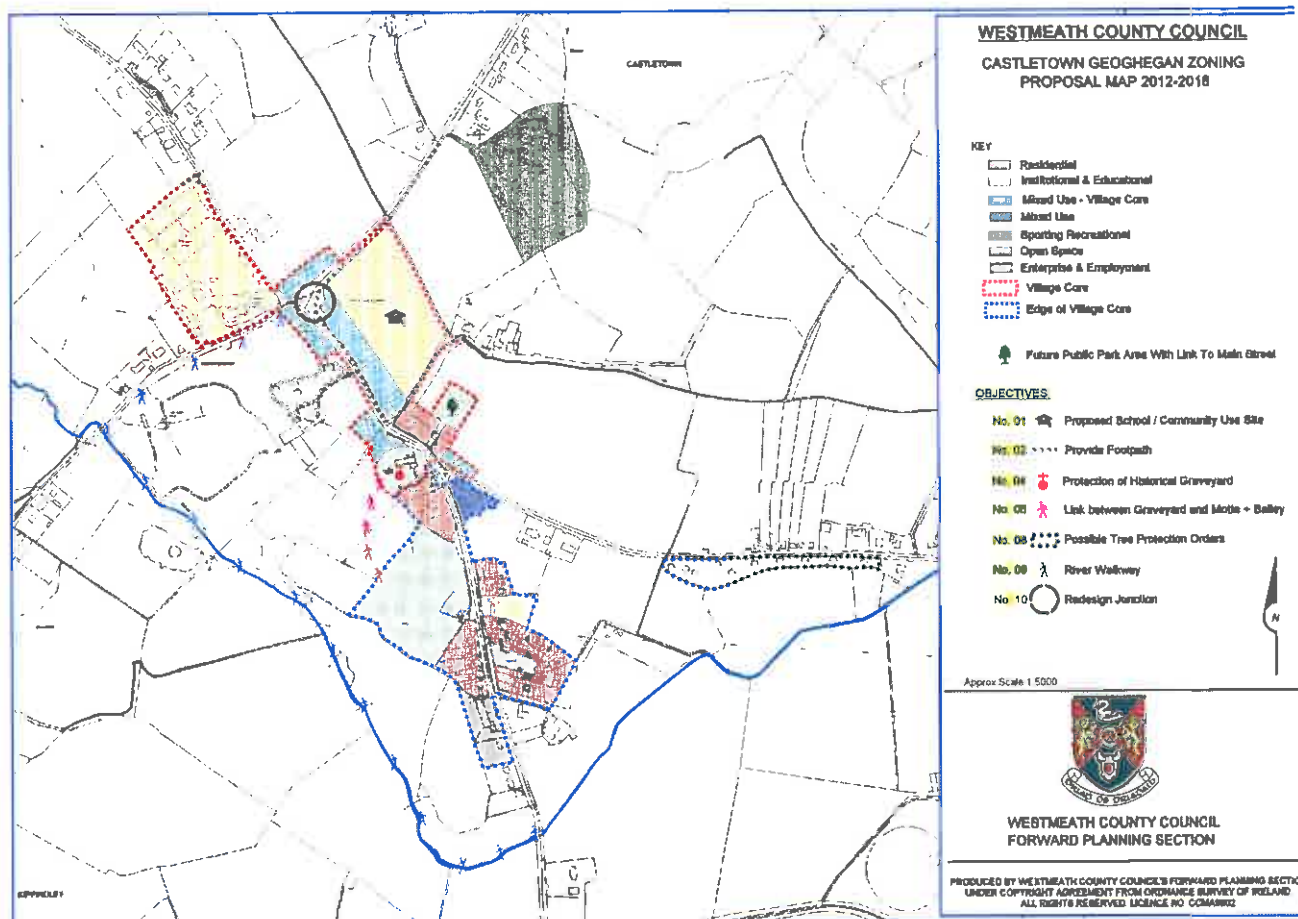
APPENDIX ONE  
OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS MAP





## APPENDIX TWO

### PROPOSAL/ZONING MAP



**APPENDIX THREE**  
**SEA SCREENING**

# Castletown Geoghegan Draft Local Area Plan 2010-2015

**Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment in accordance with criteria set out in Annex 2A of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) as transposed in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.**

## 1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this assessment is to consider whether the proposed Castletown Geoghegan local area plan (LAP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The assessment is based on the criteria set down in the SEA Guidelines and Annex II of the SEA Directive for determining the likely significance of environmental effects.

1.1 The Draft LAP is attached to this document and identifies the location of the village within County Westmeath, the size of the study area and the characteristics of the Plan area.

## 2.0 Mandatory Requirements

The guidelines require the SEA shall be carried out for local area plans where the population of the area of the local area plan is 10,000 persons or more. The estimated population for Castletown Geoghegan village plan is circa 105 persons, therefore a SEA is not mandatory. Screening for SEA is required in the case of local area plans where the proposed population is less than 10,000.

## 3.0 The SEA Directive

The criteria set out in Annex II and in Schedule 2A is set out below, alongside the Council's response in relation to Castletown Geoghegan Draft LAP.

<b>Criteria for determining the likely significance of the effects on the environment as set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning &amp; Development Regs 2004</b>	<b>Likely to have significant environmental effects Yes/No</b>	<b>Response Summary of significant environmental effects (+ and -)</b>
<b>1. Characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular to</b>		
(i) the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities either with regard to the location, nature, size and	No predicted significant effects	The purpose of the LAP is to set out a framework for the optimal development of the land

<p>operating conditions or by allocating resources.</p>		<p>in the village in terms of the existing and sensitive character of the village, linking any new development to the village core, identifying future land use zoning measures, planning policies and development objectives.</p> <p>A recently constructed waste water treatment plant has been built within the village with a capacity of 500 p.e.. All of the houses and business within the village are currently linked to septic tanks, but a total of 65 households within the village have been requested to connected to the new plant.</p> <p>Allowing for a total of existing 65 households and the school to connect to the new plant there would be a capacity of 286 p.e in the new plant.</p> <p>The village is identified as a 4<sup>th</sup> tier settlement within the County Development Plan as a centre with limited growth potential. The Plan identifies an area of 2.5 hectares for a new school site, 0.77 hectares for mixed use and a residentially zoned area for 10-12 houses approximately. Allowing for all the land</p>
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		identified to be developed there would be a capacity of 172 p.e within the plant.
(ii)the degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy:	No predicted significant effects.	Castletown Geoghegan is a Tier 4 settlement within Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 settlement hierarchy and is identified as a 'centre with limited development potential'. The proposed LAP is set within the context of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014. Any potential development facilitated by the proposed LAP would be in compliance with the relevant policies and objectives of the Westmeath County Development Plan.
(iii)the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	No predicted significant effects.	The proposed LAP provides for the consolidation and limited sensitive development of the village to cater for the needs of the settlement's population and its wider role in servicing the surrounding area, having regard to the need for sustainability, quality of life, existing population, social cohesion and conservation of the natural and built heritage.
(iv)environmental problems relevant to the plan:	No predicted significant effects.	The main issues regarding the

		<p>environment relate to:</p> <p>Possible vulnerable archaeological sites.</p> <p>Vulnerability of benefitting lands along the River Monaghanstown river to the west of the LAP area.</p> <p>Protection of the architectural heritage of the village and the retention of its character.</p> <p>Protection of designated habitats and species.</p>
(v)the relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).	No	
<b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected</b>		
(i) Probability, duration frequency and reversibility of effects.	No predicted significant effects.	The LAP is likely to have a long term positive effect on the village in so far as it sets out a framework for the optimal level of development for the village over the period of the plan period, whilst protecting its natural and built heritage.
(ii)The cumulative nature of the effects	No predicted significant effects.	<p>Development, including traffic, increase in public services and an increase in population will put the surrounding natural heritage at risk.</p> <p>There are no Natura 2000/European sites within the Plan area and</p>

		<p>in addition there are policies within the County Development Plan which promote the 'polluter pays' and 'precautionary principle' to protect the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of the county.</p> <p>Policies to protect archaeological sites, monuments and protected structures are in place within the County Development Plan and draft Plan.</p> <p>Large scale zoning is not proposed for the lifetime of the Plan.</p>
(iii)The transboundary nature of effects	No predicted significant effects.	
(iv)The risks to human health/or environment (e.g due to accidents)	No predicted significant effects.	<p>Increase in development will result in an increase in traffic, surface run off and demand on public infrastructure etc.</p> <p>It is expected that since the draft LAP will place development activities on a more coherent footing by detailing a design framework, the overall effects on human health and social issues, in as much as they are affected by the plan, will be largely positive.</p>
(vi)The magnitude, geographical and population size to be affected.	No predicted significant effects.	Future development will be consolidated and proportioned to the



		<p>existing village and its infrastructure.</p> <p>Projected population over the lifetime of the Plan would be small and contained within the village and is not envisaged to exceed 100 persons.</p> <p>Future policies and objectives within the Plan build on the village's strengths, sense of community and rural character, by enabling the village to grow at a similar rate as in the past with adequate facilities and regard to the natural habitat.</p>
<p>(vii)The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to</p> <p>(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p> <p>(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit value</p> <p>( c) intensive land use</p>	<p>No predicted significant effects.</p>	<p>Policies are in place within the draft LAP to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the village.</p> <p>There are several Recorded Monuments sites within and close to the Plan area. The effects of development on this heritage could be negative and permanent if appropriate safeguards are not in place to identify and protect same. The LAP policies will be consistent with the County Development Plan policies and seek to protect this heritage in its policies, objectives and guidelines.</p>

		<p>There is no zoning or future development proposed of lands close to or within Natura 2000 sites or on the area liable to flooding.</p> <p>The amount of lands zoned within the plan are reflective of the existing infrastructure for the village.</p>
(viii) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European union protection status:	Likely	See above 2 (i) and (ii) above.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Provision has been made in the draft LAP policies and objectives and in the various statutory provisions to protect against the above vulnerabilities. Vulnerability arising from the implementation of this proposed draft LAP should be negligible.

There is considerable potential for positive environmental effects of implementing this draft LAP in line with the strategic objectives of consolidating the future development of the village whilst protecting and enhancing its natural, historical and architectural assets.

Having taken into account the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A and the submission received from the environmental authorities it is considered that the implementation of Castletown Geoghegan Local Area Plan would not be likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

#### **5.0 Screening Decision:**

It is therefore considered that the proposed draft LAP does not require an environmental assessment.

**APPENDIX FOUR**  
**AA SCREENING**

# **Appropriate Assessment Screening**

of

## **Draft Castletown Geoghegan Draft Local Area Plan**



April 2010  
Forward Planning Section

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Westmeath County Council is currently preparing a Local Area Plan for Castletown Geoghegan in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC requires an appropriate assessment of land use plans with respect to ecological implications of any plan or project, whether within or outside a designated site, which does not directly relate to the management of the site but may impact upon its conservation objectives. Therefore, the purpose of this screening report is to consider whether, based on best scientific knowledge, the plan will have potential impacts upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites, and if so, the development where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects.

NATURA 2000 sites are protected habitats for flora and fauna of European importance. They comprise **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)**, designated under the Habitats Directive and **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)**, designated under the Birds Directive.

This appropriate assessment screening is carried out in accordance with the methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6 (3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive. The findings of the assessment are that the Raharney Local Area Plan does not require a full appropriate assessment.

In the preparation of this assessment reference has been made to the following documents in particular;

- MANAGING NATURA 2000 SITES. The provisions of Article 6, of the 'Habitats' Directive 92 / 43 / CEE
- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92 / 43 / EEC.
- Guidance document on Article 6(4) of 'Habitats Directive' 92 / 43 / EEC
- Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) Circular letter SEA 1 / 08 & NPWS 1 / 08 dated 15 February, 2008, See Appendix 1.

Circular letter SEA 1 / 08 and NPWS 1 / 08 states:

"Any draft land use plan (development plans, local area plans, regional planning guidelines, schemes for strategic development zones) or amendment/variation to it, proposed under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) must be screened for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites (normally called Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs)).

This screening should be based on any ecological information available to the authority and an adequate description of the plan and its likely environmental impacts. This should take into account any policies that will set the terms for future development. Up to date maps of Natura 2000 sites, or areas proposed for designation, are available on [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie). The results of the screening should be recorded and made available to the public.

In any case where, following screening, it is found that this Plan may have an impact on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting a precautionary approach-

- an appropriate assessment of the plan must be carried out and
- in any case where a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out."

An appropriate assessment would have been required if the LAP was likely to have a significant impact on Natura 2000 sites. A review of the CDP and the draft Area Plan found that there are sufficient policies and objectives as well as proposed infrastructure improvements to enable these habitats to be protected. In addition, the requirements of the Shannon River Basin Management Plan will require Westmeath County Council to ensure compliance with the environmental objectives set out in the RBMP. Protection of these water resources will offer protection to the Natura 2000 sites.

## 2. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF NATURA 2000 SITES

NATURA 2000 sites are protected habitats for flora and fauna of European importance. They comprise **Special Areas of Conservation**, designated under the Habitats Directive and **Special Protection Areas**, designated under the Birds Directive. Site synopses in respect to SACs, and SPAs, relevant to the Castletown Geoghegan LAP are included in this report.

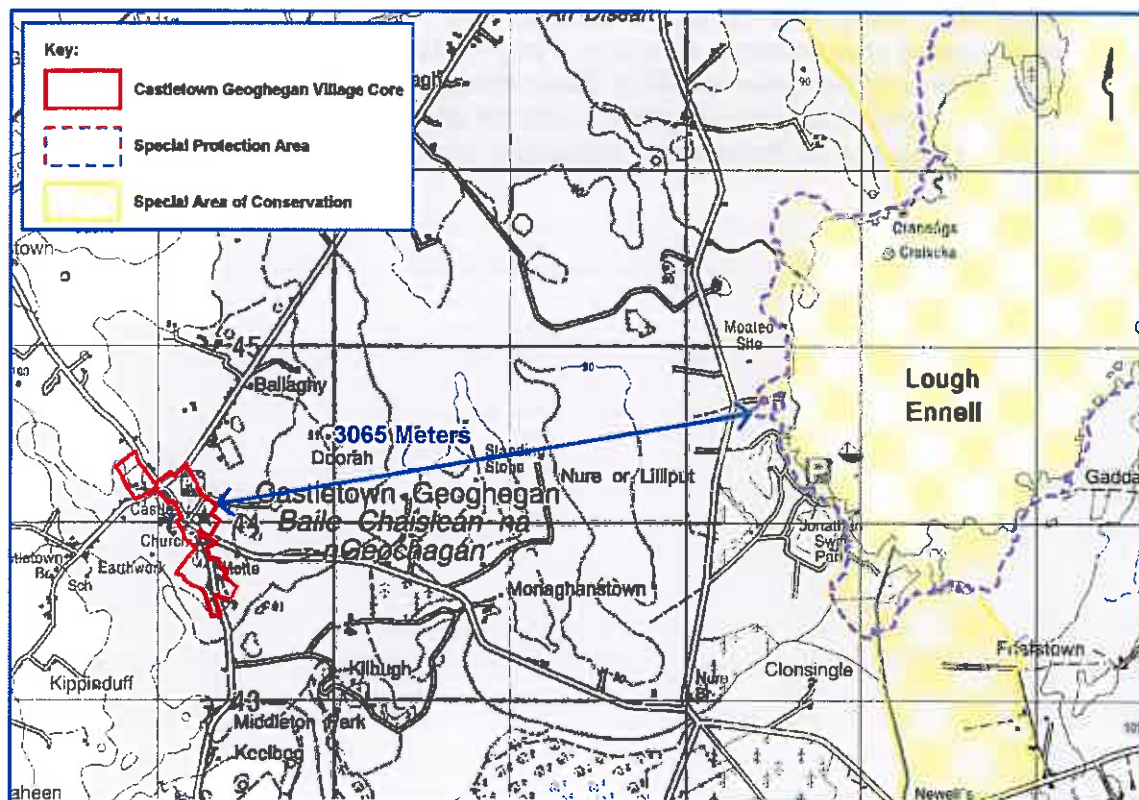


Figure 1: Context Map of Castletown Geoghegan and SAC and SPA

## 3. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

These are the prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) lists certain habitats and species that must be protected.

Sites proposed for designation are called candidate special areas of conservation (cSAC) and are legally protected under the Habitats Directive and EC Regulations. Details of these sites are forwarded to the EU Commission and once approved by the commission; these sites will be formally designated by the Minister as SAC.

There are 16 Special areas of conservation (SACs) and 10 Special Protection Areas for Birds (SPAs) in County Westmeath. The River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC extends from the north to the south of the village along the river Deel as indicated in Figure 1 above and listed below.



### **SAC's in Westmeath**

1. 000216 - River Shannon Callows SAC
2. 000440 - Lough Ree SAC
3. 000679 - Garriskil Bog SAC
4. **000685 - Lough Ennell SAC**
5. 000688 - Lough Owel SAC
6. 000692 - Scragh Bog SAC
7. 001810 - White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC
8. 001831 - Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC
9. 002120 - Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC
10. 002121 - Lough Lene SAC
11. 002299 - River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC
12. 002313 - Ballymore Fen SAC
13. 002336 - Carn Park Bog SAC
14. 002337 - Crosswood Bog SAC
15. 002340 - Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs SAC
16. 002342 - Mount Hevey Bog SAC

### **SPA's in Westmeath**

1. 004043 - Lough Derravaragh SPA
2. **004044 - Lough Ennell SPA**
3. 004045 - Glen Lough SPA
4. 004046 - Lough Iron SPA
5. 004047 - Lough Owen SPA
6. 004061 - Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA
7. 004064 - Lough Ree SPA
8. 004065 - Lough Sheelin SPA
9. 004096 - Middle Shannon Callows SPA
10. 004102 - Garriskil Bog SPA

### **Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) in Westmeath**

In addition to the above European designations there are 9 NHA's, one of which includes the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC. NHAs are designated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service by the DoEHLG under the provisions of the Wildlife (Amendment ) Act 2000 in recognition of nationally important habitats, species and sites of geological interest. However NHA's are not of direct concern to this document the purpose of which is compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

## Details of SAC proximate to Castletown Geoghegan

**SITE NAME:** Lough Ennell SAC

**SITE CODE:** 000685

Lough Ennell is a large, open, steep-sided lake, located 3km south of Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. The lake bottom is of limestone with a marl deposit. The water is markedly alkaline and mesotrophic, possibly owing to effluents received from Mullingar town and to fertilizer inputs from farmland surrounding the lake. The River Brosna flows into the lake from the north, at Butler's Bridge, and out from the south.

Lough Ennell supports a diverse aquatic flora; seven Stonewort species have been identified including two Red Data Book species, *Chara denudata* and *C. tomentosa*.

Scharff's Char (*Salvinia scharffi*), a distinct race of char which was once found only in Lough Owel and Lough Ennell, is now thought to be extinct. Notable aquatic invertebrates recorded from the lake include *Tinodes maculicornis*, *Metatype fragilis*, *Limnephilus nigriceps* (Trichoptera); *Picromerus bidens*, *Monarthia humili* (Hemiptera) and *Donacia obscura* (Coleoptera).

Much of the lakeshore is rather dry, stony ground, which was formerly part of the lake bed but is now exposed by drainage, and colonised by calcareous grassland. Species such as Mountain Everlasting (*Antennaria dioica*), Hairy Lady's-mantle (*Alchemilla filicaulis* subsp. *vestita*), Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*) and Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) occur here. Alkaline fen, a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, is also found on the lake shore with species such as Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*). In wet marshy patches along the shore Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Brookweed (*Samolus valerandi*) and Lesser Water-plantain (*Baldellia ranunculoides*) are common.

Reedbeds and species-poor swamp vegetation occasionally fringe the lake, particularly around the points of inflow and outflow and on the eastern shore, around

Tudenham Park. Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) is abundant here. Waterplantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Cowbane (*Cicuta virosa*), Frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) and Tufted Sedge (*Carex elata*) also occur. The latter two species are of note in that they are of occasional in the eastern midlands but are rarely recorded elsewhere. The rare Fibrous Tussock-sedge (*Carex appropinquata*) has been recorded here also. This species has a disjunct distribution, being recorded only from Co. Clare and from two midland counties (Westmeath and Offaly).

Mixed woodland of Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) fringes the lakeshore to the northwest. Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum*) are among the woodland ground flora.

A species of blue-green alga (*Schizothrix fasciculata*), which forms little pebbles of lime that are cast up on the lakeshore, occurs in Lough Ennell and has not been recorded from anywhere else in Ireland.

Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*), a rare plant listed in the Red Data Book, has been recorded in the woods along the eastern shores of Lough Ennell. This is the only record for this species outside the south-east of Ireland. The rare Myxomycete fungus, *Licea castanea*, has been recorded from woodland in the site.

This site shares an internationally important Greenland White-fronted Goose flock with Loughs Iron, Glen and Owel. The numbers of Geese which visit Lough Ennell are lower than for the other lakes: 91 birds (3 year average peak). Nationally important bird populations which have been recorded on Lough Ennell are:

Cormorant (average peak 149; absolute maximum 448); Mute Swan (average peak 424); Pochard (average peak 889; maximum 2,600 on 8/11/85); Tufted Duck (average peak 720) and Coot (average peak 639). All of these data were compiled from counts made over 3 seasons, 1984/85 - 1986/87. A single count of 522 Golden Plover was obtained in that period, i.e. a regionally important population.

Lough Ennell is an important amenity area, much used for fishing, boating and camping. Sections of the shoreline are managed for visitor access and amenity. The chemical composition of effluent from the Mullingar sewage treatment plant has a significant impact on the water quality of Lough Ennell. The mid-1970s saw the introduction of treatment of the sewage to reduce phosphates, with a resulting improvement in water quality (according to data compiled during 1987-90). However, levels of planktonic algal growth in the lake water continue to fluctuate, in response to the variable efficiency of the phosphate removal facility at the sewage treatment plant and the re-mobilization of phosphate from the lake sediments.

Lough Ennell is of significance as a highly productive lake which supports a rich variety of lower plant and invertebrate species. Its lakeshore habitats, which include alkaline fen, a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, support a diverse flora. These habitats also provide important refuges for wildfowl.

### **Details of SPA proximate to Casteltown Geoghegan**

**Site Name:**Lough Ennell SPA

**Site Code:** 004044

Lough Ennell is a large, limestone lake. It has a length of approximately 6.5 km along its long axis and is mostly c. 2 km wide. The River Brosna is the principal inflowing and outflowing river. It is a relatively shallow lake, with a maximum depth of c. 30 m. The water is hard, with low colour and markedly alkaline pH. The lake is classified as a mesotrophic system though it has been eutrophic in the past. The lake bottom is of limestone with a marl deposit.

Lough Ennell supports a diverse aquatic flora, with a particularly well-developed charophyte flora, including two Red Data Book species, *Chara denudata* and *C.tomentosa*. Reedbeds and species-poor swamp vegetation fringe part of the lake, particularly around the points of inflow and outflow and on the eastern shore, around Tudenham Park, where Common Reed

(*Phragmites australis*) is abundant. Waterplantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Cowbane (*Cicuta virosa*), Frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) and Tufted Sedge (*Carex elata*) also occur. Much of the lakeshore is rather dry, stony ground, which was formerly part of the lake bed but is now exposed by drainage, and colonised by calcareous grassland. Alkaline fen also occurs on the lake shore. There are several islands within the lake. Lough Ennell is an important Trout fishery.

Lough Ennell is one of the most important Midland lakes for wintering waterfowl, with nationally important populations of Mute Swan (340), Pochard (738), Tufted Duck (1,303) and Coot (433) - all figures are average peaks for the 5 seasons 1995/96-1999/00. The population of Tufted Duck represents over 3% of the national total. At times, the lake is utilised as a roost (with limited feeding) by the internationally important Midland lakes population of Greenland White-fronted Goose (c. 400 strong). The site also attracts Golden Plover (200) and Lapwing (673) though these feed mainly outside of the site, as well as Little Grebe (30), Mallard (93), Great Crested Grebe (24) and Goldeneye (22).

Lough Ennell is very vulnerable to pollution from agricultural and domestic sources though water quality has been satisfactory in recent years. A deterioration in water quality could affect bird populations (as shown by marked fluctuations in some populations in the past). It is an important amenity area, much used for fishing, boating and camping. Parts of the shoreline are managed for visitor access and amenity. Increases in such recreational activities could cause disturbance to the birds.

Lough Ennell is of ornithological significance for wintering waterfowl, with four species having populations of national importance. The occurrence of a further two species in the vicinity of the lake, Greenland White-fronted Goose and Golden Plover, is of particular note as these are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

#### **4. WESTMEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008 – 2014: POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES CONCERNING DESIGNATED SITES**

The following information contained within the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014 provides the strategic direction for WCC with respect to Designated Sites within its functional area.

##### **4.1 Strategic Aim for Designated Sites**

There are currently no published plans by the competent authority for the management of the sites, nor are there any published conservation objectives. In the absence of such official plans or objectives the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 contains a number of relevant general aims, policies and objectives for Natura 2000 sites.

The overall aim of Westmeath County Council with regard to Designated Sites is set out in the 2008-2014 County Development plan as follows:

##### **Section 2.4.3 Rural Settlement**

*Development within these areas, which is likely to have an injurious and adverse impact on the area of conservation, will be resisted.*

##### **Section 2.5.4 Heritage**

###### **Natural Heritage**

*County Westmeath supports a range of diverse and species rich habitats including peatlands, lakes, woodlands, grasslands, eskers and hedgerows. The value of these habitats is recognised in the high number of sites within the county designated by the State for nature conservation value.*

**O-EH2** *To protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath in recognition of its importance as a non-renewable resource, unique identifier and character of the county and as a natural resource asset.*

**O-EH3** *It is a key objective to ensure as far as possible that development does not impact adversely on wildlife habitats and species. In the interests of sustainability, biodiversity should be conserved for the benefit of future generations.*

**O-EH4** *The “polluter pays” and the “precautionary principles” are integral components of planning policies for the environment and heritage. If uncertainty exists regarding the potential impact of a proposed development full account will be taken of the precautionary principle and the proposed development will be resisted unless or until its effects are more clearly understood.*

**Special Protection Areas (SPAs) & Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)**

**P-EH7** To protect and conserve wild bird species and their habitats, especially rare or vulnerable species and regularly occurring migratory species.

**P-EH8** To protect and conserve proposed candidate Special Areas of Conservation. The most valuable wildlife habitats in Westmeath form part of a national network of protected areas and some species of wild plants and animals are protected by law. SPAs and candidate SACs are designated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives respectively. The Habitats Directive places an obligation on member states of the EU to establish an EU wide network of special conservation sites including Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation. This network of SPAs and SACs is known as "Natura 2000".

**P-EH9** To protect plant, animal, species and habitats which have been identified by the Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, Wildlife Act (1976) and (Amendment Act) 2000, and the Flora Protection Order S.I No. 94 of 1999.

**P-EH10** To require appropriate environmental assessment such as EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) or ecological appraisal for developments not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site, or a proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on the site individually or cumulatively.

**P-EH11** To consult with appropriate prescribed bodies and Government agencies when assessing development proposals affecting designated sites of European importance.

Where such developments would affect the integrity of the site they will only be permitted where there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the development or land-use change. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, development or land use change will not be permitted unless it is necessary for imperative reasons of human health or public safety or for benefits of primary importance for the environment. Where development is permitted the planning authority will consider the use of conditions or planning agreements to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation interest.

### **Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)**

**P-EH12** To protect and conserve Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural heritage Areas.

**P-EH13** To protect and conserve natural Heritage Areas as they become designated and notified to the Local Authority during the lifetime of the Plan.

**P-EH14** To consult with appropriate prescribed bodies and Government agencies when assessing development proposals affecting designated sites of national importance.

**P-EH15** To maintain the conservation value of Council owned land within NHAs and promote the conservation value of Council owned lands adjoining NHAs.

**0-EH5** To apply the precautionary principle in relation to development proposals in areas identified as being of national nature conservation interest,

*by requiring a scientific/ecological risk assessment to ensure that the development would not impact on the integrity and habitat value of the site.*



## **5. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA/SCREENING MATRIX**

### **5.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN**

#### **Brief Description of the project or plan**

The Draft LAP is intended to provide for the proper planning and sustainable development for Castletown Geoghegan village for the duration of six years from adoption in 2010 until 2016, unless amended, in accordance with and in order to support the policies and objectives set out in National, Regional and County planning policy hierarchy.

The strategic vision for Castletown Geoghegan as outlined in the Draft LAP is to provide for the consolidation and appropriately scaled development of the village for the needs of the settlement's population and its wider role in servicing the surrounding area, having regard to the need for sustainability, quality of life, social cohesion and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage along with wider environmental assets. In particular, the vision for Castletown Geoghegan promotes the creation of a village that:

- Has a sustainable level of development that is appropriate to the character, heritage, amenity and a strategic role of Castletown Geoghegan and that allows for the enhancement of the village character, and neighbourhood level of services, facilities and amenities.
- Supports and protects the environment, heritage, character and amenity of the village, including in particular its rural and local village character.
- Has a high quality built environment with a well developed public realm and appropriate building forms, materials, heights and associated landscaping that complement the distinctive character, heritage and amenity of the village.
- Has a range of community facilities and amenities to serve the local community, including educational, recreational, religious, civic and community needs of children, the youth, adults and the elderly.
- Has a vibrant and accessible village centre that is in walking/cycling distance from most places in the village.
- Has a strong sense of community spirit, civic pride and social inclusiveness.
- Has an appropriate level of services and infrastructure to support existing and future development in a manner that protects and is complementary to the environment, heritage, character and amenities of the village, including in particular: an adequate road network, traffic management and parking facilities; improved public transport with regular bus services and safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists; and adequate wastewater disposal, water supply and surface water drainage.

#### **Brief description of the Natura 2000 sites**

There are no SACs or SPAs within the proposed Casteltown Geoghegan LAP area. Please refer to Figure 1, which shows the closest Natura 2000 sites to the LAP and section 2.4.1 which sets out the relevant published site synopsis for each site.

## **6. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

**Describe the individual elements of the project be (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) that have the potential for having significant effects on the Natura 2000 site.**

Notwithstanding the absence of official or published management plans or conservation objectives for specific sites the Plan has been devised to ensure that uses; developments and effects arising from permissions based on this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plan or projects) will not give rise to significant adverse impact on the integrity of any Natura 2000<sup>1</sup> insofar as the objectives and criteria for determining the needs of such sites can be inferred from the relevant Sites' Synopses.

This LAP takes a detailed look at Castletown Geoghegan village and identifies the relevant issues, and sets out policies and objectives for the future development of the area. It sets out a framework for the sustainable development of the lands within the boundaries, taking into consideration the requirements for social and community infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and economic and social development.

The primary development proposals with regards to the Castletown Geoghegan LAP are:-

- Infill and clustering of any future development around the existing core, particularly with regard to future mixed use and residential development.
- Any future residential development shall occur within the environmental capacity of the village with particular reference to waste water treatment.
- Additional lands to the north east of the village have been identified for a new school site.
- An area has been identified as a walkway from the old graveyard to the Motte and Bailey and along the river to the west of the village.
- Provision for a future public park area within a residential area.
- The sequential development of the village from the core.

The preparation of the LAP allows for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Its uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based on the Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on

the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)<sup>1</sup>

**Describe any likely direct/indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of:**

**a) Size and scale, area and land-take, etc**

An area of 1.75 hectares has been identified within the LAP for residential zoning close to the village core and it is envisaged this area could accommodate approximately 10-12 houses and a public park over the Plan's lifetime. In addition to these lands there is the capacity for further infill development (0.77 hectares) in the form of mixed use development within the village with no more than 50% of this area being used for residential purposes. It is not recommended that large scale residential zoning take place, however an area has been zoned for institutional and educational use of 2.5 hectares for a school site in the event that the existing school needs to provide for a new school. On developing the site for a school any residual land would be used for a community facility.

A new treatment plant has been constructed within the village with a capacity of 500 p.e. A total of 65 households (182 p.e) previously serviced with septic tanks will be connected to the WWTP. This will leave the treatment plant with a capacity for the lifetime of the plan. However the LAP has an objective to connect the Middleton Hotel on the edge of the village to the treatment plant.

No projects are recommended which would give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts upon the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their size, scale, area and land take shall be permitted on the basis of this plan (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects)<sup>1</sup>

**b) Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key feature of the site**

There are no Natura 2000 sites located within the Local Area Plan boundary. The closest Natura 2000 site is Lough Ennell SAC and SPA which is situated c. 3km away from the LAP boundary.

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their

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<sup>1</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. there must be:

(a) no alternative solution available;

(b) imperative reasons for overriding public interest, including those of a social and economic nature; and,

(c) adequate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected

conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

**c) Resource Requirements (Water abstraction etc.)**

• Water Supply

The implementation of the LAP will not impact on the drinking water sources in the Plan area. The village is serviced by Mullingar high level supply.

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their resource requirements are facilitated or shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. there must be:

(a) no alternative solution available;

(b) imperative reasons for overriding public interest, including those of a social and economic nature; and,

(c) adequate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected

**d) Emissions and Waste (disposal to land, water or air)**

**• Waste Water Collection and Disposal**

The recently constructed Waste Water Treatment Plant has a capacity of 500 p.e. Allowing for the existing houses and businesses in the village to connect to the new system there would be a total of 182 p.e.. usage of the plant. The LAP proposes an area for residential development for 10-12 houses which would add an additional 36 p.e, the mixed use area of .77 hectares at 50% residential development at a density of 25-30 per hectare, and a future 8 classroom school would leave a capacity of 200 p.e. in the WWTP. It is an objective within the draft LAP to connect the existing hotel on the edge of the village to the WWTP.

The County Development Plan 2008-2014 has a policy to ensure that septic tanks and other wastewater treatment systems are correctly installed. Strict adherence to the EPA Wastewater Treatment Manual will provide protection for the groundwater which serves the area.

- **Surface Water Disposal**

On adoption of the proposed LAP surface water disposal shall remain on a case by case basis. It is not anticipated that surface water disposal on a site by site basis will result in any impacts on either ground or surface water quality.

There is an area to the west of the main street identified as benefiting lands on either side of the river Monaghanstown. There is a policy within the LAP restricting development on any lands subject to flooding.

- **Excavation requirements**

The Council has placed certain restrictions on quarrying close to geological features of regional importance. This may be applied if deemed necessary to the LAP.

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

- e) Transportation requirements**

The LAP has objectives to extend and upgrade footpaths and environmental improvements including the facilitating ESB wires and columns to be put underground, pending availability of financial resources.

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

- f) Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc.**

This information is not available at this stage, however various policies and objectives of the plan have ensured that appropriately zoned land for different types of development will take place within the plan area and potentially within the duration of this plan.

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

**g) Other**

Not possible to reliably estimate at this stage.

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<sup>1</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. there must be:

(a) no alternative solution available;

(b) imperative reasons for overriding public interest, including those of a social and economic nature; and,

(c) adequate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected



**Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:**

**a) Reduction of habitat area**

The Castletown Geoghegan LAP will not require any land take within the Natura 2000 sites.

The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014. No projects giving rise to reduction of habitat areas for the Natura 2000 sites, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

**b) Habitat or Species Fragmentation**

No habitat or species fragmentation is anticipated.

The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the Westmeath CDP 2008 – 2014. No projects which will give rise to reduction of habitat areas or species fragmentation for the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

**c) Disturbance to key species**

The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the Westmeath CDP 2008 – 2014. No projects which will give rise to disturbance to key species for the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

**d) Reduction in species density**

No disturbance of key species is anticipated.

The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the Westmeath CDP 2008 – 2014. No projects which will give rise to reduction in species density for the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

**e) Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water analysis, etc.)**

Westmeath County Council is part of the Shannon and Eastern River Basin District and as part of the requirement of the Water Framework Directive, the Council will be required to meet the environmental objectives of the River Basin Management Plans for the River Shannon basin.

The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the Westmeath CDP 2008 – 2014. No projects which will give rise to changes in key indicators of

conservation value for the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

**f) Climate change**

It is considered that the LAP will not have a significant impact upon climate change. The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the Westmeath CDP 2008 – 2014. No projects which will give rise to climate change shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

**Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:**

**a) Interference with the key relationship that define the structure of the site**

The implementation of the LAP will not impact on the relationships that define the structure of a Natura 2000 site. No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).<sup>1</sup>

**b) Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site**

It is considered that there will be no interference with the key relationships that define the function of the County's Natura 2000 sites.

**Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:**

**a) Loss**

Not applicable

**b) Fragmentation**

Not applicable

**c) Disruption**

Not applicable

**d) Disturbance**

Not applicable

**e) Change to key elements of the site (water quality etc.)**

Not applicable

**f) Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.**

The LAP does not propose to zone additional lands within the Natura 2000 site which extends through the village. The details above outline where Westmeath County Council have put in place policies and objectives and spatial planning to protect the Natura 2000 sites. In any event developments close to these areas will be subject to an environmental impact assessment and these assessments will adequately describe the impacts of the development on the Natura 2000 sites and will list any mitigation measures that will be employed by a developer to eliminate/mitigate against any impacts.

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<sup>1</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. there must be:

(a) no alternative solution available;

(b) imperative reasons for overriding public interest, including those of a social and economic nature; and,

(c) adequate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected

## **7 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS REPORT**

### **7.1 NAME OF PLAN**

#### **Name of project or plan**

Castletown Geoghegan Local Area Plan 2010-2016

#### **Name and location of Natura 2000 sites**

Refer to Section 2 and map in figure 1.

#### **Description of the plan or project**

Refer to Section 4.1.1

#### **Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?**

The LAP analyses Castletown Geoghegan and sets out principles for the future development of this area. The primary function of this LAP is to establish policies and objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The LAP provides a framework for the optimal development of the land within the envelope taking into consideration the requirements for physical and social development. The core objectives of the Plan include, inter alia, measures to:

- Protect, conserve and enhance the biodiversity and natural heritage of County Westmeath.
- Identify, protect and conserve sites of natural heritage importance, in co-operation with the relevant statutory authorities.

#### **Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?**

This LAP forms part of a higher level planning such as the, Westmeath CDP, National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines. The main environmental objectives of these policies and strategies are to protect the environment and to maintain a sustainable environment.

The preparation of the LAP allows for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Its uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based on the Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.<sup>1</sup>

## **7.2 THE ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS**

**Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.**

The preparation of the LAP allows for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Its uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based on the Plan centre individually or in combination with other plans and projects and shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.<sup>1</sup>

Note that with there are no official management plans for these sites. Accordingly Conservation Objectives had to be inferred for use in the evaluation of likely effects.

**Explain why these affects are not considered significant**

The purpose of this LAP is to set out objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. It sets out a framework for the optimal development of the land within the envelope of the village taking into consideration the requirements for residential development, social and community infrastructure, physical infrastructure, economic, and the natural and cultural heritage. Policies and objectives have been formulated to anticipate and avoid the need for development that would be likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites. A number of environmental policies and objectives have been included within the plan to ensure that they are adequately protected and developments permitted within the Plan area shall be required to conform to the relevant regulatory provisions for the prevention of pollution, nuisance or other environmental effects likely to significantly adversely affect the integrity of any of the Natura 2000 sites.

**List of Agencies consulted: Provide contact names and telephone numbers or e-mail addresses**

**Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG)**

Development Applications Unit, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dún Scéine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2. Tel. 01 888 3105

**Response to consultation**

To be completed.

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<sup>1</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. there must be:

- (a) no alternative solution available;
- (b) imperative reasons for overriding public interest, including those of a social and economic nature; and,
- (c) adequate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected

### **7.3 DATA COLLECTED TO CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENT**

#### **Who carried out the Assessment?**

- Forward Planning Unit, Planning Section, Westmeath County Council

#### **Sources of Data**

- Existing records
- Environmental report for the SEA for Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014.
- Draft Castletown Geoghegan LAP 2010 - 2016
- Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014

#### **Level of assessment completed**

Desktop study and on site inspections.

#### **Where can the full results of the assessment be assessed and viewed?**

This screening report is on display with the Draft Casteltown Geoghegan Local Area Plan 2009-2015.

### **7.4 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS**

This Screening Report for the Appropriate Assessment of the Castletown Geoghegan Local Area Plan has been conducted in accordance with the Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

The LAP has been formulated to ensure that uses, development and effects arising from permissions based upon this Draft (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

This screening report concludes that the Draft LAP does not require further appropriate assessment.

**APPENDIX FIVE**  
**SEA DETERMINATION**





## SEA SCREENING DECISION FOR CASTLETOWN GEOGHEGAN LAP

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan/programme before a decision is made to adopt the plan/programme; the procedures for which are set out in the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004.

The preparation of a full SEA is not mandatory for Local Area Plans with a population of less than 10,000 persons such as the Castletown Geoghegan Local Area Plan. Nonetheless, in accordance with the above SEA Regulations, the planning authority must determine whether or not the implementation of such a proposed plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment and hence require a SEA.

In making this determination, the planning authority is required to consult with the prescribed Environmental Authorities; the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR) and to take account of the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations 2004; in what is called a 'screening process'. A 'Screening Report' outlining the relevant considerations for the proposed Castletown Geoghegan LAP was prepared and issued to the prescribed authorities for their consideration.

One submission was received to the screening report from the Department of the Environment; Heritage and Local Government Development Applications Unit stating the application of the SEA in good time might have informed some of the content of the draft document and for instance in 6.3 General Policy that, 'the following policies will be applied to all new development within the village, in the interest of orderly planning and sustainable development....

**Policy G4:** To prepare an urban design framework plan / village design statement for the village which shall take account of and make specific provision for conservation and design...'

It would be expected that any 'urban design framework plan/village design statement for the village' would be a key element of any Local Area Plan for the village rather than being left to be prepared at a future time. In the meantime it is not clear what guidance Policy G4 can give or how it can be applied to 'all new development within the village'.

While the making of a new local area plan for Castletown Geoghegan should mean that there should be little negative environmental effect, there is nevertheless the potential for the local area plan to have a significant effect on the architectural heritage of the locality. It is recommended the SEA process should be used better to inform the content of any such plan.

It is recommended the following amendments/policies be included in the LAP:

- To prepare an urban design framework plan/village design statement for the village which shall take account of, and make specific provision for conservation and design.

- To encourage the re-use of existing buildings which contribute to the village character, rather than demolition and replacement.
- To encourage the appropriate redevelopment of derelict, underused, and unsightly sites within the village in order to maintain and improve the village character.
- To ensure that any application for development within the Local Area Plan will be of high quality design, taking account of its specific site, rural village setting and wider context.

Having regard to the above amendments to the LAP and the responses received from the prescribed authorities and to all of the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations; the Planning Authority determined that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment of the proposed Local Area Plan would be unnecessary. This 'screening decision' and the reasons for it have been made available for public inspection and notified to the prescribed authorities as required in accordance with Article 14A (6) of the abovementioned legislation.



**Terence McCague**  
**Senior Planner**  
**Forward Planning Section**

**8/3/2012,**  
**Date**

## APPENDIX SIX



## **DETERMINATION FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING FOR CASTLETOWN GEOGHEGAN LAP**

The Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC provides the framework for the legal protection for habitats and species of European Importance. Articles 3 to 9 provides the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. These are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the 'The Birds Directive' (79/409/EEC).


Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive sets out the decision making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment and Circular letter SEA1/08 and NPWS 1/08 states:

"Any draft land use plan (development plans, local area plans, regional planning guidelines, schemes for strategic development zones) or amendment/variation to it, proposed under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) must be screened for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites (normally called Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs))."

An Appropriate Assessment screening was carried out by the Planning Authority based on ecological information available to the authority and the draft LAP was assessed for its likely environmental impacts on Natura 2000 sites. As part of the screening process the relevant authorities were consulted and a response was received from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Development Applications Unit dated 7<sup>TH</sup> May 2010. An 'Appropriate Assessment screening' report outlining the Department's concerns and the Local Authority's considerations of same is available on the Council's web page.

Having regard to the above it has been concluded the Draft LAP does not require further appropriate assessment. The LAP has been formulated to ensure that uses, development and effects arising from permissions based upon this Draft (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

This screening decision has been conducted in accordance with the Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and the reasons for the screening decision have been made available for public inspection.

  
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Terence McCague

8/3/2012.  
Date

