



Westmeath County
Development Plan
2014-2020

Volume 3
SEA Environmental
Report

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Environmental Report

of the

2014-2020 Westmeath County Development Plan



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1 INTRODUCTION/NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Westmeath County Council advertised the start of the review of the 2008-2014 County Development Plan and the preparation of the new 2014-2020 County Development Plan on 22nd Feb 2012.

As part of this review process and the preparation of the new Development Plan Westmeath County Council are obliged to prepare this Environmental Report of the likely significant effects on the environment of the Plan on implementation. The Planning Authority shall take account of this Environmental Report along with the Appropriate Assessment and all submissions and observations made during the preparation and adoption of the County Development Plan and assessments.

The Environmental Report is required to include the information that may reasonably be required, taking into account:

- Current knowledge and methods of assessment.
- The contents and level of detail in the Plan.
- The stage of the Plan in the decision making process.
- The extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in the decision making process in order to avoid duplication of environmental assessment.

This document has been prepared taking account of Westmeath's statutory obligations and responses received from both public and statutory consultees to the Scoping Report.

There are a number of significant issues which have arisen in preparation for this exercise and require particular consideration. The opinion of the Environmental Authorities was sought in the scoping exercise on a number of particular issues which are likely to dominate this exercise, these include:

- The provision in the County Development Plan for increased development and the consequences of this for increased water abstraction from Lough Owel and Lough Lene.
- The inclusion of a schedule of road improvements including the Mullingar to Roosky extension of the N4, the preferred route corridor for which passes through a number of environmentally sensitive locations.
- The provision of policy for the continued development of settlements with limitations on both physical infrastructural capacity and environmental carrying capacity to deal with waste water arising on implementation of development objectives which may be provided for in the Draft County Development Plan.
- Policy and objectives for development/improvement of access and tourism facilities to rivers and Lakes in Westmeath.
- Policy in relation to Rural Enterprise
- The need for enhanced Groundwater Protection Policy with particular reference to Zones of Contribution for Ground and Surface Drinking Water Sources.

1.1 Statutory Context

The requirement and mechanism for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Development Plan review process is set out in the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004-2011

This Environmental Report has been prepared in fulfilment of article 13E of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004-2011.

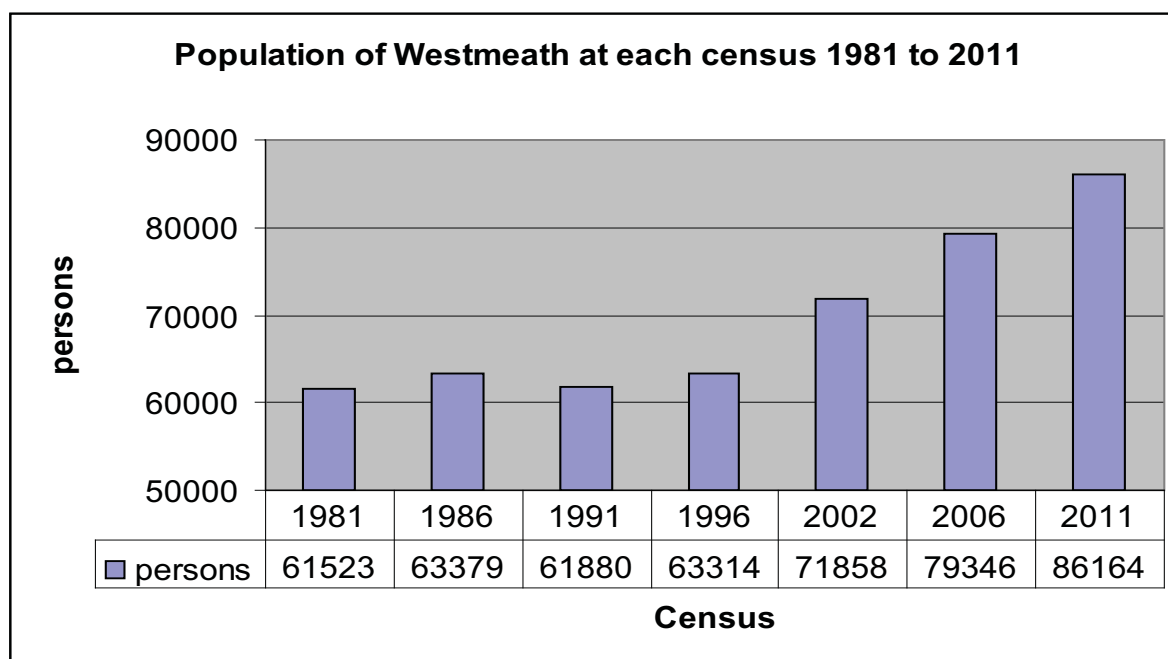
1.2 Limitations

The scope and detail of this Environmental Report have been severely curtailed by virtue of limited resources being directly and indirectly available.

1.3 Westmeath County Profile

1.3.1 Population, Household, Employment, Trends

Westmeath has been through a period of significant change in recent decades with a population increase of almost 40% over the thirty year period from 1981 to 2011, which has presented challenges to the social infrastructural and environmental assets of the county.



Graph 1.1: Westmeath Population at each Census from 1981-2011 (source CSO)

This population growth of 40% in the last 30 years has been matched by an increase in housing with just over 49% of private households in permanent housing units in Westmeath constructed in the last 30 years according to CSO census data.

Occupancy rates in Westmeath have changed significantly in recent decades from an average of 4.2 persons per rural private household in 1971 to an average occupancy of 2.6 in urban households in 2011.

On analysis of population changes from 1991 to 2011 by DED the most dramatic increase has been in the Kinnegad DED with a population increase of 421% over this 20 year period.

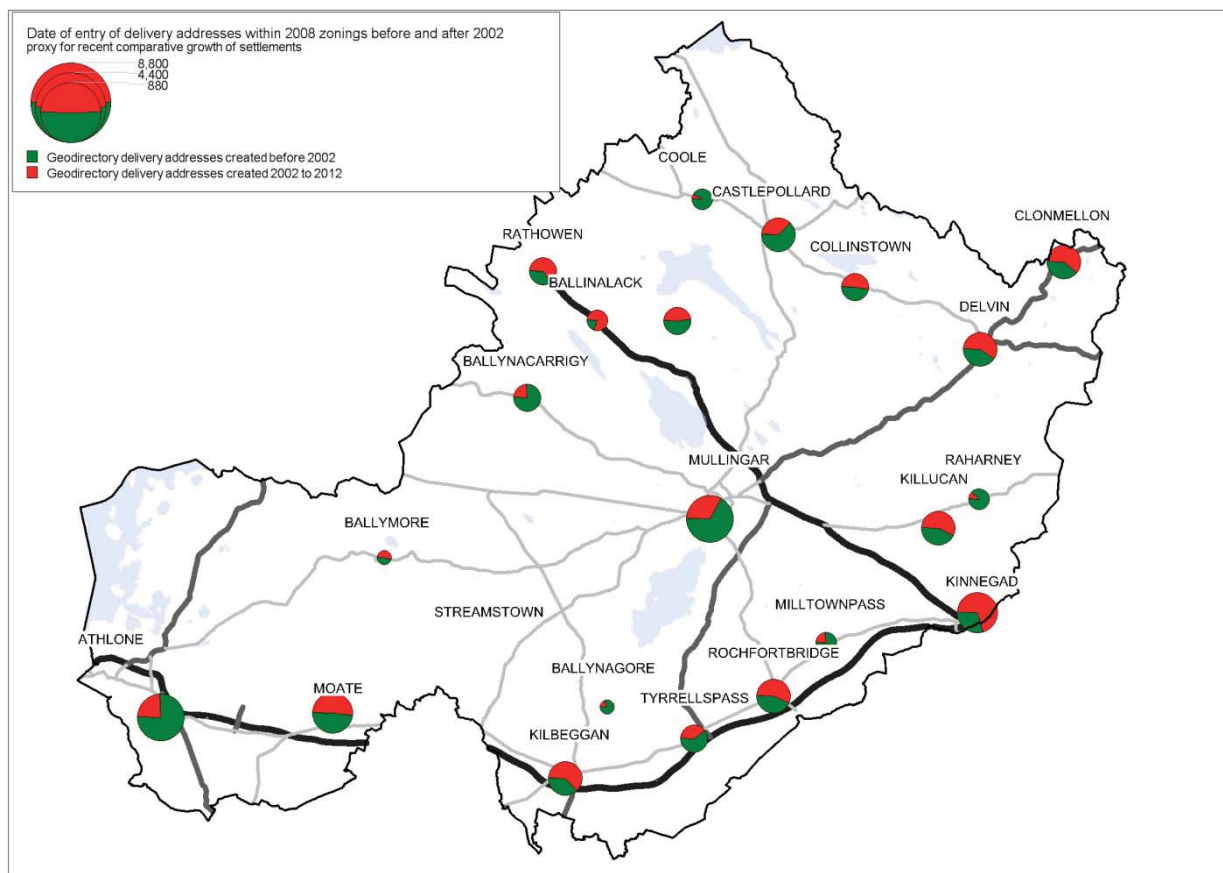
6 rural DED's in Westmeath experienced population decline in the 20 year period of 1991 to 2011. The total combined population reduction for these 6 DED's was 128 persons. One of these 6 DED's experiencing population loss was within a Structurally Weak Rural Area as designated in the 2008-2014 Westmeath County Development Plan.

Available data on the components of population change suggest that the relationship between population increase and housing requirement which became evident in the Celtic Tiger years may

not be reliably extrapolated into the future due to the population increase being dominated by natural increase, with in migration no longer a significant factor.

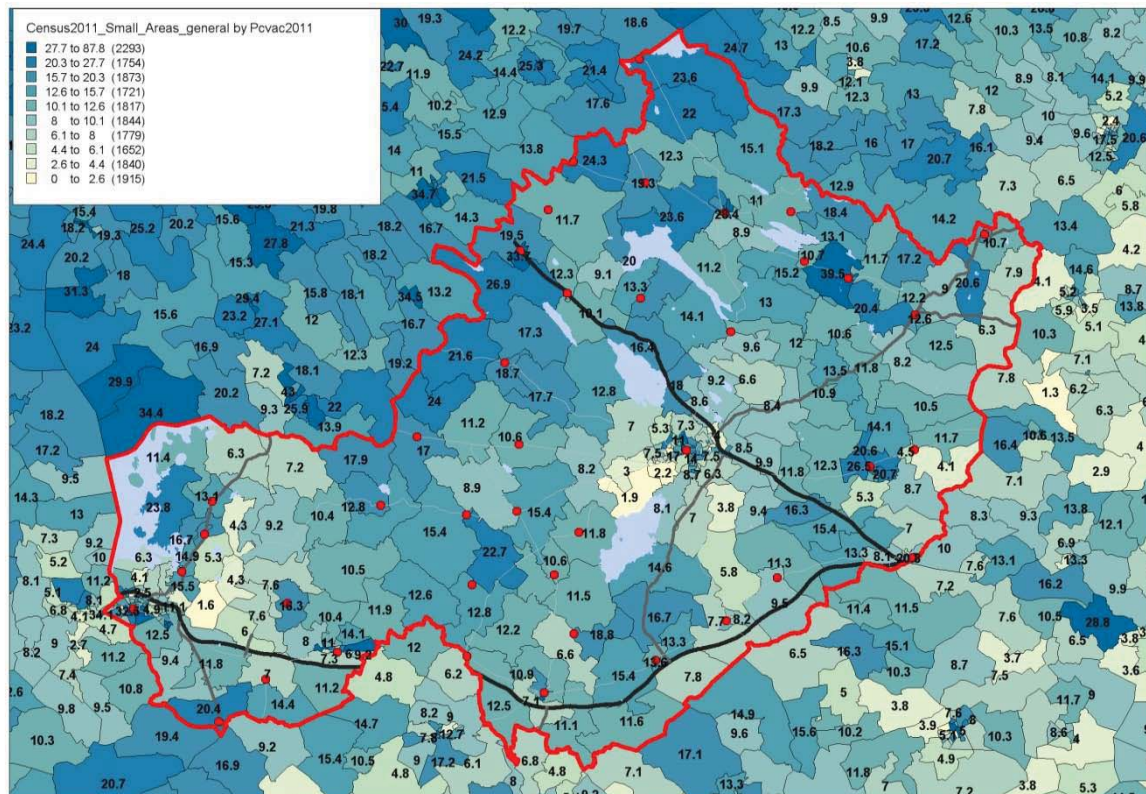
The distribution of the population increase in recent decades indicates a slight tendency towards urbanisation of the county with 58% of the population recorded in rural areas in 1991 and 51% in 2011. Two thirds of the total population increase in Westmeath in this 20 year period was in the aggregated town areas.

The map below shows the portion of Geodirectory delivery addresses on land zoned in the 2008 CDP according to those which were recorded before and after February 2002. This graphic gives an indication of the proportionality of growth in each settlement in the last decade comparatively to that which existed prior to 2002.



Map 1.1: Proportionality of growth in each settlement recorded up to 2012 in comparison to that which existed prior to 2002.

Total number of houses reported by the Census as vacant in Westmeath was 4921 with the unoccupied number on census night recorded at 5,769.



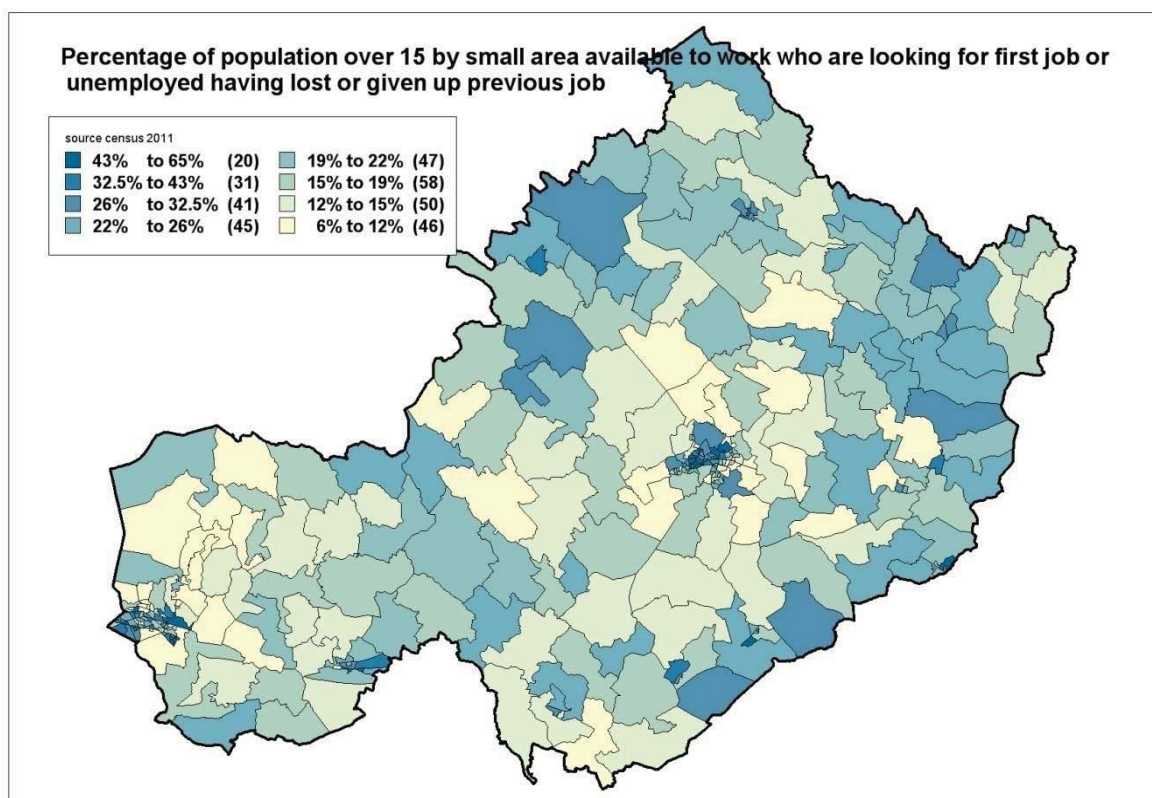
Map 1.2: Distribution of vacant units in Westmeath as a percentage of total housing by Small Area Population Statistics. (Source Census 2011)

Westmeath's economy traditionally depended on the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, with food processing and consumer products being of secondary importance in economic terms. In recent times, the county's industrial base has broadened and diversified to host a diverse range of employment opportunities in sectors such as the knowledge economy, life sciences, logistics and distribution, International Traded Services, Tourism and Hospitality, professional services and retail.

According to the 2011 census, 32,319 people residing in Westmeath recorded their principal economic status as being "at work". The number of persons employed in the county has increased by 6% whilst the population has increased by 8.6% in the same period.

The Census Returns for 2011 also records a 61.4%, with an unemployment rate for the County of 19%. In the interim Census period between 2006-2011, the labour force increased by 6% from 38,649 to 40,956.

There are both urban and rural areas of the county with significant unemployment. Map 1.3 below shows the percentage of persons over 15 available to work who in the 2011 census reported that they were looking for their first job or had lost or given up a previous job.



Map 1.3: Percentage of persons over 15 available to work who in the 2011 census reported that they were looking for their first job or had lost or given up a previous job.

1.4 Spatial Planning Hierarchy Context and Targets

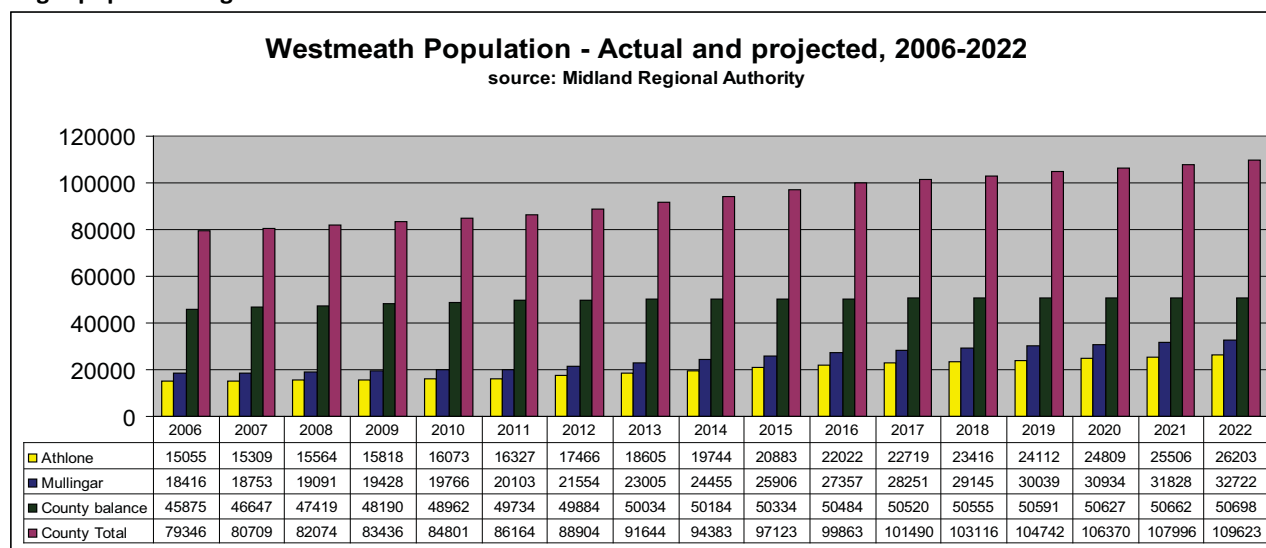
1.4.1 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands Region 2010 to 2022 (RPG's)

The 2010 – 2022 Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's) have set target populations for Westmeath, Mullingar and Athlone for 2016 and 2022. The RPGs state that the population target figures shall be reviewed in the 2016 RPG review and may be revised following the 2011 census. The target population of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 is based on the difference between the 2011 census population and the 2020 target population figures as set out in Table 1.1 below.

The Regional Planning Guidelines set out development policy within a 5 tiered Hierarchy of settlements set within 5 broad development areas, 3 of which are in Westmeath. These are the Central, Eastern and Northern Development areas. RPG Development Area policies affecting the Westmeath County Development Plan entail consolidation of settlements outside of the linked gateway with appropriate development to be channelled and concentrated towards the Linked Gateway.

1.4.2 Population Targets

Table 1.1: The difference between recorded 2011 census population figures and assigned Midland RPG 2020 target population figures.



Population target is distributed in RPG's between the gateways and the remainder of the County (county balance). 60% of the county balance as set out in Section 4.4 of RPG's for Midland Region is assigned to zoned lands with 40% assigned to unzoned lands.

1.4.3 County Development Plan and Regional Planning Guideline Settlement Hierarchies

2014-2020 Westmeath Development Plan Hierarchy is as follows:

Table 1.2: Westmeath County Development Plan Settlement Hierarchy.

LOCATION	PROPOSED 2020 HIERARCHY	2014- CDP
Mullingar Athlone	Linked Gateway town	
Castlepollard	Key service Town	
Moate Kilbeggan Kinnegad	Service Town	
Rochfortbridge Killucan/Rathwire Clonmellon Tyrrellspass	Local Service Town	
Delvin Coole, Multyfarnham, Ballymore, Ballynacarrigy, Raharney, Milltownpass, Collinstown, Glasson, Ballinalack, Rathowen Finnea, Ballinagore, Ballykeeran, Castletown-Geoghegan	Rural Centre	

The policy of the RPG's and how this relates to and has influenced the Draft County Development Plan policy is set out in the Core Strategy contained in Chapter 2 of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020.

1.5 Proposed Residential Zoning in 2008-2014 CDP and unit/population capacity

1.5.1 Quantum

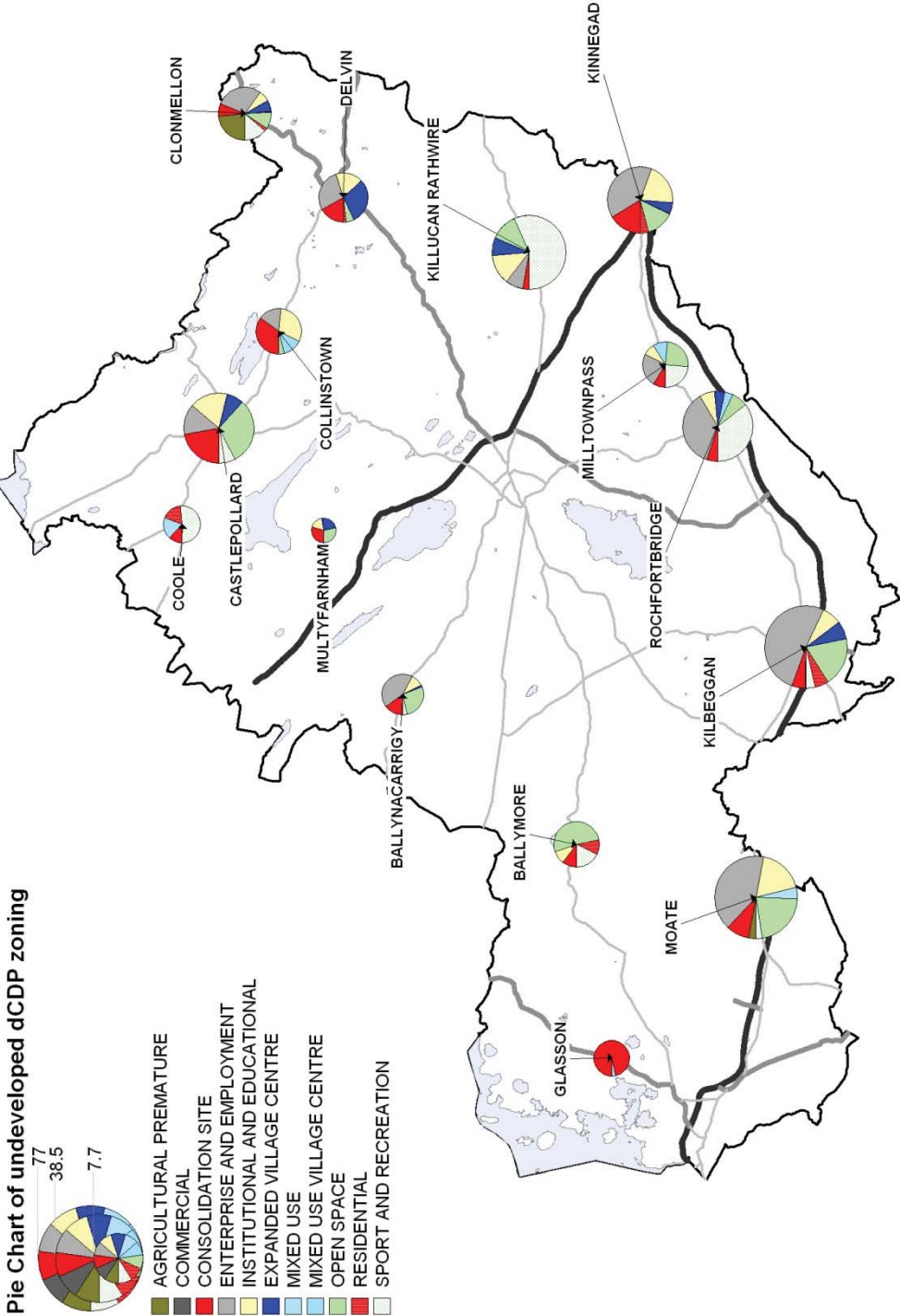
Table 1.3 below shows all land zoned in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 on which residential development is open for consideration or permitted, which remained undeveloped as of June 2012.

Table 1.3: Undeveloped Zoned land with potential housing yield

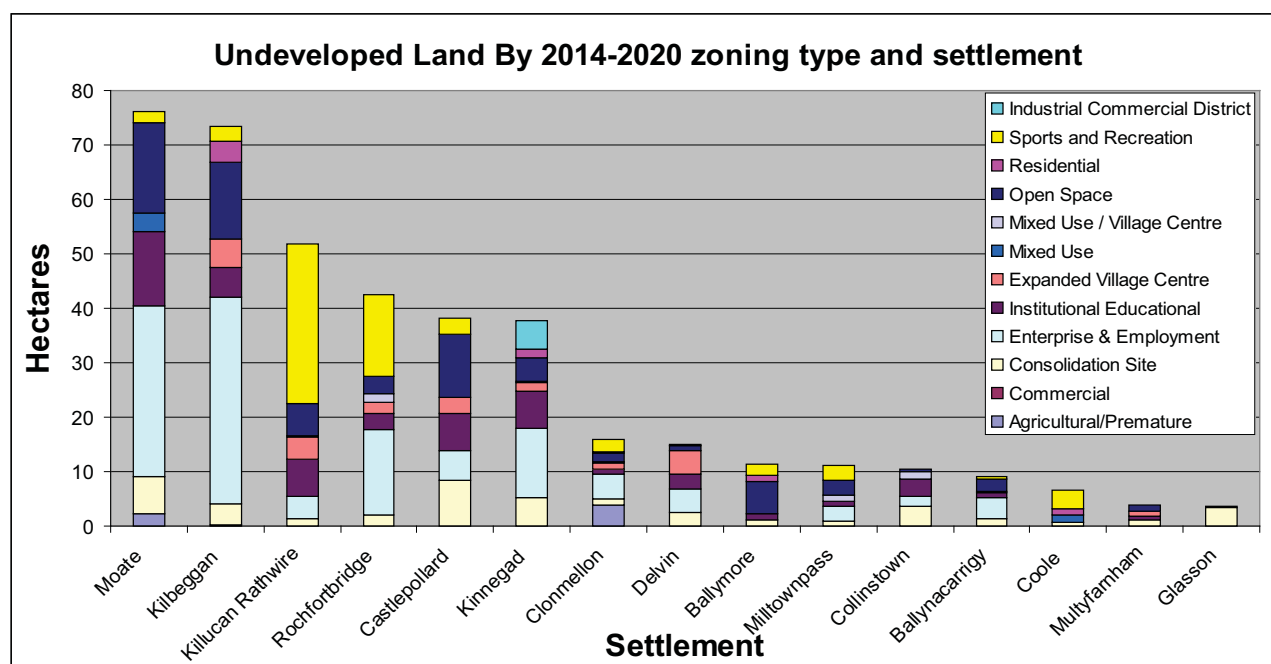
Zone type	Hectares undeveloped	Consideration of dwelling in Zoning policy
Opportunity site	47	Yes
Residential	8	Yes
Educational & Institutional	53	Open to consideration
Mixed use and EVC	32	Yes
Total	140	

1.5.2 Distribution

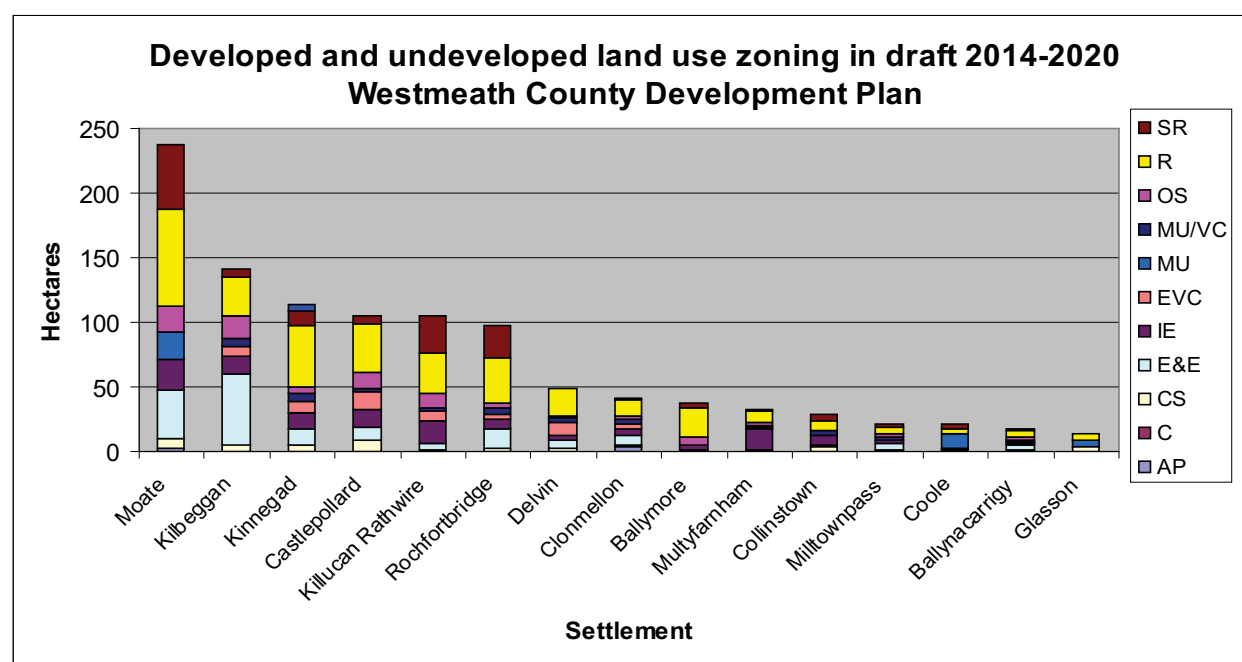
Distribution of Zoned Undeveloped lands in Draft County Development Plan 2014-2020



Map 1.3: Distribution of undeveloped lands within each settlement by zoning type



Graph 1.2: Distribution of Land use zoning objectives on un-developed lands in tier 2 to 5 of the Settlement Hierarchy of the 2014 DCDP (graph predates amendments to zoning in Glasston).



Graph 1.3: Land use objective by type tier 2-5 (graph predates amendments to zoning in Glasston).

1.6 Current Zoning for Employment

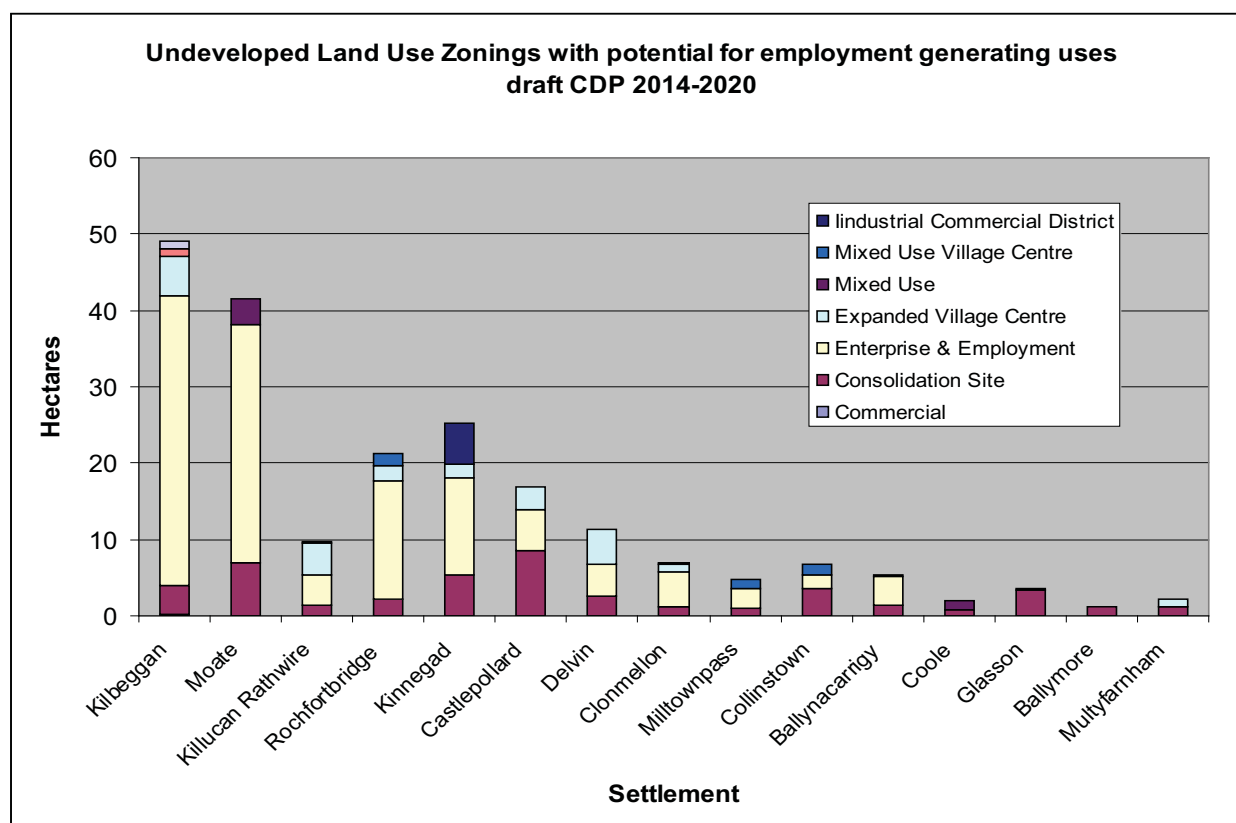
1.6.1 Quantum

Enterprise and Employment, Commercial and Light industrial zonings in the Draft Westmeath County Development plan 2014-2020 comprise a total of 156 HA across the county. In addition to this, a number of mixed use zoning types both in larger towns and in smaller rural settlements such as town and village centre zonings which would be envisaged as providing employment generating potential. Mixed use, village centre and associated zoned land with employment potential, constitutes 133 HA across the county.

1.6.2 Distribution

The spatial distribution of zonings for employment generating uses reflects the settlement hierarchy and the nature of the rural village and town network.

Land available for employment generating uses in hectares, determined by settlement aggregated by tier in hierarchy including lands already developed, serviced undeveloped land and unserviceable land are illustrated in graphs below.



Graph 1.4: Distribution of Zoning with employment generating potential by Settlement. (graph predates amendments to zoning in Glasson).

1.7 Infrastructural Capacity

Arising from the unprecedented increase in the population of Westmeath described in section 1.2.1 above and particularly the significant increase in urban population, the environmental supporting services (green infrastructure), in Westmeath has been placed under unprecedented pressure. The capacity of the infrastructure and receiving environment along with the competing needs and a renewed focus on protecting habitats and species has presented challenges for the drafting, making and implementing spatial policy for Westmeath.

Arising from the recent adoption of the River Basin Management Plans for the Eastern and Shannon Basins, along with recent regulatory changes regarding surface water and urban waste water, infrastructural capacity issues are likely to have become more acute since the preparation, environmental assessment and adoption of the 2008-2014 Westmeath County Development Plan. In addition to consideration of the capacity of Waste Water Treatment Works, there is now an increased focus on the receiving waters. The assimilative capacity of receiving waters is now an increasingly significant consideration in the allocation of both capital investment in infrastructure and in the consideration of Spatial Settlement Policy.

The distribution of the available capacity of waste water treatment works along with detail linking the waste water treatment works to the River Basin Management Plans are set out in this report. Available capacity for additional loading of waste water treatment along with the measures of the River Basin Management Plans shall be a material consideration in the Strategic Environmental Assessment of both broader settlement policy and individual land use zoning objectives.

Westmeath contains significant natural resources not least its lakes, abstractions from a number of which (Lene, Owel, and Ree) are used for public water supply. Qualitative and quantitative issues, along with the competing demands of nature conservation, water quality and capital resource requirements are all factors which impact upon this finite resource.

1.8 Spatial and Environmental Policy Hierarchy Context of 2014-2020 County Development Plan

The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the proposed Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 has been informed and carried out in the context of the following Policies, Plans and Strategies as appropriate.

International

Water Framework Directive & associated Directives
 SEA Directive
 Floods Directive
 Groundwater Directive
 Habitats Directive
 Birds Directive
 Freshwater Fish Directive
 Shell fish Directive
 Drinking Water Directive
 Bathing Water Directive
 Environmental Impact Assessment Directive
 Seveso Directive
 Sewage Sludge Directive
 Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive
 Waste Framework Directive
 Nitrates Directive
 Soils Directive
 Air Quality Directives including Framework Directive
 National Emissions Ceiling Directive
 Environmental Noise Directive
 Climate Change Programme (ECCP II)
 IPPC Directive
 EU Reach Initiative
 European Landscape Convention
 UN Convention of Biological Diversity, 1992
 Kyoto Protocol
 Stockholm Convention
 Valetta Convention
 Ramsar Convention
 OSPAR Convention
 MARPOL Convention
 Granada Convention
 Gothenburg Strategy

National

National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012

Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland - The Energy Policy Framework 2007-2020

National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

National Development Plan 2007-2013

Transport 21

Smarter Travel

Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland (1997)

National Biodiversity Plan (2002)

Our Sustainable future – A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (DoECLG, 2012)

Guidance by DoECLG including those issued under Section 28 of Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010 as amended:

River Basin Management Planning, A practical Guide for Planning Authorities, June 2008

- Architectural Heritage Protection for Places of Worship
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (May 09) - Part 1
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (May 09) - Part 2
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines
- Design Standards for New Apartments
- Development Contribution Scheme for Planning Authorities - Circular PD 5/2007
- Development Contribution Scheme for Planning Authorities - Circular PD4/2003
- Development Management Guidelines -June 2007
- Development Plans Guidelines -June 2007
- Funfair Guidance
- Implementing Regional Planning Guidelines- Best Practice Guidance
- Implementation of new EPA Code of Practice on WasteWater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses - Circular PSSP1/10
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment
- Planning & Development(Amendment)(No2)Regulations 2011 - Circular PSSP 7/11
- Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 (Circular PPL 1/2010)
- Provision of Schools and the Planning System
- Quarries and Ancillary Activities
- Redevelopment of Certain Lands in the Dublin area primarily for Affordable Housing
- Retail Planning Guidelines (April 2012)
- Retail Design Manual (April 2012)
- Rural Housing Policies and Local Need Criteria in Development Plans - Circular Letter SP/5/08
- Section 261A of Planning & Development Act 2000 Guidelines (January 2012)
- Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (Jan 2012)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Sustainable Rural Housing Development Guidelines
- Sustainable Rural Housing Development Guidelines - Map
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (May 09)
- Taking in Charge of Housing Estates / Management Companies
- Taking in Charge of Residential Developments Circular Letter PD 1/08
- Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Local Authorities (Nov 09)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Technical Appendices (Nov 09)
- Tree Preservation Guidelines
- Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations - Circular PD 7/09
- Wind Energy Development
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities
- Guidance for Planning Authorities on Drainage and Reclamation of Wetlands – draft

Regional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010-2022 Midlands Waste Management Plan 2005-2010 (current status unclear particularly with regard to SEA and AA). Eastern River Basin District River Basin Management Plan 2009 – 2015 Shannon International River Basin Management Plan 2009-2015 Catchment Flood Risk Assessment & Management Programme 	
Local	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 Westmeath Local Authorities Retail Strategy 2007 Westmeath Rural Design Guidelines 2005 inc Addendum 2008 Westmeath Housing Strategy 2008-2014 Westmeath Groundwater Protection Schemes Local Area Plans Heritage Plan 	

1.9 Environmental Baseline Data Sources

The sources of Baseline data are set out in Section 2 of this Environmental Report.

Source Name	Date of Publication	Author
Water Management Unit Action Plans for ShIRBMP		
River Basin Management Plan for ERBD	2010	Adopted by Local Authorities and submitted to Europe
EPA Licences for Waste Water Treatment Plants	Various	EPA/ Westmeath County Council
Census data	1991, 1996, 2002, 2006, 2011	CSO
Geodirectory	Quarterly releases 2003-2012	An Post
EIS for the Lough Ennell Water Abstraction (supply to Royal Canal) PL25 .PW3005	August 2011	RPS Group/ Westmeath County Council
The Draft River Basin Management Plans, National summary Programme of Measures	December 2008	ESB International/Western river basin district
Eastern River Basin District Project titled Abstractions-National POM/Standards study revised risk assessment methodology for surface water abstractions from Lakes	January 2009	CDM/ Eastern river Basin district.
ABP, Inspector's Report, File Reference: 25.PW.3001.	September 2007	ABP.
European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations 2007 Drinking Water Monitoring Program 2010 & Sampling	2010	Water Services Westmeath County Council

Manual		
Environmental Report for Collinstown Draft Local Area Plan	March 2005	Emmett McMahon Ph.D. David Kelly M.Sc.
Further detail is provided in this regard under the headings set out in Section 2 of this document		

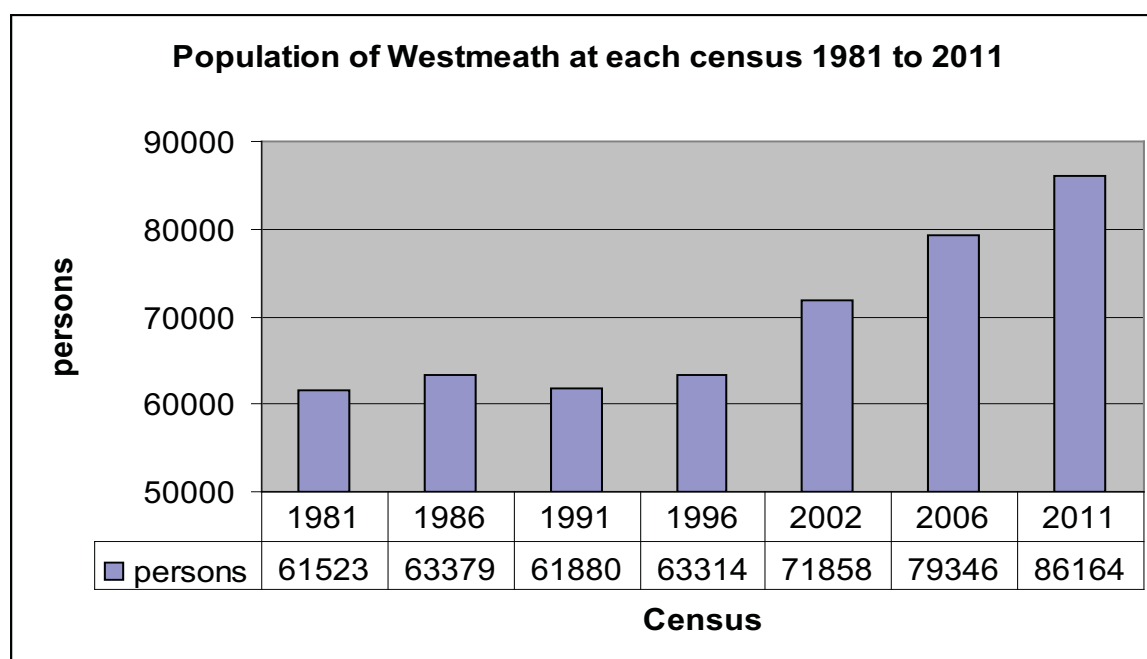
2 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES RELATING TO THE 2014-2020 WESTMEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2.1 Introduction to Section 2

It is intended that this section of the Environmental Report shall fulfil the requirements of the following sub sections of Schedule 2B of the SEA Directive (b) (c) (d) along with a broad over view of subsection (f).

2.2 Population Baseline

Westmeath has been through a period of significant change in recent decades with a population increase of almost 40% over the thirty year period from 1981 to 2011 this has had the effect of placing many of the social, infrastructural and environmental assets of the county under significant pressure.



Graph 2.1: Census population figures for Westmeath (1981-2011) (source CSO)

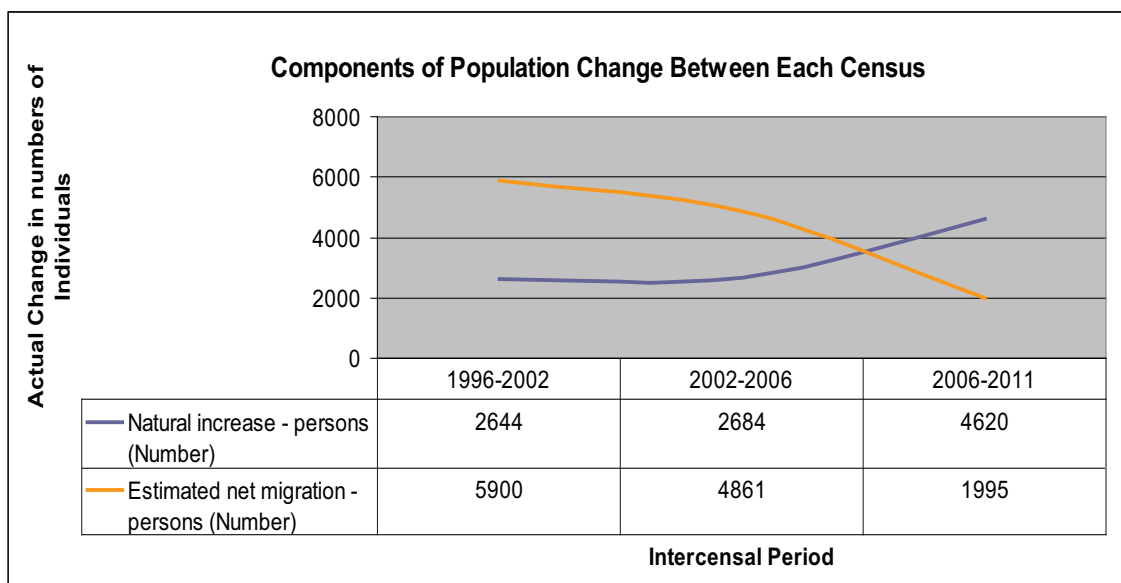
This population growth of 40% in the last 30 years has been matched by an increase the number of private households in permanent housing units with 49% of all houses in Westmeath built in that period.

Occupancy rates in Westmeath have changed significantly in recent decades with the highest being an average of 4.2 persons per rural private household in 1971 to the lowest average occupancy of 2.6 in urban households in 2011.

The components of population change are comprised of natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration (in migration minus out migration). The recent trends in this regard are set out in Graph 2.2 below.

Analysis of the components of population change suggests that housing requirement in recent years arising from inward migration (primarily adults) may not be reliably extrapolated into the future.

The most significant element of population increase is now, and is likely to continue to be attributed to natural increase. Between 2002 and 2006 natural increase accounted for 35% of the actual increase in population recorded as against 69.8% between 2006 and 2011.



Graph 2.2: Components of population change in Westmeath

2.2.1 Distribution

Distribution of the population increase across the county in both the urban and rural areas has not been even, nor has it necessarily been in accordance with the built or natural environmental carrying capacity of the areas in which it has occurred.

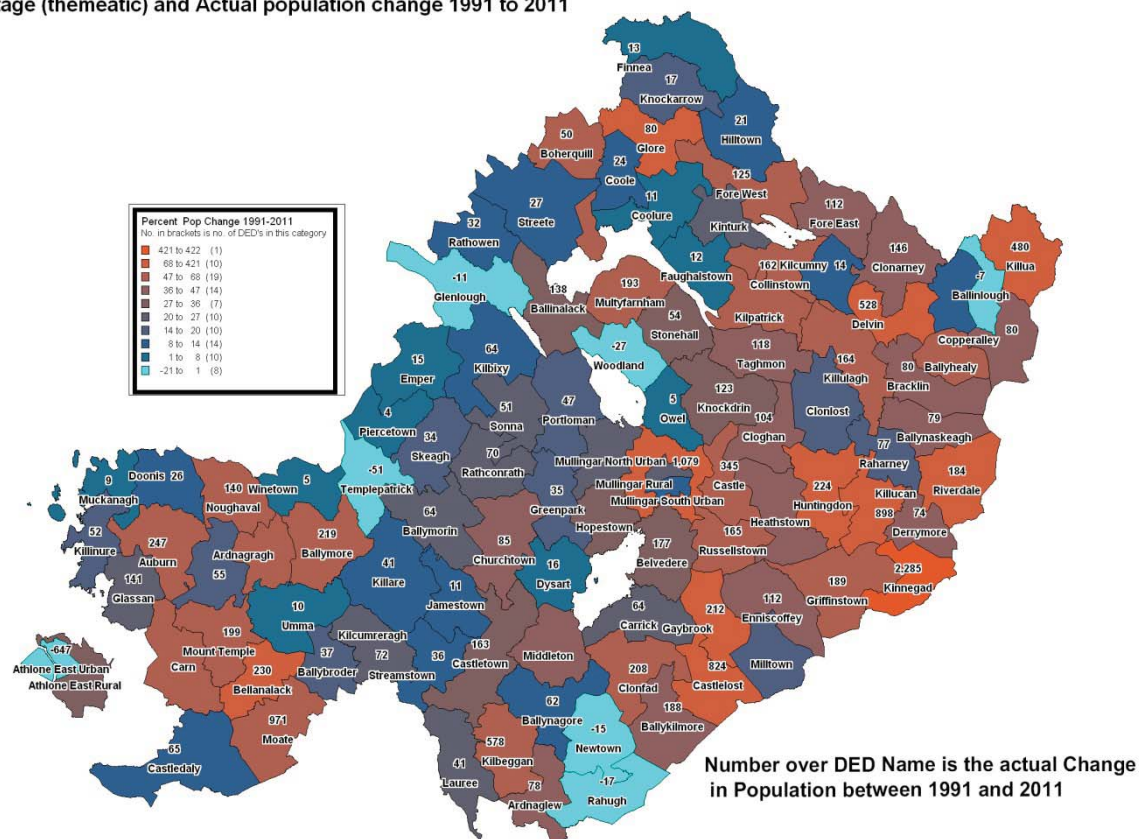
The distribution of the population increase in recent decades indicates a slight tendency towards urbanisation of the county with the proportion of the population recorded in rural areas as 58% in 1991 and 51% in 2011 with two thirds of the total population increase in Westmeath in this 20 year period being in the aggregated town areas:

On analysis of population changes 1991-2011 by DED the most dramatic increase has been in the Kinnegad DED with a population increase of 421% over this 20 year period.

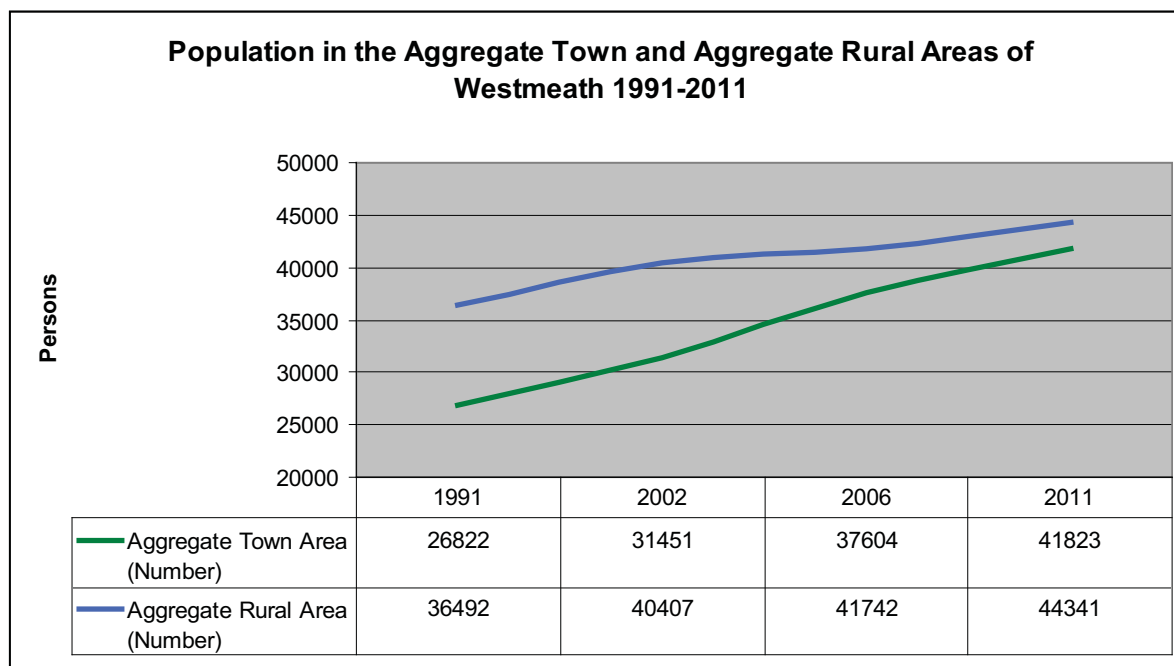
The distribution of development remains of concern. Since the publication of the National Spatial Strategy in 2002, which sought to focus development on the gateways, seeking to reduce the influence of the Greater Dublin Area, there is little evidence on analysis that policy implementation has succeeded in its goal as can be seen in Map 2.2 below.

There was a total reduction of 128 persons over the 20 years within the 6 rural DED's which experienced a population reduction in Westmeath. One of these 6 DED's is designated as a Structurally Weak Rural Area in the 2008-2014 Westmeath County Development Plan.

Percentage (thematic) and Actual population change 1991 to 2011



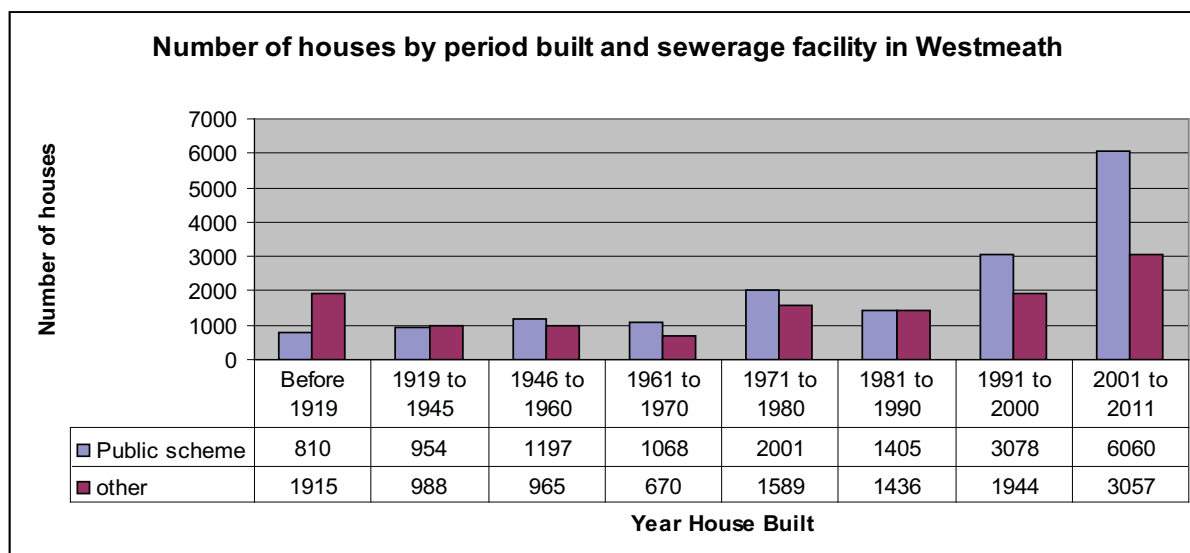
Map 2.1: Percentage (thematic) and Actual population change 1991 to 2011



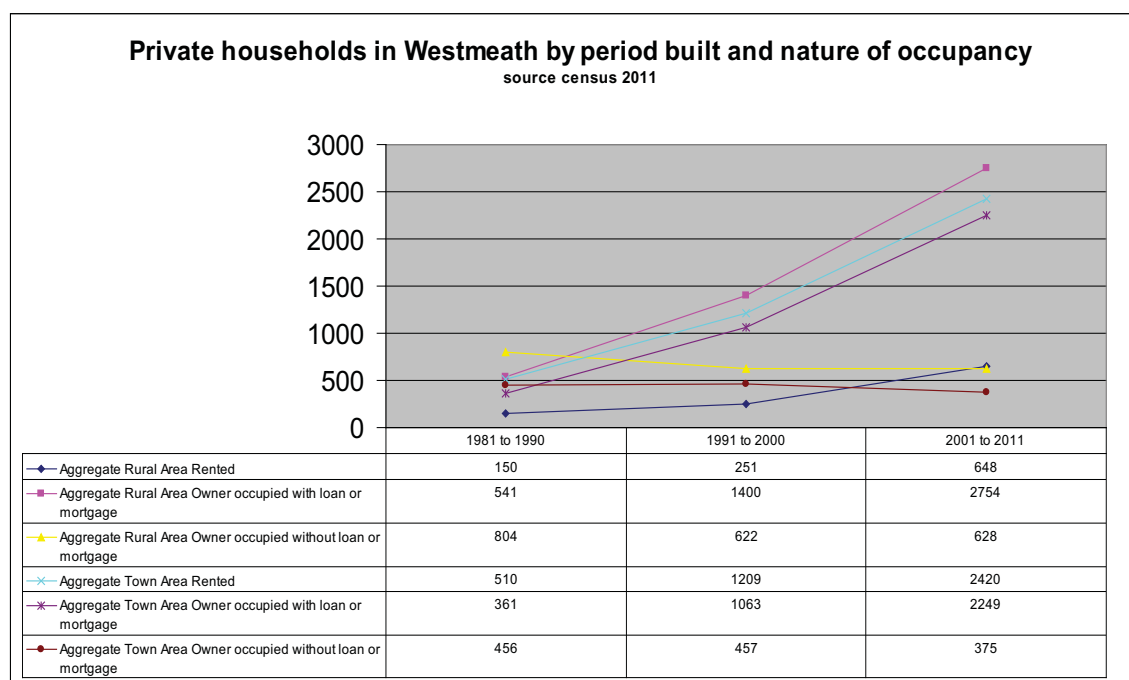
Graph 2.3: Population in the Aggregate Town and Aggregate Rural Areas of Westmeath 1991-2011

The distribution of growth in Westmeath Settlements has been uneven with evidence of the growth being development led as opposed to being facilitated in accordance with NSS and RPG's. Map 2.2 was produced by grouping Geodirectory delivery addresses within the 2008 zonings according to those which were entered before and those which were entered after February 2002, thereby giving an indication the proportionality of growth in each settlement in the last decade.

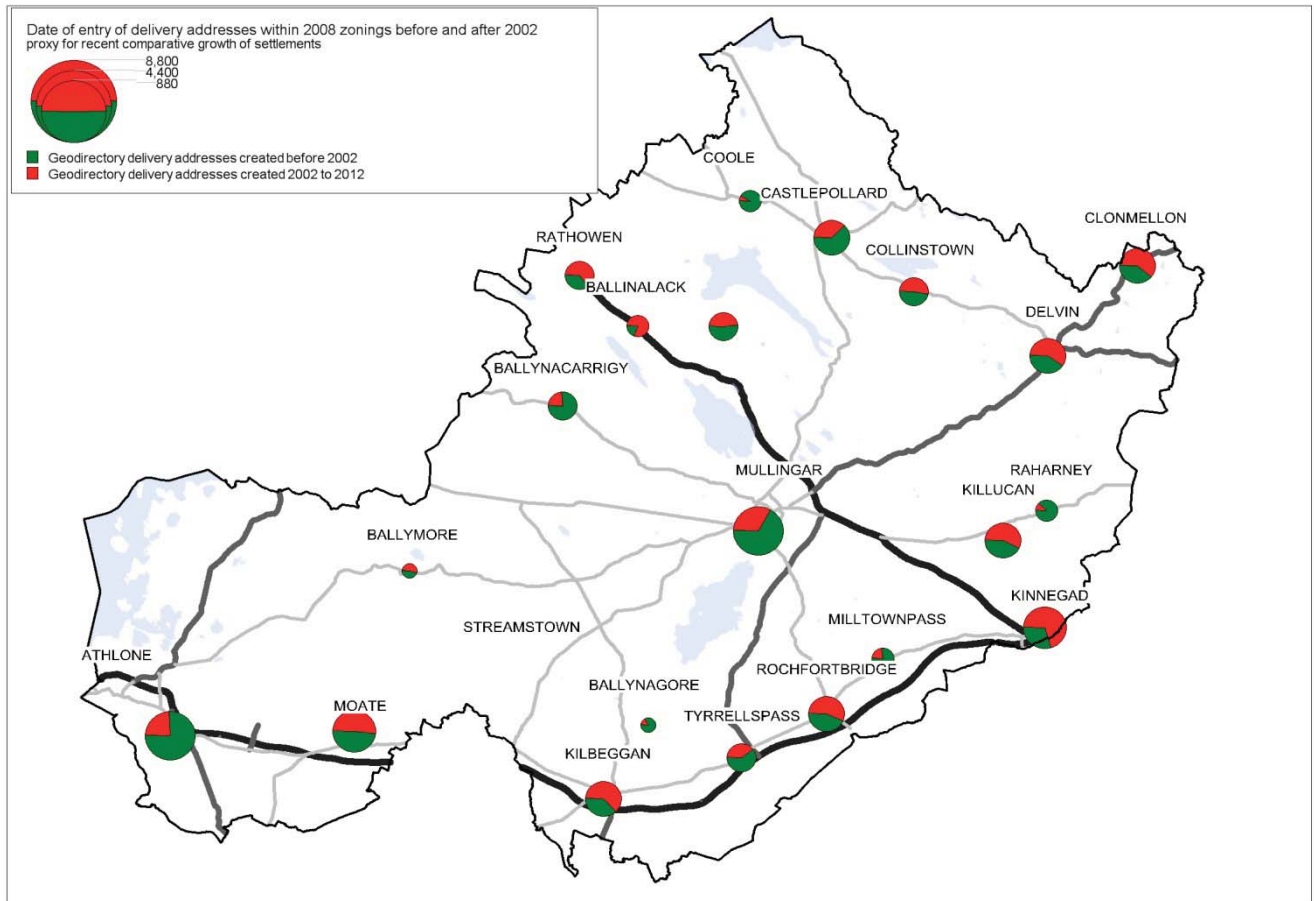
Taking sewerage facility as a proxy for urban/rural development Graph 2.4 below shows the historical trend and likely future scenario regarding rural development trends. The nature of the occupancy of aggregate rural and urban houses is set out in Graph 2.5.



Graph 2.4: Number of Houses by period built and Sewerage facility in Westmeath (source census 2011)

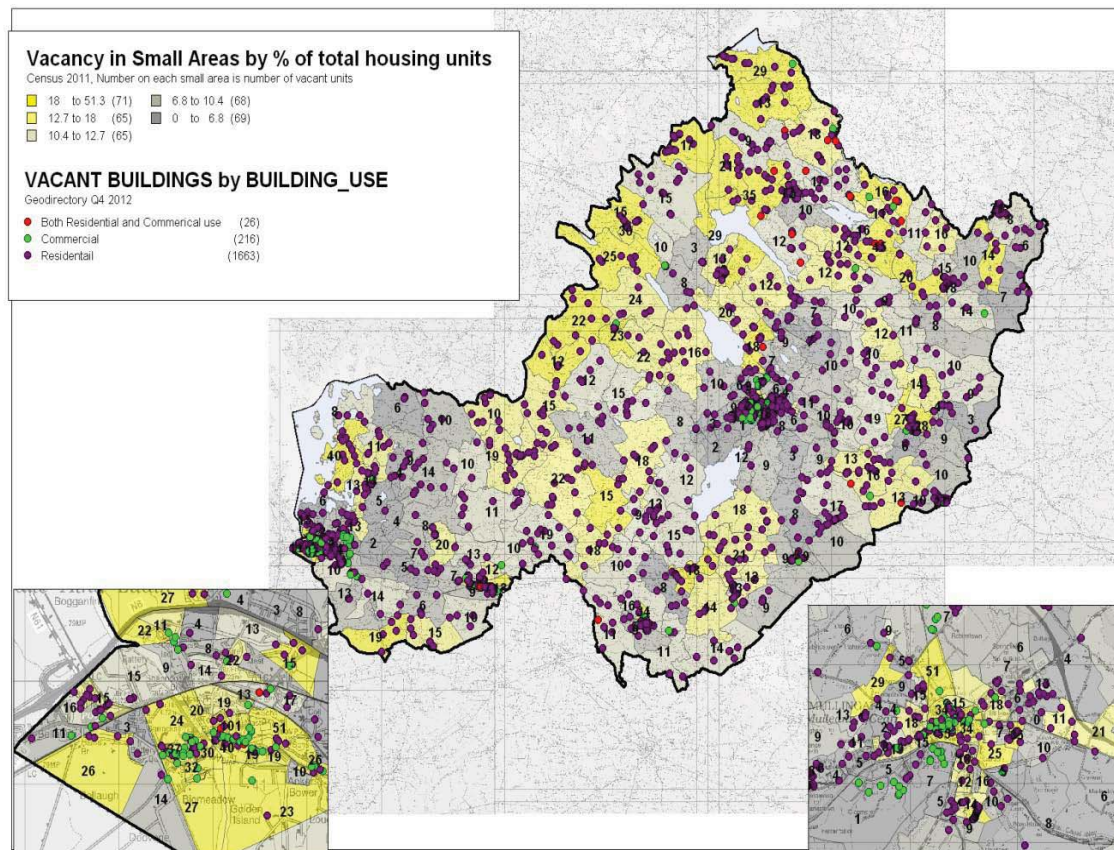


Graph 2.5: Private Households in Co. Westmeath by period built and nature of occupancy



Map 2.2: Proportion of Geo Directory Delivery Addresses before 2002 and between 2002 and 2012 in each settlement

One of the consequences of the dramatic increase in housing stock set out above, its distribution and the distribution of the population increase across the county can be seen in the following map generated from 2011 Census results, showing percentage of vacancy in small areas. The darker the Yellow, the higher the percentage of vacant dwellings as recorded in Census 2011. The numbers relating to each area are the actual numbers of houses in that area found to be vacant in Census 2011. The total number of houses recorded as vacant in Census 2011 in Westmeath was 4,291 with the unoccupied number on census night at 5,769.



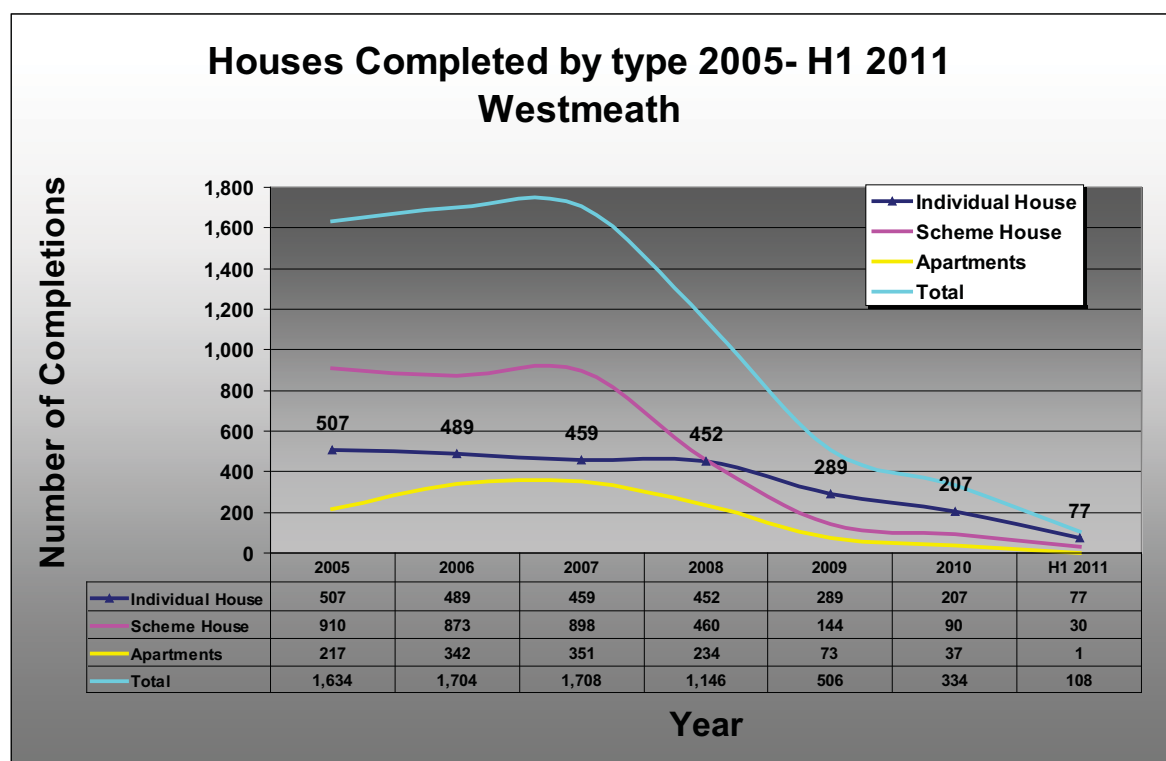
Map 2.3: Vacancy in CSO defined Small Areas by % of total housing and building use (source census 2011 and geodirectory Q4 2012)

The economic conditions which have prevailed in recent years have had a significant impact on population and development trends in Westmeath.

The Economic downturn has had the effect of reducing impacts on the Environment in that the pace of Development has decreased. Given the economic uncertainty which is prevailing during the preparation of the County Development Plan it is difficult to forecast development trends over the plan period. Notwithstanding the uncertainty regarding future economic recovery and potential development scenarios, this Environmental Report and the assessment of development plan policy in the course of conducting the assessment shall be, and can only be based on the unrealistic assumption of full implementation of development plan policy.

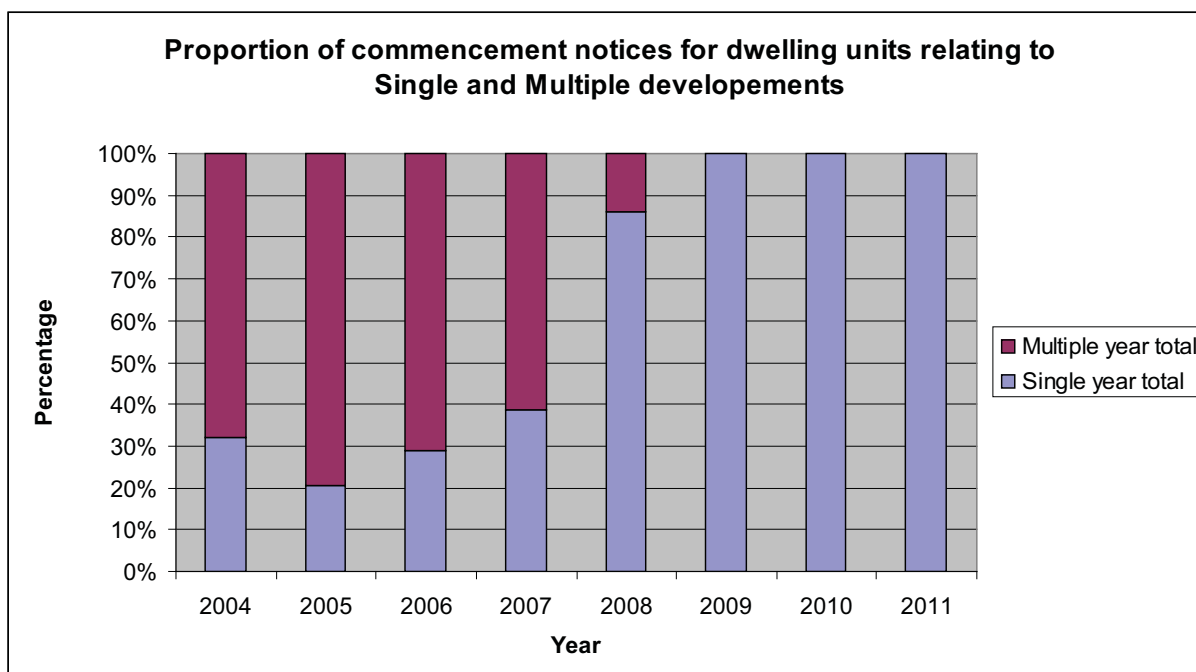
2.2.2 Significant Environmental Issues

The most significant issues pertaining to SEA and population relate to population distribution and variability of environmental carrying capacity across the county. For the purposes of this consideration the most significant environmental carrying capacity impacts on resources relate to water supply and waste water disposal. These issues relate to both urban and rural development and are dealt with in further detail below, however trends from population distribution perspective are set out below in Graph 2.6 and 2.7



Graph 2.6: House Completions by type 2005 – 2011 (Source DoEHLG/DoECLG)

Graph 2.6 above demonstrates that individual houses as a proportion of overall housing completions in Westmeath has progressed from 35% in 2005 to 62% in 2010 and 71% for the first half of 2011.



Graph 2.7: Commencement Notices for dwelling units 2004-2011

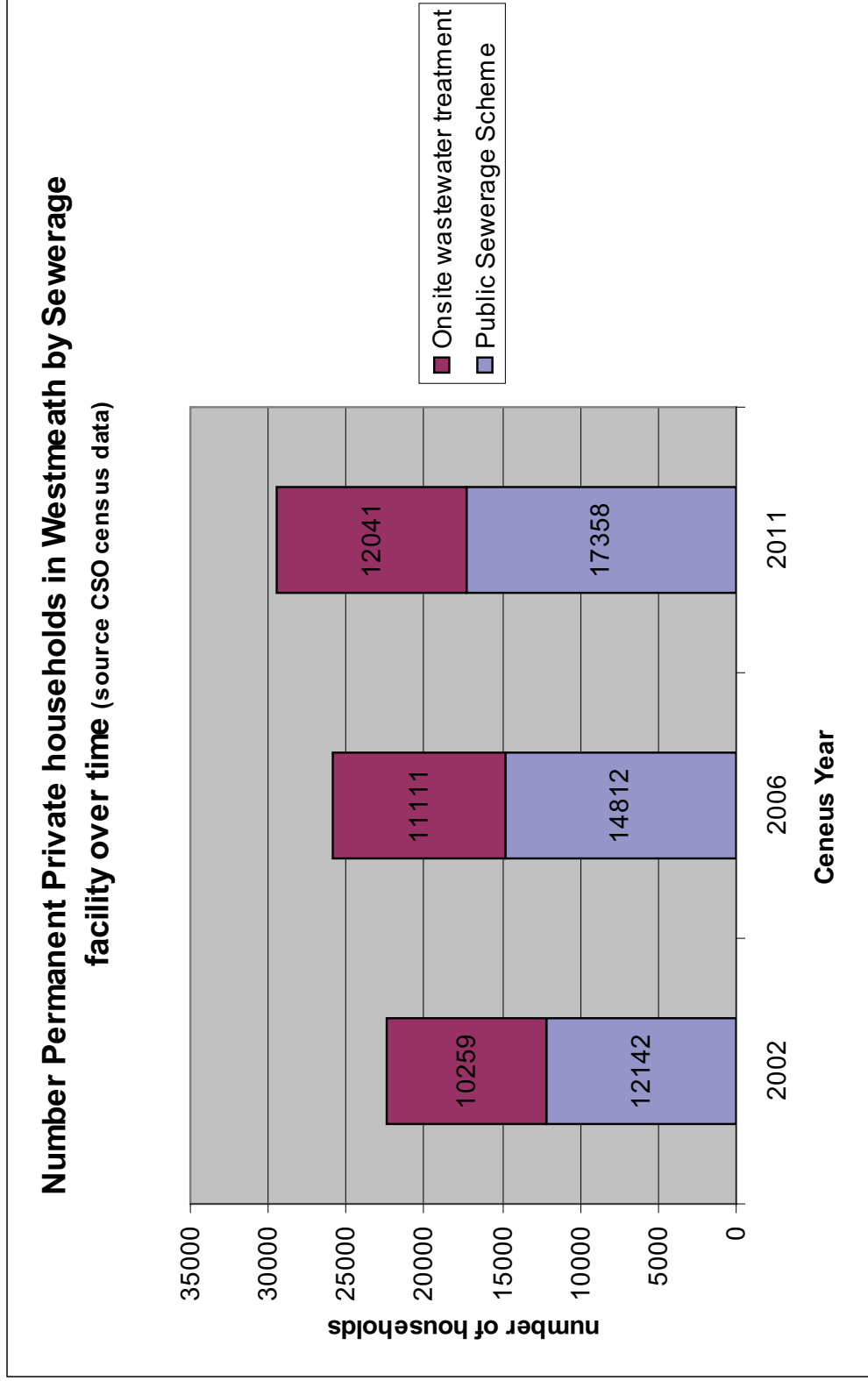
2.3 Water Infrastructure and Quality

2.3.1 Waste Water Treatment

ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE HEADING	COMMENT	SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
Current capacity and level of treatment	See Table 2.1 below for summary of capacities and loadings. Further data has been sourced in EPA license inspectors' reports and is dealt with in the consideration of development policies and objectives in matrices for each settlement.	Capacity of water courses and Wastewater Treatment infrastructure is of critical importance in the consideration of both high level settlement hierarchy considerations and in the consideration of individual land use zoning objectives. Concerns have been highlighted in relation to a number of waste water treatment plants in Westmeath in the WWDA reports and the Water Management Units (WMU) of the River Basin Management Plans.
Predicted future capacity and predicted future requirement	<p>The Core Strategy within the proposed Draft CDP sets out a spatial framework and quantifies future development potential for various locations in the county as provided for in the policies and objectives of the draft plan.</p> <p>The predicted future capacity of a given Wastewater Treatment Plant is related to complex interactions between economic, environmental and spatial policy considerations in determining priorities for capital expenditure</p> <p>On commencement of S. 36 of the Water Services Act 2007 a water services strategic plan shall be required to take account of national, regional and local spatial policy along with environmental considerations in a more coordinated manner than currently possible.</p>	<p>The predicted future capacity can only be based on the opinion of a competent person on an assessment of the practicalities, environmental considerations, likely expense and the reasonable expectation of investment in wastewater treatment infrastructure in particular agglomerations.</p> <p>Other than exceptional cases it is considered that policy and objectives for further development and consequent loading of existing Wastewater Treatment Plants be limited to the capacity remaining between the design capacity P.E and the estimated average loadings taking WWDA's and the WMU measures and supporting key actions taken into account.</p> <p>The preparation of a Water Services Strategic Plan as set out in Section 36 of the Water Services Act 2007 would assist greatly in the resolution of the various considerations regarding spatial policy in this regard.</p>

ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE HEADING	COMMENT	SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
Onsite waste water treatment	Baseline data has been prepared through use of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential delivery points outside serviced areas. Groundwater vulnerability by GSI available Census 2011 	The number and distribution of onsite waste water treatment systems with regard to vulnerability of the receptor, density of treatment systems, clustering, age of the systems, design and construction represent a significant environmental issue for Westmeath, with implications on groundwater, human health, GWDTE's and surface water bodies. The significance of this issue from a Local Government administration perspective is emphasised further the recent ECJ ruling in this regard.
Performance of existing treatment plant(s)	Detail can be collated from inspectors reports on EPA licenses It is proposed to deal with the specifics of each plant in the consideration of the settlement and only generally in the consideration of wastewater treatment generally.	The performance of existing on site waste water treatment systems represents a parameter beyond the scope of this Environmental Report. The Performance of the existing Municipal plants is dealt with in summary on a settlement by settlement basis in section 2.19 below.
Scheduled phasing of upgrading/construction	Requirements of EPA licenses for upgrading/construction shall be set out in the analysis of the environmental carrying capacity of each settlement and establishing environmental baseline and significant issues.	The WWDA's issued for existing WWTP's in Westmeath include conditions relating to works and other improvements required, these shall be discussed where significant in Section 2.19 below.
Monitoring/maintenance	Annual Environmental reporting requirements conditioned in the WWDA licences by EPA along with the reporting on the River Basin Management Plans shall form the basis of monitoring.	Where works are required by licenses under the Waste Water discharge Authorisation, and there is no prospect of funds to carry out the works this is likely to be considered a significant environmental issue.
Proposals to link with existing treatment plants	Proposals to link unserviced development to waste water treatment plants is beyond the scope an resources available to this Environmental report.	No proposal
Existing problems – surface/groundwater quality	Status, and risk of not achieving good status by 2015 data from the RBMP's	National septic tank inspection program proposed which will be a risk based. Policy in relation to accumulation of septic tanks in

ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE HEADING	COMMENT	SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
	Ribbon and excessive density of on-site WWTS in areas of ground water vulnerability shall be examined in ER.	known areas of groundwater vulnerability recommended.
Foul drainage/surface drainage - linked/separate	Information from environmental and water services sections of Westmeath Co Co along with detail from EPA WWDA licences shall be used to identify locations where issues exist in the assessment of individual settlement plans.	The combined drainage system that is present in all settlements is a challenge and impacts on waste water treatment capacity.
Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS)	An objective was contained in the 2008-2014 Plan with regard to the provision of SUDS.	
Storm water storage	Information from environmental and water services sections of Westmeath Co Co along with detail from EPA WWDA licences shall be used to identify locations where issues exist in the assessment of individual settlement plans.	



Graph 2.8: Number of permanent private households in Westmeath classified by sewerage scheme

2.3.2 Baseline

Current Capacity and level of treatment conflicts have been identified in the course of conducting the SEA.

2.3.3 Distribution of Treatment Capacity and Environmental Carrying Capacity

The receiving environment for the municipal waste water treatment plants has been examined in at least 2 apparently separate processes, in drafting the River Basin Management Plans and separately in the preparation of material for authorisation of the waste water discharge applications to the EPA.

At the time of preparation concerns were expressed in a number of the Water Management Unit Action Plans with regard to the capacity of the water course to assimilate the existing and proposed discharges. It is proposed to address the environmental carrying capacity of each of the settlements listed in the Table above in the consideration of WFD in Section 2.3.9 and relevant settlements in Section 4.2.4 of this report and assessment Matrices for each settlement in Appendix 1.

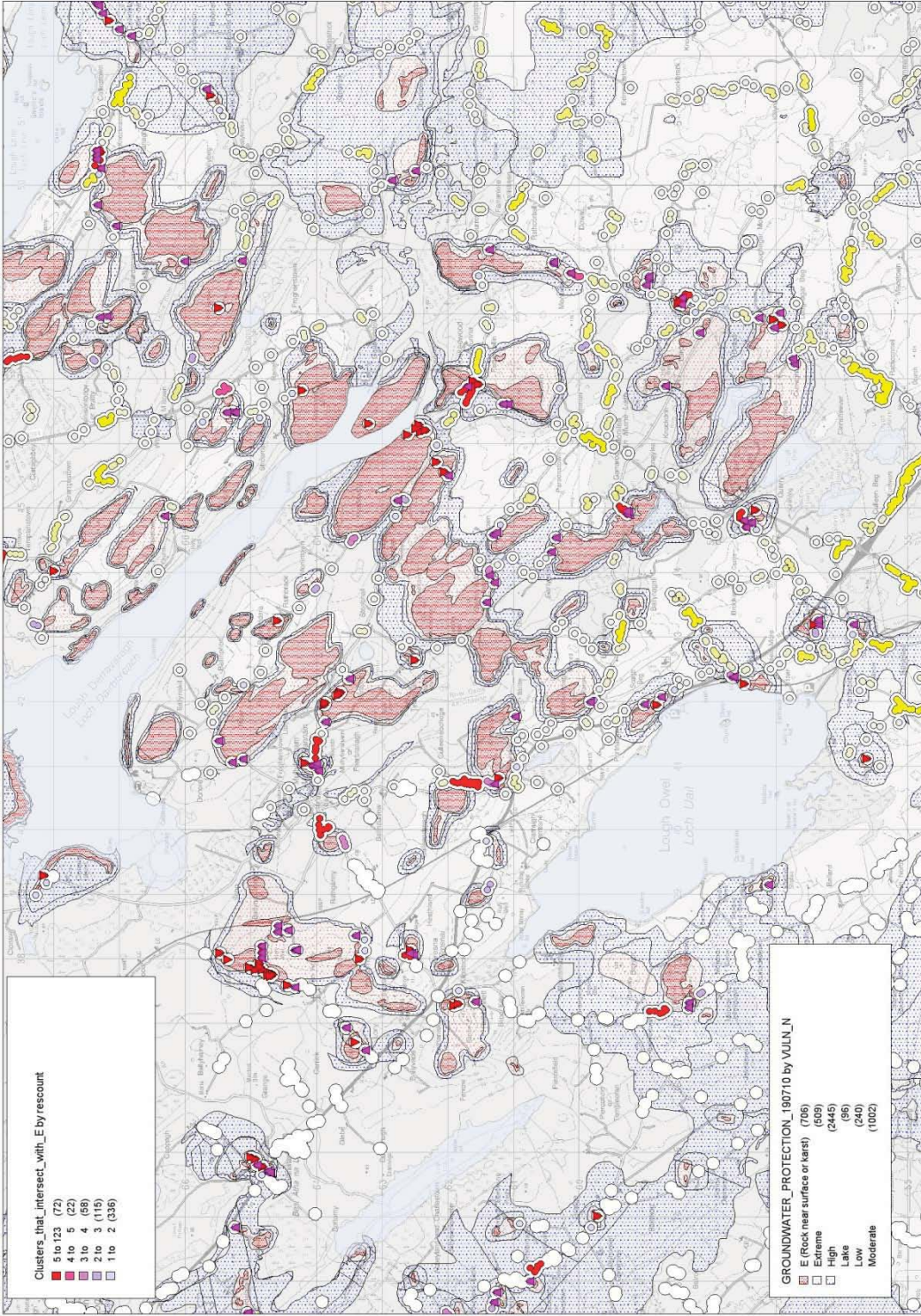
Having regard to Sections 42 and 43 of the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007, and the constraints imposed on Westmeath Council and An Bord Pleanála with regard to considering permission, an appeal or an application for approval under Section 34, 37, 37E, 175 or 226 of the Planning and Development Acts of 2000 - 2010 as amended for development being development which involves the disposal of waste water to a waste water works, or is considering such a development under Section 179 of the Act of the Planning Authority or the Board, as the case may be, shall consider whether the discharge of waste water from the proposed development, in conjunction with existing discharges to the receiving waters, would cause non-compliance with the combined approach or, in situations where there is existing non-compliance, would result in a significant breach of the combined approach.

Having regard to the above and to section 4.16 of the Guidelines for Planning Authorities No. 15 issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010 as amended in June 2007. It is unreasonable to consider the zoning of lands where services are not available and there is no reasonable expectation within a reasonable time frame.

2.3.4 On-site waste water treatment

The 2006 and 2011 Census data with regard to sewerage facility for Westmeath are as follows:

- The combined total of on-site waste water treatment systems recorded in the 2011 Census is 12,041 up by 1,017 from the 2006 census, there were an additional 765 between the 2002 and 2006 census a 17% increase in the period between 2002 and 2011.
- 34,919 persons in Westmeath are served by on site Waste water treatment based on the average occupancy in rural Westmeath recorded at 2.9 persons per unit in Census 2011 this presents a significant risk of pollution particularly in instances where the on site waste water treatment systems are either an or poorly sited, designed, installed or maintained.



Map 2.4: Extract from map north of Lough Owel showing Clusters of on site waste water treatment systems which intersect with areas where groundwater has been identified as extremely vulnerable.

2.3.5 Significant Environmental Issues for Onsite Waste Water treatment

The Baseline information for onsite waste water treatment is extremely limited.

Baseline data for Groundwater condition in Westmeath is extremely limited with EPA testing carried out in only one location, groundwater was found to be in poor condition in this location (Multyfarnham).

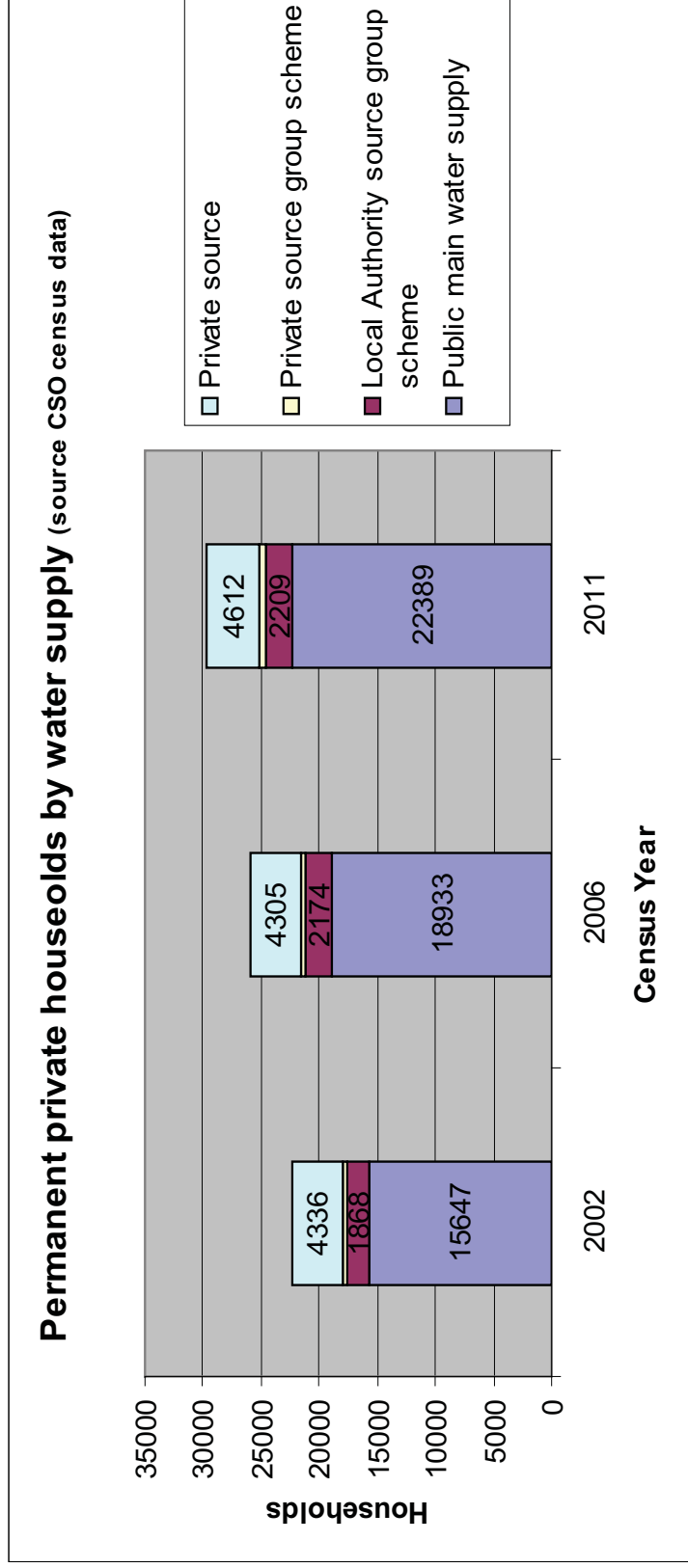
There are many clusters of residential development in areas which are unsewered, with onsite waste water treatment systems of varying age and condition. Applying the Source –path – receptor model, areas identified as being at a higher risk of pollution from on site waste water treatment can be identified due to vulnerability of groundwater, and proximity to surface water bodies, these systems should be prioritised for inspection.

2.3.6 Water Supply

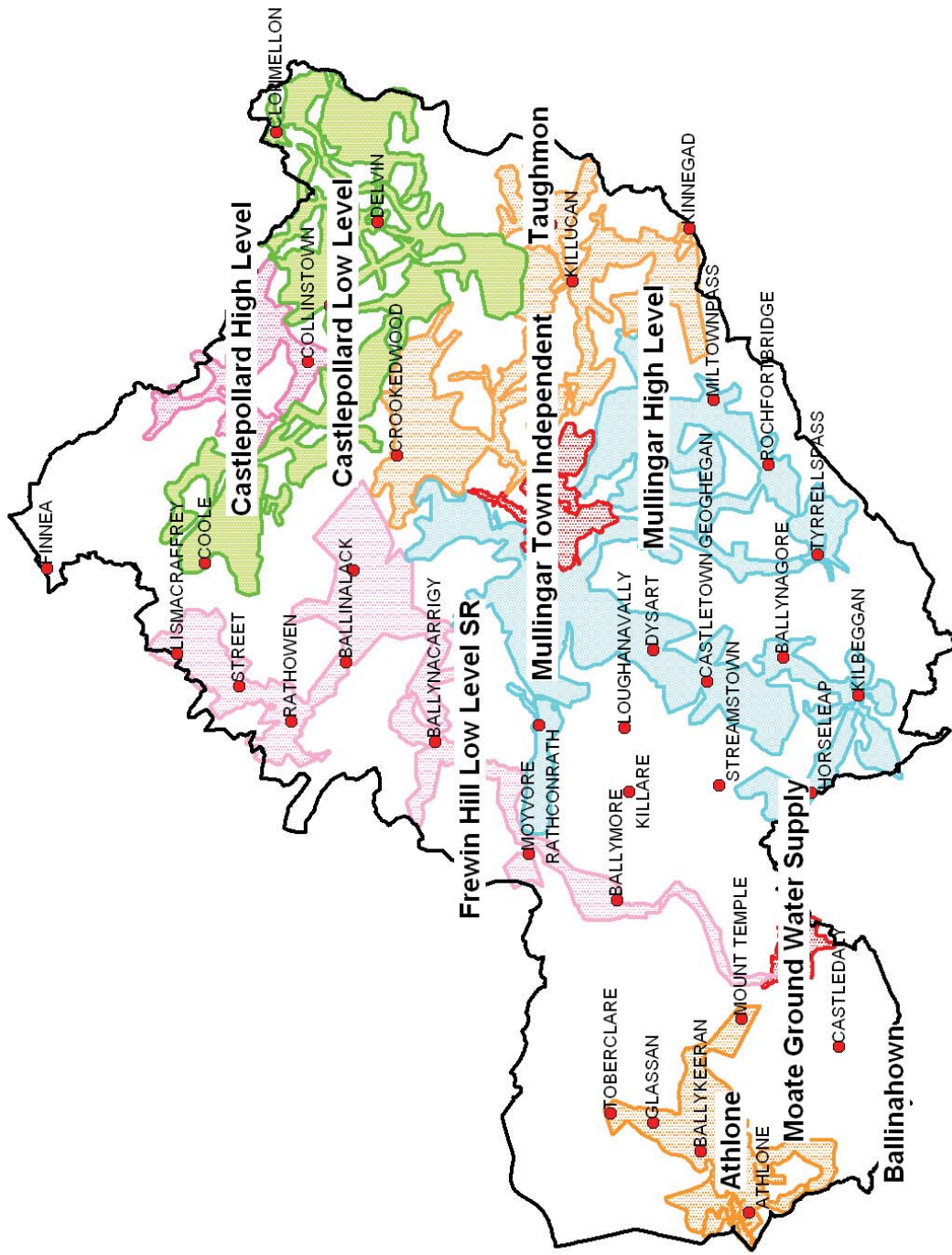
Environmental heading	Baseline	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Source(s) – surface water/groundwater		Westmeath County Council is responsible for the operation of 14 Public Water Supplies (PWS) Surface water is abstracted from Lough Owel, Lough Lene, River Shannon, and groundwater is abstracted in Moate.	Of the 4 current drinking water abstractions 3 are from Natura 2000 sites, an abstraction limit of 22.7MLD has been determined for Lough Owel. No abstraction limit has been determined for Lough Lene. The potential for increased abstraction to impact on the Natura Site has been acknowledged in NPWS publications for both Lough Owel and Lough Lene.
Adequacy of supply		Set out below	No data or reports have been identified that current supply rates are inadequate to meet current demand
Existing capacity and level of treatment		The reported infrastructural limit of the treatment plants are as follows: Lough Owel – 22 MLD Lough Lene – 6.8 MLD River Shannon – 13.6 MLD Moate – 1.4 MLD	Census data shows the following numbers of units supplied by public sources in Westmeath 2002 - 17,515 2006 - 21,107 2011 – 24,598 Shifting patterns of water consumption, occupancy and water conservation measures will have a bearing on how these housing unit numbers relate to volumes of water abstracted and supplied. However the figures above indicate a 40% increase in units served by public sources since 2002

Environmental heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
		<p>which it is assumed to have had a significant impact on abstraction rates.</p> <p>No significant issues have been identified regarding existing level of treatment.</p>
<p>Predicted future capacity and predicted future requirement</p>	<p>There is a proposed abstraction at Killinure Lough with an approved abstraction limit of 40.9 Mega Litres per Day, to supply Athlone and south Westmeath however the construction has yet to be funded. This supply scheme remains under consideration whilst details of the Dublin supply scheme are determined.</p> <p>A target requirement is to serve an additional population of 11,987 by 2020 in accordance with RPG targets with 5,065 of that additional population in Athlone and 6,479 in Mullingar along with an additional allocation for commercial and particularly employment generating uses.</p>	<p>The Draft 2014-2020 Westmeath County Development Plan makes provision for an increase in housing units of 4885(excluding Athlone), if all of these were to be supplied by public water sources this would represent an increase of 20% on the number of unit served by public sources identified in the 2011 Census.</p> <p>The relationship between the demand and supply capacity needs to be considered.</p>
<p>Existing problems – surface/groundwater quality</p>	<p>The conclusions of the Water Quality Survey of Lough Owel Jan-Dec 2011 (Aquatic Services Unit) were positive with regard to water quality it is noted that the water quality was slightly better compared to 2010, that blue green algae groups still require continuous monitoring and that special vigilance should be maintained with regard to potential sources of diffuse nutrient run off in the catchment.</p> <p>The conclusions of the Water Quality Survey of Lough Lene were positive and contains a recommendation that monitoring of Blue Green algae needs to be continued.</p> <p>The 2011 trophic status of Lough Owel was considered to be bordering mesotrophic and oligotrophic and Lough Lene was considered to be Oligo- to mesotrophic.</p>	<p>Potential sources of diffuse nutrient run-off in the catchment of Lough Owel are considered to be a significant environmental issue which include on site waste water treatments systems however Zones of Contribution have not been defined to provide for a policy response in this regard.</p> <p>Quantitative issues with regard to both Lough Owel and Lough Lene are set out below.</p>

Environmental heading	Baseline	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Percentage water loss through infrastructure		Q1 2012 Unaccounted for Water (UFW) rate for Westmeath is 42%.	Where concerns exist regarding the volume of abstraction from Lough Owel and Lough Lene the volume of unaccounted for water must be a consideration in that regard.
Protection of significant water bodies from pollution		RBMP measures discussed under the WFD river Basin District heading below.	



Graph 2.9: Number of Permanent Private Households in Westmeath classified by water supply type



Map 2.5: Westmeath Water Supply Schemes colour coded.

Quantitative Baseline

Westmeath County Council is responsible for the operation of 14 Public Water Supplies (PWS) serving a population of 62,225. (EPA 2010)

In evidence on behalf of Westmeath County Council contained in An Bord Pleanála Inspectors Report in respect of an abstraction license application from Lough Ree in 2006 (File Reference: 25.PW.3001) summarised the situation with regard to the three principal sources of water in Westmeath:

- *Lough Lene supplies Castlepollard Regional Scheme - 6.8 MLD - may not be adequate for the long-term needs of that area.*
- *Lough Owel north of Mullingar - capacity up to 36 MLD of which Westmeath County Council is currently entitled to abstract 22.7 MLD - growing demands on Mullingar will give rise to a shortfall in the scheme within 5 years perhaps. (Prior rights of Waterways Ireland to the headwaters of Lough Owel to supply the Royal Canal may jeopardise the viability of Lough Owel as a source).*
- *River Shannon passing through Athlone - 9 MLD - barely adequate for the present needs of Athlone Town. Noted that work is in progress to expand the capacity by 50% to 13.5 MLD.*

The EIS for the Lough Ennell Water Abstraction (supply to Royal Canal) August 2011 contains the following summary of the current abstraction baseline for Lough Owel,

"The demand for water from Lough Owel is approaching 13 MGD (5 MGD each for the Canal and Westmeath County Council and 3MGD for the fish farm). In the context of a calculated safe yield from Lough Owel of 8 MGD, the abstractions now evolving are unsustainable."

Predicted future requirement

The 2011 census population of Westmeath was 86,164, the projected population in 2020 of 106,370 in order to achieve the population targets set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines set for 2022. This represents an increase of 20,409 by 2020 or almost 25% from 2011 and 34% from 2006.

This projected population increase will be served through the following :

- a. Continuing emphasis on water conservation
- b. Lough Ennell abstraction scheme which will protect Lough Owel source
- c. South Westmeath Water Supply Scheme
- d. Possible connection to the greater Dublin supply from the Shannon

Qualitative baseline

This is dealt with under heading 2.3.7 Water Courses/Surface water quality

Significant Environmental Issues

The Site Synopsis for Lough Owel SAC includes the following statement:

"Potential threats to the conservation interest of the lake include the increasing level of water supply to Mullingar, overfishing, eutrophication caused by local farming practices and pressure from amenity uses such as boating and fishing".

This raises concern regarding the population target and associated land use zoning objectives for Mullingar and other parts of the county supplied from this abstraction.

The Conservation Statement for Lough Lene cSAC states in the section titled management issues, under the sub-heading of water abstraction *“if the rate of abstraction was to increase, this could affect the ecological functioning of the Lake”*.

This raises concerns regarding impacts on the conservation objectives of Lough Lene SAC of the proposed Settlement Hierarchy and the land use zoning objectives for Castlepollard, Delvin and Clonmellon, each supplied from the Lough Lene abstraction.

A document titled The Draft River Basin Management Plans, National summary Programme of Measures dated December 2008 provides for a Supplementary Measure relating to Abstraction *“Restrict development if abstraction already at capacity”*

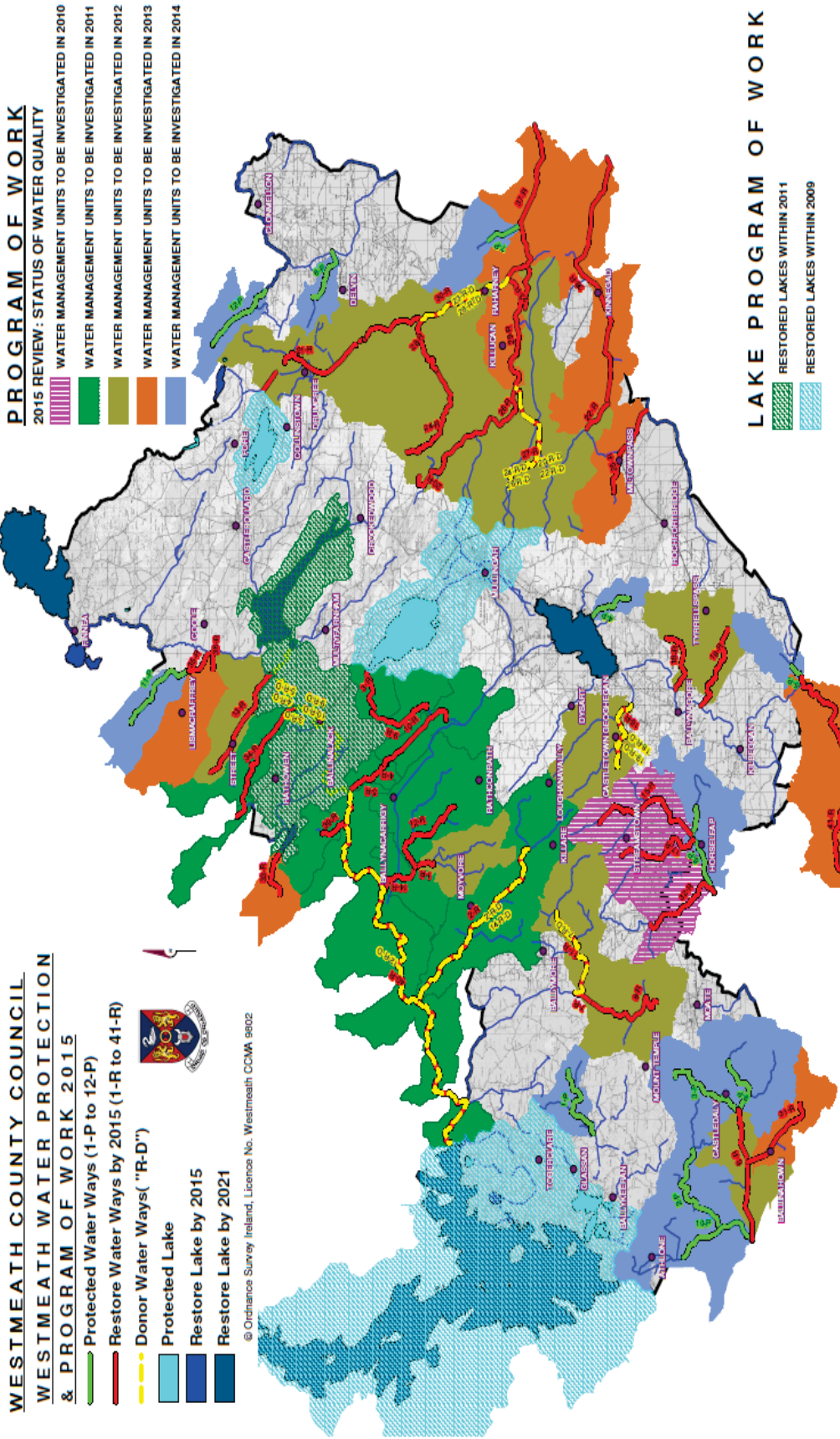
The final report dated January 2009 for the Eastern River Basin District Project titled Abstractions-National POM/Standards study revised risk assessment methodology for surface water abstractions from Lakes, examined the issue. This report acknowledges that Lough Lene represents a complex hydrological scenario and goes on to state that due to the absence of detailed records of abstraction the observed annual fluctuations cannot be correlated to the abstraction. This document also deals with the Lough Owel Abstraction.

In summary this document, concluded that that both Lough Owel and Lough Lene should continue to be monitored and reviewed in the context of environmental supporting conditions for important ecological habitats.

The development of Westmeath through implementation of policy as set out in the 2014-2020 County Development Plan and Regional Planning Guidelines is likely to increase demand from existing abstractions. It is not possible to determine that the proposed plan will not have a significant impact on Natura 2000 Sites. However the proposed measures to increase water supply as outlined above will be subject to Natura Impact Assessment as appropriate.

2.3.7 Water Courses/surface water Quality

Issues regarding surface water quality are dealt with in the Shannon and Eastern River Basin District Management Plans.



2.3.8 Groundwater

Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Ground water	Groundwater is of critical importance to the continued development of the county on several levels, as both a source and resource, in its own right and in its contribution to surface water bodies for both domestic, agricultural and commercial development. The natural environment performs a critical role in the maintenance of ground water. Many habitats and species throughout the County are dependant on groundwater.	Groundwater monitoring is undertaken by the EPA on one site in Westmeath only, Multyfarnham, which is considered to be poor status and at risk. A zone of contribution has been designated and published by the EPA
Drinking water	There are public ground water abstractions in, Moate and Multyfarnham.	Source protection.
Aquifer characterisation	Carried out by GSI	Further groundwater pressure assessment has been suggested around Lough Owel and other locations of concern using the Source Pathway Receptor model.
Aquifer vulnerability		
Source protection	A zone of contribution has been determined for Multyfarnham and Moate Abstractions.	Control of development with the potential to impact on water quality is critical in the defined Zones of Contribution.
Monitoring/mitigation	Monitoring of groundwater appears to be carried out in one location only, Multyfarnham	Condition of groundwater in areas other than Multyfarnham is unknown
Groundwater Protection Scheme	Groundwater vulnerability has been mapped by the Geological Survey of Ireland, zones of contribution to a groundwater abstraction sources have been designated in Multyfarnham and Moate.	Lack of data with regard to condition of groundwater and critically with regard to the Zones of Contribution to Lough Owel and Lough Lene to enable location specific policy for the protection of these water sources.
Groundwater Monitoring Programme	EPA Monitoring programme limited to one location (Multyfarnham)..	On the basis of the limited data available, the status of of monitored ground water in Westmeath is poor. Need for comprehensive Groundwater Monitoring Regime to be in place with particular reference to Lough Owel and Lough Lene Zones of Contribution.

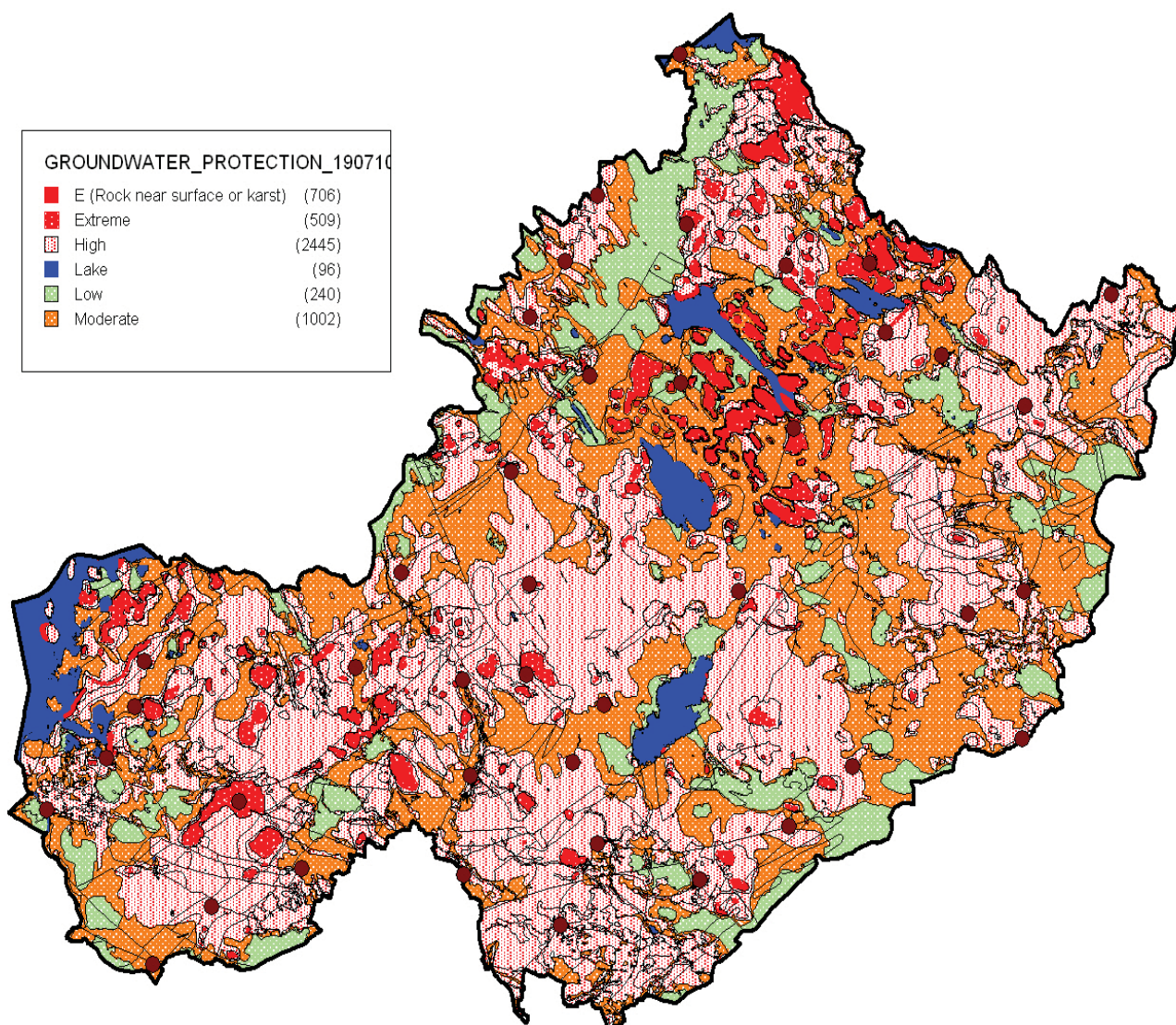
Groundwater is, at the core of the WFD. While the focus on groundwater has been mainly concerned with its use for drinking water, the environmental value of groundwater, as well as its value as a water supply reservoir, has been recognised by the ecological objectives of the WFD. Groundwater plays an essential role in the hydrological cycle and is critical for maintaining river flows and surface water ecosystems such as wetlands. The asset value of high quality groundwater as a resource for current and future economic development, with a particular focus on agriculture cannot be overstated.

The importance of protecting the groundwater contribution to Lough Owel and Lough Lene as the main drinking water sources in the county cannot be overstated.

Baseline

Very limited data is available for Westmeath on groundwater condition, however groundwater vulnerability mapping has been completed by the Geological Survey of Ireland, which provides baseline data with regard to the characterisation of the various ground water bodies in Westmeath.

A review of the terms of existing authorisations granted by Westmeath County Council allowing the input of pollutants into groundwater is required under Article 12 of the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010. It is anticipated that this review when complete shall contribute significantly to both the environmental baseline and potentially the significant environmental issues sections of the SEA environmental report.



Map 2.6: Groundwater Vulnerability mapping (source GSI)

Significant Environmental Issues

The density of on-site waste water treatment systems in Westmeath, particularly in the more sensitive areas presents a concern for rural spatial planning policy.

Recommendations have been made in a number of reports regarding investigations required to understand issues surrounding the contribution of Groundwater to Lough Owel, which would then facilitate the drafting of a groundwater protection plan for this important drinking water source.

2.3.9 WFD River Basin District

Westmeath is located in two river basin districts, the Shannon International River Basin District and the Eastern River Basin District. The aim of the Water Framework Directive and therefore the River Basin Management Plans is to achieve at least good status for all waters. River Basin Management Plans have been adopted for each river basin district since the adoption of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 and are considered in the SEA for the 2014-2020 County Development plan for the first time.

In the course of preparing this Environmental Report it has proven very difficult to set out a comprehensive baseline with regard to the River Basin management plans. It is acknowledged that

the SEA directive anticipated close coordination between SEA and WFD. Similarly to the consideration of the Groundwater protection plan, targeted measures have proven difficult to define in the course of drafting this Environmental Report. Where targeted measures have been identified (eg. GAP regulations, groundwater vulnerability maps, development control measure-conditions) it has equally proven difficult to relate these to planning policy due to complexity.

The River Basin Management plans form such a major element of the environmental baseline, protection and monitoring, it is reasonable to expect this Environmental Report to have regard to issues raised by the EPA in this connection.

Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
River characteristics – River Characterisation Report	2 River Basin Management Plans ERBD and SIRBD	Concerns have been expressed in the River Basin Management Plans with regard to a number of agglomerations.
Linkages with groundwater	The extent of linkages, particularly in karst systems as is the case in the north of the county are acknowledged	The complexity and potential for pollution in karst systems such as the north of Westmeath is acknowledged.

The current water quality status and the effectiveness of the program measures can not always be easily reflected due to the time lag between investigation and assessment of water quality data as the publication of waste quality data by the EPA.

EPA submission:

1. *There are numerous surface water bodies within the Plan area identified as being of moderate to poor water quality including the River Brosna (Q3 in 2011), Gaine River (Q3 in 2011) and River Black (Q3-4 in 2011). A large proportion of water bodies are classified as being “at risk of not achieving good status by 2015” under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) classification. The Plan should promote the protection of surface water and groundwater resources and their associated habitats and species.*
2. *It is noted that a number of Wastewater Treatment Plants in the Plan area “failed to meet the overall requirements of the Wastewater Treatment Regulations (2001)” in 2010. These include treatment plants in Athlone, Delvin, Kinnegad & Rochfortbridge.*

The River Basin Management Plans were submitted to the EU by the EPA in 2010 and shall remain in place until 2015, when a revised plan for 2015 to 2021 shall be introduced.

The key measures and objectives of the River Basin Management Plans for Westmeath are summarised in 6 Water Management Unit (WMU) action plans. These measures seek to address both point source and diffuse source pollution.

The River Basin Management Plans set out a range of dates by which all water bodies must reach “Good Status”. The implementation of spatial policy creates the potential for impact on the achievement of the objectives of the River Basin Management Plans. Consideration must be given to Article 4.7 of the Water Framework Directive in this regard, which makes provision for circumstances where failure to achieve certain objectives of the Water Framework Directive are permitted.

Baseline

The interim report required under Section 15(3) of the WFD is expected to provide the data required with regard to the programme of measures implementation.

Significant Environmental issues

Critical elements of the River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) with regard to the SEA of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 are defined by pressure/source.

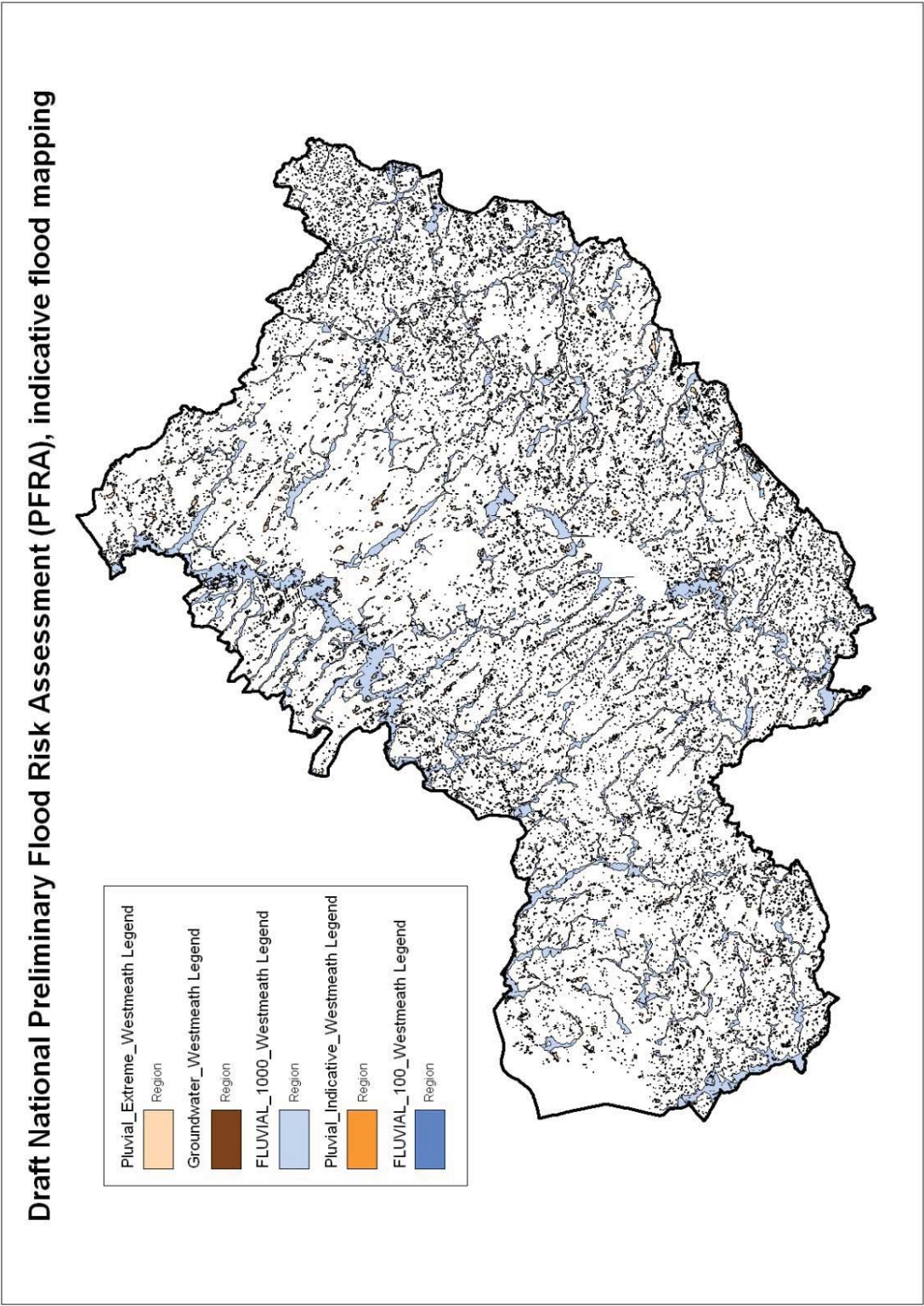
The role of the Planning Authority is highlighted in linking water services, transport and environmental sections of the Local Authority in the provision of the Supporting Key Actions, for the achievement of the Basic Measures of RBMP's. Further detail is set out in Section 5.1 of the Shannon River Basin Management Plan 2009-2015 on the role of development planning in the achievement of the programme of measures for the Shannon IRBD.

2.3.10 Flooding

Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Flood risk management	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been undertaken with recommendation in policy to avoid areas at risk of Flooding	Environmental, material asset and ecological impacts
Areas currently at risk		
Development pressure on flood plains		
Climate change - implications/adaptation/design standards		
Possible Task(s):		
Prepare a Flood Risk Management Plan for the area (utilising a catchment based approach)		
Produce map of flooding extent (historical and predicted future) for the area		
Some Useful Information Source(s):		
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG/OPW, 2009): - http://www.envron.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload,21708,en.pdf		
Office of Public Works: Flood Prediction Site: - http://www.floodmaps.ie/		

The Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (CFRAM) has released draft flood maps. The finalisation of the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP) is anticipated in 2015.

For the purposes of establishing the environmental baseline for consideration of Flooding issues in the SEA of the Westmeath County Plan, it is proposed that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is to be used.



Map 2.7: Draft National Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment

Significant Environmental Issues

- Athlone recurring flooding events
- Flooding identified in Robinstown, Mullingar South LAP's
- Agriculture and agricultural development in floodplains.
- Rural Housing septic tanks.
- Adaptation to Climate Change.

2.3.11 Harbours/Marinas

Westmeath contains a significant number of harbours and marinas on Lough Ree of various types and scales.

Baseline

A query of planning applications, aerial photograph and survey work could be carried out in order to establish the scale and extent of such development along with recommendations for future provision with a particular focus on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, however time and resources have not permitted this to be carried out in the course of this SEA.

Significant Environmental Issues

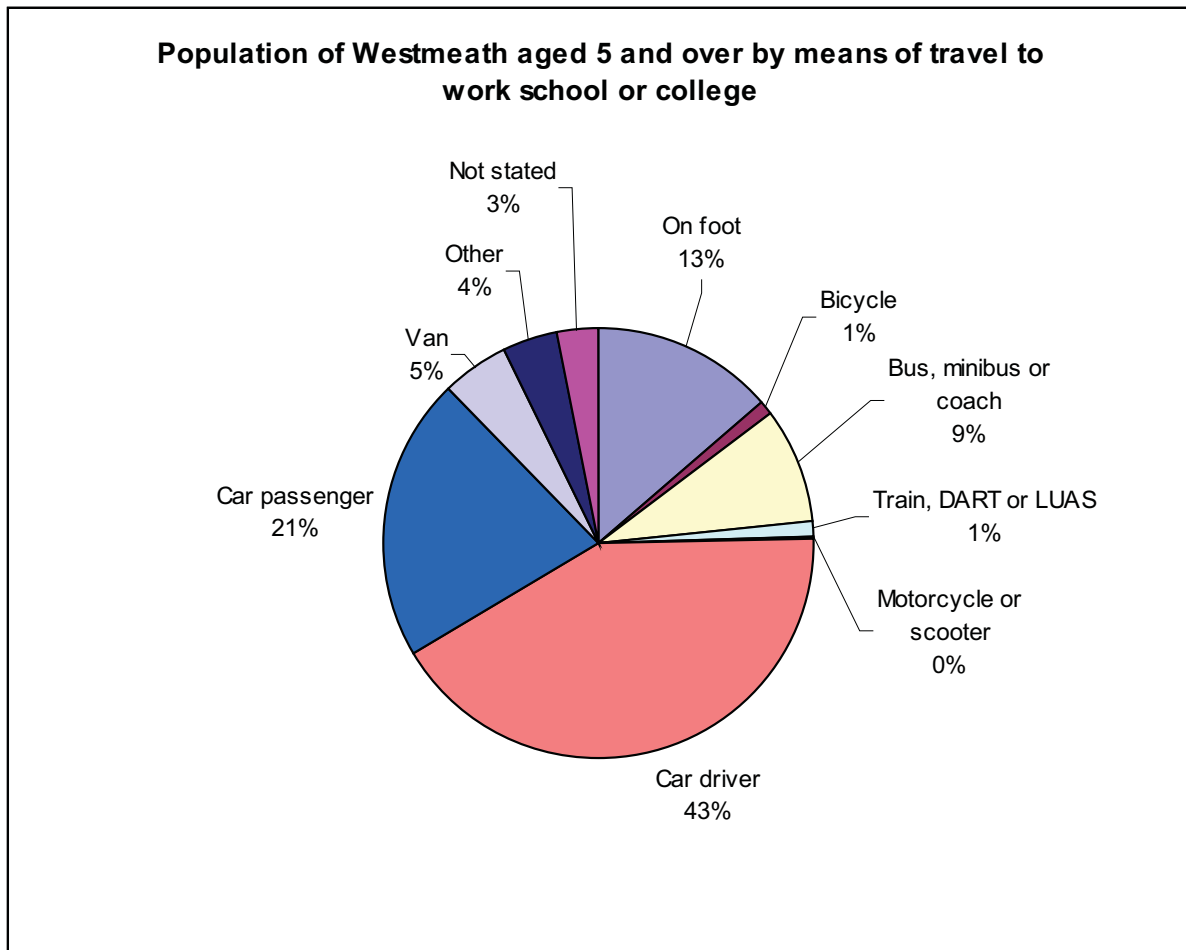
There are a number of private and commercial boat yards/harbours and ancillary uses on Lough Ree which may have the potential for significant environmental issues including impacts associated with direct land take and disruption of Natura 2000 sites both individual and cumulatively, pumping out facilitates and oil/waste storage, invasive species and general development proposals including dredging.

2.4 Transport

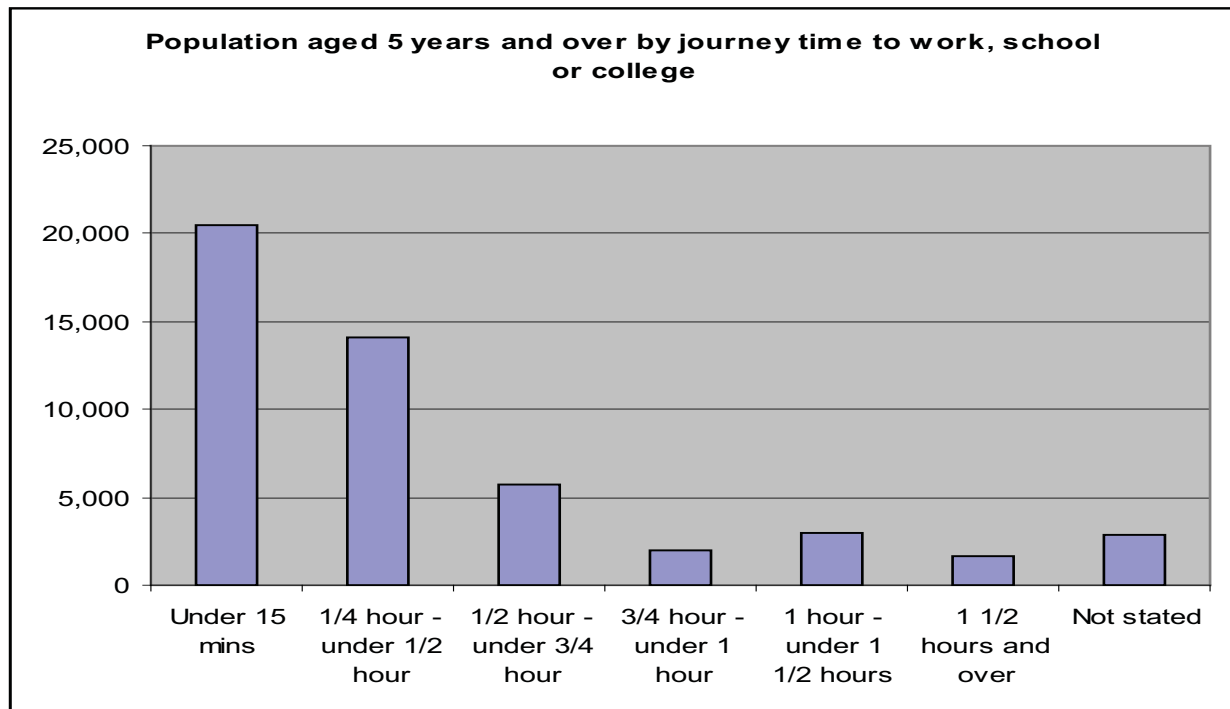
Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Roads – proposed improvements, bypass schemes; status of same	A number of road improvement schemes are included as objectives of the Draft County Development Plan	<p>The stage and extent of Environmental Assessment and or approval of the various proposals for Road improvements is of concern.</p> <p>The most significant element is likely to be proposals for the N4, however environmental issues have been identified with proposals for N52,N55 and N62 in the “National Secondary Roads need assessment” by the NRA March 2011.</p>
Rail	Proposals for re-opening of the Mullingar to Athlone Link and the re-opening of Killucan station are the main elements of rail policy in the draft County Development Plan	Killucan Station is approximately 80m from a proposed NHA and the Mullingar to Athlone disused rail line runs through Crosswood bog SAC and NHA.
Cycle lanes	The on-going work in relation to the provision of cycling and walking infrastructure shall be set out in the Environmental Report.	There are potential impacts arising from both works and use of recreational walking and cycling routes in sensitive locations including lake shores. These proposals shall be dealt with on a case by case basis in the assessment of policy.
Walking routes		
Installation of lighting and/or footpaths		
Maintenance of existing transport infrastructure	A schedule of ongoing works for maintenance of the existing transport infrastructure is set out in a schedule in the transport chapter of the Draft CDP.	There are numerous locations of environmental concern within the schedule of road improvements set out in the Transport and Movement Chapter the most significant of which is the N4 Mullingar to Roosky extension of the N4

Baseline

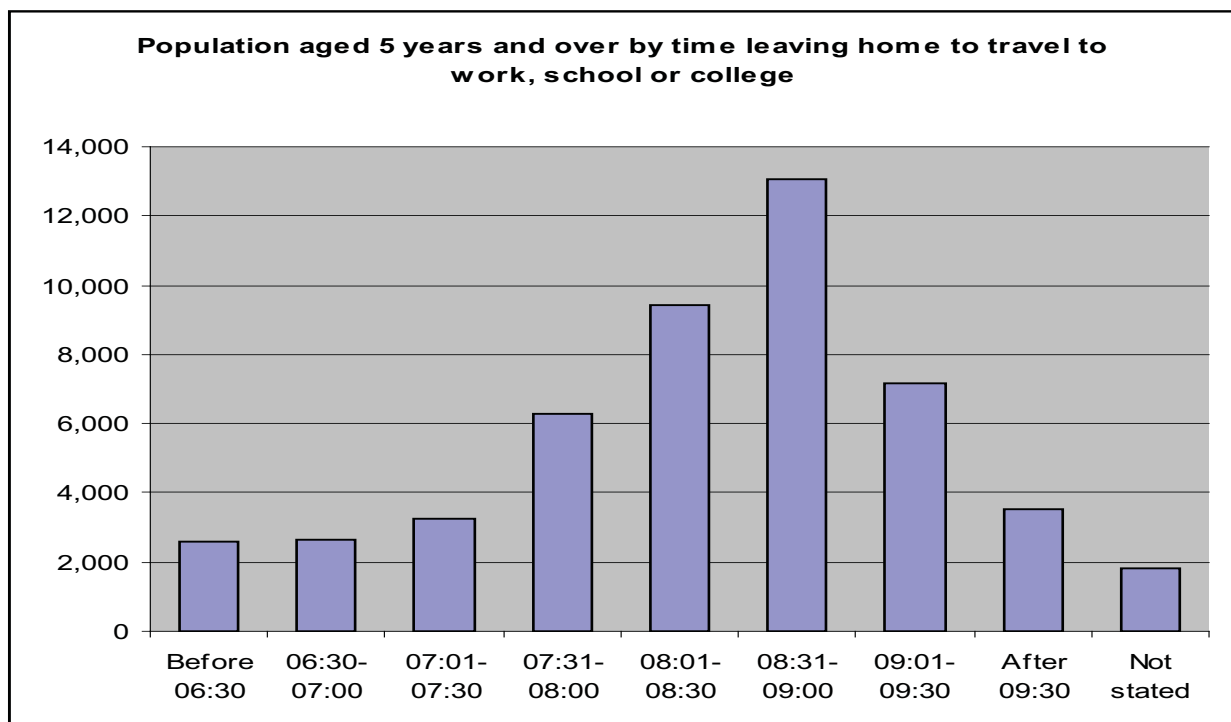
The sustainability of the means of transport to work school and college in Westmeath is of concern with 43% of all journeys to Work School or College being by Car Driver, when combined with car passengers the means of transport for 64% of all journeys to Work School and College in Westmeath is by private car. 7,461 responded in the Census that they spend greater than an hour travelling to Work School or College which represents 15% of all such journeys. The distribution across the county, by percentage of small area population is set out in Maps 2.8 to 2.13 below.



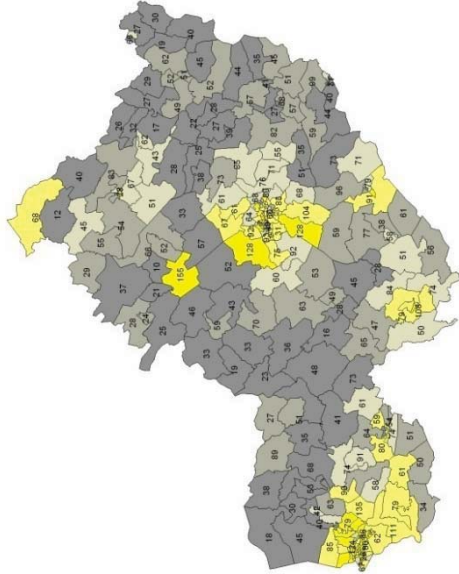
Graph 2.10: Westmeath Population (aged 5+) and means of travel to work/college/school



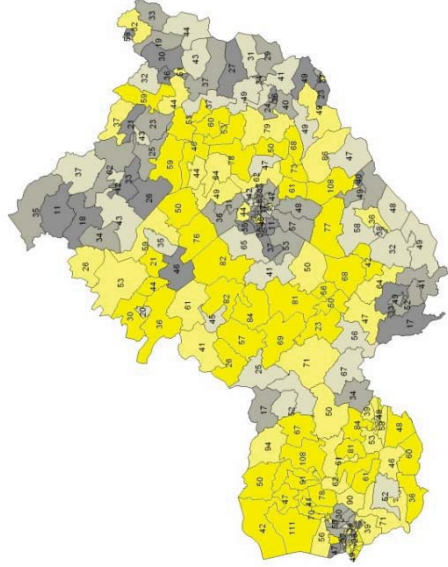
Graph 2.11: Westmeath Population (aged 5+) and journey times to work/college/school (source census 2011)



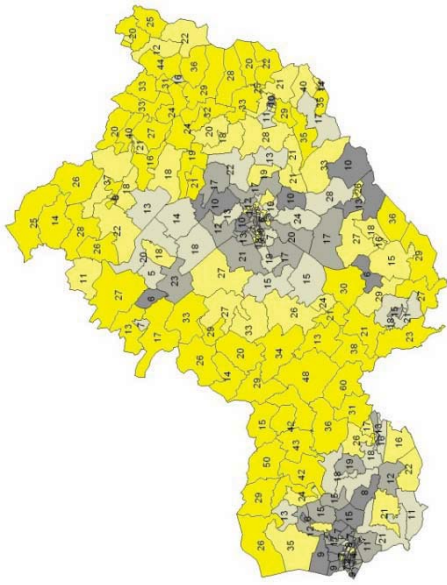
Graph 2.12: Westmeath Population (aged 5+) and departure times to work/college/school (source census 2011)



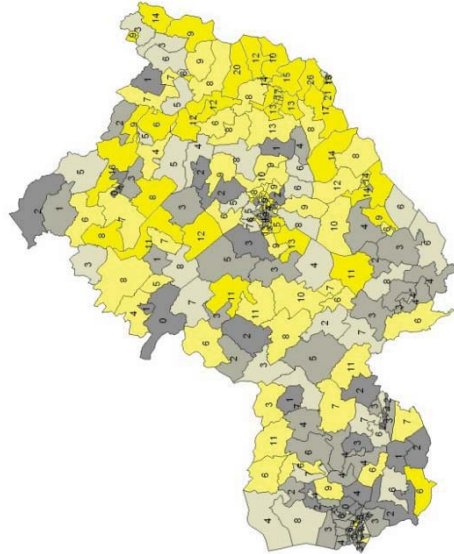
Map 2.8: Under 15 mins



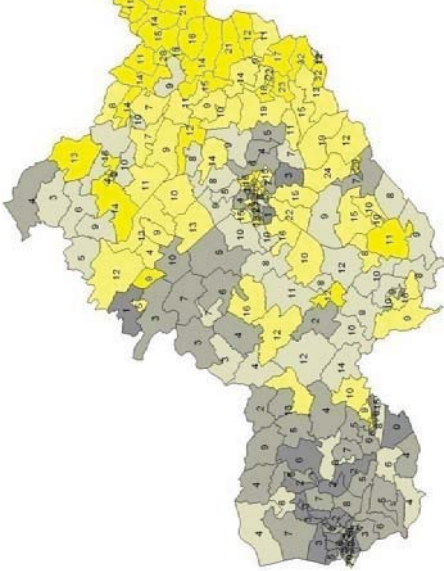
Map 2.9: 15 to 30mins



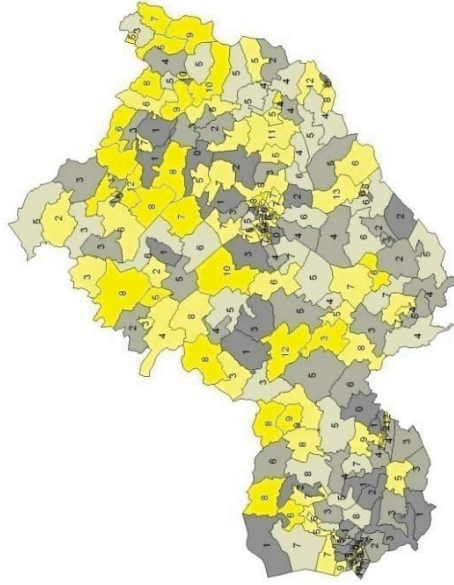
Map 2.10: 30 to 45mins



Map 2.11: 45 to 60 mins

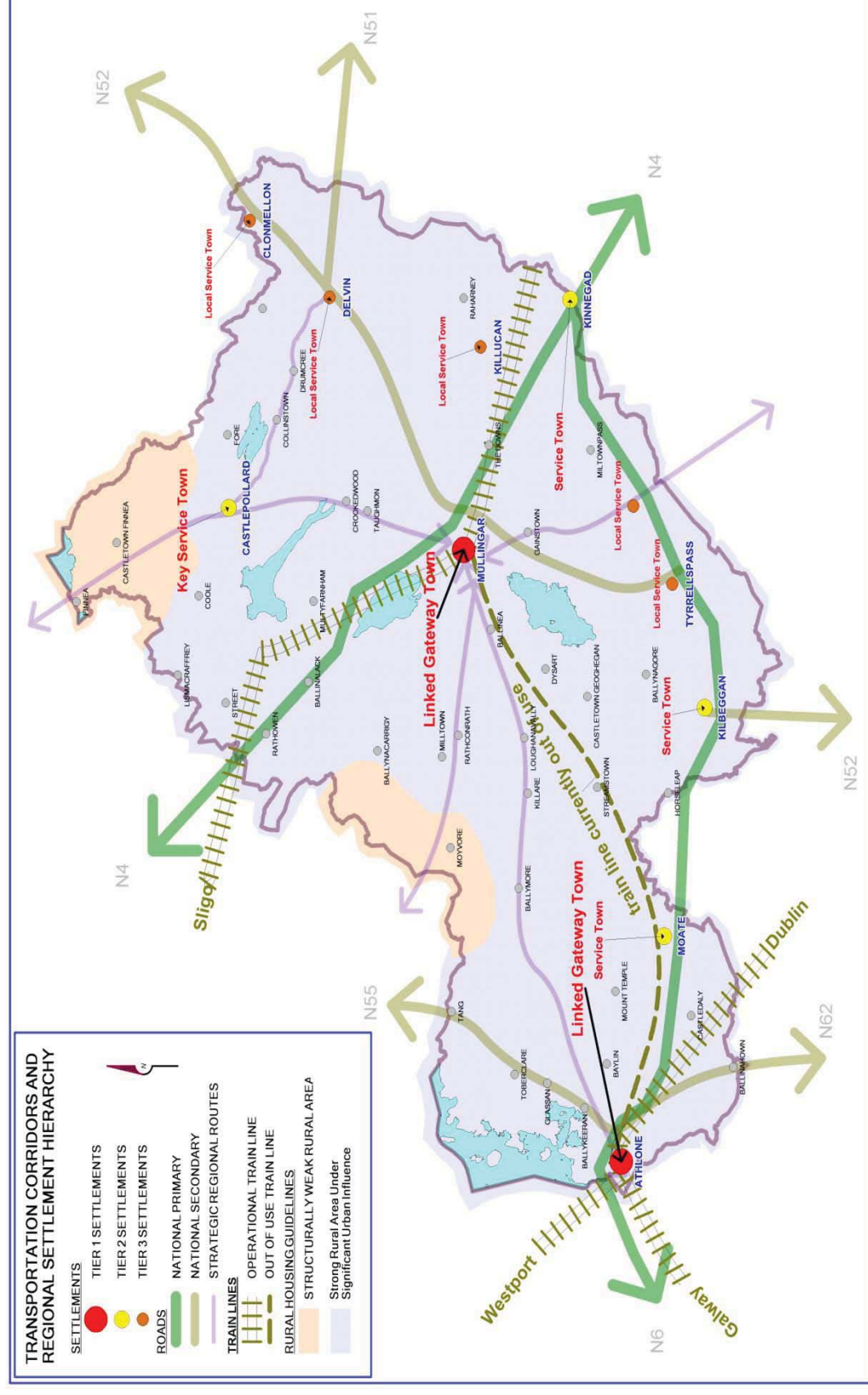


Map 2.12: 60 to 90 mins



Map 2.13: 90 mins and over

Maps 2.8-2.13: Journey time to Work School or College By Small Area, shading indicates the proportion the population which travel to work school and college within each time bracket with Yellow being a higher proportion and Grey lower. Numbers on each Small area are the numbers of persons whose journeys fall into that category. (Source Census 2011)



Significant Environmental Issues

Following a constraints study and process of public consultation, in July 2010, Westmeath County Council and Longford County Council in partnership with the National Roads Authority announced the publication of the Preferred Route Corridor for the N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) Road Scheme. The preferred route corridor passes through, and close to a number of environmentally sensitive locations.

Notwithstanding the suspension of the detailed design of the scheme, the NRA have sought the inclusion of policies and objectives providing for the development of national road schemes and a policy to protect schemes free of development that would adversely affect the National Road Network.

The NRA preferred route corridor for the N4 extension has not been subject to SEA or AA to date. The proposed scheme has yet to go through any consent stage, the manner of its inclusion in the Draft County Development Plan is likely to be critical to the future consideration of this route option and in the consideration of the environmental implications should it be reconsidered at a future date.

The NPWS has provided guidance in regard to considering road alignments entailing potential environmental consequences in Development Plan policy as follows:

Plan level mitigation may include, among other things, setting out provisions to demonstrate that lower level plans or projects will be subject to appropriate assessment where necessary. However, if policies and objectives are made conditional on adequate evaluations and assessments being undertaken at lower plan level or at project level, it is advised that, as a minimum, these situations should be subject to preliminary examination and should be noted clearly in the plan. The proposals should:

- Include a statement of the issue being addressed (e.g. improved road link between point A and B) without favouring a specified solution (if a specified solution is put forward, appropriate assessment will be required of that solution);*
- State that issues may arise under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive that will require assessment and that alternative solutions may need to be considered to avoid significant effects;*
- Stress that in deciding on a solution, it will be necessary to comply fully with Article 6(3) (and, if warranted, Article 6(4), including compensatory measures) of the Habitats Directive.*

The settlement hierarchy, economic development, and spatial aspects of education and other social infrastructure provision are critical elements of the Draft County Development Plan which have a bearing on medium and long term transport patterns in the County.

2.5 Built Environment

Built Environment/ Heritage	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Heritage features – historical importance, sense of place	The Built heritage of Westmeath is gradually being eroded with the addition of new buildings and the removal of old. Just over 50% of all houses in Westmeath have been constructed in the 20 year period from 1991 to 2011.	Significant issues regarding the built heritage in Westmeath include the demolition and substantial demolition of existing vernacular rural built heritage, in order to qualify for the rural housing and for maximising the use of urban land. Vacancy and resultant deterioration of buildings of heritage value particular in urban areas.
Architectural features – individual sites/complexes	The updating of the RPS is ongoing, it has not been possible to quantify this.	Resources have become increasingly limited with regard to grant assistance and through the provision of expertise to owners/developers of buildings of heritage value.
Archaeology –; known/potential	The Record of Monuments and Places shall be included in the Mapping is presented in the CDP mapping.	There are a number of archaeological features included in the Site and Monuments Record which are area based or of a linear nature and are not included in the electronic mapping and are not included in the Draft 2014-2020 CDP.
Architectural Conservation Areas	Further work is scheduled on ACA's for inclusion in the CDP as resources permit.	Due to time and resource constraints both the number of and detail within the ACA's in Westmeath is not fully complete.
Industrial architecture	No specific studies have been carried out in this regard.	A search of the NIAH reveals that the majority of the industrial architectural heritage, primarily mill buildings are in ruinous condition and deteriorating.
Historical features, battle sites	No specific work has been carried out in this regard however amongst the notable battle sites would be Rathowen, Tyrellspass, Ballymore and Finea. Notable Historical Features	To date there has been insufficient research carried out in Westmeath into these aspects. There has been a significant and sustained increase in the number of one-off houses in the Westmeath
Historical landscapes/heritage landscapes, e.g. stone walls		

Built Environment/ Heritage	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
	include Uisneach and Fore. Esker, Bog and Northern Crag each of which would also be considered as important cultural landscapes	countryside since 1970 as reflected in Census data.
Promotion of linkages between different features/complexes of features by way of trails/walking routes, etc	Existing trails and routes include the Westmeath Way, Fore Trail and numerous cycling routes. Recreational access to the Lake shores has been a long standing objective of Westmeath County Council.	The construction and use of access to both archaeological and natural heritage sites presents difficulties where there are risks to the features which it is intended to appreciate/protect. Of particular relevance in this regard are Lake Natura 2000 sites in Westmeath.

Baseline

The built environment and the control of changes in the built environment in the interest of the common good is the single biggest impact of the County Development plan 2014-2020. Westmeath has been through a period of significant change in recent decades as set out in section 1.2 above.

County Westmeath has a rich Heritage from a long and diverse history of urban and rural human settlement. These shall be protected by policy and objectives of the Draft County Development Plan to the greatest extent possible within the constrained resources available.

Rural Housing Policy

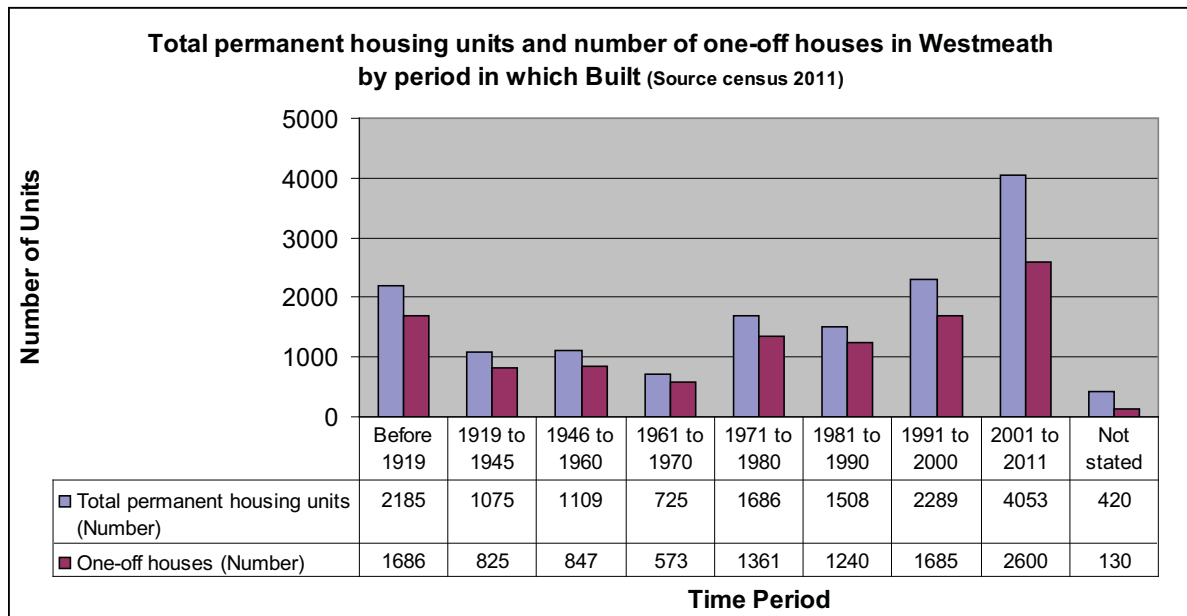
One-off rural housing policy is considered under a number of categories of environmental assessment elsewhere in this Environmental Report. Environmental concerns are often particularly acute in cases where policy allows for the establishment of new residential uses which are not 'rural generated'; and increases the extent of unsustainable commuting patterns.

The 2011 Census results reveal that in the 20 year period from 1991 to 2011 that the rural population of Westmeath increased by 10,408 persons. The trends with regard to rural housing set out in section 2.2 of this report demonstrate that in a scenario where this pattern continues the population Westmeath in un-serviced rural areas shall continue to grow leading to an increase in the associated environmental concerns.

These environmental concerns include:

- Of the 36,835 dwellings recorded by Census 2011 in Westmeath, the 12041 Single rural houses that rely on on-site wastewater treatment (including septic tank systems) contribute significant nutrient and microbial loading to the receiving surface and ground water resources. Through application of the Source-Pathway-Receptor model, general risk of pollution has been identified particularly in areas of groundwater vulnerability.
- Where occupiers of rural housing are working, being educated and/or connecting with family in urban areas or elsewhere, extra trips are generated, resulting in a reliance on the private car and unsustainable transport patterns. If the proportion of Westmeath's population that reside in Rural Areas increases and employment, and educational opportunities decrease the cumulative impact of such development include, increased emissions of greenhouse gases and the unsustainable use of material assets in the form of both physical and social infrastructure.

- c) Individual rural houses that are poorly sited and screened or located in sensitive or exposed environments or landscapes will negatively impact on the landscape quality of individual areas and cumulatively across the county.



Graph 2.13: Number of one-off houses in Westmeath classified by building period and as a percentage of total housing units constructed during same period. (Source CSO).

2.6 Biodiversity

Environmental Baseline Heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Biodiversity		
Designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs) – need for appropriate assessment	All policy set out in the Plan shall be subject to assessment for impacts on designated sites.	The are a number of proposals for improvements to the road network contained in the Draft Development plan, a number of these proposals have potential for significant impacts on designated sites on implementation not least of which is the proposal to extend the N4 from Mullingar to Roosky.
Designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs) – management plan/notifiable activities	A policy has been included in the draft County Development Plan to prepare management plans for a number of designated sites around the county.	There are currently no management plans for Natura 2000 sites or NHA's in Westmeath. The potential for spatial policy contained in the Development Plan to impact on Notifiable activities is limited, other than increasing awareness.
Habitats – habitat mapping, quality	A body of work was carried out in the middle of the last decade in this regard, including work on fens, peatlands, eskers and hedgerows. Sites identified fens and eskers have been mapped in the Development Plan mapping.	There has been considerable loss of hedgerow, wetlands and other habitats of importance. Biodiversity studies undertaken in the county should be taken into account in the policy of the Plan to optimise potential for protection. Where hedgerows form townland or other significant boundaries this in an indicator of age and therefore diversity and habitat value, older and more diverse hedgerows such as townland boundaries should be afforded extra consideration in policy.
Buffer zone application (e.g. designated features, water bodies, valuable habitats)	There are a number of buffer zones in existing Planning Policy (2008-2014) associated with High Amenity Areas, policy for riparian zones and others, which have been set out in CDP mapping. Buffer zones are not included in the Draft Plan.	The consideration and treatment of riparian of zones is of importance for flooding control, water quality, biodiversity and public amenity.
Habitats of value/importance (e.g. woodlands, wetland features)	The range of habitats of value/importance in Westmeath	The absence of statutory protection of the proposed NHA's and undesignated sites of habitat value/importance in particular is of concern

Environmental Baseline Heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues in considering the implementation of the proposed draft development plan policy
Hedgerows	<p>are limitless. Studies and mapping were undertaken a number of years ago on a limited range of habitats a number of these have been presented in CDP mapping.</p> <p>A 2005 Study of 29 sample squares across the county estimated that there was 10,481km of hedgerow in varying condition across the county. A number of threats were identified and recommendations regarding existing and new hedging. The implications of policy contained in the draft CDP shall be considered in the assessment matrices.</p>	Agricultural and rural domestic development present an ongoing challenge to the retention of hedgerows in Westmeath.
Trees/groups of trees, Tree Protection Order's	<p>There are a number of trees, and clusters of trees with the benefit of objectives protecting them in the current CDP. There is a case to carry out survey work and for further TPO's to be proposed.</p> <p>There are numerous quality fisheries in Westmeath. http://www.fishinginireland.info/coarse/shannon/mullingar.htm</p>	There are many trees in urban and rural areas of significance without the benefit of protection in policy.
Fisheries	<p>There are numerous quality fisheries in Westmeath. http://www.fishinginireland.info/coarse/shannon/mullingar.htm</p>	The most significant impacts on aquatic biodiversity are water quality, damage to riparian zones and invasive species
Protected species – e.g. otters, bats, badgers, salmonids, etc	Species protection arises from National Legislation. Protection within the CDP is limited in scope	Gradual loss of habitat results in species level impacts in the course of development.

Environmental Baseline Heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
	however policy in this regard is contained in the draft plan.	
Other species of value	Protection of fish species of Angling interest may form part of an integrated environmental and tourism strategy.	Water quality and invasive species pose the greatest threat to the aquatic species of angling interest.
Local biodiversity – ponds, ditches, watercourses, lakes, ecological networks	These valuable biodiversity assets shall primarily be considered in the CDP in the context of policy relating to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive	The lack of understanding of the importance of Biodiversity and the potential to impact negatively on local biodiversity, particularly by the removal of elements of ecological networks, or stepping stones through localised drainage works or removal of hedgerow.
WFD – RBDs – River/Water body characterisation, monitoring	Status set out below	
Invasive species, e.g. Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Zebra mussel	There are a range of invasive species within Westmeath with the potential to cause significant damage and financial cost.	Westmeath has a significant problem with invasive species in sensitive locations. Zebra Mussel and Japanese knotweed are of particular concern in various locations. A Countywide policy and plan of action in relation to invasive species should be prepared.
Possible Task(s):		
SAC/SPA Management/Maintenance Plan	It has been the longstanding policy of Development Plans in Westmeath for recreational access to be enhanced to the Lakes	The potential impacts on implementation of policy to enhance access to the lakes arising from construction and use, these shall be examined further on a case by case basis in the matrices
Habitat Mapping – water features, woodlands, trees and hedgerows, etc.	Mapping is presented in Volume 2 of the Draft CDP	The protection of these natural assets is set out in CDP policy

2.6.1 European and National Sites

Table 2.4: SAC's in and within 15km of Westmeath

	<u>SITE CODE</u>	<u>SITE NAME</u>	<u>NATURA 2000 CODE</u>	<u>SITE SPECIFIC PLANS BY THE COMPETENT AUTHORITY (NPWS)</u>
1	000006	Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)	IE0000006	Generic Conservation Objectives
2	000216	River Shannon Callows	IE0000216	Generic Conservation Objectives
3	000440	Lough Ree	IE0000440	Generic Conservation Objectives
4	000448	Fortwilliam Turlough	IE0000448	Generic Conservation Objectives
5	000571	Charleville Wood	IE0000571	Generic Conservation Objectives
6	000572	Clara Bog	IE0000572	Generic Conservation Objectives
7	000575	Ferbane Bog	IE0000575	Conservation Plan 2005-2010 Generic Conservation Objectives
8	000576	Fin Lough (Offaly)	IE0000576	Conservation Plan 2006-2011 Generic Conservation Objectives
9	000580	Mongan Bog	IE0000580	Conservation Plan 2005-2010 Generic Conservation Objectives
10	000581	Moyclare Bog	IE0000581	Generic Conservation Objectives
11	000582	Raheenmore Bog	IE0000582	Conservation Plan 2005-2010 Generic Conservation Objectives
12	000610	Lough Croan Turlough	IE0000610	Generic Conservation Objectives
13	000611	Lough Funshinagh	IE0000611	Generic Conservation Objectives
14	000679	Garriskil Bog	IE0000679	Generic Conservation Objectives
15	000685	Lough Ennell	IE0000685	Generic Conservation Objectives
16	000688	Lough Owel	IE0000688	Generic Conservation Objectives
17	000692	Scragh Bog	IE0000692	Generic Conservation Objectives
18	001625	Castlesampson Esker	IE0001625	Generic Conservation Objectives
19	001776	Pilgrim's Road Esker	IE0001776	Generic Conservation Objectives
20	001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo	IE0001810	Generic Conservation Objectives
21	001831	Split Hills and Long Hill Esker	IE0001831	Generic Conservation Objectives
22	002120	Lough Bane and Lough Glass	IE0002120	Generic Conservation Objectives

23	002121	Lough Lene	IE0002121	Conservation Plan 2005-2010 Generic Conservation Objectives
24	002299	River Boyne and River Blackwater	IE0002299	Generic Conservation Objectives
25	002313	Ballymore Fen	IE0002313	Conservation Statement 2009 Generic Conservation Objectives
26	002336	Carn Park Bog	IE0002336	Generic Conservation Objectives
27	002337	Crosswood Bog	IE0002337	Generic Conservation Objectives
28	002339	Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough	IE0002339	Generic Conservation Objectives
29	002340	Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs	IE0002340	Generic Conservation Objectives
30	002341	Ardagullion Bog	IE0002341	Generic Conservation Objectives
31	002342	Mount Hevey Bog	IE0002342	Generic Conservation Objectives

Table 2.5: SPA's in and within 15km of Westmeath

	<u>SITE CODE</u>	<u>SITE NAME</u>	<u>SITE SPECIFIC PLANS BY THE COMPETENT AUTHORITY (NPWS)</u>
1	004017	Mongan Bog SPA	No data available, problem with NPWS.ie
2	004043	Lough Derravaragh SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
3	004044	Lough Ennell SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
4	004045	Glen Lough SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
5	004046	Lough Iron SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
6	004047	Lough Owel SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
7	004061	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
8	004064	Lough Ree SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
9	004065	Lough Sheelin SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
10	004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
11	004097	River Suck Callows SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
12	004102	Garriskil Bog SPA	No data available, problem with NPWS.ie
13	004139	Lough Croan Turlough SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives
14	004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA	Generic Conservation Objectives

Table 2.6: NHA's in and within 15km of Westmeath

	<u>SITE CODE</u>	<u>SITE NAME</u>
1	000222	Suck River Callows NHA
2	000565	Clonydonnin Bog NHA
3	000570	Black Castle Bog NHA
4	000674	Ballynagrenia And Ballinderry Bog NHA
5	000677	Cloncrow Bog (New Forest) NHA
6	000684	Lough Derravaragh NHA
7	000694	Wooddown Bog NHA
8	000921	Scraggan Bog NHA
9	000985	Lough Kinale And Derragh Lough NHA
10	001324	Jamestown Bog NHA
11	001388	Carbury Bog NHA
12	001448	Forthill Bog NHA
13	001450	Mount Jessop Bog NHA
14	001580	Girley Bog NHA
15	001582	Moleric Bog NHA
16	001623	Carrickynaghtan Bog NHA
17	001725	Nure Bog NHA
18	001812	Lough Garr NHA
19	002033	Daingean Bog NHA
20	002323	Milltownpass Bog NHA
21	002355	Hawkswood Bog NHA

Table 2.7: pNHA's in and within 15km of Westmeath

	<u>SITECODE</u>	<u>SITE NAME</u>
1	000006	Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)
2	000008	Lough Ramor
3	000216	River Shannon Callows
4	000390	Ballina Bog
5	000440	Lough Ree

6	000447	Derrymore Bog
7	000448	Fortwilliam Turlough
8	000449	Lough Bannow
9	000556	Lough Shesk
10	000571	Charleville Wood
11	000572	Clara Bog
12	000574	Clonad Wood
13	000575	Ferbane Bog
14	000576	Fin Lough (Offaly)
15	000580	Mongan Bog
16	000581	Moyclare Bog
17	000582	Raheenmore Bog
18	000586	Woodfield Bog
19	000610	Lough Croan Turlough
20	000611	Lough Funshinagh
21	000672	Aghalasty Fen
22	000673	Ballynafid Lake And Fen
23	000676	Carn Park Bog NHA
24	000678	Crosswood Bog NHA
25	000679	Garriskil Bog
26	000681	Hill Of Mael And The Rock Of Curry
27	000685	Lough Ennell
28	000686	Lough Glore
29	000687	Lough Iron
30	000688	Lough Owel
31	000689	Lough Sewdy
32	000690	Lough Sheever Fen/Slevin'S Lough Complex
33	000692	Scragh Bog
34	000885	Ballyduff Esker
35	000892	Clonfinlough Esker
36	000893	Clonllyn Glebe Bog

37	000894	Clorhane Wood
38	000896	Derrygolan Esker
39	000906	Kilcormac Esker
40	000910	Lough Nanag Esker
41	000916	Pallas Lough
42	000917	Raheen Lough
43	000918	Rahugh Ridge (Kiltober Esker)
44	000987	Lough Sheelin
45	000992	Lough Gowna
46	001365	Lough Boora
47	001443	Lough Slawn
48	001444	Derry Lough
49	001573	Ballynabarny Fen
50	001584	Mount Hevey Bog NHA
51	001625	Castlesampson Esker
52	001630	Cranberry Lough
53	001634	Feacle Turlough
54	001687	Glen Lough
55	001711	Ardan Wood
56	001713	Ballynagarbry
57	001721	Lough Bane
58	001731	Walshestown Fen
59	001732	Waterstown Lake
60	001775	Murphy'S Bridge Esker
61	001776	Pilgrim'S Road Esker
62	001777	Ballyduff Wood
63	001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs And Lough Doo
64	001814	Lough Naneagh
65	001819	Lough Bawn
66	001821	Cordara Turlough
67	001822	Carrickglass Demesne

68	001830	Doon Esker Wood
69	001831	Split Hills And Long Hill Esker
70	002069	Ardagullion Bog NHA
71	002103	Royal Canal
72	002104	Grand Canal

Significant Environmental Issues

- A County Biodiversity Plan has yet to be undertaken, this should include the proposal for management plans for council owned property within or near designated sites.
- Abstractions from lakes having potential for impacts on Lough Owel and Lene
- Waste water treatment upstream from water based Natura 2000.
- Quarries, and gravel pits in and adjacent to Natura 2000 sites, Eskers, Karst areas and other areas of complex hydrology.
- Ground water impacts from agricultural developments and on site WWTS on water based and GWDTEs
- Peat Harvesting, locally and cumulatively
- Invasive Species (Zebra Mussel) new supply from Lough Ennell into Royal canal
- Amenity and Recreational impacts on lakes
- Impacts on Hedgerows arising from rural Development
- Potential impacts on biodiversity of N4 Mullingar to Roskeery realignment.

2.6.2 Areas of Local Biodiversity Value**Baseline**

A number of studies have been carried out over time in Westmeath in an attempt to identify areas of local biodiversity value including:

- County Westmeath Esker Study
- Fen study
- Hedgerow study
- Local biodiversity study areas
- Peatlands study

These various studies have been mapped to the greatest extent possible in Volume 2 of the CDP.

Significant Environmental Issues

The identification/recognition of sites of local biodiversity value in County Westmeath and taking account of this value in decision making remains a challenge in spatial policy implementation.

2.6.3 Article 10 of Habitats Directive**Baseline**

The baseline data with regard to implementation of Article 10 of the Habitats directive are limited and extend only to that which is presented in Section 2.6.2 above.

Significant Environmental Issues

The consideration of Article 10 of the habitats directive in decision making remains a challenge, in the case of undesignated sites of biodiversity value.

2.7 Geo-diversity/Mining/Quarries

Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Geo-diversity/Mining/Quarries		
Features of geological/geomorphological interest	See table below	Lack of statutory protection leaves these sites at on going risk.
Mining exploration (current and past)	Recent years have seen ongoing exploration of minerals in Westmeath	There is potential for significant environmental impacts if exploration develops into exploitation. A specific policy statement in relation to lead and zinc and the exploitation of these mineral resources has been included in the Plan.
Quarry – sand/gravel/rock	The baseline arising from ongoing work relating to the implementation of S.261A of the PDA is set out below.	There are a number of existing quarries which have existing and potential significant environmental issues the most acute of which relate to natural heritage impacts, these are set out below.

Baseline

Partially reproduced list of IGH April 2012 sites provided by GSI in pre-draft submission.

Theme Site No.	Site Name	Principal characteristics & Critical feature(s) key words
IGH7	Murrens (Finnea-Murrens Esker)	Esker, delta, fan, kames and kettle holes
IGH7	Ballyduff Esker-Rahugh Ridge	Esker ridges buried by fans and deltas in places
IGH7	Clara Esker Complex [Ballinasloe (Galw)-Split Hills (Roscl)-Clonmacnoise-Clara Esker System]	Fans: part of the Ballinasloe (Galw)-Split Hills (Roscl)-Clonmacnoise-Clara Esker System
IGH12	Hill of Mael et al. (Rock of Curry)	
IGH14	Lough Derravaragh	glacially overdeepened lake
IGH15	<i>Ballinalack [Zn, Pb]</i>	Zinc, Lead mineralisation
IGH16	Fore	springs
IGH16	Kilbeggan	handpumps

IGH16	Shores of Lough Lene	karst spring crosses gw divide
IGH7	Ballymore Esker	Segmented tunnel fills
IGH7	Ballynagarbry	Esker
IGH7	Cappalahy Esker	Esker, beaded
IGH7	Fore Hills	Crag and tails
IGH7	Horseleap Esker	Esker, with fans surrounding
IGH7	Kilbeggan Esker	Esker, surrounded by fans and other ice marginal features.
IGH7	Killtober Esker	Esker landscapes
IGH7	Long Hill Esker and Swallow Lough (Split Hill and Long Hill Esker Complex)	Esker
IGH7	Race Course Esker	Esker
IGH7	Rahugh Ridge (Kiltober Esker) (part of Ballyduff Esker-Rahugh Ridge)	Esker, woodland
IGH7	Split Hill and Long Hill Esker Complex	Esker
IGH7	Streamstown Esker	Esker ... multi-crested with a very complex geomorphology.
IGH7	Tyrrellspass	Kettlehole
IGH7	West of Athlone	Esker landscapes
IGH8	Kinnegad	Waulsortian Quarry
IGH8	Lagan Cement Quarry	
IGH8	Lough Derryvaragh	Cherts
IGH8	Mullingar bypass	Road Section of Derryvaragh Cherts, upper Lucan Fm
IGH8	River Inny	Limestone
IGH14	Inny River	anastomosing channel
IGH7	Ballynagarbry (Mount Temple Esker)	Esker

In the course of complying with Section 261A of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010 as amended, Westmeath reviewed the status of 84 Quarries, in 38 cases no quarry was found or it had been reinstated. In the course of conducting this review the following comments were received from NPWS. The reference numbers relate to the map below.

EUQ42: Shay Murtagh - issues to be addressed include riverbank treatment along the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (SAC site code: 002299) and Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA site code: 004232). Currently the quarry road runs along the river bank and this is leading to dust suspension and deposition within the SAC/SPA. A buffer zone is required to protect the SAC/ SPA;

EUQ46: Roadstone Provinces at Ballymascarry, Finea, Co. Westmeath, contains a pair of nesting Peregrine Falcons, which is species listed in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC), and nesting Ravens (*Corvus corax*) and at times breeding Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). Prior to any further blasting or extraction at this site a biodiversity/management plan should be drawn up in consultation with NPWS;

EUQY9: Tyrrellspass – adjoining Milltownpass Bog NHA 002323;

EUQY70: Tyrrellspass – adjoining Milltownpass Bog NHA 002323;

EUQY79: Pass of Kilbride - adjoining Milltownpass Bog NHA 002323. This quarry is of particular concern due to drainage and habitat alteration works that have already taken place here, including a recent fire;

EUQY24: Beglin – within 1km of Milltownpass Bog NHA 002323;

EUQY27: Baylin – please note that this quarry is within 1-5km of Carn Park Bog SAC 002336;

Protection of Split Hills & Long Hill Esker SAC 001831. The alteration of the hydrology through excavation, drainage and infilling can potentially have a direct negative impact on the integrity of the SAC and its associated habitats. Black Lough, Swallow Lough and a number of smaller wetland areas have been lost or damaged from various activities, including quarrying. Direct loss of habitat due to quarrying appears to have ceased, however indirect impacts such as loss of wildlife corridors continue to hamper the quality of the SAC. Blasting on Sand and Gravel sites is a concern due to the potential to undermine stability and damage to the thin skin of vegetation covering the esker in certain places. The following quarries may potentially negatively impact on the Split Hills & Long Hill Esker SAC -

EUQY4 – Split hills. – This quarry is situated inside the SAC. Consultation with NPWS is requested should the intention to do any works arise, restorative or otherwise, in the quarry on either side of the road. The main issues of concern are deep excavation, drainage, infilling, undermining stability, damage to the fragile top soil layer, loss of wildlife corridors and unsuitable restorative measures;

EUQY5 – Rahinmore & Ardmorney;

EUQY3 – Cumminstown – lies particularly close to the SAC;

EUQY12 – Teernacreeve;

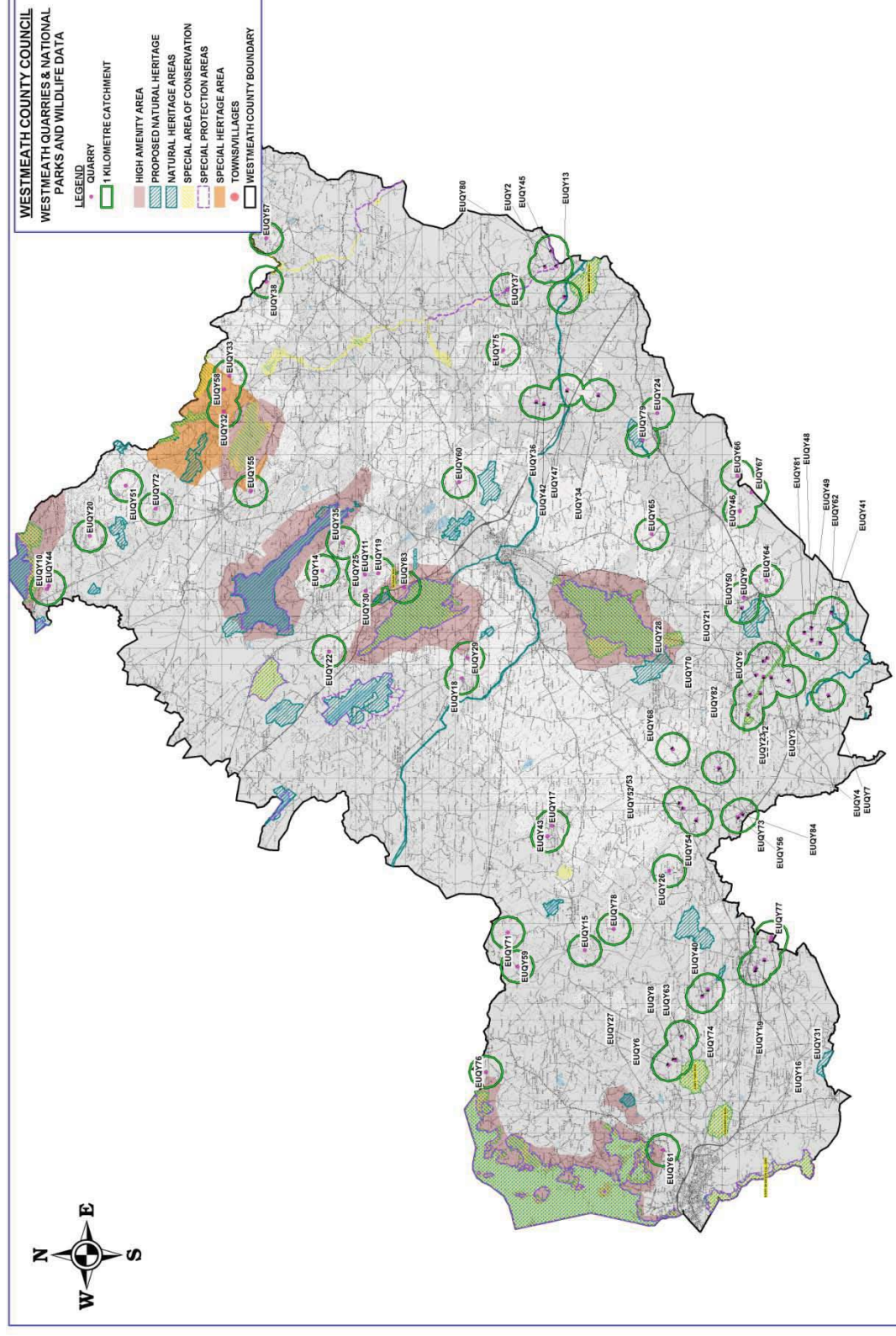
EUQY23 – Split hills;

EUQY28 – Ardmorney;

EUQY48 – Cornaher;

EUQY81 – Cornaher.

Wider issues in relation to landscape impact, sustainable transportation and protection of the rural road network at the same time as facilitating the utilisation of an indigenous material asset remain as challenges in the control of new and existing mineral exploitation.



Map 2.15: Quarry locations in relation to Natura 2000 sites, High Amenity Areas and the Special Heritage Area of Fore.

Significant Environmental Issues

The protection of sites of geomorphic interest remains difficult in the absence of statutory protection.

There has been ongoing exploration of Lead and Zinc Deposits in the area of Westmeath, there is significant potential environmental implications on exploitation this resource.

County Development Plan policy has a potentially significant impact on environmental considerations with regard to establishment, extension, alteration, after use, reinstatement and environmental and or environmental enforcement pertaining to Quarrying enterprises.

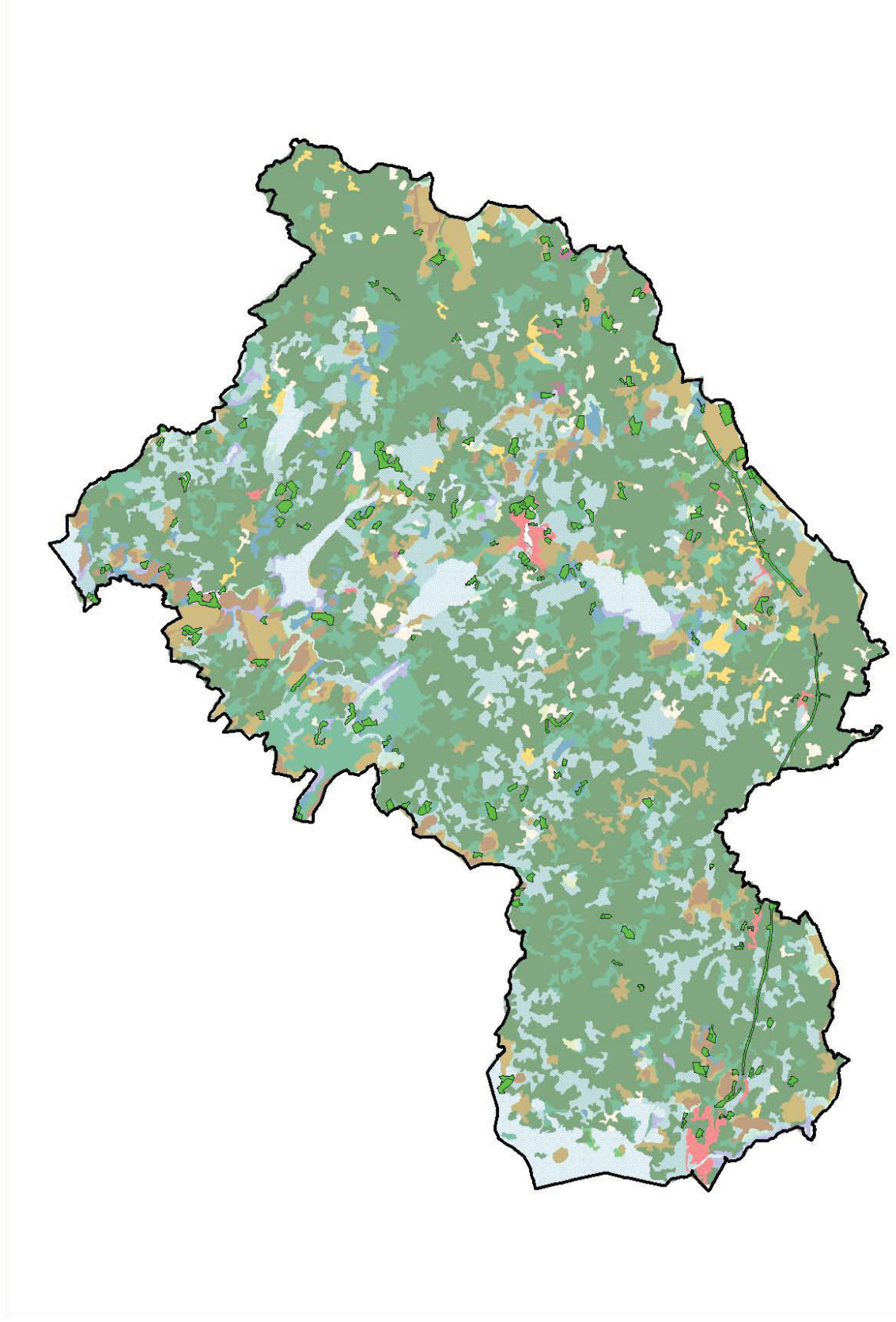
2.8 Landscape

Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Characteristics of local landscape, lakescape, riverscape, townscape, streetscape		
Landscape Character Assessment	A landscape character assessment was carried out in the course of preparing the 2008-2014 CDP given resource constraints this is being repeated in the revised plan.	Exploitation of eskers, bogs, development of rural housing and agricultural development all present significant environmental issues
Unique landscape features – e.g. stone walls, woodlands, estuaries	Westmeath contains diverse quality manmade and natural landscape features including canals, eskers, peatlands, railways and demesnes	
Landscape, landform, contours	The topography of the landscape varies hugely between various areas of the county with areas dominated by bogs, karst geology and esker systems	
Tree lines and groups/Tree Protection Orders	There are objectives contained in the existing CDP and LAPs with regard to the retention of specific trees and groups of trees.	A comprehensive survey of trees and tree groups is required.
Seascape – outward views, inward views	N/A	
Scenic areas, routes	There are scenic walking and driving routes in the county including the Westmeath Way, and the Táin Trail, the Fore Trail and a number of	

	views are listed for protection.	
Gardens	NIAH register of Gardens and mapped Demesnes	
Historical landscape	The Hill of Uisneach has been proposed for inclusion as a UNESCO world heritage site. There are also many quality historic demesne landscapes in Westmeath.	
Dereliction	Ongoing issues in certain towns and villages.	Limits to the funding to address or assist in addressing issues of dereliction
Brownfield Development	There are many brownfield sites across the county	In general brownfield sites by their nature present additional development challenges and expense than that which would be the case for a greenfield site.
Building design – height restrictions, suitable design for surroundings	A building height policy is contained in the Draft County Development Plan. There are a number of ACA's as well as specific policy for urban and rural design contained in the Draft County Plan which shall have the effect on implementation of ensuring appropriate design.	The implementation of design policy remains a challenge in both urban and rural development.

Baseline

Corine landcover mapping carried out in 1990, 2000 and 2006 forms a significant element of the baseline for landscape. A map showing both the Corine landcover data for 2006 and the areas in which landcover was found to have changed between the 2000 and 2006 mapping exercise. Amongst the changes that are recorded is the change of 918Ha from various landcover classifications to New Coniferous Forest. Also of interest is the extent of change from bogland to transitional scrub indicating drainage.



Map 2.16: The areas of bright green highlight changes in land cover as identified by Corine landcover mapping.

Significant Environmental Issues

Changes in landscape cover particularly changes from wetland type land cover including Peatlands and the changes in land cover arising from road construction projects are considered significant environmental issues.

2.9 Agriculture

Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Type and intensity of agriculture	Control over Agricultural development in Planning Policy is limited, however policy and objective regarding the development of new intensive agri development shall be included.	Changes to the type and intensity of agriculture have been and are likely in the future to be the most significant environmental issue in Westmeath. Impacts range from loss of habitats from wetlands to hedgerows, reducing farm diversity, issues with nutrient management, increased use of chemicals and increased transportation on rural roads.
Forestry	Although the proportion of forestry in Westmeath is comparatively low the potential environmental impacts are considerable.	Potential significant impacts of forestry have generally been addressed in National Policy and in agreed Codes of Practice. The Corine landuse survey indicates that there were an additional 918ha of coniferous forestry between the 2000 survey and the 2006 survey. Roads construction and clearfelling/ treefelling and afforestation activities can give rise to significant environmental impacts.
Quality of soil/sub-soil		

Baseline

The County Development Plan has little impact on Agricultural issues within the County, however the potential for impact of new intensive agricultural development on landscape and water issues is both significant and within the remit of the County Development Plan.

Significant Environmental Issues

Forthcoming changes in Agricultural policy including the Harvest 2020 Plan dictates that it would prudent for the CDP to have consideration of Nutrient Assimilative Capacity at a county or regional level in order to facilitate the future development of large scale agricultural enterprise in appropriate locations.

2.10 Energy/Communications

Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Energy/Communications		
Renewables – wind, geothermal, solar, hydro, tidal, wave	Consideration of the suitability of various locations in Westmeath for the development of wind power generation has been considered in the 2014-2020 CDP.	Conflicts may arise in the implementation of the wind energy policy identified in the county Development Plan, this shall be considered on a case by case basis.
Energy efficiency in buildings, sustainable building design	General policy with regard energy conservation in buildings has been included in the Draft 2014-2020 CDP.	
Transmission networks – current capacity and condition	There are constraints in the existing electricity supply network to Mullingar, there are proposals for augmentation with a 110Kv new line.	Where plans for increased wind energy production are realised the transmission network associated would have the potential for significant environmental impacts.
Transmission networks – replacement and extension of infrastructure		
Visual impact of infrastructure (energy and telecommunications)	There are ongoing concerns with regard to visual impacts of infrastructure in Westmeath particularly given recent planning application for wind farm.	Due to the generally low lying character of Westmeath and the absence of significant back drops for wind turbines, the issues of visual impact is considered significant.

Baseline

Significant Environmental Issues

The potential of various locations in Westmeath for renewable energy development and communication infrastructure is considered to be limited by virtue of the high quality landscape and the density of rural housing in Westmeath. The Landscape Character Assessment in the Draft County Development Plan shall inform the consideration of these issues in the Environmental Report.

Environmental impacts of wind energy development and policies relating to same including impacts on species and habitats shall also be given consideration in Appropriate Assessment reporting.

2.11 Air/Climate

Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Air/Climate		
Power plants	There are no power plants within County Westmeath	
Greenhouse gasses	The most significant contribution to greenhouse gases in Westmeath is transportation.	Unsustainable travel patterns within and out of the county are likely to be the most significant environmental issue with regard to the County Development Plan.
Climate change	Adaptation to Climate Change has been a consideration in drafting of the CDP and particularly the SFRA which informs it.	Increased frequency of extreme weather events have the potential to cause risk to life and property. Policies in relation to Areas at risk of flooding and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment have been incorporated into the Draft.

2.12 Tourism

Resource and time constraints did not permit completion of this section.

Environmental Baseline heading	Comment	Significant Environmental Issues
Major projects	Hotels, Resorts, Visitor Centres and Marinas	Increased recreational use of Lakes and Major water bodies, including water based transport. Onshore infrastructure in or close to designated sites
Sufficient infrastructural linkages	Roads and Public Transport	
Cater for increased numbers during the Summer	Peak Volumes of Visitors	Increase effluent loading and traffic.
Consolidate development in tourist related areas	Spatial Policy should direct development to appropriate locations	Localised impacts on environmental resources
Possible Task(s):		

Promotion of linkages between features/groups of features	For consideration in CDP and Tourism Plan	
Promotion of cycle ways, walking routes, waterways/navigational corridors as tourist trails	Specific Policies and Objectives in Draft County Development Plan	Impacts of walking and cycling routes provision and use on biodiversity of designated areas.
Some Information Source(s):		
Fáilte Ireland: - http://www.failteireland.ie/		

Baseline

Tourism development in Westmeath has been limited in scale and scope, however the impacts on the implementation of CDP policy to increase tourist use of the Lakes, Rivers and Cultural sites has been considered in the assessment matrices of the SEA ER.

Significant Environmental Issues

Increased recreational use of the lakes, including water based recreation and the provision of cycle and walking routes in Westmeath has potential significant environmental impacts.

Potential impacts include disturbance, introduction of invasive species such as zebra mussel and water quality issues associated with pumping out of cruisers on Lough Ree and the Shannon.

2.13 Cultural Heritage**2.13.1 RPS and NIAH****Baseline**

There are currently 503 Structures recorded as being protected in Westmeath, there are in addition to this a large number of further structures recommended by the Minister for Inclusion in the RPS due to classification as Regional and Higher importance in the course of the NIAH survey. These are being added to the RPS as resources permit and have been proposed for addition to the RPS in the Draft CDP 2014-2020.

Significant Environmental Issues

The erosion of character of buildings in/on the Record of Protected Structures is a significant concern, in the case of both occupied and unoccupied structures.

2.13.2 Architectural Conservation Areas**Baseline**

There are 20 Architectural Conservation Areas in County Westmeath including Athlone town.

Significant Environmental Issues

The character of Architectural Conservation Areas is being eroded for a range of reasons including lack of awareness of the designation to the owners, with regard to obligations arising from the designation.

2.13.3 Record of Monuments and Places**Baseline**

The Sites and monuments record contains 2,872 individual entries in Westmeath. These entries are of varying scale, age and importance. Of particular significance to the assessment of the Development Plan is the designation of zones of Archaeological potential in urban areas including Mullingar, and Kilbeggan.

15 (13 in March 2009) National Monuments in State Care are listed in the Schedule 5 of the 2002-2008 Plan and these are protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004) as amended. There are currently 17 Preservation Orders and 1 Temporary Preservation Order in Westmeath.

The Archaeological heritage of Westmeath is not confined to the Record of Monuments and Places and policies have been included in the Draft County Development Plans to deal with proposals entailing extensive excavation and previously undiscovered archaeology.

Significant Environmental Issues

Linear and other features included in the Sites and Monuments Record including Uisneach are presented as point data in the electronic datasets and therefore do not appear in the normal searches conducted in the course of development control.

2.14 Material Assets

Material assets for the purposes of the SEA Environmental Report include the built environment, water, waste water and transport infrastructure, as well as the natural material assets which have a supporting role in the physical and natural infrastructure. Consideration of material assets in this SEA assessment has a particular focus on the sustainable economic use of public investment and natural resources.

2.15 Climatic factors**Baseline**

In the consideration of climatic factors, adaptation to climate change and an overview of energy input implications of the various policy options have set out in this Environmental Report, with a very broad consideration of the carbon accounting type assessment

Significant Environmental Issues

The implications of Climatic factors have a local aspect with regard to adaptation to climate change and a national and global dimension, in relation to the potential contribution of development in Westmeath to climate change.

2.16 Interactions between the above

The most significant interaction arising as a result of the above considerations relate to the impacts of the Settlement Hierarchy on material assets and the physical and natural infrastructure of the county. The application of Regional and National Spatial Policy to prioritise the development of certain urban centres such as impacts on roads, water treatment and waste water treatment along with rural development policy for employment/economic development, residential and social infrastructure are areas which greatest interactions will occur.

2.17 Baseline, Significant Environmental Issues and Draft Plan Policy Assessment for individual Settlements

Having regard to Sections 42 and 43 of the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007, and the constraints imposed on Westmeath Council and An Bord Pleanála with regard to considering permission, an appeal or an application for approval under Section 34, 37, 37E, 175 or 226 of the Act of 2000 for development being development which involves the disposal of waste water to a waste water works, or is considering such a development under Section 179 of the Act of 2000, the Planning Authority or the Board, as the case may be, shall consider whether the discharge of waste water from the proposed development, in conjunction with existing discharges to the receiving waters, would cause non-compliance with the combined approach or, in situations where there is existing non-compliance, would result in a significant breach of the combined approach.

Having regard to the above and to Section 4.16 of the Guidelines for Planning Authorities No. 15 issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010 as amended in June 2007, the zoning of lands where services are not available and there is no reasonable expectation within a reasonable timeframe is not recommended.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OBJECTIVES RELEVANT TO 2014-2020 WESTMEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

3.1 Introduction

The use of environmental protection objectives fulfils obligations set out in Section F, Schedule 2B of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 as amended. The environmental protection objectives are distinct from the County Development Plan objectives and provide a standard against which the goals, policies and objectives of the County Development Plan can be measured in order to highlight those with the potential for environmental impact. They are used as a tool to cross check the policies of the Plan in order to maximise the environmental sustainability of the Plan. The cross checking process helps identify policies that will be likely to result in significant adverse impacts, so that alternatives may be considered or mitigation measures may be put in place.

The environmental protection objectives for the Westmeath County Development Plan have been generated from European, National and Regional Policy and Guidance. Sample objectives are given in Table 4B of the SEA Guidelines produced by the DoEHLG in 2004 and these were amended to reflect the specific issues that are considered relevant to this particular Plan and the range of issues that are significant within the County. Scoping, public consultation processes and higher level policy informed the generation of appropriate objectives.

3.2 Environmental Protection Objectives

Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna				
SEO	Indicators	Responsible Authority	Frequency of Monitoring	Targets
B1: Protect, conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats, species and areas of local, national or international importance, including aquatic habitats and species and promote the sustainable management of habitat networks	Conservation status of habitats and species as assessed under Art. 17 of the Habitats directive	NPWS	6 year cycle, next report due 2014	Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under National and International legislation
B2: Ensure that on implementation, any policy or objective not directly connected with or necessary for the management of a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination, shall not adversely affect the integrity of a European Site.				Compliance with WFD RBMPs
Population and Human Health				
SEO	Indicators	Responsible Authority	Frequency of Monitoring	Targets
P1: Facilitate a high quality of life for Westmeath's population through ensuring high quality residential, recreational and working environments, encouraging sustainable transport patterns and minimising noise pollution	Data on commuting, education, employment and economy, housing and general health data from Census	Westmeath County Council	5 year intervals	Reduction in average distance and time to travel to work school or college. Increase in educational access and opportunity

					Increase in general health as recorded by Census. Improved recreational amenity and open space provision. Increased sustainable employment opportunities
Water Resources					
SEO	Indicators	Responsible Authority	Frequency of Monitoring	Targets	
W1: Promote water conservation and sustainable water use based population projections and long-term projections of available water resources.	Core Strategy and Water Service Strategic Plan shall set out detail at each County Development Plan review	WCC	6 years	Abstractions existing and proposed to be maintained within the environmental carrying capacity of the water body.	
W2: Protect the quality of surface and ground waters as sources of drinking water and as valuable assets for amenity and recreation and for the protection of habitats and species.	Water quality testing results for the full range of monitoring including WWDA's	EPA and Westmeath County Council	Varies - many monthly with annual reporting and interim review/updates of RBMP's	Achieving good water status for all water bodies by 2015.	
W3: Achieve and maintain required water quality standards and reduce discharges of pollutants or contaminants to waters as required under the River Basin Management Plans and the associated programme of measures and action programme.	WFD reporting and updates, Westmeath County Council and EPA Monitoring results. RBMP's to be revised in 2015.	Westmeath County Council, EPA		Achieving good water status for all water bodies by 2015.	

SEO	Indicators	Responsible Authority	Frequency of Monitoring	Targets
S1: Maximise the use of brownfield lands and the existing built environment to reduce the need to develop greenfield lands. Prioritise the re-use of structures, over demolition and replacement wherever possible	Quantity of Greenfield land developed. HLA returns and Core Strategy	Westmeath County Council	HLA annual Core Strategy 6 year cycle	Prioritise brownfield development in Urban Areas.
S2: Maintain the quality of and access to assets such as aquifers, aggregates, motorways, open spaces, water courses and all other physical, social and green infrastructure.				
S3: Avoid flood risk in selecting sites for development and mitigate the effects of floods.	Properties and zoned lands effected by flooding or flood risk	Westmeath County Council and OPW	Intermittent	No new properties to be effected by flooding.
Cultural Heritage and Landscape				
SEO	Indicators	Responsible Authority	Frequency of Monitoring	Targets
C1: Protect and conserve the integrity and setting of features of architectural and archaeological heritage and identify other features of merit for protection where appropriate.	Proportion of NIAH recommendations on RPS	Westmeath County Council	At 2 and 4 year County Development Plan review	All ministerial recommendations to be included in RPS.
C2: Conserve and enhance valued natural and historic landscape features.	Landscape character assessment completed in accordance with the European landscape convention			All parts of the county characterised.
C3: Enhance landscape and townscape quality and minimise negative visual impacts from development.	No. of ACA's			An ACA designated for each village in Westmeath
C4: Protect and enhance the quality, character and features of waterways.	Lake management plans	Westmeath County Council		All Major Lakes to Have Management Plans.
C5: Protect and conserve the quality, character and distinctiveness of geological and geomorphological	To have a list of geomorphological sites	GSI/NPWS/ Westmeath County	At 2 and 4 year County	To appropriately assess all

systems, sites and features.	included in the CDP for protection.	Council	Development Plan review	applications affecting geomorphological sites
Air and Climatic Factors				
SEO	Indicators	Responsible Authority	Frequency of Monitoring	Targets
A1: Reduce the need to travel.	CSO census data on travel time to school/college/work	Westmeath County Council	Each Census	Reduction of total numbers of long journeys
A2: Support Implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy.			Annual Returns	As above and increase in public transport use.
A3: Encourage energy efficiency in building design and maximise the use of renewable energy forms.			SEAI Recommendations	SEAI Targets

3.3 Use of Strategic Environmental Protection Objectives

The above Environmental Protection Objectives have been used to carry out the SEA in accordance with legislation. They provide a standard against which the policies of the Development Plan are measured for their environmental sustainability. A crosschecking process has been used whereby the Draft Plan policies were proofed against the Strategic Environmental Protection Objectives such that any policies with the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts were highlighted in addition to significant positive impacts. Alternative strategic options are considered below or mitigation measures proposed to counteract any adverse environmental effects highlighted, thereby maximising the environmental sustainability of the Draft Development Plan.

4 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF POLICIES

4.1 Methodology for assessment and Determination of Significance of Effects

Matrices are the mechanism by which conflicts or potential conflicts between the policies of the County Development Plan and the strategic environmental objectives have been identified. The likely significant effects of policies contained in the Plan on implementation would be likely to have on the environment were identified in this process.

The DoEHLG SEA Guidelines (Nov 2004) suggest that the assessment of likely significant effects on the environment should be carried out by the Development Plan team as a whole, preferably involving some external specialist advice. It was considered that advice would be best provided through the resources and expertise available from within the Council, Environmental Authorities and Prescribed Bodies.

The following stages were followed to ensure a robust and defensible determination of significance, particularly in difficult cases such as cumulative effect of single houses, or increased wastewater generation of particular settlements.

- Consultation with the public and relevant authorities and gathering of baseline data was carried out to determine the significant issues facing the County and the conclusions reached were presented to the Steering Group and the EPA and approved
- A set of Strategic Environmental Objectives were prepared within the Forward Planning Section, which are in accordance with National and international policy and guidance and also reflective of the significant issues facing Westmeath. (The environmental objectives are the standard against which the policy of the Plan will be measured)
- Each Policy and Objective proposed for inclusion in the Plan was assessed against the agreed SEA objectives. This was carried out during the preparation of the Plan and changes were made as issues arose to make the Plan produced more environmentally sustainable.
- The Plan produced was formally assessed using the matrix. The assessment of each was assigned a symbol;
 - o compatible (+),
 - o conflicting (-),
 - o no relationship or insignificant impact (/),
 - o possibly compatible or conflicting (?)
- All major issues arising in the assessment of the policies and objectives were raised for discussion with the Steering Group to ensure that significant issues were not missed or given undue consideration
- Evaluation of significance requires consideration of various questions, which will establish the importance, or "significance", of the predicted impact:
 1. Will the measure in the policy lead to a risk of environmental standards being breached?
 2. Could it lead to failure to achieve environmental policies or targets?

3. Will it affect environmental resources, which are protected by laws or policies, e.g. Natura 2000 habitats, species, landscapes, water resources, agricultural resources and cultural sites, etc.?
4. Could it lead to impacts on environmental resources, which, although not legally protected, are important or valuable?

As a follow on from the preparation and evaluation of the previous sections of the report, ie baseline data and trends, existing significant issues, types and scale of development likely to impact on the environment, environmental vulnerabilities, the above questions were considered in determining significance of environmental effects identified

- Where the strategic objective or policy included in the draft plan emanates from a higher level or parallel plan; where the nature of the impact depends on decisions that have been made or will be made at;
 - a higher policy level the symbol ↑ was used (e.g. NSS, RPG, NDP, etc.)
 - a lower policy level the symbol ↓ was used (e.g. LAP, AAP, Habitat Management Plans etc.)
 - parallel policy from other plans, the symbol → will be used. (e.g. Rural Water Programme, Waste Management Plan, County Development Board Strategy, etc.)
- The assessment matrices for the Draft Plan were presented to development plan team for consideration during final editing of the plan.
- Suggested alternatives, mitigation, offsetting, etc to the potential identified significant effects were raised for discussion, with the Steering Group and amendment to the Plan were suggested where required.

4.2 Summary of Likely Significant Effects of Implementing the Plan on the Environment and Measures Proposed to Prevent, Reduce or Offset

4.2.1 Introduction

The full matrix and assessment of policies against environmental objectives was undertaken, the assessment tables were compiled in the course of preparing the draft Westmeath County Development Plan and as such contain assessment of objectives and policies which were subsequently amended or removed. A summary of the outcome of this assessment for major issues arising is provided in this section.

Given the ongoing changes arising from the iterative nature of the SEA and CDP drafting processes and the number of locations in the Draft Plan where there are statements akin to policy or objectives which are contained within the back ground text there are a number of minor gaps and inconsistency in the assessment of the plan.

Due to time and resource constraints for both the drafting of the Development Plan and the SEA process there are a number of conflicts which have been identified in the assessment Matrices which have not been set out for general discussion below, therefore, account must be taken of the matrices in the consideration of specific elements of this Environmental Report.

Depending on the level of significance, which was determined based on the scale and cumulative nature of the potential impact, measures to mitigate against significant negative environmental effects have been provided. Some of the potential effects discussed below are likely to be less significant than others. For those with a higher level of significance, a recommendation has been made to remove or alter the policy so as to prevent or reduce the impact if possible.

4.2.2 Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna

Proposed increased recreational access to lakes and other environmentally sensitive assets:

Water based, walking and/or cycling access to the lakes and lake shores is an important element of the future development of the natural assets of Westmeath, however these policies and objectives have the potential for significant environmental impacts on biodiversity Flora and Fauna of Local National and International importance, as set out in the submission from NPWS and in the SEA Matrices.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

Policy has been provided in the Draft County Development Plan in response to the SEA process to ensure that consent for new, enhanced or intensified recreational access would only be considered following the preparation of a Strategic Habitat Management Plan in consultation with relevant stakeholders including National Parks and Wildlife Service for the Habitat of concern. The specific individual impacts on biodiversity generally and on the Natura network, of these policies and objectives would be considered in those Strategic Habitat Management Plans.

Arising from the conclusions of both the SEA and AA processes, map based objectives for the provision of recreation and amenity development including walkways which have the potential to impact on habitats with a focus on Natura 2000 sites have been removed. Policies and objectives in the body of the draft plan are set out in a manner by which strategic habitat management plans shall be required prior to finalising the proposed location, nature and construction of such facilities.

An approach to the inclusion of policy and objectives relating to recreation and amenity routes should be at least consistent with the advice from NPWS set out below in the consideration of road objectives. It is recommended that policies and objectives relating to recreation and amenity uses in environmentally sensitive locations be provided in the format of a point A to point B, for the proposed route, an acknowledgement of the potential difficulties on implementation of these policies should be included in the Draft County Development Plan.

Preferred Route Corridor for N4 Mullingar to Roosky extension and other road building/improvement policy:

A preferred route corridor has been published by the NRA. This has to date not been subject to EIS, SEA or AA and presents a number of significant challenges with regard to biodiversity, flora and fauna including habitats and species protected under the Habitats Directive.

NPWS in a pre-draft submission to the CDP have proposed an approach towards resolving the difficulties presented in SEA and AA as follows:

Plan level mitigation may include, among other things, setting out provisions to demonstrate that lower level plans or projects will be subject to appropriate assessment where necessary. However, if policies and objectives are made conditional on adequate evaluations and assessments being undertaken at lower plan level or at project level, it is advised that, as a minimum, these situations should be subject to preliminary examination and should be noted clearly in the plan. The proposals should:

- Include a statement of the issue being addressed (e.g. improved road link between point A and B) without favouring a specified solution (if a specified solution is put forward, appropriate assessment will be required of that solution);*
- State that issues may arise under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive that will require assessment and that alternative solutions may need to be considered to avoid significant effects;*

- *Stress that in deciding on a solution, it will be necessary to comply fully with Article 6(3) (and, if warranted, Article 6(4), including compensatory measures) of the Habitats Directive.*

The following text was included in the Draft County development Plan in that regard:

A schedule of proposed national road improvement and upgrade projects are listed in table 8.1. The council will preserve a corridor to enable design options for national road improvement and upgrade projects to be advanced. Issues may arise under article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive that will require assessment at design stage and alternative solutions may need to be considered to avoid significant affects.

Table 8.1 is presented in the dCDP as follows:

Table 8.1: Schedule of National Road Improvements

Road No.	Description
N52	Realignment from Cloghan to Billistown
N51	Realignment from Delvin to the Meath Co. Boundary
N52	Realignment offline Delvin bypass
N52	Realignment offline Clonmellon bypass
N62	Realignment from Fardrum to Coounty Boundary including Ballinahown Bypass
N55	Realignment Athlone to the Longford County Boundary
N4	Mullingar Bypass north westwards to Longford County Boundary
N52	Improvement of route from Kilbeggan to Offaly County Boundary

Table 8.2: Schedule of Regional Road Improvements

Road No.	Description
R390	Realignment at Walderstown
R394	Realignment from Taughmon to Crookedwood

Each of the improvements listed have a range of potentially significant environmental impacts, potential impacts arising from works to the National Secondary Road Network projects in Westmeath are set out in a preliminary fashion in National Secondary Roads Needs Study, North region by NRA and include amongst other things direct and indirect impacts on Natura 2000 sites and archaeology.

Issues relating to the N4 are complex and a considerable quantity of work has been carried out in the consideration of impacts of the various routes options.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

The text contained in the draft County Development Plan should be further amended to make the plan level mitigation into policy and to take into account fully the proposal in this regard by the NPWS in the Scoping Response, it should include a brief discussion of the likely issues that need to be addressed in plan policy level mitigation; “as a minimum, these situations should be subject to preliminary examination and should be noted clearly in the plan” the plan should also be amended to ensure that the policy/objective/intention to undertake improvements to regional roads is also included.

Rural enterprise:

A number of policies and objectives are included in Chapter 3 seeking to facilitate the development of rural enterprise. Although this represents a critical element of a rural county such as Westmeath, the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy as articulated by the Regional Planning Guidelines is also a critical element in the Development of the County. (See environmental report for proposed Variation no. 11 of the 2008 CDP for further detailed consideration along with submission from the EPA on the consideration of this variation)

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

The plan should be amended to contain an objective to carry out an appropriate level of analysis to identify specific locations/areas and/or specific uses to which a policy of the type proposed would apply thereby allowing assessment of location specific sensitivities and/or development specific issues. This evidence based approach would have the added advantage of providing some level of certainty of site viability to a proposed project which could potentially be considered under this policy.

Agricultural development:

The following objective is contained in Chapter 3 of the Draft Plan: O-GA1 To implement at county level provisions set out in Harvest 2020.

The Harvest 2020 plan has not been subject to SEA and contains targets and measures which have potential significant impacts with particular reference to increasing challenges in nutrient management. In order to facilitate the successful implementation of the objectives of Harvest 2020 in Westmeath County Council need to consider and facilitate proactive and innovative solutions to the various environmental consequences of this plan including nutrient management solutions.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

Include objective for the preparation of a strategy to positively address aspects of agricultural intensification required to achieve the objectives of the Harvest 2020 plan within the competency of Westmeath County Council such as River Basin Management planning and Nutrient planning.

4.2.3 Population and Human Health

Impacts to population and human health may occur as a result of reduction in general amenity and inadequate service provision such as wastewater treatment and public transport, a deterioration in landscape quality, cultural heritage, water or air quality. In this regard, issues relating to population and human health are dealt with throughout consideration of the majority of the other issues in this section of the Environmental Report.

Scale of Population Growth:

Policies seeking to influence the scale and distribution of future population growth necessary for the provision of services including transport infrastructure, schools, health services are a critical part of the high level policy of the plan, and are implemented through application of the Settlement Strategy.

The settlement strategy prioritises the development of settlements from the Gateway Towns of Athlone and Mullingar down through a range of tiers to un-serviced rural settlements. These settlements are of varying sizes in both remote rural and areas in close proximity to larger settlements.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

The status of background text regarding unserviced settlements within the plan, which is not reflected policy, objectives or in the Settlement Strategy of the plan is of concern. The variation in character and environmental carrying capacity of the settlements makes it difficult to consider generic impacts, however it appears by definition that this provision advocates the clustering of on-site waste water treatment. There is need for policy statement qualifying the role of unserviced settlement and issues arising from groundwater vulnerability.

4.2.4 Water Resources**Water Supply**

There is a material asset and human health aspect to constraints presented regarding water supply, however the most significant issue relates to Biodiversity and with particular reference to Natura 2000 Sites. These issues are also dealt with in the consideration of Appropriate Assessment of the 2014-2020 County Development Plan. Although a significant issue in the consideration of SEA, the implications for consideration of the Habitats Directive in AA are likely to be more acute. Specific account should be taken of the AA in considering this issue.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

Potential solutions to any water supply issues that arise will be fully assessed under the Habitats Directive

Objective O-WT6 should be amended to reflect the adoption of Variation no. 11 of the 2008 -2014 County Development Plan. The Objective should be amended to read:

In the consideration of proposals with a public water supply requirement to take fully into account the abstraction capacity limits set out in the report due for completion in September 2013 arising from the adoption of Variation No. 11 to the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014.

Wastewater Treatment Capacity to support development provided for by the Settlement Strategy and Water source/resource protection

The settlement strategy/hierarchy is prescribed in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands Region. The Regional Guidelines considered that issues regarding the Physical and Green infrastructural (assimilative capacity) available to facilitate the expansion were to be considered at County Plan level.

The SEA process for the Draft CDP has identified a number of shortcomings in the wastewater infrastructure and assimilative capacity serving settlements contained in the Settlement Hierarchy, details are set out in assessment matrices of the individual settlement plans in Appendix One and elsewhere in this report.

It is the objective of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan to provide for a range of types of development on zoned lands in Coole and Milltownpass, where there is no waste water collection system, development would therefore be dependant on on-site wastewater treatment systems.

It is the objective of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan to provide for a range of types of development on zoned lands in Moate in which the loading of the relevant Wastewater Treatment Plants has exceeded the design capacity.

It is the objective of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan to provide for a range of types of development on zoned lands in Ballynacarrigy, Ballymore, Multyfarnham, Clonmellon, where the assimilative capacity of the water course has been or is being exceeded.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

Land should not be zoned if there is no reasonable prospect of providing key infrastructure including drainage (S.4.16 of Development Plans, Guidelines for Planning Authorities). Policy and objectives for the development of land with particular regard to land use zoning objectives should be limited to locations where key infrastructure is in place.

The provision of improved and increased wastewater and collection and treatment infrastructure throughout the county is on going and will continue through the plan period. There is a reasonable prospect that the identified deficiencies will be resolved during this time and in any case development will not be permitted unless adequate waste cater capacity is available.

Potential impacts of Rural Housing Policy on Groundwater source/resource

The Draft Development Plan contains policy and objectives to facilitate development in areas without the benefit of currently available, or any reasonable expectation of waste water collection being provided. It is the draft policy of Westmeath County Council to accommodate demand for housing on unzoned lands, limited by a number of conditions.

Considerable progress was made in the consideration potential impacts on ground and surface waters by implementation of 2008 County Development Plan policy, completion of the groundwater vulnerability mapping for Westmeath and the introduction of the 2010 EPA Code of Practice, however short comings remain. Little or no progress has been made on monitoring/maintaining the quality of the panel of approved assessors or on ensuring that on-site waste water treatment systems are installed and operated correctly.

There remains no reference or particular policy for the existing Zones of Contribution to groundwater abstractions in Westmeath. The Zone of contribution to all lakes in Westmeath where groundwater represents a significant contribution including Lough Owel and Lough Lene, both important groundwater fed water sources, as well as important Nature Conservation Sites remain undefined, and unprotected by means of a specific policy.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

A policy should be included in the draft County Development Plan to deal with applications with the potential to impact on quantitative and qualitative aspects of groundwater including the provision of on site waste water treatment systems in zones of contribution designated by the EPA.

A policy to prioritise the preparation of a groundwater protection plan with particular reference to the establishment of zones of contribution to Lough Lene and Lough Owel should be included in the Draft County Development Plan, including recommendations for dealing with development with the potential to impact on same.

A policy should be included in the Draft County Development Plan to require that the construction of all on-site waste water treatment systems are signed off by a member of the Approved panel of site assessors.

4.2.5 Soil, Material Assets, Flooding

Material Assets

Material assets include past and future planned physical and social infrastructure from which maximum efficiencies need to be sought (Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-16) by the Department of public expenditure and reform. The maximisation of the return on this investment is a critical aspect of proper planning and sustainable development.

The stock of vacant housing in the county is considered as a material asset, serviced lands in the form of incomplete developments or phases of developments with ground works completed are equally considered material assets often now embodying past public investment. The prioritisation of brown field sites and the existing built environment is expressed in Strategic Environmental objective S1. The zoning of greenfield sites where capacity exists to accommodate demand projected in the plan period within existing brown field sites is inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the county, and needs careful consideration.

Flood risk

In the course of carrying out the SEA of the Draft County Development Plan, a number of conflicts were identified between the policy and objectives of the plan and locations identified as being subject to a flood risk identified in the draft CFRAM data and/or the Benefiting land designation.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

Each of the conflicts identified in the assessment matrices should be removed from the Draft Development Plan or alternatively assessed in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, with particular reference to the provision of Section 4 of that document.

4.2.6 Cultural Heritage and Landscape

Archaeological heritage

Land use zoning objectives for development have been proposed in the Draft plan for sites within Zones of Archaeological Potential where other options appear to have been available (see assessment matrices for settlements).

In the course of assessing settlement plans a number of recorded national monuments that appear on the Record of Monuments and Places have not been identified on the Draft Plan Mapping.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

Mapping presented in the settlement objectives maps should be cross checked against the statutory record to ensure consistency.

4.2.7 Air and Climate Factors

Reliance private cars

Also see Population and human Health in Section 4.2.3 above.

Rural Housing Policy

One-off rural housing raises a number of environmental concerns and if it is not 'rural generated'; necessary to sustain rural communities and economies; it can be considered unsustainable. These environmental concerns include:

- a) Housing which is urban generated: where occupiers are working, at school, accessing services and meeting family and friends, etc., in urban areas and elsewhere; generates car

journeys and results in unsustainable transport patterns. Such development cumulatively results in undesirable environmental impacts, including greenhouse gas emissions and use of non renewable resources, and is contrary to our obligations under the Kyoto agreement. In contrast, for rural generated housing, some of these journeys e.g. to work or family, will be within the local area.

- b) Individual rural houses that are poorly sited and screened or located in sensitive or exposed environments or landscapes will negatively impact on the quality of the area. Cumulatively a large volume of rural housing development over time, however sensitively sited will impact visually upon landscape and natural amenity.
- c) Single rural houses that rely on individual on-site wastewater treatment place surface and ground water resources under a significant risk of pollution and can be particularly harmful if located in areas of groundwater vulnerability.

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005) issued by the DoEHLG advises on the type of housing development that should be considered as rural generated; which should take account of the scope and extent of the housing needs to be considered in the area – whether beside a large town or more removed from such a centre; the categories of persons the guidelines cite as comprising rural generated are those who are an intrinsic part of the rural community, e.g., have lived for substantial periods of their lives in the area as members of the established rural community; or persons working full-time or part-time in the rural area e.g., in farming or natural resource related occupations or teaching in a rural school. The 2014-2020 Draft Westmeath County Development Plan policy allows for persons in the following categories:

To permit residential development in areas outside of the development boundaries of the settlement hierarchy subject to the following circumstances:

1. *Persons who are actively engaged in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, bloodstock and peat industry,*
2. *Members of farm families seeking to build on the family farm,*
3. *Landowners and members of landowners' families (landowner for this purpose being defined as persons who owned the land in question at the date of adoption of the draft County Development Plan 2000),*
4. *Persons employed locally whose employment would provide a service to the Local Community,*
5. *Persons who have personal, family or economic ties within the area, including returning emigrants*
6. *Persons who wish to return to farming and who buy or inherit a substantial farm-holding which is kept intact as an established farm unit, will be considered by the Council to be farmers and will be open to consideration for a rural house, as farmers. Where there is already a house on the holding, refurbishment or replacement of this house is the preferred option.*

Provision for returning emigrants is included in the Rural Housing Guidelines issued by DOEHLG. (An amendment to CDP policy was introduced under Variation 5 Rural Housing which provided for Category 6 above, this variation was subject to SEA and AA)

Proposals for one-off rural housing will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and policy is contained in the Plan to ensure that proposals contributing to ribbon development, those impacting on sensitive areas or environments or those likely to pose a significant threat to surface or groundwater resources will be strictly regulated, however the cumulative effects of the Rural Housing Policy can only be given adequate consideration at policy level. Rural Design Guidelines have been produced which seek to increase the quality of proposals so that impacts to the landscape will be minimised. An objective is included to encourage the development of sustainable rural transport initiatives with a view to reducing unsustainable transport patterns.

5 ALTERNATIVE POLICY AND REASONS FOR SELECTING ALTERNATIVE CHOSEN

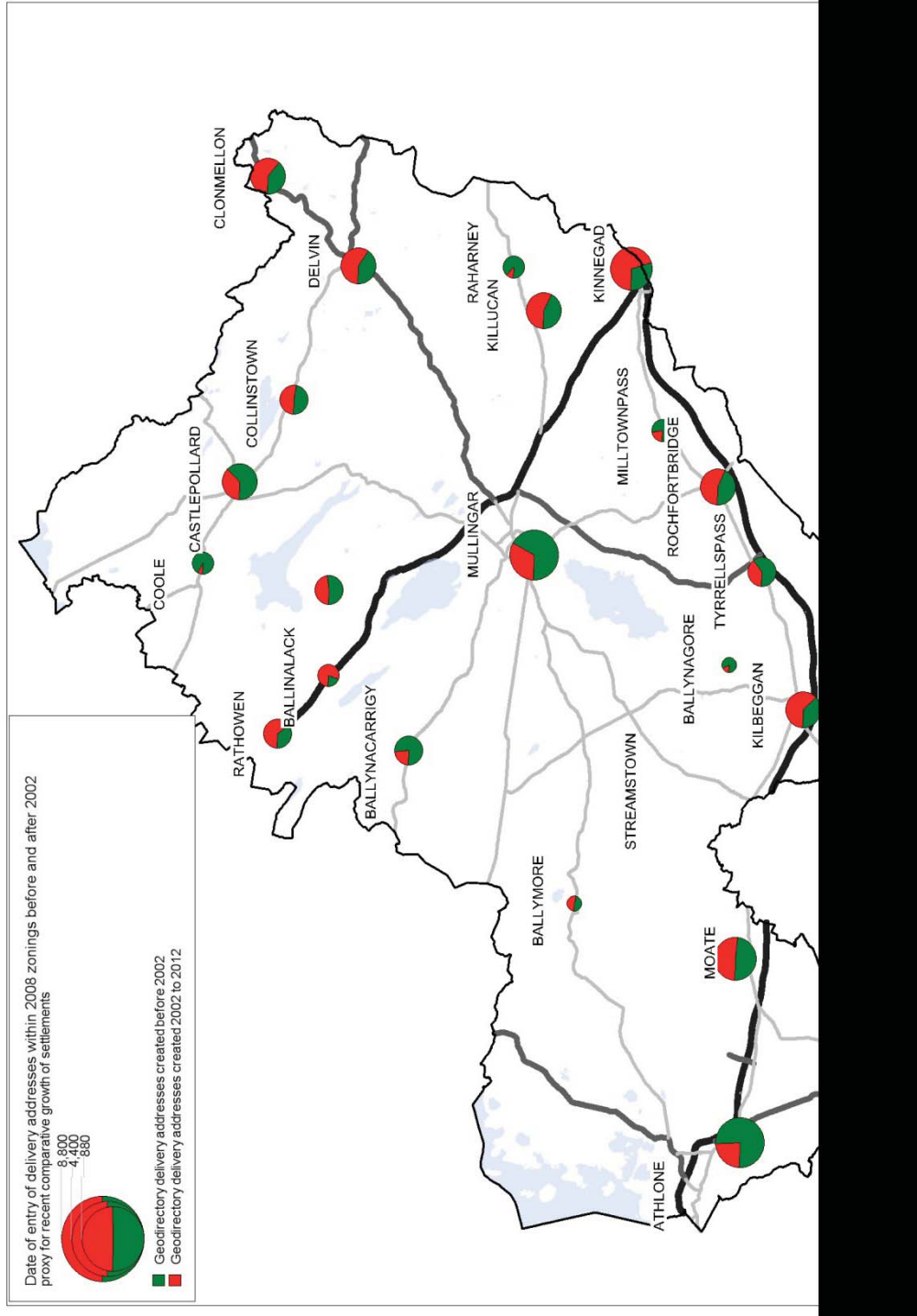
The Core issue identified in the SEA of the Draft County Development Plan relates to the Settlement Strategy and its relationship to the environmental carrying capacity of the county in the context of obligations arising at Regional, National and European level. The settlement strategy for the purposes of considering alternatives includes the rural housing policy.

5.1 Alternative 1: Continuation of Historical Development Trends

Map 2.2 in Chapter 2 demonstrates the distribution of growth in settlements in Westmeath prior to and after 2002.

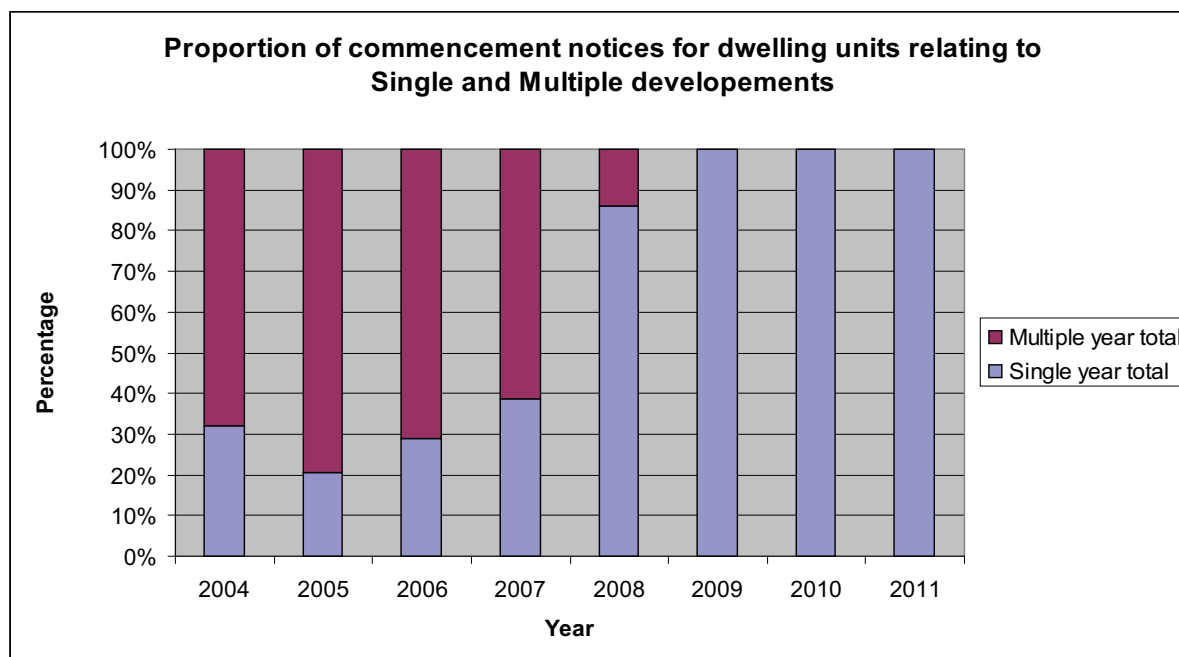
A dramatic increase in the number of rural houses in Westmeath in each category has been recorded, however the dramatic increase in the number of rural houses in each category including rented demonstrates an historical demand led development trend.

In the continuation of the development trend in Map 5.1, an additional 5800 houses would be anticipated in the aggregate rural area in the period of 2011 to 2021.



Map 5.1: The growth of settlements as represented by Geo-directory address creations before and after 2002

The growth of settlements (size before 2002 green, after 2002 red) in the settlement Hierarchy represented in the map above demonstrate significant growth of settlements in lower tiers of the hierarchy to the east and south of the county. In a development scenario where this historical trend continues the possibility of achieving the Goals of the NSS and RPGs, and fulfilling the Linked Gateway project would be undermined.



Graph 5.1: Proportion of commencement notices for dwelling units representing single and multiple developments (2004-2011)

The proportional growth of rural areas in recent years has far exceeded growth in urban areas as demonstrated in the graph above.

The complete dominance of rural housing in the data following 2008 is likely to be as a result of the extreme circumstances that arose, however the fundamentals of the extreme financial circumstances are likely to persist for at least the term of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan.

Analysis carried out by the Forward Planning Section of Westmeath County Council in 2010 revealed that within the period 2005-2009 that 5,051 units were permitted in Westmeath on Zoned Lands with 1,283 completed, in the same period there were 2,124 individual houses permitted, and commencement notices were received for 1,317 of these.

In this scenario significant issues arise with regard to environmental sustainability in planning policy and achievement of the Objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

5.2 Alternative 2: A Settlement Strategy Having Regard to Environmental Carrying Capacity at Development Control Level

In this scenario policy facilitates a development led system with detailed consideration of environmental issues at development control stage.

In this scenario the analysis of existing and future environmental conditions are less onerous than that set out in other alternatives considered ie plan led system.

It is possible in this scenario that development potential is indicated in the plan in locations where none may exist.

In this scenario it is not possible to consider cumulative, in combination and wider impacts of development at a county or regional scale and is therefore contrary to the intention and spirit of the SEA Directive and process.

5.3 Alternative 3: A Settlement Strategy Designed With Regard to Environmental Carrying Capacity

In this scenario the environmental carrying capacity is a basic determinant in drafting of policy regarding the quantum and distribution of policy objectives/intentions providing for development in Westmeath.

The available capacity regarding water resources were identified in the course of conducting the SEA as the most critical of the environmental issues in Westmeath.

Water supply baselines with regard to supply and demand would be required along with projected demand arising from the policy and objectives of the plan.

The limits of the existing resources, natural and infrastructural being utilised for water supply and waste water treatment, should be established, the development potential of existing and new resources estimated and the potential for demand to exceed safe supply in various development and investment scenarios considered.

These aspects are likely to be assembled in the preparation of a Water Services Strategic Plan as set out in Section 36 of the Water Services Act 2007.

The environmental carrying capacity of rural areas would need to be considered, this would be most likely carried out for vulnerability of groundwater and surface water separately. PE organic loading from on-site waste water treatment systems could be estimated for each aquifer as delineated by GSI along with details of the groundwater discharge licenses assembled under Article 12 of the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010, the vulnerability and capacity for further unserved development in a particular area could then be estimated.

In this scenario settlement strategy is determined by Regional Policy prioritising planned expansion of the Gateway towns with growth in other settlements determined by their role and function and position in the settlement hierarchy. Further issues relating to availability of services and transport infrastructure could then be factored in to assist in the development of a Settlement Strategy beyond the gateway towns of Mullingar and Athlone.

There is a facility provided for in Article 4.7 of the Water Framework Directive to allow for a member state not to be in breach of the directive where it is as a result of new sustainable human development activities subject to meeting conditions set out in subsection a to d of the that Article.

5.4 Reasons for Selecting the Preferred Strategy

A combination of Alternative 2 and 3 was selected primarily with regard to availability of resources to the preparation of the Plan.

6 SUMMARY OF HOW INPUT FROM STATUTORY CONSULTEES WAS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE COURSE OF CONDUCTING THE SEA

6.1 NPWS

No areas should be targeted for development including zoning in the absence of basic ecological data. The objectives of the plan should be integrated with those specified to comply with the relevant River Basin Management Plan. The extent of wetlands and floodplains should be identified and protected for their biodiversity value.

It is recommended that the biodiversity environmental objectives in the SEA cover habitats and species both within and outside of designated sites as below:

- European (Natura 2000) sites (cSACs, cSPAs, SPAs) (see Appendix I)
- Designated and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs, pNHAs) (see Appendix I)
- Nature Reserves, and Refuges for Fauna and Flora (see Appendix I)
- Priority habitats of bad or poor conservation status listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive (see Appendix 2)
- Species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (see Appendix 2)
- Bird species (and their habitats) listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, and in the red list of birds of conservation concern in Ireland (see Appendix 2)
- Plant species (and their habitats) listed in the Flora Protection Order 1999 (see Appendix 2)
- Habitats that can be considered to be corridors or stepping stones for the purpose of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive (see Appendix 2)
- Habitats, habitat features and species identified in any Biodiversity Plan applying to the area of the Plan.

Water quality environmental objectives need to take into account the following:

- The water quality requirements of target species such as salmon, lamprey species, shad species, white-clawed crayfish, fish prey of otter.
- The minimum quantity and physical quality of water required for breeding, survival and movement of target species, especially during summer drought periods. Also the minimum water levels in source sites for water abstraction if these are at a distance from the settlement (e.g. upland lakes). Optimum temperature and pH of receiving waters, where there are discharges from industrial or municipal water treatment plants, should be specified.
- The quality of wastewater discharges, taking into account whether development proposed in the plan will cause the capacity of treatment systems to be exceeded, should be specified.
- The objectives should be integrated with those specified to comply with the relevant River Basin District Management Plan (Water Framework Directive).
- The extent to which SUD Systems have been incorporated into developments, and the degree of flood attenuation in the drainage from the settlement.
- The extent of wetland habitats (including floodplains⁹), as these are an important source of biodiversity and should be protected under the plan.

6.2 EPA

The EPA made an extensive and detailed submission, the cover letter made the following specific points in relation to the SEA of the County Development Plan:

A number of specific comments are made in the attached scoping guidance document, which are summarised below.

Specific Comments to be considered

- Protection / improvement of surface water quality
- Provision of adequate and appropriate critical service infrastructure.
- Protection of designated and undesignated biodiversity
- Flood risk assessment
- Provision/protection of green infrastructure/ecological linkages & corridors
- Protection of areas of significant landscape character
- Appropriate land use zoning / rezoning

7 MONITORING

The 2 year review of the County Development Plan under Section 15(2) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010 as amended, shall be the main point of monitoring progress on implementation of the plan.

Further elements of monitoring are set out in Section 3.2 of this report.

7.1 Progress since Adoption of 2008-2014 Westmeath County Development Plan and Accompanying SEA Environmental Report

On foot of the recommendations of the SEA process in the drafting and adoption of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 a number of unserved settlements were removed from the Plan due to groundwater vulnerability concerns. Considerable progress was also made with regard to the regulation of on site waste water treatment systems, with a panel of approved assessors now in place.

8 CONCLUSION OF DRAFT PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

A number of potentially significant environmental issues were identified at the outset of the County Development Plan review and were set out in the SEA Scoping Documents and public consultation material, further issues have been identified in the course of conducting the detailed assessment of the policies and objectives contained by means of matrices.

The majority of the identified issues have been addressed by means of amendment or omission of policy or objectives where conflicts were identified. All of the potential impacts relevant to SEA of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 are clearly set out in this Environmental Report facilitating the fundamental objective of SEA, being informed consent by decision makers.

Addendum to the Environmental Report on the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020.

Consideration of amendments made to the Draft Plan by the members in accordance with S. 11(5)(c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to 2012.

Amendments made by resolution of the Elected Members dated 07/01/13: Members Amendments are underlined below where Members removed text it has been struck through.

1. Members Amendment 1

Chapter 2 Core Strategy
2.3 Strategic Aims

- VI. Supporting the role of rural areas and the countryside in sustaining the ~~rural~~ economy and its role as a key resource for agriculture and agri-food, forestry, energy production and reduction, tourism, recreation, mineral extraction and/or other new and emerging rural based enterprises.

SEA response:

The recommendations of the Executive and SEA recommendations in the consideration of proposed Variation no. 11 to the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-14 have remained consistent with, the planning advice to the Midlands Regional Authority, the EPA and the Planning and Housing (Policy & Finance) of the Department of Environment Community and Local Government throughout. Discussion is set out in Section 4.2.2 of the Environmental Report for the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020.

Recommendation:

Strategic Aim VI of the Core Strategy should be amended to ensure that there is clarity that this strategic aim relates to rural resource based enterprise only, in accordance with the Regional Planning Guidelines, National Spatial Strategy and to be consistent with the proposals set out in Section 4.2.2 of the Environmental Report for the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020.

2. Members Amendment 2

Chapter 3

3.1.2 Action Plan for Jobs 2012 – Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation

This policy document which was published in February 2012, will improve supports for job-creating businesses and remove barriers to employment-creation across the economy. The Action Plan for Jobs is to create the environment where the number of people at work will increase by 100,000, from 1.8m to 1.9m by 2016, and reach 2m people by 2020.

SEA response:

It is unclear if this action plan was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment however by virtue of being higher level policy the implications cannot be considered at the level of Development Plan assessment.

Recommendation:

No action required arising from SEA process.

3. Members Amendment 3**P-RE9**

The Council will favourably consider proposals for enterprise and employment uses on their merits in ~~both urban and~~ rural locations and where their specific location offers amenity, environmental and economic advantage. Such enterprises or considered industrial projects, new or expanded, may sometimes require sites outside settlements because of their size or other specific site requirements. Such projects will be assessed taking account of:

- The contribution of the proposed development to the County's economy;
- The contribution of the proposed development to the County's environment and the principles of sustainable development; and
- The full assessment of any potential environmental effects
- The economic viability and availability of alternative sites; and
- National planning policy

It will be the responsibility of the developer to explore all environmental impacts, both local and of wider consequence. The Council will consider not only the immediate needs and benefits, but the wider long-term environmental effects of the proposal.

SEA response:

There has been considerable discussion regarding the consideration of this policy within County Development Policy in Westmeath, the opinion and advice of the executive of Westmeath County Council arising from SEA and otherwise, the Midlands Regional Authority, the EPA and the Planning and Housing (Policy & Finance) section and Minister of the Department of Environment Community and Local Government are all on record.

Recommendation:

As recommended in Section 4.2.2 of the Environmental Report on the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020, this policy should be amended.

4. Amendment 4**Chapter 13****13.3 KILBEGGAN SERVICE TOWN PLAN 2014- 2020****13.3.8 Education**

Both schools have expanded over the years and are on constrained sites. The Convent site to the rear which is currently vacant would be suitable for expansion of educational facilities, given its proximity to the town centre and the adjacent schools. Furthermore the Convent building is a Protected Structure and would be appropriate for conversion to an intuitional/community type use to ensure its retention as a building of architectural and historic merit. A site has been reserved on the Dublin Road to the east of the existing Secondary School for a new replacement Secondary School.

SEA response:

A concern arises with regard to the use of Greenfield lands in preference to the lands as set out in the policy prior to amendment by the members. Concerns regarding the amendment also relate to the application of the sequential approach to land use zoning as described in paragraph 4.19 of Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities. It is unclear if the existing sewerage network in Kilbeggan extends to this location.

Notwithstanding the reduction in the potential for achievement of a school campus, and sharing of existing and proposed facilities in accordance with Westmeath County Council and Department of Education and Skills policy, the use of brownfield lands and re-use of existing buildings are included in the Strategic Environmental Objectives of the SEA.

Recommendation:

An investigation of the potential for achievement of the objectives for educational provision in Kilbeggan should be undertaken with particular reference to enrolment projections and to the Department of Education and Skills Technical Guidance Document 025 and Department of Education and Skills Technical Guidance Document 027, and other Departmental Guidance on identification and assessment of potential school sites which may have a bearing.

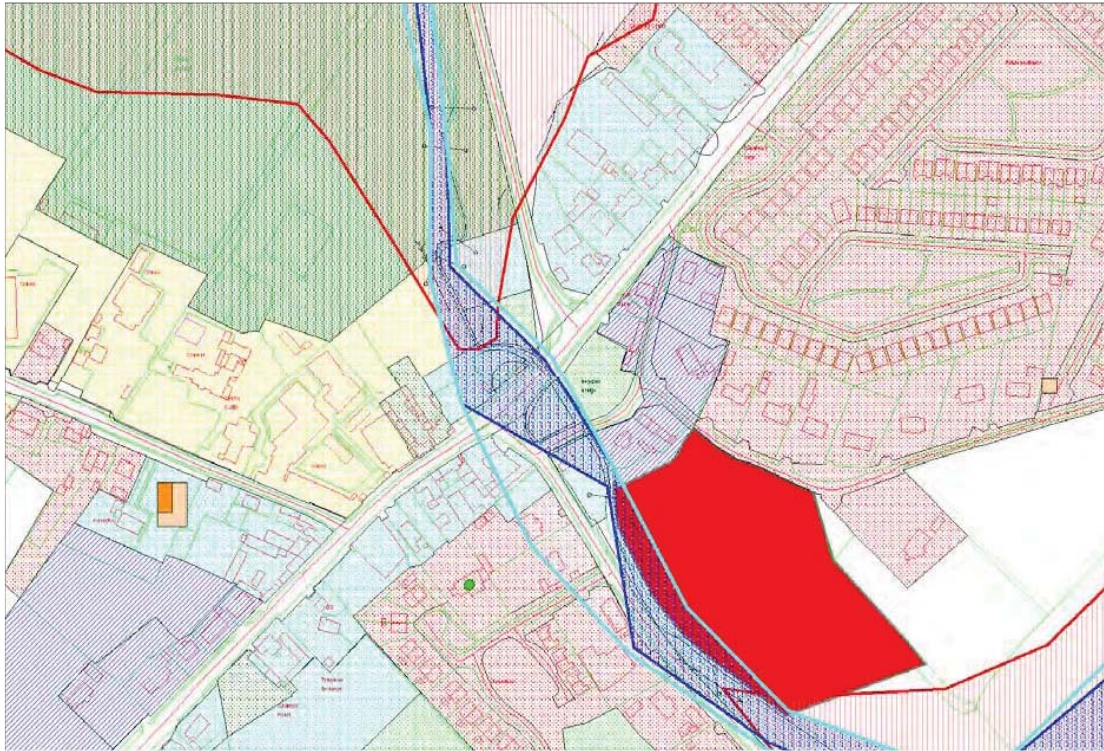
In the absence of a justifiable need to zone a, non-sequential unserviced site in preference to other options, zoning should revert to that which was recommended by the Executive in the Draft Plan presented to the Members.

5 Amendment 5**13.8 ROCHFORTBRIDGE LOCAL SERVICE TOWN PLAN 2014-2020****13.8.10 Infrastructure Policies & Objectives****O-RFB5**

To provide for an access point off roundabout at the junction of the R446 and the R400, to serve future car park for St. Joseph's Secondary School.

SEA response:

The location of the proposed access point at least partially coincides with a flood risk identified as benefiting lands under the 1945 Arterial Drainage act (red hatch in map below) and as being affected by both 1000 and 100 year return flood risk as identified in the Draft Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment in the CFRAM's by the OPW in 2011 (blue in map below).



Location of objective O-RFB5 (Rochfortbridge) as included in the Draft Plan by resolution of the members.

Recommendation:

A justification test in accordance with Box 4.1 of the Planning System and Flood risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities should be undertaken for this objective.

Further amendments to zoning objectives were recorded in the meeting Minutes as follows:

6. Amendment 6

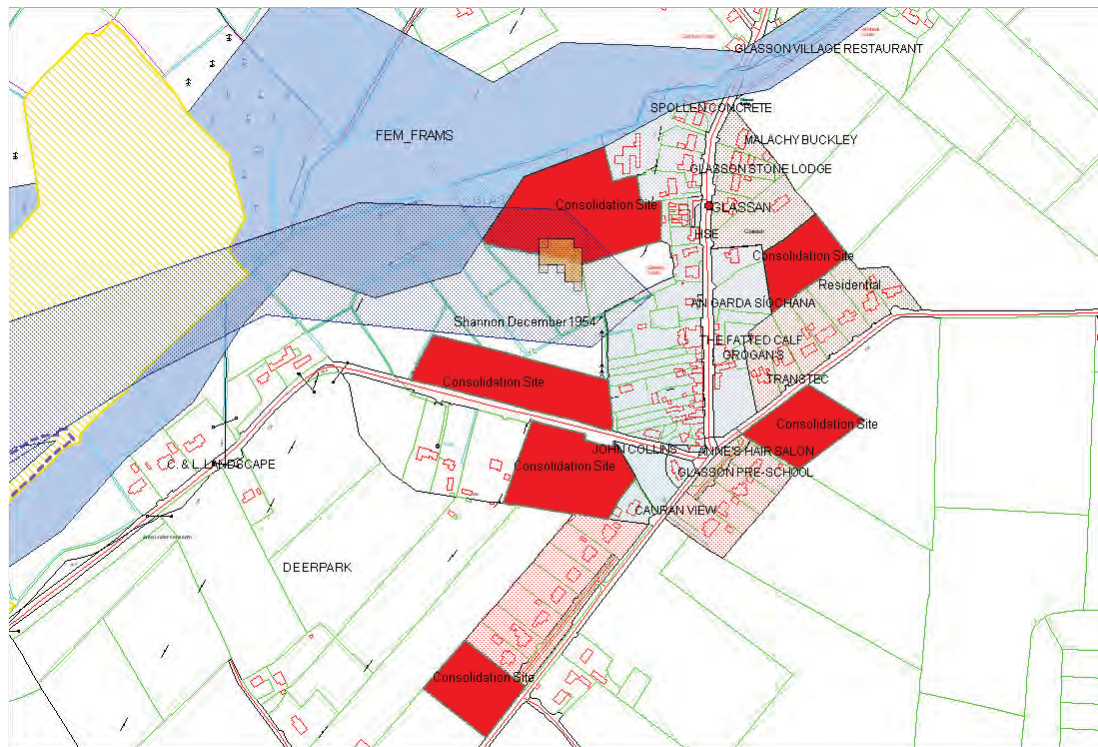
On the proposal of Cllr. Kevin Moran seconded by Cllr. Denis Leonard, it was agreed by the Members to include a zoning matrix in the Draft Plan.

SEA response:

None

7. Amendment 7

On the proposal of Cllr. Mark Cooney seconded by Cllr. Frank Keena, it was agreed by the Members to add new consolidation sites to the Glasson Zoning Map (Map 38).



Zonings including those made by resolution of the members in Glasston

SEA response:

The addition of the 2.77 Ha of land to the consolidation policy/objective/intention further compounds issues of zoning lands where services are not available. See SEA Matrix for Glasston.

The total area of consolidation sites in Glasston is now 6.14 Ha, on implementation of these objectives at 12 units per Ha (very low) and occupancy of 2.4 persons per unit, provision has been made for a population increase of 177 persons above the estimated population of 117 (see SEA Matrix) representing a proposed population increase in the order of 150%, in the village with little or no social infrastructure to support this level of development.

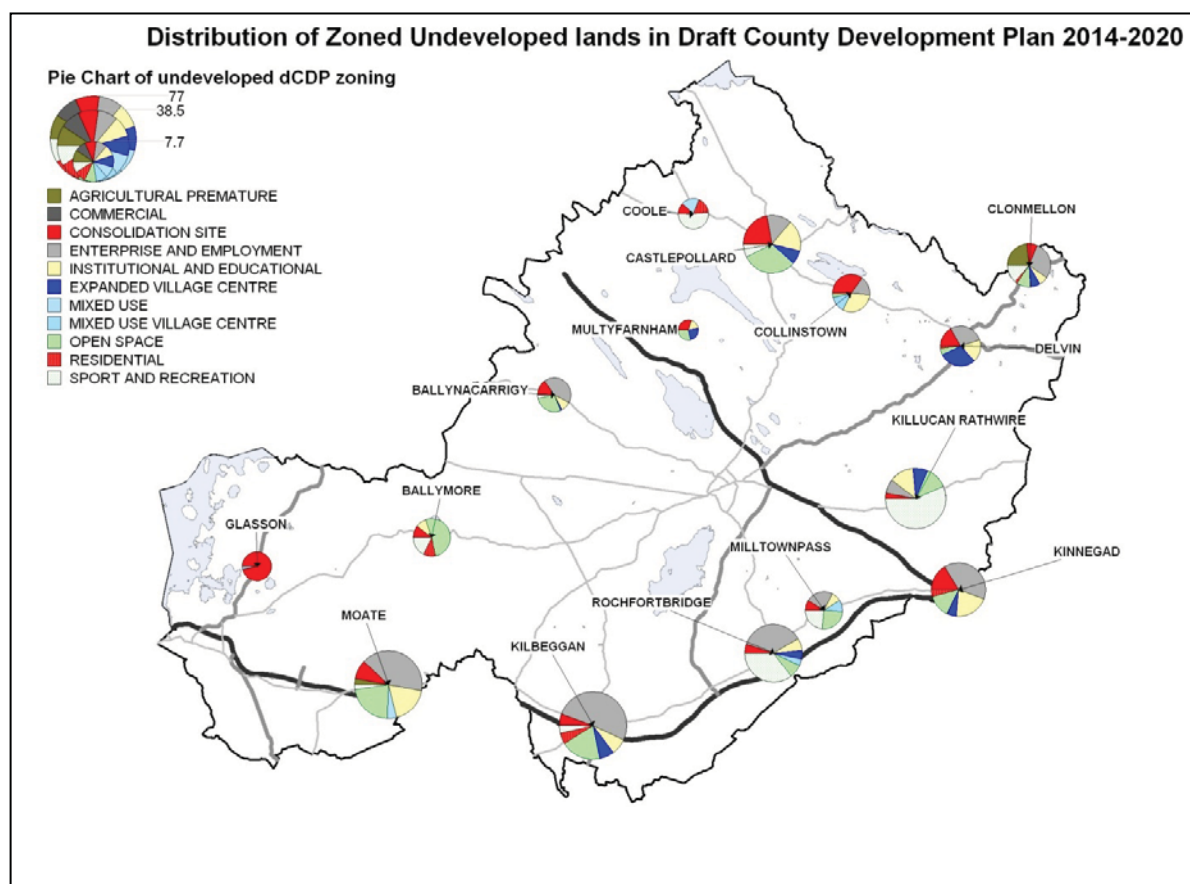
In both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Draft land use zoning for Glasston, it appears the proposal is in substantial contravention of numerous aspects of the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010 as amended.

Glasston does not feature in the Settlement Hierarchy in the Regional Planning Guidelines. In the Core Strategy of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020, Glasston is included in Tier 5 Rural Centres. Although the role of rural settlements or the settlement hierarchy has not been set out in the policy or objectives of the Plan, Section 2.15, described as the Preferred Development Strategy describes the focus as including the following:

Establishing a hierarchy of smaller rural settlements to develop rural centres capable of providing a range of services and employment to their local populations

Position Hierarchy	Description	Settlement
Tier 1	Linked Gateway Town	Mullingar, Athlone
Tier 2	Key Service Town	Castlepollard
Tier 3	Service Town	Moate, Kilbeggan, Kinnegad
Tier 4	Local Service Town	Rochfortbridge, Killucan/ Rathwire, Clonmellon, Tyrrellspass
Tier 5	Rural Centres	Delvin, Coole, Multyfarnham, Ballymore, Ballynacarrigy, Raharney, Milltownpass, Collinstown, Glasson, Ballinalack, Rathowen, Finea, Ballinagore, Ballykeeran, Castletown-Geoghegan

For comparison purposes Map 3.1 of the Environmental report is reproduced here as it provides a good illustration of the relative quantities of undeveloped zoned land in each of the settlements in the settlement Hierarchy.



Distribution of undeveloped lands within each settlement by zoning type

As can be seen from the mapping above a flood risk has been identified in data relating to 1954 Shannon floods, and the pluvial flood risk identified by the OPW in the draft CFRAMS.

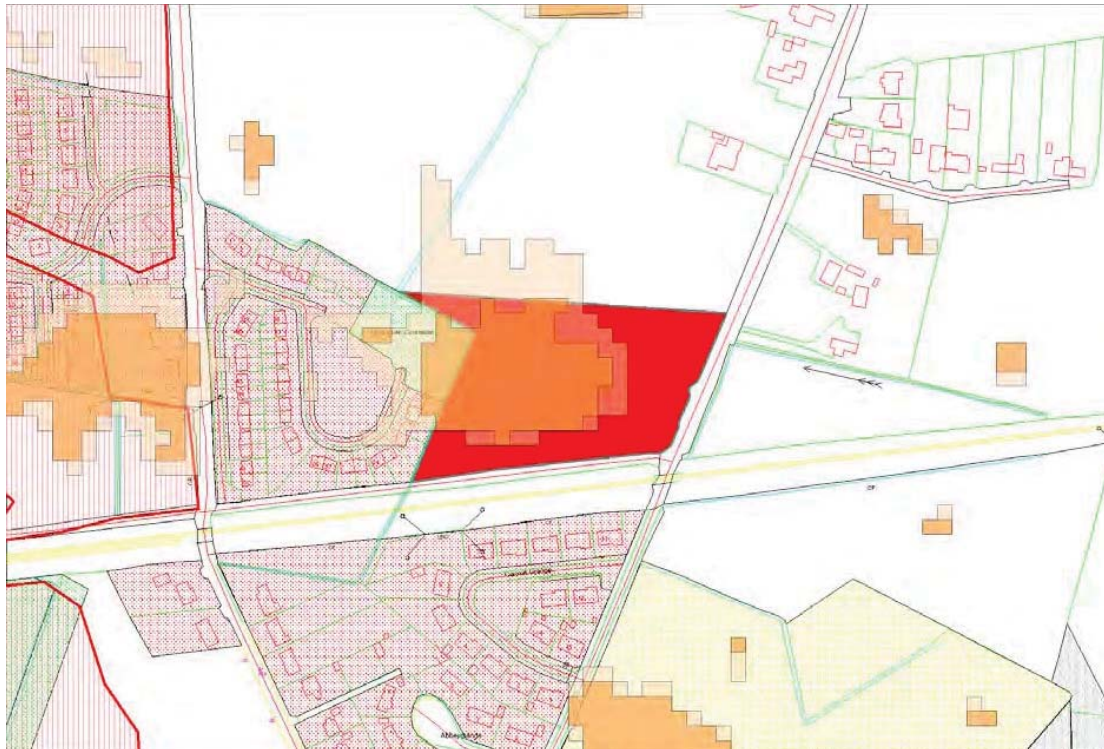
There are additional issues relating to ground conditions and disturbance of the SAC and SPA as set out in the Environmental Report.

SEA recommendation:

The land use zoning objectives should not be included in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan.

8. Amendment 8

On the proposal of Cllr. Frank Keena seconded by Cllr. John Dolan it was agreed by the Members to zone a parcel of land in Moate as a consolidation site (Map 53).



Area zoned for Consolidation site by resolution of the members

SEA response:

The zoning of this 1.844 Ha on implementation would result further overloading of the Moate Wastewater treatment Plant as set out in detail in the SEA Matrices of the Moate Service Town Plan. The subject site was formerly identified in the 2008-2014 County Development Plan as being an attenuation area. As shown in the map extract above, a pluvial flood risk has been identified on this land.

SEA recommendation:

The subject lands should not be zoned for development where a justification can be made with regard to the waste water treatment capacity, a justification test in accordance with Box 4.1 of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009 should be undertaken for this objective.

9. Amendment 9

On the proposal of Cllr. Frank McDermott seconded by Cllr. Paddy Hill, it was agreed by the Members to extend the Sport & Recreational zoning at Collinstown (Map 29) beside the existing playing field to allow for the expansion of this facility.

SEA Response:

No environmental Issues of concern to the SEA process were identified in regard to this amendment.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Addendum No.2

to the Environmental Report of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020

**Following proposed amendments following consideration by the Members of
the Managers Report.**

1 Introduction & Purpose of Addendum 2

The Draft Westmeath County Development Plan was subjected to an assessment of the potential significant environmental effects on implementation, the output of this assessment was the Environmental Report which was referred to the Environmental Authorities and put on public display.

The first addendum to the Environmental Report related to amendments made to the Managers draft by resolution of the members at their meeting of 07/01/13 in accordance with the provisions of S. 11(5)(c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. The first Addendum was attached to the end of the Environmental Report for the Draft County Development Plan.

This report, Addendum no. 2 was prepared in October 2013 for the purpose of assessing Material Amendments proposed to the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan in the Managers Report under section 12(4) and amendments proposed by resolution of the Members under section 12(6) at meetings of Westmeath County Council on 18th and 23rd September 2013. Proposals made by resolution of the Members in relation to zoning of consolidation sites in Glasson and Moate and the retention of Policy P-RE9 in the plan, which contravened recommendations made in the Managers Report have been addressed in the initial Environmental Report.

It is intended that this Addendum shall not repeat or revisit any of the baseline and significant environmental issues sections of the parent Report.

It is intended that this Addendum shall assess each of the proposed amendments against the Strategic Environmental Objectives in summary form followed by any necessary cross referencing to the Draft County Development Plan Environmental Report followed by recommendations/options to the Development Plan team as to how to proceed in keeping with the objectives of the Strategic Environmental Objectives and the SEA process.

2 Appropriate Assessment

It is intended that this SEA Addendum shall act in a limited extent as a further Appropriate Assessment screening, some comment may be made within this SEA Addendum regarding Appropriate Assessment, however consideration of Appropriate Assessment and the proposed Material amendments is presented under separate cover.

3. Proposed Material Amendments

3.1 Chapter 2

3.1.1 Proposed Material Amendment 2a

Managers Amendment:

Insert revised Core Strategy Table including a detailed breakdown of the overall quantum of residentially zoned land in each settlement, and levels of population growth for all towns in the County including the linked Gateway, Mullingar and particularly tiers 1-4 which contain settlements designated under the RPGs, the population of two which exceeded 1,500 persons in the last census (Moate & Kinnegad).

Comment:

A broad range of changes have been made to the Core Strategy including a breakdown of percentages of the overall quantum of zoned land in each of the settlements, which may indicate the level of growth provided for in the quantum of land use zoning objectives applied to each settlement. The material changes to the Core Strategy are considered to represent aspirational policy as described in the Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report as follows:

Given the diverse nature and range of policy and objectives set out in the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020, account was taken of section 4.3.2 of the European Commission document “ Managing Natura 2000 sites, The provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC”. This section refers to the distinction between plans which are in the nature of policy statements; setting out general political will, aspirations or general intentions.

Recommendation:

No action necessary beyond that set out in section 4.2 of the Environmental Report on the Draft County Development Plan.

3.1.2 Proposed Material Amendment 2b

Manager’s Amendment:

P-CS13 To implement a ‘plan and monitor’ approach to development trends in the context of zoned residential land, having regard to the ambitious growth targets which have been set for the Gateway Towns but which are dependent upon strong economic recovery.

Comment:

As for 3.1.1 above.

Recommendation:

As for 3.1.1 above.

3.1.3 Proposed Material Amendment 2c

Manager's Amendment:

P-CS15 To ensure that transport and water service investment programmes align with the Core Strategy for the County and with identified investment priorities prescribed in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022

Comment:

As for 3.1.1 above.

Recommendation:

As for 3.1.1 above.

3.2 Chapter 3

3.2.1 Proposed Material Amendment 3b

Manager's Amendment.

A statement will be inserted in Section 3.5.1 to the effect that:

The linked-gateway towns of Mullingar and Athlone are recognised anchors of regional enterprise, identified in the RPG's and the attainment of critical mass is a core objective to drive economic growth and to promote patterns of sustainable development, maximise return on infrastructural investment and create a sustainable alternative to commuting into the Greater Dublin Area.

The environmental carrying capacity constraints of both Mullingar and Athlone achieving the critical mass envisaged are of concern. These concerns are set out in section 2.3.3, 2.3.6, 2.3.9 and 4.2.4 of the Environmental Report (ER) of the Draft County Development Plan.

Recommendation:

The material amendment proposed by the Manager should be amended to include the phrase "within the environmental carrying capacity" after critical mass.

3.2.2 Proposed Material Amendment 3c

Manager's Amendment.

Policy P-EC1 will also be amended as follows: To accelerate and promote the sustainable development of and the attainment of critical mass within the linked gateway towns of Athlone and Mullingar, which are recognised anchors of regional enterprise, which in turn will maximise return on infrastructural investment and create a sustainable alternative to commuting into the Greater Dublin Area

The environmental carrying capacity constraints of both Mullingar and Athlone achieving the critical mass envisaged are of concern. These concerns are set out in section 2.3.3, 2.3.6, 2.3.9 and 4.2.4 of the Environmental Report (ER) of the Draft County Development Plan.

Recommendation for proposed material amendment:

The material amendment proposed by the manager should be amended to include the phrase “the environmental carrying capacity of” after “critical mass within”.

3.2.3 Proposed Material Amendment 3d**Manager’s Amendment.**

The environmental and landscape impacts of Agricultural reform programmes including Harvest 2020 require to be monitored and assessed. The overall impacts of these programmes on water quality, landscape, biodiversity and local distinctiveness / identity shall be taken into consideration by the Planning Authority.

Comment:

Harvest 2020 was considered in the assessment of Objective OAG1 in appendix 1 and in section 4.2.2 of the Environmental Report.

Recommendation:

Include a policy to make Agricultural development in Westmeath sustainable through robust application of the Water Framework and Habitats Directive.

3.2.4 Proposed Material Amendment 3e**Members Amendment**

O-WB2 To develop a riverside walk on the Brosna at Kilbeggan within three years of implementation of the Plan

Comment:

The provision of a riverside walk along the Brosna at Kilbeggan potentially conflicts with SEO’s B1, C1, C2, C3, C4. These issues are expanded on in sections 2.4, 2.5, 4.2.2.

Recommendation:

Amend the objective to include “in consultation with NPWS”.

3.2.5 Proposed Material Amendment 3f**Members Amendment**

O-WB3 To facilitate increased access to and signposting of the lakes, within three years of implementation of the Plan, subject to the requirements of the habitats directive

Comment:

Arising from the nature of the policies and objectives seeking to provide for increased access to the lakes considerable discussion was engaged in, Section 4.2.2 of the environmental report of the Draft Plan contains a summary of the concluding position in that regard. The subject objective without the time frame was highlighted in the matrices in appendix 1 of the Environmental Report and was recommended for removal.

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

Policy has been provided in the Draft County Development Plan in response to the SEA process to ensure that consent for new, enhanced or intensified recreational access would only be considered following the preparation of a Strategic Habitat Management Plan in consultation with relevant stakeholders including National Parks and Wildlife Service for the Habitat of concern. The specific individual impacts on biodiversity generally and on the Natura network, of these policies and objectives would be considered in those Strategic Habitat Management Plans.

Arising from the conclusions of both the SEA and AA processes map based objectives for the provision of recreation and amenity development including walkways which have the potential to impact on habitats with a focus on Natura 2000 sites have been removed. Policies and objectives in the body of the draft plan are set out in a manner by which strategic habitat management plans shall be required prior to finalising the proposed location, nature and construction of such facilities.

Recommendation:

The recommendation of the SEA process as set out in the Environmental Report remains to remove the objective. Where the recommendation of the draft plan Environmental report is not being followed consideration should be given to including the following text, “following implementation of O-T12”.

3.2.6 Proposed Material Amendment 3g**Members Amendment**

O-WB7 To develop a walk around Lough Ree in co-operation with Longford and Roscommon County Councils and other relevant bodies, within three years of implementation of the Plan, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

Comment:

See section 3.26 above. The Environmental Report for the Draft Plan recommended that this objective be removed.

Recommendation:

See 3.2.5 above.

3.2.7 Proposed Material Amendment 3h**Members Amendment**

P-PF4 To encourage access to forestry and woodlands, including private forestry, in cooperation with stakeholders for walking routes, bridle paths, mountain biking, nature walks, orienteering, hiking, recreational areas and other similar facilities.

Comment:

This is a proposed revision of an existing policy of the Draft Plan. On assessment the original policy the potential for impacts on habitats and species and on Natura 2000 sites was highlighted.

Recommendation:

Include the following wording to the end of the proposed amended policy “in consultation with NPWS”

3.2.8 Proposed Material Amendment 3i**Members Amendment**

O-PROW3 To undertake a review of walking and cycling routes in the county, protect existing public rights of way for the common good and bring forward proposals for the creation of public rights of way, which give access to places of recreational utility or natural beauty, particularly in relation to the Royal Canal, lakes, rivers and forests and areas of historical, archaeological importance within two years of adoption of the Plan.

Comment:

This objective was assessed in the Environmental Report and was subsequently removed from the display draft. The first part of the objective gives rise to no difficulties. The creation of access to places of interest for the reasons set out creates a potential for conflict with, SEO’s B1, B2, C1, C2, C3, and C4.

Recommendation:

Add the following text “following implementation of O-T12 and/or in consultation with NPWS and/or National Monuments section as appropriate”

3.3 Chapter 4**3.3.1 Proposed Material Amendment 4a****Managers Amendment**

P-SRD1 To ensure that settlements grow in a manner that is self sustaining with sufficient social and economic infrastructure, and to a scale which aligns with the Settlement Hierarchy prescribed in the Core Strategy

Comment:

This policy presents a challenge due to the limitations of various settlements set out above and elsewhere by virtue of the environmental carrying capacity.

Recommendation:

Add the following text: “within the environmental carrying capacity”.

3.3.2 Proposed Material Amendment 4b**Managers Amendment**

P-RD1 Reference to densities cited in Chapter 4 the RPGs with respect to the Gateways shall be included in P-RD1

Comment:

A new policy P-RD6 was introduced.

Recommendation:

None.

3.4 Chapter 5**3.4.1 Proposed Material Amendment 5a****Managers Amendment:**

P-RL14 To protect and maintain, waterway corridors, rivers, lakes (including an immediate area adjoining including skyline development on surrounding hill crests) and canals and adjoining land free from inappropriate development to ensure that public use is not prejudiced by incompatible use. In addition to protect the amenity and recreational value of walking and cycling routes, and to maintain their amenity and recreational value.

Comment:

This policy has been amended to take account of the SEA recommendations

Recommendation:

No action necessary

3.5 Chapter 6

No Material amendments to chapter 6 were determined to require further assessment.

3.6 Chapter 7

No Material amendments to chapter 7 were determined to require further assessment.

3.7 Chapter 8**3.7.1 Proposed Material Amendment 8a****Managers Amendment:**

O-WC4 To support and facilitate the development through the county of the National Cycle Route between Dublin and Galway, including the provision a walking/cycling route along the entirety of the Athlone Mullingar railway line, together with all related signage, waymarking and all associated site works and connections, subject to environmental and habitats requirements.

Comment:

A similar objective was considered in the course of preparing variation number 13 of the 2008 -2014 Westmeath County Development Plan. Amendments were made to the proposed policy at drafting stage pre-SEA which contributed to its screening out of a requirement for further SEA.

Recommendation:

Revise proposed objective O-WC4 to make it consistent with adopted Variation No. 13 of the 2008-2014 Westmeath County Development Plan.

3.7.2 Proposed Material Amendment 8g**Members Amendment:**

To encourage and promote walking and cycling to improve health and well being by providing quality green space and facilitate the upgrading of Slí Na Sláinte walking routes

Comment:

The location of the existing published Slí Na Sláinte walking routes in Westmeath are limited to urban routes in Mullingar and Athlone, as such there is not considered to be potential for significant impacts on items of heritage value.

Recommendation:

No action necessary.

3.8 Chapter 9**3.8.1 Proposed material Amendment 9a****Managers Amendment:**

Objective O-WT6 will be amended to reflect the adoption of variation no. 11 of the 2008 -2014 County Development Plan, as follows: In the consideration of proposals with a public water supply requirement, to take fully into account the abstraction capacity limits set out in the report due for completion in September 2013, arising from the adoption of Variation No. 11 to the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014.

Comment:

The proposed Material Amendment does not appear to have been made.

Recommendation:

No change to recommendations of the Environment Report on the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 which remain valid and current.

3.9 Chapter 10

3.9.1 Proposed material Amendment 10a

Members Amendment:

Cllr Leonard put forward a counter motion to Cllr Frank McDermott's motion which provides for an amendment to Section 10.5.2 and insertion of definition of Industrial Turbine, as follows:

"It is Council policy to strictly direct the development of large-scale energy production projects, in the form of wind farms onto cutover cutaway peatlands in the county, subject to nature conservation and habitat protection requirements being fully addressed"

In the context of this policy, industrial/large-scale energy production projects are defined as follows:

Projects that meet or exceed any of the following criteria:

Height: over 100m to blade tip, or

Scale: More than 5 turbines, or

Output: Having a total output of greater than 5M

Comment:

Support is set out for the transition to renewable energies in the Draft County Development Plan, Regional Planning Guidelines and in national policy, in this context the proposed amendment particularly when combined with the proposed amendments below is considered to be restrictive. Directing wind energy development into areas of particular cultural and natural heritage value such as peatlands creates concerns in relation to the implementation of this policy as highlighted in the assessment of policy P-WIM2 of the Draft County Development Plan.

Where the wind energy resources of Westmeath are considered to be a material asset of the County the prevention of development of this material asset by policy could be considered to be a negative impact in the context of SEA.

Extract from NIR of Draft County Development Plan:

The policy to direct Wind farm developments to Peatlands has the potential to impact on Natura 2000 sites and species where the impact on flight paths or sites outside Natura 2000 network used by protected species. Policy and projects should adopt a precautionary approach in relation to potential for impacts on large areas of cut-over/cutaway peat lands . Many of these sites are nearing the end of production and most if not all will shortly be reinstated as bogs that are likely to be deemed to be sensitive if not protected habitats.

Recommendation:

Consider removing text "subject to nature conservation and habitat protection requirements being fully addressed" and replace with "following implementation of O-WIN1".

3.9.2 Proposed material Amendment 10b

Members Amendment:

Cllr Penrose proposed that a policy/objective be inserted in the Plan as follows: “To require a setback distance from residential dwellings of 10 times the height of Industrial Wind Turbines as defined in Variation 14” (i.e. 100m high)

In the context of this policy, industrial/large-scale energy production projects are defined as follows:

Projects that meet or exceed any of the following criteria:

Height: over 100m to blade tip, or

Scale: More than 5 turbines, or

Output: Having a total output of greater than 5MW

Comment:

The impact of this proposed Amendment would be to reduce the area of land which could be considered for Wind Energy developments in this category.

Recommendation:

No Action Necessary

3.10 Chapter 13

3.10.1 Proposed material Amendment 13a

Managers Amendment:

Policies and objectives have been included in each of the settlement plans to upgrade the surface water drainage systems to facilitate the projected growth set out in the plan subject to the consideration of habitats and species including Appropriate Assessment and consultation with the NPWS.

Comment:

Providing the infrastructure in order to facilitate development beyond the environmental carrying capacity of a given settlement is contrary to the recommendations of the SEA Environment Report of the Draft County Development Plan. In accordance with the recommendations of the Environmental Report of the Draft County Development Plan the environmental carry capacity of each settlement should be established taking account of the Regional Planning Guidelines. The infrastructure including the surface water drainage system should then be designed accordingly.

Recommendation:

The words “to facilitate the projected growth set out in the plan” should be removed from each instance where this has been inserted as a policy or as an objective.

3.10.2 Proposed material Amendment 13b

Members Amendment:

P-RB12 To facilitate the construction of an abattoir on the Dunbia Site, Clara Road, Kilbeggan.

Comment:

There is a planning history attached to the subject site planning application reference 10/4079 and An Bord Pleanála reference PL25K.239436 refers.

The subject site is constrained by a number of factors including a number relevant to SEA; Water supply constraints, identified flood risk to part of the site, and the waste water treatment, each of these was resolved to the satisfaction of An Bord Pleanála and as such the site and area is considered to have the environmental carrying capacity.

Recommendation:

No Amendments necessary.

3.10.3 Proposed material Amendment 13c

Members Amendment:

In relation to Submission CDP57, Cllr F. Cooney proposed that the land in Milltownpass is zoned for development (Map submitted)

Comment:

Flooding and absence of Wastewater are constraints for the proposal and were highlighted in detail in the Environmental Report of the Draft CDP which included the following:

Observations on zoning and objectives mapping:

There are significant issues with 100 and 1000 year return flooding risk along with benefiting land designations affecting a number of zoning objectives including the provision made for the extension of the school, the Mixed use zoning to the south of the church and the location which appears to be zoned for the Wastewater treatment plant proposed in 2003.

Recommendation:

Each of the land use zoning objectives in Milltownpass affected by a flood risk should be subject to sequential testing in accordance with the statutory flooding guidelines.

Waste water Treatment:

Waste water treatment in Milltownpass consists of on site waste water treatment systems with the exception of a council sewerage scheme serving a council housing scheme Millview. Milltownpass in effect an unserved settlement with employment generating uses.

Recommendation:*Option 1:*

Identify available capacity in Milltownpass WWTP to accommodate further development and ensure that the proposed development does not exceed this capacity.

Option 2:

Remove all land use zoning objectives that on implementation have potential to result in increased loadings to the WWTP where there is no reliable prospect of the capacity being provided.

The current proposal has neither the benefit of a flood risk assessment or a reliable prospect of waste water treatment capacity being provided.

Recommendation:

Do not make the proposed amendment.

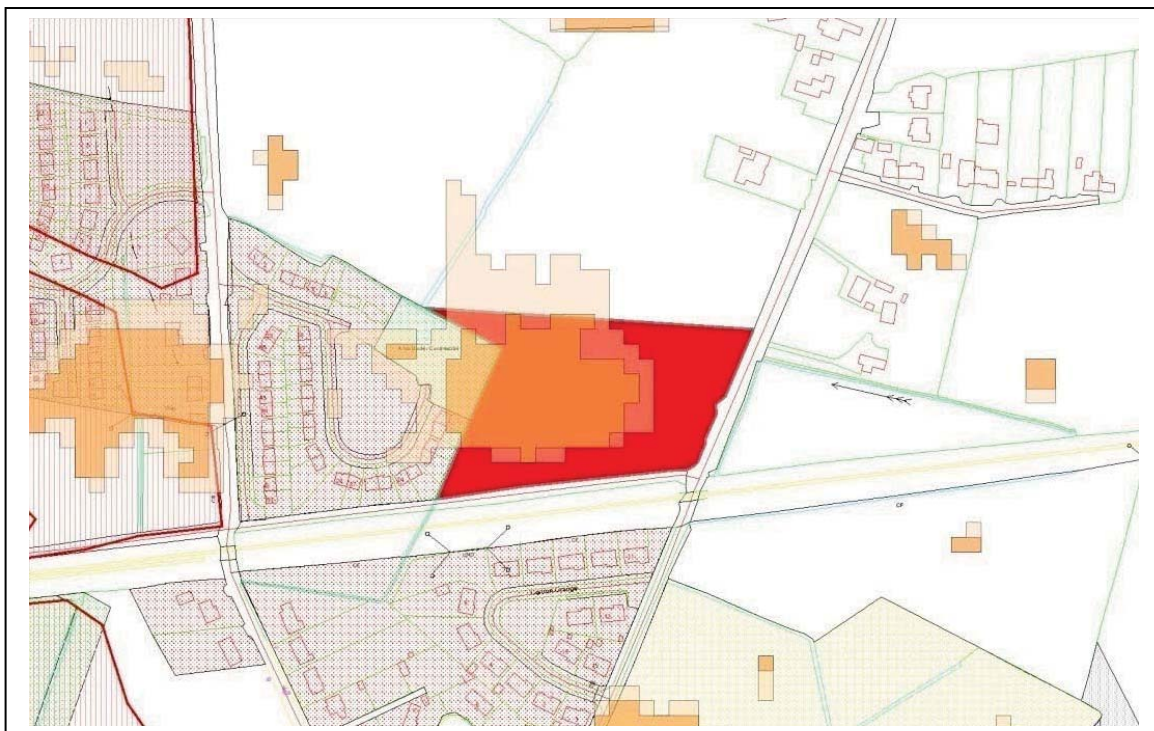
3.10.4 Proposed Material Amendment 13d**Members Amendment:**

Cllr Allen proposed that the site on the Rosemount Road be zoned as a consolidation site.

Comment:

The site on the Rosemount Road was proposed as an amendment under the provisions of 11(5)c, the following is an extract from the consideration of that proposal in the first Addendum to the Environmental Report.

On the proposal of Cllr. Frank Keena seconded by Cllr. John Dolan it was agreed by the Members to zone a parcel of land in Moate as a consolidation site (Map 53).



Area zoned for Consolidation site by resolution of the Members

SEA response:

The zoning of this 1.844 Ha, on implementation would result further overloading of the Moate Wastewater treatment Plant as set out in detail in the SEA Matrices of the Moate Service Town Plan. The subject site was formerly identified in the 2008-2014 CDP as being an attenuation area. As shown in the map extract above a pluvial flood risk has been identified on this land.

SEA recommendation:

The subject lands should not be zoned for development, where a justification can be made with regard to the waste water treatment capacity, a justification test in accordance with Box 4.1 of the Planning System and Flood risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities should be undertaken for this objective.

Recommendation:

The recommendation set out in the consideration of the issue in appendix 1 to the Environmental Report remain valid and apply to this proposed amendment.

*Wastewater Capacity:**Option 1:*

Identify available capacity in Moate WWTP to accommodate further development and ensure that the proposed development does not exceed this capacity.

Option 2:

Remove all land use zoning objectives that on implementation have potential to result in increased loadings to the WWTP where there is no reliable prospect of the capacity being provided.

*Flood Risk:**Option 1:*

Remove land use zoning objectives where a flood risk has been identified.

Option 2:

Carry out a SFRA and justification test in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

3.10.5 Proposed material Amendment 13e

Members Amendment:

Cllr McDermott proposed that a plot of land on the Athboy Road in Delvin be zoned for development and the equivalent amount of land within two parcels of land in Castlepollard and Collinstown be de-zoned.

Comment:

There are a number of issues with the subject site in respect of the proper planning and sustainable development of Delvin not least the non sequential nature of the proposal however no potentially significant environmental impacts have been identified beyond the proper planning and sustainable development considerations.

The reduction of zoned lands in Castlepollard although on the face of it being proposed to comply with the Core Strategy is in effect further weakening the policy position of the Key Service Town of Castlepollard, making it the policy of the Westmeath County Development Plan to grow Kilbeggan and Kinnegad further beyond that of Castlepollard.

Recommendation:

None

3.10.6 Proposed material Amendment 13e

Members Amendment:

In relation to Submission CDP029, Cllr Daly proposed that two plots of land to be zoned for as consolidation sites in Kilbeggan. (Map submitted) Cllr Arthur suggested that the consolidation site on the R400 in Rochfortbridge could be de-zoned in lieu of same. Cllr McDermott seconded this proposal.

Comment:

The proposal involves a area of 4 ha of land on 2 separate extremities of Kilbeggan, if made would be contrary to the provisions of the Core Strategy and the settlement Hierarchy.

Recommendation:

None.

3.11 Appendices

3.11.1 Appendix 14 Amendment

Managers Amendment:

Appendix 14 will be amended to include Horseleap as an unserved settlement.

Comment:

It is not clear what the status of an unserviced settlement is in the draft 2014-2020 County Development Plan. Horseleap was one of a number of settlements recommended for removal from the unserviced settlement list on foot of the SEA of the 2008 plan, the recommendation of the current SEA process remains consistent with that position.

Extract from section 4.2.3 of the Environmental report of the 2014-2020 Westmeath county Development plan:

Measures to Prevent, Reduce or Offset:

The status of background text regarding unserviced settlements within the plan, which is not reflected in policy, objectives or in the settlement strategy of the plan is of concern. The variation in character and environmental carrying capacity of the settlements makes it difficult to consider generic impacts however it is appears by definition that this provision advocates the clustering of on-site waste water treatment. There is need for a policy statement qualifying the role of unserviced settlement and issues arising from groundwater vulnerability.

Recommendation:

Horseleap and other unserviced settlements particularly those in areas identified as being at an area of increased risk to groundwater should be removed from the list of unserviced settlements.

3.11.1 Volume 5 Record of protected structures**Members amendments**

Removal of the following structures from the Record of Protected Structures:

D065, D079, D082, D085, D087, D088, D097, D098, D107, D108, D109, D119, D127, D128, D135, D077, D131, D129, D094, D099, D078, D093, D064, D118, D081, D084, D134, D116, D092, D120, D063, D104, D111, D113, D115, D100, D105, D112

Comment:

These structures were proposed for protection arising from their importance relating to their architectural heritage value. To remove these structures from the Draft Record of Protected Structures would conflict with a number of the Strategic Environmental Objectives of the SEA including, C1, C2, and C3.

Recommendation:

No structure should be removed from the Draft Record of Protected Structures without a justification to counter the reasons given for its inclusion.

4. How the input of the Environmental Authorities has been incorporated into the current stage of the County Development Plan review.

4.1 EPA submission 12 April 2013

The EPA submission to the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan was divided into 2 sections, section 1 contained the opinion of the EPA and a number of suggested amendments to the Draft Plan, and section 2 contained the opinion and comments relating to the Environmental Report.

4.1.1 Section 1

Chapter 1 - Introduction

It is noted that in *Section 1.7 - Environmental Considerations* it is stated that SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) were carried out and informed the Plan, resulting in changes being made to the Plan content. Where changes were made as a result of SEA, AA and FRA, these should be highlighted in the Plan.

Section 1.10 - *Monitoring, Review and Implementation* should include a commitment to carry out SEA/Environmental monitoring. This section should also specify monitoring frequency and related reporting.

Draft Plan amended in this regard.

Chapter 2 - Core Strategy

Strategic Objective I of *Section 2.3 - Strategic Aims* should be amended as follows: "Prioritising **sustainable** development within the Gateway towns of Athlone and Mullingar." In addition Strategic Objective V should be amended as follows: "Promoting **sustainable** economic development and employment creation.." Strategic Objectives VII and VIII should refer to "**sustainable** growth". Strategic Objective IX should be rephrased as follows: "Protecting the county's natural assets by ~~preserving~~ **maintaining and/or improving** the quality of the lakes, water and groundwater..."

The plan has been amended accordingly.

It should be clarified whether the vacant residential units discussed in *Section 2.7 - Housing Stock and Capacity* were taken into account in the calculation of the housing land requirements in *Section 2.14-Population Estimates and Projections* to meet RPG Targets.

Consideration should be given to updating *Figure 2.8 - Population Targets and Housing Land Requirements* to include a breakdown of the zoning requirements for each of the County settlements included in *Chapter 13 - Settlement Plans* of the Plan.

The preferred development strategy as described in *Section 2.15 - Preferred Development Strategy* should include reference to **sustainable** growth, **sustainable** development and **sustainable** tourism. Consideration should be given to summarising, in this section, how the SEA process informed the selection of the preferred development strategy, including a clear justification, on environmental grounds, for the selection of the preferred development strategy.

The plan has been amended accordingly.

Consideration should be given to amending Policy P-CS2 as follows: "To take account of, in the assessment of development proposals, transport corridors, environmental carrying capacity, availability and/or capacity to provide Waste Water and Water Supply Services, **potential to conflict with WFD objectives, potential to impact on the integrity of European sites and Annexed habitats and species, features of biodiversity value including ecological networks, impact on landscape and visual characteristics**, education and other socio-economic objectives."

The plan has been amended accordingly.

Consideration should be given to amending Policy P-CS5 as follows: “To have regard to sequential development, prioritisation of infill **and brownfield lands**, and the relationship of new areas with existing development, in the assessment of development proposals in urban areas.”

The plan has been amended accordingly.

Policy P-CS7 should be amended as follows: “To restrict development in areas at risk of flooding in accordance with the “Planning System and Flood Risk **Management** Guidelines **for Planning Authorities**”(DEHLG/OPW, 2009)”.

The Plan has been amended accordingly.

Chapter 3 - Economic Development

The economic development strategy as set out in Section 3.5 - Economic Development Strategy should emphasise the need to promote economic development **in a sustainable manner**, and should include reference to the need to promote development while taking the carrying capacity of the environment, and the protection of environmental sensitivities into account.

It should be clarified how the development of the SDZ, proposed in *Section 3.6 - Strategic Development Zone Athlone*, fits in with the core strategy for Westmeath. Any proposal for an SDZ should be subject to justification under the Core Strategy. In addition, Objective O-EC1 should be amended as follows: “To identify and progress the establishment of a Strategic Development Zone, to the east of Athlone. Site selection shall be pursuant to SEA, **FRA** and AA processes”.

The Plan has been amended accordingly.

Policy P-EC8 should be amended as follows: “*To facilitate and encourage the development of the alternative energy sector **in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner**, and to recognise its potential in the creation of enterprise and employment opportunities including the building of research capacity.*” Consideration should be given to developing a Renewable Energy Strategy for the County, which should be subject to SEA and AA where appropriate.

The plan has been amended accordingly.

It should be clarified whether the North Westmeath Strategy, referred to in *Section 3.8 - North Westmeath Strategy*, has undergone SEA and AA.

The inclusion of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy as part of the Plan is noted.

Policy P-ST2, “*to develop the Mullingar Greenway from Mullingar town to the shores of Loughs Ennell and Owel...*” should not be in conflict with the requirements of the Habitats, Birds and Water Framework Directives.

Policy P-ST2 has been amended in this regard.

The criteria set out in *Section 3.42.3 - Development Management Criteria* are noted. These criteria will contribute to the protection of the environment by minimising the impact of extractive industries.

Chapter 5-Natural and Built Heritage

The inclusion of policies and objectives for the protection of biodiversity of international, national and local importance, and for the protection of specific habitats such as eskers and peatlands, is noted. The intention to prepare local biodiversity plans and strategic habitat management plans in consultation with the NPWS, to identify and map wetland sites of “good ecological value”, is also noted. Consideration should be given to including a time-frame for the preparation of these plans and strategies, e.g. within the lifetime of the CDP.

Policy P-NH7, regarding the intention to “*provide for the creation of a network of green infrastructure*” for Athlone and Mullingar, is noted. Consideration should be given to including a commitment to the development of green infrastructure strategies for these areas, within the lifetime of the Plan.

The plan has been amended accordingly.

Consideration should be given to amending Policy P-PTL4 as follows: “*To plan and prepare for the future **sustainable and environmentally sensitive** use of large industrial bog sites when peat harvesting finishes and to encourage a balanced approach to the redevelopment of cutaway bogs, including habitat creation.*”

The plan has been amended accordingly.

Chapter 6 - Landscape Character Assessment and Lake Management

Consideration should be given to amending Policy P-LLM3 as follows: “~~To adhere to the implementation of provisions~~ **implement the objectives and measures of the Shannon River Basin Management Plan and Eastern River Basin Management Plan and associated Programmes of Measures** to assist the process of achieving good water status...”

The plan has been amended accordingly.

Chapter 9-Water, Drainage and Environmental Services

In *Section 9.5 - Water Quality and Groundwater Protection* it is stated that a Groundwater Protection Plan/Scheme has not currently been developed for Westmeath. Consideration should be given to including a policy or objective for the preparation of a Groundwater Protection Plan within the lifetime of the Plan.

The plan has been amended accordingly.

Chapter 10 - Energy and Communications

The development of the Wind Energy Capacity Map, derived from the Landscape Character Assessment and included in Volume 2 of the Plan, is noted. The terms ‘low capacity’ and ‘medium capacity’ should be clearly defined in terms of whether these areas are open to consideration, preferred areas, etc.

Consideration should be given to amending Policy P-WIN2 as follows: “*To direct large-scale energy production projects, in the form of wind farms, ~~onto cutover cutaway Peatlands in the county~~*”

“medium capacity” lands, as identified on the Wind Energy Development Map (Volume 2), subject to environmental, landscape, habitats and wildlife protection requirements being addressed. This should also be reflected in the text of Section 10.5.2 - Industrial Scale Wind Farms.

Chapter 13- Settlement Plans

Zoning maps for each of the settlements, or a reference to the relevant map set out in Volume 2, should be included in the text for each of the settlements. The amount of land (if any) zoned for new residential within each of the settlement areas should also be clearly stated in the text.

It should be ensured that the land use zoning categories/objectives described in *Chapter 15 - Land Use Zoning* are consistent in the text of the Plan, the accompanying maps and tables, and the SEA (i.e. Section 15.2 lists 7 categories, Section 15.3 describes 6 categories, the accompanying table shows 7 categories, the maps have 9 zoning categories, and the SEA discusses 11 to 12 categories).

It is noted that lands outside the development boundary for Castlepollard have been zoned to support Policy P-CPT10 *“To provide for the establishment of an enterprise centre to the south of the town on the Mullingar Road...”* Lands (for various uses including open space, sport & recreation, enterprise & employment, and community, educational & institutional) have also been zoned outside the development boundaries at Ballymore, Ballynacarrigy, Clonmellon, Collinstown, Kilbeggan, Killucan-Rathwire, Milltownpass, Moate and Rochfortbridge. The relationship between these lands and the specific development boundaries should be clarified. Does the proposed zoning of these lands have implications on the specific relevant development boundaries?

It is noted that “mixed use” and “town centre” zoned lands in Kilbeggan and Glasson are located within Flood Risk Zone A. “Community, educational & institutional” zoned lands are located within Flood Risk Zone A in Milltownpass and Multyfarnham. Given that highly vulnerable development types are “permitted” or “open for consideration” in these zoning types, consideration should be given to de-zoning or rezoning these lands where appropriate, and/or requiring site level flood risk assessment and justification tests in accordance with *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities*.

It is noted that Objective O-KGD11 requires that a Local Area Plan be prepared for the lands located at the junction of the M6 and M4, near the settlement of Kinnegad. Clarification should be given regarding the justification for and scope of this proposed LAP.

In 2011, the Waste Water Treatment Plants at Clonmellon, Ballymore, Ballynacarrigy and Collinstown failed to achieve the overall objectives of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations 2001 (Urban Waste Water Treatment in 2011, EPA, 2012). An objective should be included in these settlement Plans to ensure that adequate and appropriate waste water treatment is in place prior to further development in the settlement areas.

The plan has been amended accordingly.

An area of un-zoned land has been included within the development boundary of Rochfortbridge, to the south west of the settlement area. Clarification should be given as to the intended use of these lands.

It is noted that a “buffer zone” is included on the objectives map for Delvin, but is not included on the zoning map, and is not within the development boundary. Clarification should be given as to the purpose of the buffer zone, and it should be clearly shown on the zoning map.

Appendix 3 - Strategic Policy, Guidance and Legislation

Consideration should be given to referring to Appendix 3, which summarises legislation, guidance and policy documents which informed the Plan, in the relevant sections of the main body of the Plan.

4.1.2 Section 2

Comments raised with regard to the Environmental Report of the Draft County Development Plan are set out in the Managers Report to the members of July 2013, these remain valid.

Chapter 1 - Introduction/Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

The NTS should be written in non-technical language, and should consist of a stand-alone document which summarises the contents of the Environmental Report, including all the requirements of Schedule 2B of the SEA Regulations.

Graphs 1.2 and 1.3 regarding distribution of zoned land in the County settlements could be presented as tables for clarity, and also included in the Plan.

Chapter 2 - Environmental Baseline and Significant Environmental Issues relating to the 2014-2020 Westmeath County Development Plan

The inter-relationship between the parameters (e.g. links between population and groundwater, surface water, drinking water and waste water treatment) has been well described. However, details on the likely evolution of the environmental parameters (population, water, biodiversity, climate change, etc.) in the absence of the Plan should be included.

Where key significant data gaps or technical difficulties were encountered, these should be documented in the Environmental Report.

Chapter 3 - Environmental Protection Objectives relevant to 2014-2020 Westmeath County Development Plan

The objectives should be clearly linked with relevant related targets and indicators, e.g. the biodiversity, flora and fauna section includes a target for “compliance with WFD RBMPs”; this target should be clearly linked to an objective and indicator.

Chapter 4 - Strategic Environmental Assessment of Policies

This chapter refers to Appendix 1 of the Environmental Report, which contains the assessment matrices which assess the impact of the Plan Objectives on the Environmental Protection Objectives. This Appendix has not been included. A copy of the appendices was furnished to the EPA.

It is noted that conflicts between the EPOs and the Plan objectives were identified, which resulted in changes being put forward for inclusion in the Plan. Where additional policies and objectives were

included in the Plan, these should be specifically set out in the Environmental Report, and should be highlighted in the Plan to improve transparency of the SEA process. Where the proposed changes were not integrated into the Plan, justification should be given for not including them. The inclusion of a section in the Plan on how the SEA (and AA) influenced the drafting of the Plan should be considered.

Chapter 5 - Alternative Policy and Reasons for Selecting Alternative Chosen

A more detailed description of each of the Alternative Scenarios should be included, particularly Alternative 2 which has been selected as the preferred strategy in combination with Alternative 3. Clear justification should be given for choosing the preferred combination of Alternatives.

Chapter 6 - Summary of how input from Statutory Consultees was taken into account in the course of conducting the SEA

The inclusion of summarised accounts of submissions received from the NPWS and EPA is noted. It should be clarified how these comments were taken into account in the drafting of the Plan and SEA. In addition, the nature and extent of any other consultation carried out during the SEA process, including with the public, relevant local organizations and adjoining Local Authorities should be described.

Chapter 7 – Monitoring

Consideration should be given to the following:

- The inclusion more frequent monitoring (at 2-3 yearly intervals rather than 5-6 yearly).
- Monitoring of both positive and negative effects, where they occur.
- Inclusion of the on-going 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 specific environmental issues as they arise. The programme should incorporate provisions for cumulative effects.

While the monitoring programme sets out the various sources of data, the actual departments responsible for collecting, collating and analysing the data should be identified as soon as possible after the Plan has been adopted.

A commitment should be made to reporting on monitoring, which could be linked with the interim review of the Plan.

Addendum to the Environmental Report on the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 - Consideration of amendments made to the Draft Plan by the Members in accordance with S. 11(5)(c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to 2012.

It is noted that, in response to Amendment 4 (zoning of greenfield lands for school development when suitable brownfield lands exist, and when access to waste water treatment is limited), the SEA recommends that the Amendment is not made. However, the Amendment has been brought forward into the Draft Plan. Justification should be given for this.

Amendment 5 (inclusion of a policy for an access point off a roundabout to facilitate a proposed school carpark) was also found to be contrary to the recommendations of SEA but has been brought forward in the Plan. Justification should be given in this regard.

Amendments 7 and 8 (zoning of additional “consolidation” lands in the Glasson and Moate Zoning Maps) was also found to be contrary to the recommendations of SEA but have been brought forward into the Plan. Justification should also be given in this regard.

It should be ensured that the Plan is in keeping with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development, as described in the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

4.2 NPWS submission 12 April 2013

The Amendments proposed in the Managers report arising from NPWS submission are as follows:

1. The following policy will be inserted in Chapter 5 as follows:

P-NH9 *Westmeath County Council shall consult with NPWS in regard to any developments (those requiring permission and those not requiring planning permission) which the Council propose to carry out within pNHAs, NHAs, SACs, SPAs, and other important ecological sites.*

2. Objective O-WT6 will be amended to reflect the adoption of variation no. 11 of the 2008 -2014 County Development Plan, as follows:

In the consideration of proposals with a public water supply requirement, to take fully into account the abstraction capacity limits set out in the report due for completion in September 2013, arising from the adoption of Variation No. 11 to the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014.

3. Policy P-THWH2 will be amended to read as follows:

To encourage the retention of hedgerows and other distinctive natural boundaries in rural areas. In the event that such boundary removal is unavoidable, the provision of the same type of boundary of equal or greater length will be required. Where such a boundary is a hedgerow it shall be replaced with a new hedgerow of native species indigenous to the area, grown from seed of local provenance.

A new policy will also be inserted in Chapter 5 as follows:

P-THWH7 *All tree and hedgerow planting shall be carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines on hedgerow and tree establishment/ planting when published.*

4. Policy should be amended as follows to take account of concerns regarding surface water drainage:

OFL1 To improve and extend surface water disposal infrastructure to serve the planned levels of growth, during the lifetime of this plan, in order to facilitate development subject to the consideration of habits and species including AA and consultation with NPWS.

P-CLO1 To upgrade the surface water drainage system subject to appropriate assessment and consultation with NPWS.

P-MF4 To upgrade the surface water drainage system to facilitate the projected growth set out in the Plan subject to the consideration of habits and species including AA and consultation with NPWS.

O-KR2 To upgrade the surface water drainage system to facilitate the projected growth set out in the Plan subject to the consideration of habits and species including AA and consultation with NPWS.

P-BYM4 To upgrade the surface water drainage system to facilitate the projected growth set out in the Plan subject to the consideration of habits and species including AA and consultation with NPWS.

P-CSN4 To upgrade the surface water drainage system to facilitate the projected growth set out in the Plan subject to the consideration of habits and species including AA and consultation with NPWS.

P-DLN5 To upgrade the surface water drainage system to facilitate the projected growth set out in the Plan subject to the consideration of habits and species including AA and consultation with NPWS.

P-GLN4 To upgrade the surface water drainage system in the village subject to the consideration of habits and species including AA and consultation with NPWS.

5. The following policy will be included in the appropriate location in the plan.

The Council will prepare and produce a plan for the Industrial Peatlands in the County (in consultation with stakeholders and adjacent local Authorities) during the lifetime of the County Development plan.

6. Policy P-WIN3 will be amended as follows:

P-WIN3 To ensure the siting and development of wind turbines is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the DoEHLG Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 as may be amended.

The land along the Inny River and the area to the north of Mullingar presented as being of medium capacity for wind energy development will be re-designated as being of low or no capacity.

7. Policy regarding extension of the Westmeath way to include the lakes will be amended as follows:

O-LM6 To continue to develop the Westmeath Way to include the lakes in consultation with the NPWS.

The proposed Westmeath Way route alongside the White Lake as indicated in Map Ref 13 will be relocated to the south of the site.

8. The following policy should be included in the relevant section of the Plan.

It shall be the policy of the Westmeath County Council to implement the actions of the forthcoming Biodiversity Action Plan.

9. The following policy should be incorporated in an appropriate location:

It shall be the policy of Westmeath County council to encourage the inclusion of wildlife friendly building methods to support birds, bats and hibernating insects.

The plan has been amended to take account of the foregoing.

A further amendment to the amendment (point 4 above) proposed in the Managers Report has been proposed in section 3.10.1 of this addendum as follows:

The words *“to facilitate the projected growth set out in the plan”* should be removed from each instance where this has been inserted as a policy or as an objective.

