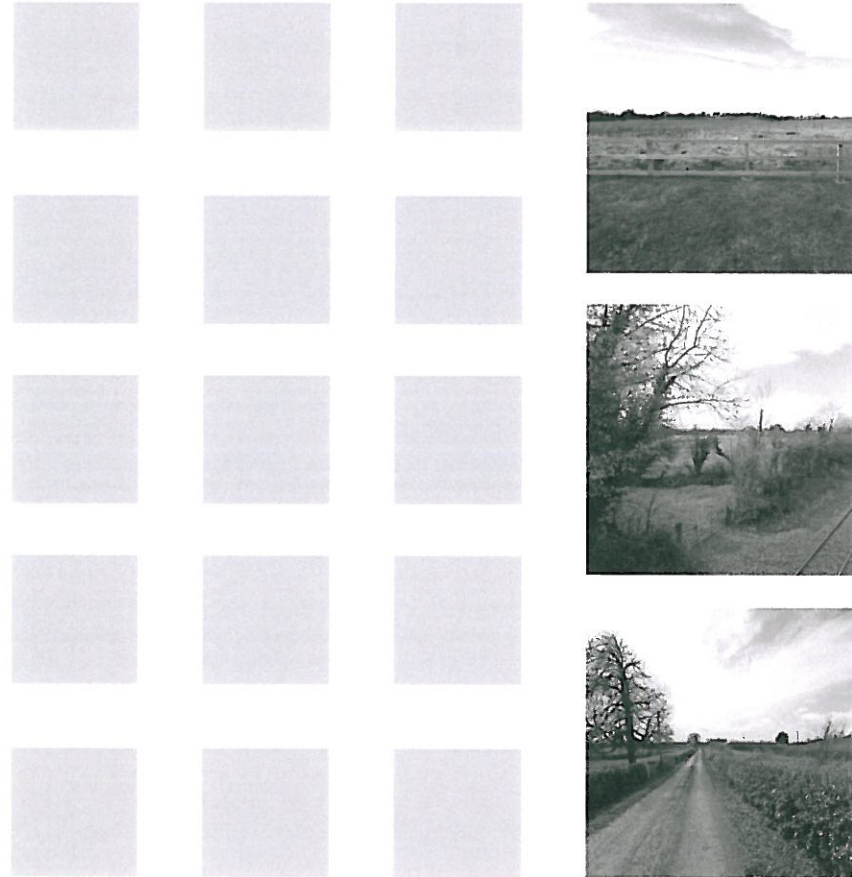


*Strategic Environmental Impact Statement*  
on the

**Local Area Plan for Creggan, Co. Westmeath**



05 November 2010

This environmental report was prepared by Loci in conjunction with Natura Environmental Consultants and Irish Archaeological Consultants on behalf of Westmeath County Council.



Loci  
1 Butlers Court  
Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2  
phone: +353 1 881 4062  
fax: +353 1 881 4063  
e-mail: [info@loci.ie](mailto:info@loci.ie)  
url: [www.loci.ie](http://www.loci.ie)



Natura  
Suite 17, Broomhall Business  
Park, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow,  
Republic of Ireland  
Phone: +353 (0)404 34300



IAC Wicklow  
120b Greenpark Road  
Bray, Co. Wicklow  
Tel: +353 1 211 6544  
Fax: +353 1 211 6550  
Email: [archaeology@iac.ie](mailto:archaeology@iac.ie)

# Table of contents

---



Loci

1	Introduction
1.1	General requirements
2	How environmental considerations have been integrated into the lap
2.1	Overall approach
3	Environmental assessment of the draft lap
3.1	Sea report
4	How the environmental report and submissions, received in response to the public consultation, have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan
4.1	Sea scoping consultations
4.2	Submissions to draft lap and sea report
5	Consideration of alternatives and reasons
5.1	Evolution without implementation of LAPC
5.2	Description of the alternatives
5.3	Modification of the preferred alternative in the light of the sea process
6	Monitoring

---

# 1 Introduction

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 General requirements

As required by Article 14I of the SEA Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436), this Statement describes how the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process has influenced the preparation of the Local Area Plan for Creggan (LAPC):

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the LAP;
- How the environmental report and any submissions and observations received in response to the public consultation, have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan;
- The reasons for choosing the plan in light of the other reasonable alternatives; and
- The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan.

## 2 How environmental considerations have been integrated into the LAP

### 2.1 Overall approach

Environmental considerations were considered throughout the plan making process and integrated into the LAP at the following stages:

#### 1. Screening

This was undertaken according to the environmental significance criteria contained in Annex II (2) of the SEA Directive. The screening report was informed by the Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) screening report carried out by ecological consultants in accordance with the Habitats Directive.

#### 2. Scoping and Statutory Consultation

The Screening Report was submitted to the designated environmental authorities, and a scoping meeting was held with the Environmental Protection Agency.

#### 3. Environmental Assessment of the draft LAP

The draft plan was assessed in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive, Habitats Directive and SEA Guidelines.

#### 4. Statutory Consultation on draft LAP and SEA Report

The Draft LAP, initial SEA report and Appropriate Assessment reports were placed on public display for period of 6 weeks, and submitted to the statutory environmental authorities.

#### 5. Manager's Report on Submissions

Valid submissions were received and a Manager's Report on submissions was prepared, including detailed submissions from the EPA.

Elected members determined to incorporate the recommendations of the Manager into the LAP, including the mitigation measures outlined in the initial SEA and AA reports.

#### 6. LAP amended

The LAP, SEA and AA reports were amended accordingly.

#### 7. Adoption of LAP

The LAP was deemed to be made following the elapse of the statutory period.

#### 8. SEA Statement

The final Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment report will be available, together with this Environmental Statement.

#### Environmental Screening

An Environmental Screening exercise was undertaken to ascertain whether it would be appropriate to carry out a full Strategic Environmental Assessment. The evolving content of the draft plan was assessed against the environmental significance criteria as contained in Annex II (2) of the SEA Directive.

The main environmental issues facing Creggan as identified by the screening exercise comprised:

- Traffic issues regarding existing local and strategic road infrastructure and the potential capacity and congestion of roads and junctions.
- Quality and potential vulnerability of the landscape.
- Provision and capacity of transport infrastructure.
- Capacity and provision of social and community infrastructure.
- Capacity and provision of amenity and recreation.
- Capacity and provision of local infrastructure and services.
- Vulnerability of geology and groundwater.
- Vulnerability of areas of natural heritage (flora and fauna) including designated sites.
- Sensitivity of built heritage and archaeology.
- Temporary effects such as construction.

The Screening Report was submitted to the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government (Development Applications Unit), the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (Coordination Unit), and the Environmental Protection Agency (Regional Inspectorate). The responses received are summarised in the SEA report.



### 3 Environmental Assessment of the draft LAP

#### 3.1 SEA Report

An initial Environmental Report (24th June 2010) was prepared to assess the likely significant effects of implementing the draft LAP on the environment, in accordance with Annex 1 of the Directive.

The Environmental Report established a number of environmental objectives and indicators to be taken into account when assessing the effects of the proposed plan.

The policy and objectives of the draft LAP were appraised in a matrix format, informed by the environmental baseline and the descriptions of potential significant effects and proposed mitigation measures.

The Report summarised the likely significant environmental effects under the following headings:

##### Effects of land use and development objectives

The effects land-use on biodiversity, flora and fauna, soil and water and material assets were deemed to be uncertain due to uncertainty about the spatial expression of urban and landscape structure concepts for the plan, the need to consider certain effects when detailed proposals are advanced and gaps in our understanding of the environment.

Potential effects on population and human health were found to include:

- Potential for increase in accidents arising from increased traffic levels,
- Potential for reduction in air quality deriving from increased traffic levels, related to new development,
- Potential for adverse effects from construction,
- Potential risk from flooding,
- Potential for adverse effects on existing community infrastructure.

Development was considered likely to have a negative impact on air quality due to increased traffic and anthropogenic pollutants from the construction and use of buildings.

##### Effects of natural and built heritage objectives

Effects on natural and built heritage were found to be neutral or positive, with some uncertainty in relation to undiscovered archaeology.

##### Effects of walking and cycling objectives

The effects of walking and cycling objectives were found to be positive, with some uncertainty in relation to undiscovered archaeology.

##### Effects of transport and traffic objectives

Potential negative effects were found to include:

- Potential negative effects of road infrastructure on flora and fauna,
- Potential negative effects traffic on residential amenity and human health due to congestion and potentially higher accident rates,
- Potential negative effects on air quality from increased traffic levels,
- Potential negative effects on water quality due to surface water run-off from roads etc.

There were uncertain effects on sustainability due to uncertain timing of public transport infrastructure outside of the Planning Authority's control, and uncertain effects on undiscovered archaeology.

##### Effects of open space objectives

The potential effects of open space objectives on population and human health, air, cultural heritage and landscape were found to be positive.

The potential effect on biodiversity, flora and fauna was found to be uncertain or negative due the potential for disturbance.

##### Effects of community and social infrastructure objectives

The plan objectives for community and social infrastructure were likely to have neutral or positive effects on the environment. Uncertain effects stemmed from uncertainties as to the broad location, nature and extent of the infrastructure.

Effects on local biodiversity, flora and fauna, soil, were found to be uncertain due to their location in relation to public transport, potential congestion and decline in air quality arising from traffic generation.

Effects of the community and social infrastructure objectives on aspects of cultural heritage were also considered to be uncertain.

The initial SEA concluded that the draft Local Area Plan would conform with the relevant local, regional and national planning policy relating to the designation of Athlone as a linked gateway.

The SEA indicated that the plan would have a combination of negative, neutral and positive effects and identified key information gaps where more information was needed to properly assess potential impacts as well as aspects which would require further assessment at development management stages.

Following consultation with the environmental authorities the planning authority determined to address the information gaps identified as follows:

- Preparation of a Strategic Traffic Impact Assessment;
- Preparation of Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (including hydro-geological impact assessment); and
- Preparation of strategic development concepts for Area A.

The findings of these studies informed the recommendations of the County Manager on the submissions and the plan was amended accordingly.

As a result specific measures to ensure adequate capacity in the road network have been identified and significant additional buffer areas have been identified to avoid potential risk of flooding, to avoid impacting on the hydro-geological regime of Crosswood Bog and to avoid downstream effects on watercourses feeding the Shannon Callows. Avoidance of development in these areas together with objectives to provide buffers along these corridors will also reduce the potential for adverse effects on undiscovered archaeological zones of potential and protected species of flora and fauna.

### 3 Environmental Assessment of the draft LAP

The table below summarises how environmental considerations have been integrated in the plan:

Effects of land use and development objectives		
Potential significant effects	Proposed mitigation measures	Specific policies and objectives
Uncertain effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna	Avoidance of Area B north and east of M6 pending further study of groundwater conditions. Preparation of a landscape and urban structure concept for Area A to provide greater certainty as to the location, nature and extent of land uses and development. Buffer to rail and watercourse landscape corridors. Avoidance of culverting. Preparation of habitat mapping.	Objective to establish a buffer zone around (Crosswood Bog cSAC) to ensure that there is no impact on the hydrology of the site. The buffer zone will extend west and south from the Natura 2000 site boundary to the existing M6 motorway and no development will be permitted within this area (B1). The extent of the buffer zone may be reassessed once hydrological surveys, and any other required surveys and assessments, have been undertaken to ensure that there will be no adverse impacts from the proposed development on the integrity of the Natura 2000 [Crosswood Bog SAC] site. Objective to provide a 20m corridor along the AI river and Clonbonny stream. Objective to have regard to the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board Guidelines for Watercourses in Urban Environments in the preparation of an overall landscape plan. Omission of objective to provide amenity route across or through Crosswood Bog. Incorporation of a requirement for major proposals to be accompanied by a landscape and structure concept taking to provide appropriate buffers between development and areas of local biodiversity. Objective to promote the implementation of any Management Plan to be prepared by the NPWS. Incorporation of references to Habitats Directive and relevant statutes. Objective to promote the implementation of any Management Plan to be prepared by the NPWS.
Uncertain effects on soil	Avoidance of Area B north and east of M6 pending further study of groundwater conditions.	Objective to promote the implementation of any Management Plan to be prepared by the NPWS.
Uncertain effects on water	Avoidance of Area B north and east of M6 pending further study of groundwater conditions. Protect and maintain undeveloped riparian zones and natural floodplains along the River Shannon and its tributaries. Implementation of South Westmeath Regional Water Supply Scheme. Avoidance of abstraction of groundwater from wells. Assessment of potential impacts of detailed proposals on groundwater vulnerability. Implementation of County Water Conservation Strategy.	Objectives to comply with Water Framework and relevant Directives. Objective that any alteration to the surface water drainage in the area does not negatively impact upon the surface water levels within (Crosswood Bog cSAC). Objective to ensure that all developments within the LAP area adhere to best practice and legislative requirements during operation to prevent discharge of contaminants and pollutants to surface water or groundwater. Discharge from any proposed development will be properly licensed and monitored in accordance with best practice and legislative requirements. Objective to advocate the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to treat and eliminate potential contamination arising from diffuse sources such as construction or stormwater runoff. Ensure compliance with the measures set out in the Shannon International River Basin Management Plan. Objective to ensure that any alteration to surface water drainage in the area does not negatively impact on the surface water flow to the Natura 2000 site. Recognition of the importance and implementation of a groundwater protection scheme. Acknowledgment of the need to provide wastewater treatment in parallel with new development. Objective to establish supplementary development contributions scheme. Prioritisation of key infrastructural requirements including Athlone Main Drainage, Loughandonning Link Road, and train station proposals. Inclusion of groundwater vulnerability mapping.

Effects of land use and development objectives (continued)		
Potential significant effects	Proposed mitigation measures	Specific policies and objectives
Uncertain effects on material assets	Preparation of strategic development concepts for Area A. Identification of road infrastructure improvements. Preparation of Creggan Sewerage Masterplan. Compliance with retail planning guidelines.	Amendment of draft zoning objective to remove 'Shops major'. Objective to establish supplementary development contributions scheme.
Potential for reduction in air quality deriving from increased traffic levels related to new development and anthropogenic pollutants associated with construction and use of buildings	Promotion of public transport and other modes. Promotion of sustainable building technologies.	Objectives for assessment of the potential cumulative effects of vehicular traffic on the local and strategic road network. Objectives to ensure sustainable design, construction and management of buildings as part of any EIA process. Requirement for major proposals to be accompanied by an Energy Conservation Strategy
Potential for adverse effects from construction	Protect and maintain undeveloped riparian zones and natural floodplains. Promotion of sustainable urban drainage systems to intercept run-off from roads and hardstandings.	Objective to require construction management plans, prepared as part of the later development management stages. Objective to ensure best practice measures are implemented during the construction phases of development to prevent contamination of surface or groundwater.
Potential risk from flooding	Avoidance of areas at risk of flooding and compliance with Flood Risk Management Guidelines in regard to proposals in areas at risk of flooding.	Objective to require preparation of a detailed flood risk assessment(s) (FRA) at the later development management/EIA stages.
Potential for adverse effects on existing community infrastructure	Provision of new community infrastructure Provision of social and affordable housing	Objective to locate community and social infrastructure where walking and cycling and use of public transport can be maximised. An objective to extend the Athlone Town bus service into the Creggan lands. An objective to provide an appropriate buffer between proposed development and established community infrastructure in Character Area C. Objectives in relation to new primary school, childcare facilities, local shopping facilities, recreation and leisure facilities, improved public transport and cycle facilities. Objective to provide a network of play areas in strategic locations overlooked by areas of housing and linked by pedestrian and cycle pathways. Policy to reserve 15% of lands zoned for residential or mixed uses for social and affordable housing.

### 3 Environmental Assessment of the draft LAP

Effects of natural and built heritage objectives		
Potential significant effects	Proposed mitigation measures	Specific policies and objectives
Uncertain effects on built heritage including protected structures	Protection of built heritage and curtilage of protected structures	Policy to protect and incorporate protected structures sensitively in new development. Incorporation of linear open space corridor east of the N62.
Uncertain effects on Recorded Monuments and undiscovered archaeology	Avoid vicinity of known sites Avoid development in vicinity of watercourses	Provision for buffer zones around recorded monuments. Requirement to provide full archaeological investigations at development management stage to confirm appropriateness of buffer areas.
Uncertain effects on landscape character and views	Identification of viewing points Landscape character assessment Visual impact assessment Adherence to building height policy	Objective to use existing topography to assist in the integration of development proposals into the landscape. Objectives to provide and enhance wildlife corridors and to preserve hedgerows where feasible. Objective to plant new hedgerows. Objective to assess building heights with Westmeath County Council Building Height Policy.

Effects of walking and cycling objectives		
Potential significant effects	Proposed mitigation measures	Specific policies and objectives
Potential effects of amenity walks and cycleways on local flora and fauna	Avoidance of contact with Natura site (Crosswood Bog) Appropriate assessment of detailed proposals	Omission of objective to provide amenity walk across Crosswood Bog. Proposal for cycleway along disused Mullingar line to be subject to appropriate assessment. Proposals for riverside amenity walks to be subject to appropriate assessment.



Effects of traffic and transport objectives		
Potential significant effects	Proposed mitigation measures	Specific policies and objectives
Potential effects of road infrastructure on local flora and fauna	Protect and maintain undeveloped riparian zones and natural floodplains along the River Shannon and its tributaries	Objectives to ensure the effects on new streets and roads on local flora and fauna are minimised. Objectives to augment green corridors along new roads and streets. Objective to ensure that cycleways and walkways are located and designed in such a way as to protect existing biodiversity, flora and fauna. Objective to promote the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to treat and eliminate potential contamination arising from diffuse sources such as construction or stormwater runoff.
Potential negative effects on residential amenity due to increased traffic congestion	Improvements to capacity of local and strategic road network	Former N6 road widening and upgrading to dual carriageway status between the Clonbonny junction and the Creggan roundabout. Creggan roundabout – improvement of traffic capacity. Widening of the R446 between the Creggan roundabout and the Athlone Business Park. Junction improvements to the M6 motorway/N6 Athlone bypass in the vicinity of the plan area. Improvement in the width and the alignment of the Clonbonny Road (L54101) and its junction with the former N6. Loughandonning Link Road Garrycastle Road Realignment and Improvement Athlone Business Park Link from R446 to Creggan Lower (Character Area C) Dense network of on-road and Greenway pedestrian and cycle routes. Extended Athlone Town bus service to serve the Creggan LAP lands.
Potential for increase in accidents arising from increased traffic levels	Promotion of safe and permeable traffic networks with provision for pedestrian and cycle movement Promotion of public transport Avoidance of over-engineered road geometries Compliance with best practice guidelines	Objective to prioritise a bus-based public transport service at the earliest phases of development and to seek the earliest delivery of rail services to augment this service. Objective to provide for sustainable movement with effective links to the existing urban area. Objective to ensure design, construction and management of the road network to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport including 'greenway' and cycle routes. Objectives to provide for traffic calming measures including restricted carriageway widths and 'homezones'. Incorporation of reference to DTO 'Traffic Management Guidelines' 2004, DoT (UK) 'Manual for Streets' 2007, English Partnerships 'Carparking: what works where?' DoT (UK) 'Home Zones' 2005.

## 3

## Environmental Assessment of the draft LAP

Effects of open space objectives		
Potential significant effects	Proposed mitigation measures	Specific policies and objectives
Potential for disturbance of flora and fauna	Avoidance of contact with Natura site (Crosswood Bog) Appropriate assessment of detailed proposals	Omission of objective to provide amenity walk across Crosswood Bog. Proposal for cycleway along disused Mullingar line to be subject to appropriate assessment. Proposals for riverside amenity walks to be subject to appropriate assessment.

Effects of community and social infrastructure objectives		
Potential significant effects	Proposed mitigation measures	Specific policies and objectives
Uncertain effects as to the broad location, nature and extent of the infrastructure, in relation to potential effects on local biodiversity, flora and fauna, soil, location in relation to public transport, potential congestion and decline in air quality arising from traffic generation, and aspects of cultural heritage.	Preparation of urban and landscape frameworks	Objective for major development proposals to be accompanied by a landscape and urban structure concept for the area to provide greater certainty as to the location, nature and extent of land uses and development. Objective to locate community and social infrastructure where walking and cycling and use of public transport can be maximised.

## 4 How the environmental report and submissions received in response to the public consultation, have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan

public display of the proposed Draft Plan documentation. Further acknowledgments with no comments to on the draft plan documentation were received from An Bord Pleanála, and the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.

The submissions and responses to submissions that have resulted in changes to the plan are summarised as follows:

### 4.1 SEA Scoping Consultations

The statutory process was commenced on 24th May 2010 with a notice of a proposal to make a Local Area Plan for the Creggan area. The Draft Plan together with the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment Screening and Scoping documents were forwarded to the prescribed environmental authorities for their consideration.

### 4.2 Submissions to draft LAP and SEA report

A notice was published in the Athlone Independent on the 30th June 2010, copies of the proposed plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) were sent to the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government, An Bord Pleanála, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Athlone Town Council, Roscommon County Council and the National Roads Authority (NRA). The Draft Plan, SEA and AA were also forwarded to the National Parks & Wildlife Service for their consideration.

A period of formal public consultation was advertised from 30th June 2010 to the 13th August 2010 for inspection of the documents (Draft Plan, SEA & AA) at the Athlone Civic Centre and on the Westmeath County Council website inviting submissions from the public.

A total of five submissions were received in response to the

<b>Submission Ref:</b> Creg 01 <b>Submitted by:</b> Simon Clear & Associates, 3 Terenure Road West, Terenure, Dublin 6W	
Summary of submission	Response
2. Requests that the LAP clarifies that the Strategic Gateway Zone (SGZ) and the Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) shall be independent of each other, with the SDZ location as yet unidentified but not on Creggan lands.	2. The Strategic Gateway Zone (SGZ) proposed within Area C is a separate entity to the Midland Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) provided for in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022, which is to be located to the east of Athlone.  <i>2. A statement is provided in the plan to clarify that the SGZ is a separate entity to the SDZ provided for in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022.</i>
3. Text references relating to the provision of a Railway Station as part of the transportation network are predicated upon support from Iarnród Éireann for this element of infrastructure. Thus, if Iarnród Éireann does not support the objective to provide a railway station, these objectives could be set at naught. These issues could then become contentious at the development management stage. Suggested changes to text itemised.	3. The plan provides for a possibility of a transportation hub centred upon a new railway station along the Dublin Galway line. The proposed railway station is an integral component of the transportation network planned for Area C. The facilitation of a railway station at this location is however contingent upon a number of factors, including viability, scale of development and agreement by Iarnród Éireann. Notwithstanding, the Creggan LAP lands will be served by an integrated road, cycle and pedestrian network including provision for bus routes.  <i>3. A reference is inserted in the plan that the provision of a railway station is contingent upon a number of factors including prior discussion and agreement with Iarnród Éireann.</i>

## How the environmental report and submissions received in response to the public consultation, have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan

<b>Submission Ref:</b> Creg 02 <b>Submitted by:</b> Tara Spain on behalf of the National Roads Authority, St. Martins House, Waterloo Road, Dublin 4	
Summary of submission	Response
<p>2. The plan should be brought forward within the framework principles established by the DoEHLG Spatial Planning and National Roads (Draft) Guidelines for Planning Authorities, in particular Section 2.3., 2.12 and Pg 22, in relation to the need for a Strategic Transport Assessment, identification of key transport corridors, nodes and networks, including public transport networks, compliance with Smarter Travel - A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020", direct consultation with relevant national organisations including NRA and CIE.</p>	<p>2. The Draft plan makes the following proposals for transport infrastructure improvements:</p> <p>Former N6 road widening and upgrading to dual carriageway status between the Clonbonny junction and the Creggan roundabout; Creggan roundabout – improvement of traffic capacity; Widening of the R446 between the Creggan roundabout and the Athlone Business Park; Junction improvements to the M6 motorway/N6 Athlone bypass in the vicinity of the plan area; Improvement in the width and the alignment of the Clonbonny Road (L54101) and its junction with the former N6; Loughandonning Link Road; Garrycastle Road Realignment and Improvement; Athlone Business Park Link from R446 to Creggan Lower (Character Area C). Dense network of on-road and Greenway pedestrian and cycle routes; Extended Athlone Town bus service to serve the Creggan LAP lands.</p> <p>The plan has been brought forward within the principles established by the DoEHLG Spatial Planning &amp; National Roads (Draft) Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2010" and has been subject to a Strategic Transport Assessment in accordance with the methodology prescribed in these guidelines. This Strategic Transport Assessment was carried out on foot of consultation with the NRA.</p> <p>A broad transport impact analysis has concluded that some capacity enhancements are required at the national primary roads and junctions within the LAP area to provide adequate residual capacity in excess of that required to cater for additional traffic arising from the Local Area Plan development proposals. A suitable reserve capacity is required for future growth in long distance national traffic along the M6/N6 Dublin to Galway inter-urban route.</p> <p>The Strategic Transport Assessment recommends a number of upgrades to the road network. The key road improvements required are as follows: a) Creggan Roundabout Capacity Enhancement; b) N6/M6 Junction 8: minor capacity enhancement; c) N6 Athlone Bypass Widening to Dual 3-lanes between Junction 8 Creggan and Junction 11 Coosan over a length of 4km.</p> <p><i>2. Amend text to incorporate recommendations of the Strategic Transport Assessment.</i></p>
<p>6. Proposals within Parcel A should be subject to appropriate Traffic and Transport Assessment to assess the individual and cumulative impact of development on the adjoining primary road network.</p>	<p>6. The Strategic Transport Assessment undertaken took into consideration the implications of the development of Parcel A on the adjoining primary and local road network. It is a stated objective of the plan under the Access &amp; Movement Objectives, that workplaces and educational facilities are required to produce mobility and transportation plans.</p> <p>Parcel A will be served off a new junction from the realigned Garrycastle Road on the western side, to complement the existing road access from the R446. This will complete the integration of the lands into the urban fabric of Athlone town. Cycle lanes will be provided along the access roads and the main circulation roads within Area A and these will connect with the external cycle route network, existing and proposed along the R446 and the improved Garrycastle Road.</p> <p>A further objective will be introduced requiring traffic and transport assessments to be produced for development proposals, which would impact upon the primary and local road network.</p> <p><i>6. An objective requiring traffic and transport assessments to be produced for development proposals, which would impact upon the primary and local road network has been inserted in the plan.</i></p>



7. The Retail Planning Guidelines 2005 contain an explicit presumption against large scale retailing adjacent to existing, new or planned national routes. The Council may consider it appropriate to review the zoning objectives at this location, having regard to the proximity to the M6 and Creggan junction	7. In order to accord with the Retail Planning Guidelines 2005 and NRA policy, the provision of "shops major" will not be permitted in Areas B and C. The provision of "Shops Major" is not permitted within Area A in the current Draft Plan.  <i>7. Zoning matrix amended to preclude "Shops Major" in Area B and C.</i>
8. The road extending between the Creggan roundabout and the junction of the N62 with the former N6 is a local road and not the N62 as referred to in the plan.	8. The road in question was automatically declassified following the opening of the M6 to traffic. This reclassification procedure has yet to formally take place. For the purposes of the plan, the road shall be referred to as the former N6.  <i>8. Text amended to describe this section of road as the former N6.</i>

<b>Submission Ref:</b> Creg 05 <b>Submitted by:</b> Cian O'Mahony on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Inspectorate, Inniscarra, Co. Cork	
<b>Summary of submission</b>	<b>Response</b>
3. The Plan does not clearly incorporate objectives of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA). This should be addressed prior to adoption of the plan.	3. The list of objectives and recommendations made in both the SEA and AA will be included in the plan. Both the SEA and the AA are being amended to incorporate changes made to the Draft plan following the public display of the document.  <i>3. Text amended to include objectives and recommendations made in the SEA, AA and in the Managers Report. SEA and AA updated to reflect amendments made to the Draft Local Area Plan.</i>
4. The National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) should be consulted in relation to AA findings and recommendations. The need for additional survey/investigations should be discussed with the NPWS prior to adoption of the plan. The absence of information on the hydrological regime of Crosswood Bog SAC including zone of contribution should be highlighted.	4. Statutory consultation requirements have been met with regard to consultation with the NPWS. Further discussions with the NPWS have occurred in relation to hydro-geological impacts assessment on foot of the findings of the AA. The hydro-geological assessment has been incorporated into the Strategic Flood Risk Report. Recommendations contained in the Hydro-geological assessment are as follows: a. Establish a potential buffer zone around (Crosswood Bog cSAC) to ensure that there is no impact on the hydrology of the site. The potential buffer zone will extend west and south from the Natura 2000 site boundary to the existing M6 motorway and no development will be permitted in the northern parcel of Area B. The extent of the buffer zone may be reassessed once hydrological surveys, and any other required surveys and assessments, have been undertaken to ensure that there will be no adverse impacts from the proposed development on the integrity of the Natura 2000 [Crosswood Bog SAC] site. b. Ensure that any alteration to the surface water drainage in the area does not negatively impact upon the surface water levels within (Crosswood Bog cSAC). c. Ensure that all developments within the LAP area adhere to best practice and legislative requirements during construction and operation to prevent discharge of contaminants and pollutants to surface water or groundwater. Discharge from any proposed development will be properly licensed and monitored in accordance with best practice and legislative requirements. d. The use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) should be advocated on new developments to treat and eliminate potential contamination arising from diffuse sources such as construction or stormwater runoff.  <i>4. The above recommendations have been incorporated into the plan text.</i>

## How the environmental report and submissions received in response to the public consultation, have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan

<p>5. Consideration should be given to modifying the land use and zoning objectives for Area B – Creggan Upper and Area A, as appropriate, to reflect the mitigation measures proposed in the SEA and AA, and to ensure the protection of Crosswood Bog. This should be done in consultation with the NPWS.</p>	<p>5. The recommendations of the hydro-geological and Strategic Flood risk assessments that have been undertaken, on foot of the findings of the SEA and AA reports, provide for buffers to safeguard the integrity of Crosswood Bog and reservation of additional tracts of land along the AI and Clonbonny watercourses, in order to mitigate against the risk of flooding. The land use zoning objectives in Areas B and C will be altered accordingly.</p> <p><i>5. Text and associated zoning maps amended to incorporate recommendations made in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Hydro-geological Assessment. SEA/AA revised as appropriate.</i></p>
<p>7. The implications of data gaps on the conclusions of the SEA/AA should be described. Data gaps should be addressed on a priority basis.</p>	<p>7. Strategic Flood risk assessment, hydro-geological impact assessments and strategic traffic impact assessment studies have been undertaken to address the data gaps referred to in the SEA/AA.</p> <p><i>7. SEA/AA revised as appropriate. Objective inserted in plan that development proposals in areas of high or moderate risk of flooding are required to be accompanied by flood risk assessments at development management stage.</i></p>
<p>8. Flood Risk Assessment should be undertaken for the plan in accordance with the OPW/DoEHLG Flood Risk Management Guidelines.</p>	<p>8. The Draft plan provides for a 20m corridor along both the AI and Clonbonny Rivers. In addition, an area extending to approx 17 ha in area has been reserved free of development in the northern parcel of Area B, in order to mitigate against the risk of flooding at this location.</p> <p>A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been undertaken for the plan area, in accordance with "The Planning System &amp; Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities" 2009. In accordance with these guidelines, it is recommended that development will be avoided in areas identified as being of high or moderate risk of flooding (ie) 1 in 100yr and 1 in 1000 yr, with respect to both the Clonbonny and AI Rivers.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that both river catchments will need further more detailed flooding investigation and analysis, to establish the exact extent of the areas at risk of flooding. In this regard, development proposals in areas of high or moderate risk of flooding, shall be accompanied by a detailed flood risk assessment at development management stage.</p> <p><i>8. Text amended to include the recommendations contained in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.</i></p>
<p>11. The plan should include a definitive commitment to the proposed mitigation/monitoring objectives in the SEA/AA and demonstrate this with clear objectives.</p>	<p>11. A statement will be included in the plan to comply with the proposed mitigation / monitoring objectives recommended in the SEA/AA.</p> <p><i>11. Statement inserted in the plan to ensure compliance with the proposed mitigation / monitoring objectives recommended in the SEA/AA.</i></p>
<p>12. The SEA and AA monitoring should be linked with a programme for the Creggan LAP monitoring.</p>	<p>12. Noted.</p> <p><i>12. The draft plan has been amended to take account of proposed monitoring measures. A programme for monitoring is included in the plan.</i></p>
<p>13. Any changes to the draft plan as a result of consultation should be assessed in terms of environmental effects. AA screening should also be undertaken where appropriate.</p>	<p>13. Material variations to the Draft Plan will be subject to SEA and AA screening in compliance with the Planning &amp; Development Act 2000 as amended, the "Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" 2004 and the "Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities" 2009.</p> <p><i>13. No change to draft plan. SEA/AA revised as appropriate.</i></p>

14. The SEA Statement should summarise how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan; how submissions and observations have been taken into account; reasons for choosing plan adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives; and measures decided upon to monitor environmental effects of implementing the plan.	14. An SEA Statement in accordance with Article 14 of the SEA Regulations 2004 will be included in the plan.  <i>14. SEA statement completed in accordance with Article 14 of the SEA Regulations 2004. Amend SEA accordingly.</i>
15. The Plan should be set in the context of the planning hierarchy and a clear statement should be provided as to the function of the Plan and what the Plan can and cannot do. Where other Plans/ Programmes /Strategies are responsible for implementing relevant policies / objectives / initiatives, these should be acknowledged and fully referenced in the Plan.	15. The plan is set within a planning hierarchy consisting of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2022, the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014. Reference can be made in the plan to the role of other plans and programmes, which are relevant to the plan, the implementation of which falls within the remit of other plans and programmes.  <i>15. Reference inserted in the plan regarding the role of other plans and programmes, which are relevant to the plan, the implementation of which falls within the remit of other plans and programmes.</i>
18. Consideration should be given to the preparation of Master Plan for each of the Areas A, B and C within the Plan area – to be screened with respect to SEA and AA requirements.	18. The planning authority has considered whether to prepare a masterplan for the LAP sub-areas.  The overall approach to the development of Area C is to secure the comprehensive and integrated development of these lands, having regard to the Strategic Gateway Zone designation of this area. In this context, it is not considered appropriate to prescribe an urban structure which may limit the range and scale of development options for these lands. In order to maximise connectivity and linkages through the site, additional access points will be provided for from the Clonbonny Road and the Athlone Business Park into Area C.  <i>18. Plan text and associated maps amended to provide an objective to co-operate with the IDA in the preparation of a masterplan for Area A.</i>
19. The Plan should promote the protection of surface water and groundwater water resources and their associated habitats and species, including fisheries.	19. Noted. The importance of these matters to the plan is acknowledged.  <i>19. Objective inserted in the plan to promote the protection of surface water and groundwater resources and their associated habitats and species, including fisheries.</i>
20. Provisions should be made in the Plan for the incorporation of the specific relevant objectives and measures for individual water bodies set out in the relevant River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and associated Programme of Measures (POM). The Plan should not hinder, and where possible promote the achievement of these specific objectives at water body level. In addition the plan should outline the current water quality status and the status to be achieved by 2015 in any receiving waters covered by the plan.	20. Specific objectives and measures in relation to these issues will be incorporated into the plan text.  <i>20. Reference in the plan to the River Basin Management Plans.</i>
26. The Plan should take account of any Groundwater Protection Schemes and Groundwater Source Protection Zones data.	26. Noted. The importance of groundwater protection schemes and groundwater source protection zones is acknowledged and reference shall be made to same in the plan.  <i>26. Reference inserted in the plan to groundwater protection schemes and groundwater source protection zones and the need to protect these resources.</i>



## How the environmental report and submissions received in response to the public consultation, have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan

30. Where the introduction of additional lands for development is being proposed within the Plan area, relevant Policies / objectives should be included in the Plan, to promote the assessment of the adequacy of the existing wastewater treatment facilities in terms of both capacity and performance and the potential risk to human health and water quality. Where relevant, the potential impact on, habitats and species of ecological importance should be addressed.	<p>30. A new foul sewer network is proposed to serve the Creggan area. Sewage will be pumped via a new pumping station to be constructed on low-lying ground to the west of the Dublin-Athlone Railway line, which will be connected to the existing wastewater treatment plant at Golden Island. The plan acknowledges that facilities should be provided in tandem with development on foot of the Council's Supplementary Development Contributions Scheme. The Creggan Sewerage Masterplan is currently being finalised.</p> <p><i>30. Explicit policy to the effect that the capacity of waste water facilities should be assessed in the case of all development proposals within the LAP area inserted.</i></p>
32. Development standards within the Plan area should take into account groundwater vulnerability.	<p>32. Noted. Groundwater vulnerability has been considered in the SEA. The plan includes groundwater vulnerability mapping which should be used to assess development proposals at development stage. Policy requirement in this regard will be included in the plan.</p> <p><i>32. Statement inserted in the plan requiring account to be taken of groundwater vulnerability in any development proposal.</i></p>
33. The Plan should include clear Policy and Objective for the protection of groundwater resources and associated habitats and species. The Plan should make reference to the requirements of the Groundwater Directive (2006/11 S/EC) on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration.	<p>33. Noted. The protection of groundwater and associated habitats were considered in both the SEA and AA. Reference can be made in the plan to Groundwater Directive 2006/11 S/EC.</p> <p><i>33. Objective inserted in the plan to protect groundwater resources and associated habitats.</i></p>
38. The Plan should include, promote and support proper planning and sustainable development including sustainable use of water resources.	<p>38. Noted. The plan seeks to encourage greater environmental sustainability through the promotion of the use of sustainable built form, SUDS and alternative energy sources. In this regard, reference can be made to the sustainable use of water resources.</p> <p><i>38. Reference inserted to promote the sustainable use of water resources.</i></p>
39. The Plan should promote the appropriate zoning of lands and restriction of use in areas liable to flooding to avoid increased risk of flooding of the lands either within or adjoining the zoned areas.	<p>39. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) of the subject lands within the plan area has been undertaken in accordance with "The Planning System &amp; Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" 2009. A flood risk assessment is required to be carried out in areas at high or moderate risk of flooding.</p> <p><i>39. Text and associated maps amended to reflect recommendations contained in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment</i></p>
41. The Plan should make reference to the E.U Directive (2007/60/EC) on the assessment and management of flood risks entered into force on 12 December 2007.	<p>41. Noted. Reference can be made in the plan to this Directive.</p> <p><i>41. Reference to the EU Directive (2007/60/EC) on the assessment and management of flood risks inserted in the plan.</i></p>
42. A Flood Risk Assessment of the subject lands within the plan area is required in accordance with "The Planning System & Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities"	<p>42. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the subject lands within the plan area has been undertaken in accordance with "The Planning System &amp; Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" 2009.</p> <p><i>42. Recommendations contained in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment inserted into the plan text.</i></p>
49. The above requirements should be promoted in the Plan and as appropriate should be reflected in relevant Policies/Objectives associated with relevant Land Use and other relevant Plans within the Plan area.	<p>49. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the subject lands within the plan area has been undertaken in accordance with "The Planning System &amp; Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" 2009.</p> <p><i>49. Recommendations contained in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment incorporated into the plan.</i></p>

<p>50. The Plan should include a clear Policy to protect all designated habitats and species within the area. The Plan should also refer to the Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas in particular those relating to biodiversity. The Crosswood Bog (SAC) and River Shannon Callows in particular should be afforded specific protection in the Plan.</p>	<p>50. Noted. The statutory protection afforded to certain habitats and species stands independently of the plan. The SEA recommends that development proposals which, in the opinion of the planning authority, may have potentially significant adverse effects on the environment should be subject of an Environmental Impact Statement. The SEA contains a recommendation that the LAP should include a requirement for development proposals to have regard to the Regional Fisheries Board guidelines for watercourses in urban environments.</p> <p><i>50. Requirement for development proposals to have regard to the Regional Fisheries Board guidelines for watercourses in urban environments inserted.</i></p>
<p>51. The objective in the Plan relating to the creation of an amenity walk within Crosswood Bog has potential to be in conflict with the objective to protect the integrity of Crosswood Bog and minimise disturbance of protected species contained therein.</p>	<p>51. The SEA recommends that the objective for a proposed amenity walk in Crosswood Bog should be subject to consultation with the NPWS. The omission of an amenity walk within Crosswood Bog is recommended in the Stage 2 AA.</p> <p><i>51. Text amended to omit the provision of an amenity walk within Crosswood Bog.</i></p>
<p>52. Consideration should be further given to establishment of a Master Plan for the area of the Plan adjoining the Crosswood Bog SAC, which would be subject to SEA and Appropriate Assessment.</p>	<p>52. Statutory consultation requirements have been met with regard to consultation with the NPWS. Further discussions with the NPWS have occurred in relation to hydro-geological impacts assessment on foot of the findings of the AA. The hydro-geological assessment has been incorporated into the Strategic Flood Risk Report. Recommendations contained in the Hydro-geological assessment are as follows:</p> <p>Establish a potential buffer zone around (Crosswood Bog cSAC) to ensure that there is no impact on the hydrology of the site. The potential buffer zone will extend west and south from the Natura 2000 site boundary to the existing M6 motorway and no development will be permitted in the northern parcel of Area B. The extent of the buffer zone may be reassessed once hydrological surveys, and any other required surveys and assessments, have been undertaken to ensure that there will be no adverse impacts from the proposed development on the integrity of the Natura 2000 [Crosswood Bog SAC] site.</p> <p><i>52. Recommendations have been incorporated into the plan text.</i></p>
<p>55. The Plan should also refer to the protection of Annex I and Annex 11 - Natural Habitats Animal and Plant Species respectively of Community Interest whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation and Annex IV -Animal and Plant Species of Community Interest in need of Strict Protection of "Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora" which occur within and adjoining the Plan area. For example the status of bat species within the plan area should be considered.</p>	<p>55. Noted.</p> <p><i>55. Text amended to refer to Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.</i></p>
<p>57. The Plan should promote the protection of fisheries and shell fisheries where relevant and appropriate within the Plan area and adjoining LA areas.</p>	<p>57. Noted. The SEA recommends that the draft plan should have regard to the 'Regional Fisheries Board Guidelines for Watercourses in Urban Environments'. The plan will discourage the use of culverts that may affect fisheries.</p> <p><i>57. Objectives that regard is to be had to the 'Regional Fisheries Board Guidelines for Watercourses in Urban Environments' inserted.</i></p>
<p>58. The Plan should promote the guidance documents from the Regional Fishery Boards where appropriate and relevant (4 documents listed).</p>	<p>58. Noted. Reference can be made to these documents.</p> <p><i>58. Reference to adherence to the documents listed.</i></p>

## How the environmental report and submissions received in response to the public consultation, have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan

59. The Plan should promote the provision/application of appropriate buffer zones between designated ecological sites and areas zoned for development. The nature and extent of the proposed buffer zones should be determined in consultation and agreement with the NPWS. There would be merits in providing sufficient buffer zones, and re-zoning of land within Development Zone B to fulfill the role of buffer zone and be afforded significant protection from development under the Plan's Policies / Objectives.	59. Noted. In accordance with the Hydro-geological report, a potential buffer zone is to be established around (Crosswood Bog cSAC) to ensure that there is no impact on the hydrology of the site. The potential buffer zone will extend west and south from the Natura 2000 site boundary to the existing M6 motorway and no development will be permitted in the northern parcel of Area B. The extent of the buffer zone may be reassessed once hydrological surveys, and any other required surveys and assessments, have been undertaken to ensure that there will be no adverse impacts from the proposed development on the integrity of the Natura 2000 [Crosswood Bog SAC] site.  <i>59. Plan text and associated maps amended on foot of Hydro-geological Assessment with regard to the provision of additional buffers to Crosswood Bog.</i>
61. A determination for the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment of all Land Use Plans and related variations should be made in consultation with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government – National Parks and Wildlife Service, and this should be highlighted in the Plan.	61. Noted. SEA and AA screening were carried out and it was determined, in consultation with the prescribed bodies, that a full SEA and AA was required to be carried out on the Draft plan.  <i>61. Statement to the effect that SEA and AA screening has been carried out and it was determined, in consultation with the prescribed bodies, that a full SEA and AA should be carried out is inserted.</i>
62. The Plan should promote the application of the Guidance set out in the recent DOEHLG Publication 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities (2009)'.	62. The draft plan included objectives for the protection of existing wildlife corridors along watercourses and railway lines. The SEA also recommends that the Guidelines of the Regional Fisheries Board Guidelines in relation to the conservation of riparian zones along waterways is also followed. The SEA recommends that a landscape and urban structure concept should be prepared for the plan area. This should provide greater clarity as to the appropriateness, location and extent of buffer zones between development and areas of local biodiversity.  <i>62. The location and extent of buffer zones between development and areas of biodiversity importance will be identified and incorporated into the plan.</i>
66. The Plan should support / acknowledge existing Local Heritage / Biodiversity Plans and should promote the implementation of key actions set out in these Plans. Where not already prepared and adopted through County Development Plans, the Plan should promote the preparation of County and where relevant and appropriate Local Heritage/ Biodiversity Plans.	66. Noted. The Council has recently prepared a Heritage Plan for the county. It is an objective of the Heritage Plan to undertake a Biodiversity Plan for the county.  <i>66. Statement inserted in the plan that adherence should be made to "The Westmeath County Council Heritage Plan".</i>
68. The Plan should promote the implementation of measures to control and manage alien/ invasive species (e.g. Japanese knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Zebra Mussel etc.) and noxious weeds (e.g. Ragwort, thistle, dock etc.) within the Plan area.	68. Noted  <i>68. Policy/objective inserted in the text to control/manage invasive species.</i>
70. The Plan should include reference to and, as appropriate, promote the implementation of Noise Directive and associated national regulations as well as the specific "measures"/ actions" set out in or due to be set out in a proposed " Noise Action Plans" for the relevant local authority area within the Plan area.	70. The Council has undertaken a Noise Action Plan for the county and reference shall be made to same in the plan text.  <i>70. Reference to the County Noise Action Plan inserted.</i>
72. The Plan should promote specific Policies/Objectives and associated provisions for the development and promotion of appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures that can be implemented through relevant land use plans and/or specific plans. The Plan should also promote the inclusion of specific Policies within local authority land use plans, which promote the integration of the implications of Climate Change at a regional and local level, in land use planning within the Plan area. In particular the Plan should refer to Ireland's National Climate Strategy 2007 – 2012. The Plan should also address how climate change might impact on the implementation of land use plans in the Plan area.	72. Noted. Reference to the National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012 will be made in the plan.  <i>72. Reference to the National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012 inserted in the plan.</i>





<p>73. Consideration should be given to the inclusion in the Plan, as appropriate, of a Policy/Objective in relation to the preparation and implementation of "An Energy Conservation Strategy" and associated awareness campaign within the Plan area. Specific timescales should be assigned to the preparation of such a strategy.</p>	<p>73. Noted. Objectives in relation to this issue can be broadened to provide for the requirement to submit an energy conservation strategy to accompany major projects within the plan area.</p> <p><i>73. Text requirement to submit an energy conservation strategy for major projects within the plan area inserted.</i></p>
<p>75. The Plan should promote the protection of designated scenic landscapes, scenic views, scenic routes and landscape features of regional, county and local value. The Plan should promote the undertaking of Landscape Character Assessment in accordance with the relevant national guidance. Consideration should be given to inclusion of a specific policy to require a Visual Impact Assessment / Landscape Character Assessment to be carried out, for developments potentially likely to adversely impact areas of significant landscape character and associated scenic views.</p>	<p>75. Noted. Visual impact appraisal/ landscape character assessments are a requirement for major developments and must be carried out as part of the Development Management process. A policy to this effect will be inserted in the plan.</p> <p><i>75. Policy requiring the submission of a visual impact assessment for major development proposals within the plan area inserted.</i></p>
<p>81. Consideration should also be given to reviewing such Traffic Management Plans as appropriate. The promotion of sustainable forms and transport and increased usage of public transportation should be encouraged in the Plan.</p>	<p>81. Noted. The Strategic Transport Assessment deals with this matter and recommendations with regard to Traffic Management Plans and the promotion of sustainable forms of transport and increased usage of public transportation will be incorporated into the plan.</p> <p><i>81. Recommendations from the Strategic Transport Assessment in relation to Traffic Management Plans and the promotion of sustainable forms of transport and increased usage of public transportation into the plan inserted.</i></p>
<p>84. The Plan should promote the development of traffic management measures to reduce the potential for traffic congestion and associated vehicular emissions within the Plan area. In particular the preparation of Integrated Traffic Management Plans, where relevant and appropriate, for the existing urban areas and proposed new urban developments should be promoted as appropriate through the Plan. This approach should address the short, medium and long-term, traffic management requirements within the Plan area.</p>	<p>84. Noted. As per 81. The recommendations contained in the Strategic Transport Assessment in relation to traffic management will be incorporated into the plan.</p> <p><i>84. Recommendations contained in the Strategic Transport Assessment in relation to traffic management incorporated into the plan.</i></p>
<p>90. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a specific Policy/Objective in the Plan to ensure full compliance with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment – The SEA Directive and the associated Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004. The Plan should promote the development and implementation of Procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements of the SEA Directive and related SEA Regulations.</p>	<p>90. The plan is subject to the SEA Directive and the associated Planning &amp; Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004) and the recommendations made in the SEA will be incorporated into the plan text.</p> <p><i>90. Recommendations of the SEA Environmental Report incorporated into the plan.</i></p>
<p>98. Consideration should be given to the following: The addition of appropriate corrective action thresholds for unauthorised development, illegal waste activity and water pollution incidents; The inclusion of monitoring frequencies; Reporting on environmental monitoring; Monitoring of both positive and negative effects, where they occur; Inclusion of the ongoing review of environmental targets and indicators in the monitoring programme. Responsibility for this role should be clearly defined. The Monitoring Programme should be flexible to take account of, the various stages of the Plan and should be able to deal with specific environmental issues as they arise. The programme must be able to deal with the possibility of cumulative effects. The monitoring programme should describe the actual organisations/ departments responsible for collecting, collating and analyzing the data should be identified as soon as possible after the Plan has been adopted. The Monitoring Programme should include information on how the monitoring proposed will allow unforeseen adverse effects to be identified and responded to as appropriate. For instance who will have responsibility for this and what might trigger appropriate remedial action.</p>	<p>98. Noted. A monitoring programme will be provided for in the plan.</p> <p><i>98. Statement inserted in the plan to ensure compliance with the proposed mitigation / monitoring objectives recommended in the SEA/AA.</i></p>

## 5 Consideration of alternatives and reasons for adopting the chosen alternative

At an early stage in the preparation of the Draft LAPC three planning and development alternatives for development were identified by Westmeath County Council. These considered alternative locations outside the plan area, within the reasonable development boundary of the town. The alternatives were considered at a preliminary and strategic level. The preferred alternative (Alternative A) was then chosen and developed to greater detail. The evolution of the area without the implementation of a plan, the "Do nothing" scenario was considered initially to provide comparison with the plan alternatives.

The alternatives were:

*Alternative A - Developing the Creggan lands based on the LAPC vision.*

*Alternative B – Selecting a location closer to the town centre with direct access onto M6.*

*Alternative C – Availing of existing, zoned enterprise and employment lands within statutory plans for the area, ie. Athlone Town Plan & Athlone Environs Plan.*

### 5.1 Evolution without implementation of LAPC

This scenario is based on the evolution of the area in the absence of significant development and assumes the following conditions:

The character of the area would remain largely unchanged.

Environmental issues would remain largely unchanged.

The negative environmental consequences of this scenario are as follows:

- Continuous decline in population.
- Devaluation of existing cultural heritage.
- Continued focus on suburban development.
- Fewer options for living/working in the area.
- Failure to take advantage of proximity to public transport.

### 5.2 Description of the alternatives

Alternative A emerged as the preferred strategic alternative. It was therefore developed to later stages of detail. Its vision and strategies are summarised in the SEA report. The principal logic for its choice as the preferred alternative is summarised as follows:

Athlone is a large urban centre in the Midlands and is strategically positioned in the centre of Ireland, at a crossing point along the River Shannon. The growth of the town has evolved on an east west basis. In order to fulfil its role as a "Linked Gateway", the population of Athlone is expected to reach approximately 26,000 persons by 2022. Having regard to the siting of Lough Ree immediately north of the town, the River Shannon floodplain and past incidences of seasonal flooding occurring south of the town, it is considered that the future expansion of Athlone will be concentrated on lands to the east of the existing urban area.

Taking into consideration existing zoned land within Athlone and the proximity of Athlone Institute of Technology, the Creggan area represents the largest undeveloped land bank in the town regarded as being suitable to meet future enterprise and employment needs for the gateway. The area has been identified for preparation of a local area plan with an objective for enterprise and employment use in the current environs plan for Athlone 2008-2014.

The assessment of Alternatives B and C, in the context of the Environmental Report, is summarised as follows:

*Alternative B – Selecting a location closer to the town centre with direct access onto M6.*

Undeveloped lands located closer to the town centre are contained in parcels which are largely subject to Local Area Plan preparation. The list of plans is as follows: Lissywollen South, Curragh-Lissywollen, Cornamagh, Cornamaddy, Baylough, Irishtown and Loughanaskin. These plans provide for town centre, primarily residential use and complimentary mixed uses. In the case of Lissywollen South, an area of approximately 10 hectares has been reserved for enterprise use. Loughandonning Local Area Plan is being prepared at present and the primary use proposed herein is also residential.

There are flood risk issues associated with this latter area and the Baylough Local Area Plan area, which limit the lands available for development. Curragh Lissywollen and Lissywollen South LAP areas are accessed from off the interchange. Direct access onto the M6 is not available from any of these local area plan areas. Sufficient lands to fulfil the vision of the Creggan plan are not available at the scale required closer to the town centre, owing to pre-existing commitments in adopted or proposed Local Area Plans and by reason of flood risk constraints. Having regard to the foregoing, Alternative B is not deemed to be a viable option.



*Alternative C – Availing of existing zoned enterprise and employment lands within statutory plans for the area, ie Athlone Town Plan & Athlone Environs Plan*

Existing zoned lands for enterprise and employment use in the Athlone Town Plan and the Athlone Environs Plan comprise 94.4ha, which is dispersed on the northern and eastern sectors of the town at Blyry Industrial Estate and Garrycastle IDA Business Park. Blyry Industrial Estate has been almost fully developed and comprising smaller scale enterprises and warehousing. There are approximately 44 hectares of undeveloped enterprise and employment lands located in the vicinity of the IDA Business Park. Having regard to the scale of lands required in a single land bank considered necessary to fulfil the vision of the plan, in regard to the expansion of enterprise and employment and the development of a major centre of international profile it is considered that Alternative B would not be acceptable.

### 5.3 Modification of the preferred alternative in the light of the SEA process

Following the preparation of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment study (SFRA) the Council determined to avoid development of areas that are currently undeveloped which have been identified by the SFRA as being at risk of flooding. Further development of areas that are already partially developed, or any development proposals in areas at risk of flooding will require to be justified in accordance with the Justification Test prescribed by the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. Further, development of part of Area B (north and east of the M6 will be placed on hold pending a more detailed hydro-geological assessment to ensure that any development proposals in that area will not impact on the integrity of Crosswood Bog.

The LAP zoning and land use objectives have been amended to reflect these findings.

## 6 Monitoring

It is a requirement of Article 10 of the SEA Directive that Member States monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans in order to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.

For the purposes of monitoring the implementation and effects of the plan, it is recommended that a Review Group is established. This group should be established by Westmeath County Council in conjunction with Athlone Town Council, and should include the Environmental Protection Agency, National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies to ensure the implementation of the plan does not compromise the environmental criteria identified for the area.

As part of the monitoring process, the Review Group will seek to:

- Carry out appropriate survey work and collate the necessary data required from other agencies to effectively monitor the environmental effects of the plan.
- Prepare a monitoring report on the implementation of the plan every two years.

Monitoring will have particular regard to the key issues identified in the assessment of the plan, and will need to provide the framework to trigger remedial action if necessary.

A more detailed programme for monitoring will be put in place, taking into account:

- :: The time, frequency and geographical extent of monitoring,
- :: Budget for cost of monitoring, and
- :: Detailed allocation of responsibilities for individual monitoring collection, collation and recording tasks.

### 6.1 Monitoring Proposals and environmental indicators

The following measures are proposed to monitor the effects on the environment of implementing the LAPC, presented in terms of the achievement of the environmental protection criteria and the impact on the environmental factors that the SEA legislation requires to be considered.

It is recommended that monitoring should focus on the main environmental issues and gaps in existing data, in particular the interdependence between protected habitats, flora and fauna, water quality including the hydro-geological regime and human health. Indicators may be quantitative and/ or qualitative in nature and may:

1. State the environment indicators (quality, or quantity of physical and biological or chemical phenomenon).
2. Stress indicators (reflecting development effects).
3. Performance indicators (used to evaluate long-term achievements in environmental management and protection).
4. Sustainable development indicators (seeking to describe and measure key relationships between economic, social and environmental factors).

#### Monitoring Responsibility

Overall responsibility for monitoring will lie with Westmeath County Council, mostly as part of the development management process, and supported as necessary by other relevant statutory authorities according to the environmental topic under consideration.

## 6

## Monitoring

Biodiversity, flora and fauna			
Environmental criteria	Indicators	Targets	Responsibility
<p>B1. To protect existing, valuable species and habitats in the area.</p> <p>B2. To protect the integrity of designated sites in, adjoining or near the area.</p> <p>B3. To connect valuable areas of biodiversity in the area.</p>	<p>Removal of hedgerows.</p> <p>Removal of trees.</p> <p>Water quality indicators.</p> <p>Hydro-geological indicators.</p> <p>Air quality indicators.</p> <p>Obstruction of pathways or movement corridors.</p> <p>Drying out of bog</p> <p>Identification of invasive species.</p> <p>Habitat mapping.</p>	<p>Minimise loss of hedgerow habitats.</p> <p>Retention of biodiversity</p> <p>Broadleaf planting.</p> <p>Retention of value of areas of national and international importance.</p> <p>Prevention of development that would impact upon habitats or species of importance.</p> <p>Prevention of invasive species.</p> <p>Implementation of Groundwater Protection Scheme.</p> <p>Bog regeneration.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b></p> <p>WCC to monitor and enforce ecological assessments and habitat management strategies submitted as part of the development process. WCC to monitor all targets in association with relevant government departments and agencies where appropriate.</p>
Population and human health			
Environmental criteria	Indicators	Targets	Responsibility
<p>PH1: To protect existing residential amenity.</p> <p>PH2: To provide active community and residential recreation and amenity</p> <p>PH3: To protect important elements of community identity.</p> <p>PH4: To minimise the risk of accidents to the population from traffic or transport.</p> <p>PH5: To minimise risk of accidents from activities or development in the area.</p> <p>PH6: To protect against air or other pollution from traffic or other activities in the area.</p> <p>PH7: To protect against contamination of the local groundwater and local water supply.</p> <p>PH8: To protect against adverse effects from noise or vibration from traffic or activities in the area.</p> <p>PH9: To protect against adverse effects from construction or other development activities.</p> <p>PH10: To avoid / minimise the risk of flooding to the resident and working population.</p> <p>PH11: To protect existing residential and community infrastructure and services.</p> <p>PH12: To provide appropriate new community infrastructure and services to support new development.</p>	<p>Notices served under noise Regulations.</p> <p>Health and Safety reports to HSE.</p> <p>Flood reports to OPW.</p> <p>Air quality indicators.</p> <p>Drinking water quality indicators.</p> <p>Commuting trends and modal split.</p> <p>Provision of public transport facilities.</p> <p>Provision of cycle paths.</p> <p>Provision of children's play areas.</p> <p>Provision of public open spaces.</p> <p>Provision/ retention of community infrastructure.</p> <p>Provision of home-zone and integrated traffic calming measures.</p> <p>Quantity and quality of open space provision.</p> <p>Development in areas at risk of flooding.</p>	<p>Reduced levels of incidences of noise pollution.</p> <p>Reduced accident levels.</p> <p>Avoidance of flood damage.</p> <p>Increased provision of public transport services.</p> <p>Reduced private car usage.</p> <p>Compliance with drinking water quality standards.</p> <p>NSS and Regional Planning Guidelines population targets.</p> <p>Avoid development which is vulnerable to flooding in areas at risk of flooding.</p> <p>Increased provision of community infrastructure and facilities.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b></p> <p>WCC to monitor and enforce mobility management plans, energy conservation plans, visual impact and flood risk assessments submitted as part of the development process. WCC to monitor all targets in association with relevant government departments and agencies where appropriate.</p>

Soil			
<b>Environmental criteria</b> S1: To protect local soil and bedrock. S2: To carry out remedial action where damage has already occurred to the soil or bedrock.	<b>Indicators</b> Hydro-geology. Water table re-charge.	<b>Targets</b> Protection of locally important aquifer and hydro-geological regime.	<b>Responsibility</b> WCC to monitor development proposals in association with GSI where appropriate. EPA standards and guidelines to be adhered to.

Water			
<b>Environmental criteria</b> W1: To protect against pollution of the groundwater. W2: To minimise surface water run-off. W3: To protect against the deterioration of water quality in the waterbodies. W4: To provide quality water supply. W5: To minimise loss of water from infrastructure in the area. W6: To protect any damage to water quality arising from flooding.	<b>Indicators</b> Changes in water quality identified through water quality monitoring as a result of implementation of the Water Framework Directive, Nitrates Directive, Groundwater Directive and Groundwater Protection Scheme when implemented. Use of Sludge Regulations, Cross-Compliance Regulations. Changes in water quality identified as a result of monitoring under IPPC licensing or Waste Licensing. Changes in water quality identified as a result of River Water Sampling (Biotic quality ratings/ Q values). Levels of E-coli and coliforms present in drinking water supply.	<b>Targets</b> Compliance with water quality standards. Improvement or at least no deterioration in ground water quality. Implementation of Creggan Sewerage masterplan. Implementation of Water Supply Scheme. Rainwater harvesting. Grey water re-cycling. Provision of sustainable urban drainage systems. Compliance with drinking water quality. Greater public awareness.	<b>Responsibility</b> WCC to monitor all targets in association with relevant government departments and agencies where appropriate. EPA, IFI standards and guidelines to be adhered to.

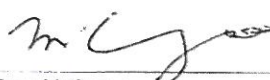
Air			
<b>Environmental criteria</b> A1: To protect existing air quality. A2: To minimise levels of anthropogenic pollutants resulting from energy use in the area. A3: To minimise use of private transport. A4: To maximise use of walking cycling and public transport. A5: To maximise use of energy from sustainable or "green" sources. A6: To maximise use of energy efficient design, construction and management of buildings.	<b>Indicators</b> Air quality indicators. Use of sustainable energy such as CHP and District Heating. Commuting trends and modal split. Percentage of broadleaf and native tree species planted. Building Energy Ratings.	<b>Targets</b> Increased provision of and use of public transport. Reduced private car use/ ownership. Increased public rights of way and established and maintained walking and cycling routes. Broadleaf afforestation. Increased proportion of energy generated from renewable energy sources. Compliance or exceedance of Building Regulation standards for the conservation of fuel and power. Maintenance of low levels or levels within EU limits of Sulphur dioxide, Nitrogen Oxides and particulate matter. Greater public awareness.	<b>Responsibility</b> WCC to monitor all targets in association with DoEHLG, SEAI and EPA where appropriate.

## 6 Monitoring

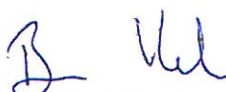
Material assets			
<b>Environmental criteria</b> MA1: To ensure efficient and sustainable development and use of strategic urban land. MA2: To ensure sequential and phased growth of the town fringe. MA3: To comply with strategic vision for lands within the context of Athlone Town. MA4: To avoid / minimise risk of flooding to buildings and structures. MA5: To minimise traffic congestion of local and surrounding roads and junctions. MA6: To maximise use of public transport MA7: To ensure a permeable and managed urban route structure. MA8: To ensure appropriate provision and timing of public transport. MA9: To ensure appropriate provision and timing of storm water drainage. MA10: To ensure appropriate provision and timing of foul water drainage and treatment. MA11: To ensure appropriate provision and timing of water supply	<b>Indicators</b> Structuring of urban form. Mix and density of development. Sequential growth of greenfield land. Conformity of development proposals with Local Area Plan vision and objectives. Quantum of development in areas at risk of flooding. Flood risk assessment. Survey of queuing / traffic congestion. Modal split.	<b>Targets</b> Compact and permeable urban structure. Clarity of rural – urban landscape transition. Avoid development which is vulnerable to flooding in areas at risk of flooding. Permeability of urban structure. Low traffic speeds. Traffic management plans. Upgrade of movement infrastructure where necessary. Implementation of Sewerage Masterplan and Drainage Plan. Linkage to existing urban area.	<b>Responsibility</b> WCC to monitor all targets in association with all relevant government departments and agencies where appropriate. WCC to monitor and enforce mobility management plans / traffic and transport assessments and energy conservation plans in association with major development proposals.
Cultural heritage			
<b>Environmental criteria</b> CH1: To protect existing and potential archaeology and its context. CH2: To protect and enhance existing built heritage. CH3: To protect important elements of local cultural identity. CH4: To ensure that the archaeology and built heritage of the wider area is not adversely effected through the visual impact of new development.	<b>Indicators</b> Number of monuments or cases in areas of archaeological potential in the Record of Monuments and Places that have been recorded or subjected to physical/geophysical exploration/excavation as a result of an application for planning permission. Number of monuments in the RMP or other monuments that have been damaged, including their fabric or setting, by development granted planning permission. Number of archaeological objects found, catalogued and retained by the National Museum. Number of structures included in the NIAH. Enforcement actions against unauthorised developments. Visual impact assessment.	<b>Targets</b> Retain or increase, as appropriate, number of valued structures afforded protection. Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities. Retain or improve integrity of built fabric through development where feasible. No damage occurring to structures or monuments, or their character or setting, due to insensitive development. Respect setting of protected monuments.	<b>Responsibility</b> WCC to monitor all targets in association with all relevant government departments and agencies where appropriate.



Landscape			
Environmental criteria	Indicators	Targets	Responsibility
<p>L1: To retain and enhance important elements of existing landscape quality.</p> <p>L2: To connect important aspects of landscape as part of a green infrastructure.</p> <p>L3: To ensure that the general landscape character of the wider area is not adversely effected through the visual impact of new development</p> <p>L4: To protect and enhance the quality, character and features of waterways.</p>	<p>Landscape protection designations</p> <p>Landscape character assessment.</p> <p>Visual impact assessment.</p> <p>Hedgerow and tree survey</p>	<p>Integrated urban and landscape plan.</p> <p>Retain significant hedgerow, trees and tree groups.</p> <p>Net increase in tree cover.</p> <p>Identify and maintain riparian zones.</p> <p>Clear rural – urban transition on approach roads</p> <p>Avoidance of visual clutter, hoardings etc</p>	<p>WCC to monitor and enforce any visual impact assessments submitted as part of the development process. WCC to monitor all targets in association with DoEHLG and NPWS where appropriate.</p>

  
 Terry McCague,  
 Senior Planner

5/11/2010  
 Date

  
 Barry Kehoe,  
 Director of Services

5/11/10  
 Date