



Laois County Council
Comhairle Chontae Laoise

MOUNTMELICK LOCAL AREA PLAN

2018 – 2024

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

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Annex A: Assessment matrix

Annex B: Plans, Policies and Programmes

Annex C: Addendum to SEA -Material Amendment to draft LAP and SEA Screening of same

1.0 Introduction

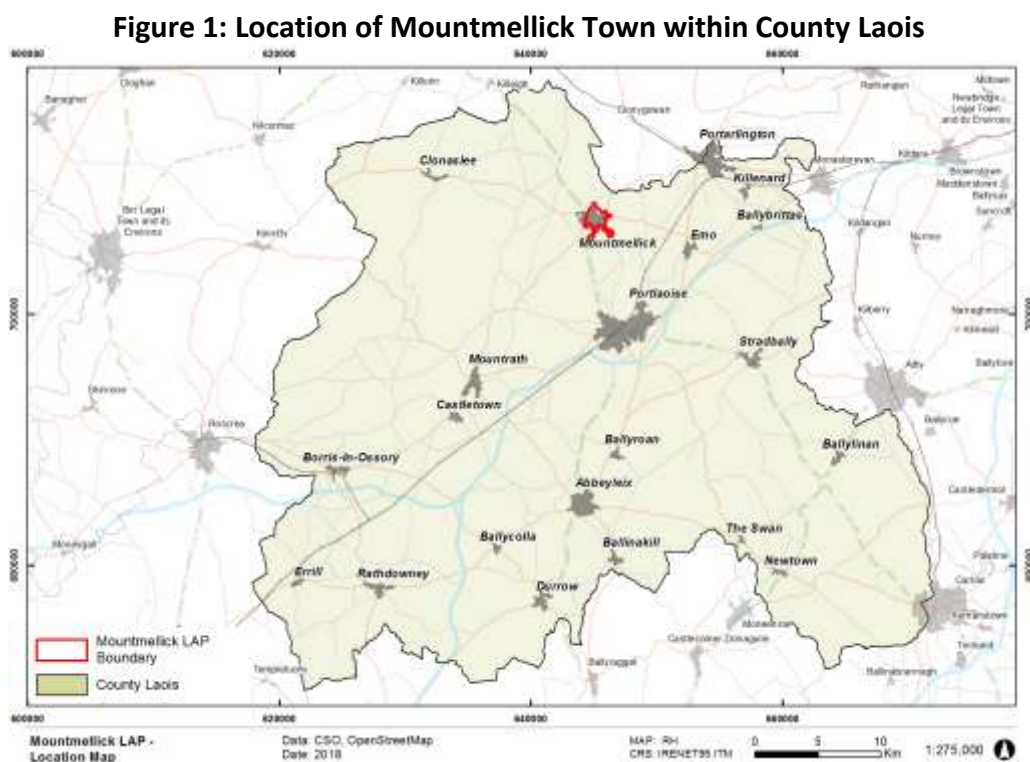
Laos County Council has prepared a Local Area Plan (LAP) for Mountmellick for the period 2018-2024. This is the Environmental Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Draft LAP. The purpose of SEA is to formally and systematically evaluate the likely significant effects of implementing a plan or programme, in this instance the Mountmellick LAP. The report identifies the significant environmental effects of the plan on the environment and where significant effects are identified, recommends appropriate mitigation measures to avoid or reduce such effects. SEA is an iterative process and has informed and influenced the preparation of the LAP, particularly through avoiding areas of greatest environmental sensitivity.

This Environmental Report for the Draft LAP, forms part of the SEA process, documents the SEA process and is the key consultation document in the SEA process and facilitates interested parties to comment on the environmental issues associated with the plan. This Environmental Report has been prepared under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I 436 of 2004).

This is the final SEA ER of the adopted Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2018-2024, please see Annex C for SEA comments on material alterations to the LAP as well as the SEA Screening of same.

1.2 Scale, nature and location of development

Figure 1 below shows the outline of the Mountmellick LAP within the wider context of Laois County.



1.3 SEA Environmental Report

Regulations contained in Schedule 2B of Statutory Instrument (S.I.) 436 of 2004 (as amended) details the information to be contained in an Environmental Report. The following Table 1 lists the information required and details where this information is contained in this Environmental Report.

Table 1: Information required to be contained in an Environmental Report

Schedule 2B of Statutory Instrument 436 of 2004	Addressed in this SEA ER
(a) An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans	Chapter One Introduction and Chapter Two Methodology outlines contents and main objectives; Chapter Three details the relationship with other relevant plans
(b) The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Chapter Four Baseline Environment provides this information
(c) The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	Chapter Four Baseline Environment provides this information
(d) Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to the Birds Directive or Habitats Directive	Chapter Four Baseline Environment provides this information
(e) The environmental protection objectives, established at international, European Union or national level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation	Chapter Five: SEA Objectives provides this information
(f) The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors	Chapter Seven, Significant Effects on the Environment provides this information
(g) The measures envisaged to prevent,	Chapter Eight, Mitigation Measures provides

**Schedule 2B of
Statutory Instrument 436 of 2004**

Addressed in this SEA ER

reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan

this information

(h) An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information

Chapter Six, Alternatives Considered provides this information and difficulties encountered are listed at the end of Chapter Two, Baseline Environment.

(i) A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring of the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan

Chapter Nine, Monitoring provides this information

(j) A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings

This is provided as a separate document to this Environmental Report but is also available

1.4 Report Preparation

The SEA Team worked with the LCC Planning team and other specialists. The following consultants prepared this SEA ER:

- **Ruth Minogue** MCIEEM, AILI, (BSoc Sc) Social Anthropology, University of Manchester 1996, MA (Econ) Environment and Development, University of Manchester 1998, Dip Field Ecology, University College Cork 2003, ongoing CPD including certificate in Health Impact Assessment (2012) and diploma in Planning and Environmental Law (2017);
- **Pat Doherty** MCIEEM, MSc in Applied Environmental Science (Ecology), University College Dublin, 2003; BSc (Honours) in Environmental Earth Science, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 2000; ongoing CDP including Habitat Assessment (NVC) and flora and fauna identification through IEEM;
- **Dr Ronan Hennessey**, Ph.D Earth & Ocean Sciences, NUI Galway, Higher Diploma in applied Remote Sensing and GIS, NUI Maynooth, B.Sc Earth Sciences, NUI Galway;
- **Michael Cregan**, Diploma in Landscape Architecture (Edinburgh University), B.Agr.Sc. (Forestry) (University College Dublin) and M.Agr.Sc (Urban Landscape Planning) (University College Dublin).

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the SEA methodology in detail and outlines the steps required for SEA. The methodology used to carry out the SEA of the plan reflects the requirements of the SEA regulations and available guidance on undertaking SEA in Ireland, including:

- SEA Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2003;
- Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment – Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities - published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004;
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI 436 and SI 435 of 2004);
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 201 of 2011);
- Planning and Development (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (S.I No 200 of 2011);
- SEA Process Checklist Consultation Draft 2008, EPA 2008;
- Circular Letter PSSP 6/2011 Further Transposition of EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment;
- Guidance on integrating climate change and biodiversity into Strategic Environmental Assessment European Union 2013;
- SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Authorities, Draft Version, 2013;
- Integrating Climate Change into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland – A Guidance Note, EPA, 2015; and,
- Developing and assessing alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment, (EPA, 2015).

2.2 Stages in the SEA Process

The steps involved in SEA are as follows:

- Screening (determining whether or not SEA is required).
- Scoping (determining the range of environmental issues to be covered by the SEA).
- The preparation of an Environmental Report (*current stage*).
- The carrying out of consultations.
- The integration of environmental considerations into the Plan or Programme.
- The publication of information on the decision (SEA Statement).

2.2.1 Screening

The SEA Regulations state that SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds. SEA is mandatory for Local Area Plans where the population or target population exceeds 5,000 persons. As this is the case for the Mountmellick LAP area, the LAP progressed to the next stage of SEA – Scoping. An overview of this is provided below.

2.2.2 Scoping

The purpose of the SEA Scoping report is to identify the scope of the SEA and ensure that relevant data and environmental topics are included in the SEA. The Scoping report was issued to the statutory environmental authorities consultees on January 2018 for a four week period.

The table below summarises the main issues raised by consultees and the SEA response to same. Please note that pre-draft consultation was also undertaken by LCC and the list of issues identified through this process also informed the scope of the SEA.

Table 2: Scoping Submissions received

Consultee	Key Issue Raised	SEA Response
Scientific Officer, SEA Section Office of Evidence and Assessment. Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Inspectorate, Inniscarra, County Cork		
	Plan Area Boundary Map: There is merit in including a map showing the extent of the Plan area, particularly in the context of assessing and identifying relevant environmental sensitivities to be considered in the SEA.	Agreed, see Figure 1.
	Key Environmental Resources: We welcome in Section 3 Key Environmental Resources, that the EPA’s Ireland’s Environment 2016-an Assessment (EPA 2016), is a key environmental resource in informing the LAP process. The challenges and emerging issues described within this report should be integrated as appropriate in the Plan.	Noted.
	Water Framework Directive: The Plan should include a commitment to integrate the relevant recommendations of the Draft National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG) and associated Programme of Measures which will be adopted during lifetime of the Plan. The Plan should also provide for the protection of high and good quality surface waters and groundwater resources and also protect relevant	Noted, reference made in policies to same. Noted, this is provided in the LAP.

Consultee	Key Issue Raised	SEA Response
	areas listed on the WFD Register of Protected Areas.	
	<p>Designated Sites: Among the conservation areas included in / within 15km of the Plan area are the River Barrow and River Nore (SAC) and the Slieve Bloom Mountains (SPA). The SEA should consider the potential effects occurring for all designated sites and protected species within and adjacent to the Plan area and associated ecological corridors. In particular consideration should be given to the potential for cumulative effects associated with existing, and proposed, development associated with the Plan implementation. The SEA should consider the potential effects occurring for all designated sites and protected species within and adjacent to the Plan area and associated ecological corridors. In particular consideration should be given to the potential for cumulative effects associated with existing, and proposed, development associated with the Plan implementation.</p>	Noted, these sites are described in Chapter 4 and potential cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 7 of this SEA ER.
	<p>The protection of and possible enhancement of Undesignated Biodiversity: Wider consideration of biodiversity outside of designated areas, such as ecological corridors/linkages, hedgerows and wetlands should be identified and measures put in place to ensure protection/replacement where appropriate.</p> <p>It may also be useful to consider reviewing and updating, as appropriate, existing habitat mapping to inform the development of the Plan area over the lifetime of the Plan. Where wetland sites are involved, consideration should be given to assessing the potential impact on water quality and the hydrological/ hydrogeological regime which maintains these sites.</p>	Noted, consideration of these within the plan area are described in Chapter 4. Noted.
	<p>Flood Risk Assessment and Management: We note that the Plan area has a history of flood events. The Plan should reflect the need for flood risk to be taken into consideration for both existing and proposed new zoning, and associated development, within the Plan area. UoM14 CFRAMS should help inform appropriate zoning/re-zoning considerations within the Plan area. The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DAHLG 2009), should also be</p>	Noted, described in Chapter 4 and specific policies/objectives in Chapter 7, and annex A, as well as land use zoning considerations.

Consultee	Key Issue Raised	SEA Response
	integrated, as appropriate.	
	<p>Groundwater Vulnerability:</p> <p>We note that Section 3 Material Assets identifies that the public water supply for Mountmellick is supplied by groundwater aquifers and that there are no aquifer protection zones within the LAP boundary. In this context, the Plan should include a commitment to the protection of groundwater resources and associated habitats and species.</p>	Noted, included in LAP.
	<p>Provision of Adequate and Appropriate Critical Infrastructure:</p> <p>We note the recognition in section 3.6 Material Assets in the Scoping Report that ‘high quality water supply and wastewater infrastructure is fundamental to ensuring the long-term physical, environmental, social and economic development of Mountmellick’. At the same time, the various drinking water upgrades proposed in the joint Portlaoise and Mountmellick Water Supply Scheme and outlined in the Scoping Report for the Draft Portlaoise LAP 2018-2024, are not referenced in this Scoping Report. The Plan should clarify this and include a commitment to ensuring the provision of adequate and appropriate critical water infrastructure to cater for future sustainable development in the Plan area and to collaborate with Irish Water in seeking to resolve any critical water infrastructure issues which may arise.</p>	Noted, Chapters 4 and 7 of this SEA ER amends this.
	<p>Climate Change Adaptation:</p> <p>The Plan should promote commitments for the development and promotion of appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures that can be implemented through relevant land use plans and/or specific plans e.g. Flood Risk Management Plans etc. Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures should be included in the Plan as appropriate and the Plan should be consistent with the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework (when available), as well as relevant sectoral, regional and local adaption plans. The Agency has published SEA guidance on ‘Integrating Climate Change into SEA’ which may be useful in this regard. This guidance (and other SEA related guidance) is available at: http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea.</p>	Noted, a specific policy addresses this in the LAP.

Consultee	Key Issue Raised	SEA Response
	<p>Core Strategy: We note Table 3 Core Strategy in the Scoping Report. The Plan should ensure that it remains consistent with the National Planning Framework, when adopted, and promote the need for sustainable development. A commitment should also be made to remain consistent with the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) upon adoption.</p>	<p>Noted. The Ethos of the NPF has informed the plan preparation. The LAP complies with the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines currently in place. Policies relating to Town Centre consolidation have been integrated to the LAP.</p>
	<p>Brownfield Lands: Where any brownfield lands are proposed for reuse / regeneration in the context of Plan development, these should be appropriately remediated to avoid or minimise any potential significant environmental impacts or human health impacts that may arise. A commitment should be given that any assessment of these sites should consider and provide information on aspects such as contaminated soil removal / remediation, noise and air quality, waste management, possible service infrastructure provision issues, possible presence of invasive species and ensuring appropriate management / control, implications for biodiversity etc.</p>	<p>Noted, included as appropriate.</p>
	<p>Development arising from the Plan: The Plan should include a specific commitment that any proposed residential, industrial, infrastructural or tourism related development arising from the Plan will take into account any other associated plans/programmes/strategies and the requirements of the SEA, Habitats, WFD and Floods Directives, as relevant and appropriate.</p>	<p>Noted, this is included in the Key Plan objectives.</p>
	<p>Potential for Cumulative Effects: In preparing the SEA, you should consider assessing the potential for cumulative effects on the environment as a result of implementing the Plan. A review of relevant adjacent Local Area Plans and relevant Plans/ Programmes and significant projects should also be undertaken and the potential for cumulative environmental effects considered.</p>	<p>Noted, see Chapter 7 for assessment of cumulative effects.</p>

Consultee	Key Issue Raised	SEA Response
	<p>Alternatives: In considering and assessing alternatives, the alternatives proposed should be reasonable and realistic and should be set at the appropriate strategic level at which the Plan will be implemented operating within the national planning hierarchy. They should be assessed against the relevant environmental objectives established for the key environmental aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected. Clear justification should be provided for the selection of the preferred alternative/ combination of alternatives. Where relevant, the development of alternatives should be clearly described. In addition, the methodology applied in the assessment of alternatives along with any assumptions made should be described. The Agency has published an EPA Guidance document Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment - Good Practice Guidance (EPA, 2015), which should be considered.</p>	<p>Noted, and agreed. Chapter 6 Consideration of Alternatives addresses these comments.</p>
	<p>SEA Mitigation Measures: The Plan should include appropriate mitigation measures to address the potential for significant negative environmental effects, where these have been identified.</p>	<p>Noted, see Chapter 8 for mitigation measures.</p>
	<p>SEA Related Monitoring: In relation to monitoring related aspects required under the SEA Directive, the SEA should include information on the nature and frequency of monitoring to be carried out and organisations responsible for carrying out the monitoring. Linking SEA and Plan related monitoring will ensure that any unforeseen negative effects are identified early and appropriate mitigation measures provided.</p>	<p>Noted, please see Chapter 9 of this SEA ER.</p>

2.3 Baseline Data

The baseline data assists in describing the current state of the environment, facilitating the identification, evaluation and subsequent monitoring of the effects of the plan. It helps identify existing environmental problems in and around the plan area and in turn these can be quantified (for certain environmental parameters) or qualified. This highlights the environmental issues relevant to each SEA parameter and ensures that the plan implementation does not exacerbate such problems. Conversely this information can also be used to promote good environmental practices and opportunities for environmental enhancement, thereby improving environmental quality where possible.

Baseline data was gathered for all parameters. Site visits were undertaken by the forward planners and SEA consultant in January 2018. Other data was gathered from the SEA ER of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023, Irish Water, the EPA, Met Eireann and other sources as appropriate. Footnotes throughout the document, particularly in Chapter Four present the reference and source.

The SEA has also used a Geographical Information System (GIS) in the following ways:

- To provide baseline information on a range of environmental parameters;
- To assist in assessment of alternatives;
- To help assess in-combination or cumulative impacts, and
- To provide maps to illustrate environmental parameters in the SEA Environmental Report.

The SEA Directive requires that information be focused upon **relevant aspects** of the environmental characteristics of the area likely to be **significantly affected** by the plan and the likely change, both positive and negative, where applicable.

2.4 Consideration of alternatives

The SEA assessed a number of alternative development scenarios during the plan preparation process. The three emerging scenarios were subject to a workshop that assessed each of the scenarios through posing key questions in relation to potential environmental effects associated with same. Further information is provided in Chapter Six, Consideration of Alternatives.

2.5 Approach to assessment of significant environmental impacts

The assessment described within this Environmental Report aims to highlight the potential conflicts, if they are present, between the aims and proposals contained in this draft LAP with the Strategic Environmental Objectives. Furthermore the assessment examines the potential impact arising from the plan's implementation on sensitive environmental receptors.

Key to assessing the above is setting a specific set of environmental objectives for each of the environmental topics. The objectives are provided in Chapter Five and include all aspects of the environment such as Cultural heritage, Population and Human health, and Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna.

The SEA, Habitats Directive Assessment process and LAP formulation is an iterative process and environmental considerations have informed all stages of the preparation of the plan, in order to avoid or minimise significant adverse environmental impacts. However, where the environmental assessment identifies significant adverse effects, consideration is given in the first instance to preventing such impacts; where this is not possible for stated reasons, to lessening or offsetting those effects.

In accordance with SEA guidelines the assessment identifies 'impact' under three headings:

- Quality of Impact
- Significance of Impact
- Duration of Impact.

This initial stage aims to ascertain the quality, if any, of the potential impact. Each of the Plan's objectives, policies and zonings have been assessed for their impact and where a neutral impact is noted no further discussion is provided within this report. In this manner, the ER focuses on the negative and positive impacts and proceeds to a commentary on their significance and duration. Thus it is a more robust, more focused approach to understanding the potential impacts associated with the Mountmellick LAP.

Secondly, where a potential impact is noted, either positive or negative, the significance of impact is addressed. Significance is assessed in terms of the type/scale of development envisaged by the plan and the sensitivity/importance of the receiving environment. Finally where it has been determined that elements of the LAP may potentially result in a negative impact on an environmental receptor appropriate level mitigation measures are proposed.

2.6 Mitigation

Section (g) of Schedule 2B of the SEA Regulations requires information on the mitigation measures that will be put in place to minimise/eliminate any significant adverse impacts due to the implementation of the LAP. Chapter Eight of this SEA ER highlights the mitigation measures that will be put in place to counter identified significant adverse impacts due to the LAP's implementation.

The LAP has been prepared having regard to the environmental protection objectives contained within the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023. However, some unavoidable residual issues may remain and therefore mitigation measures are required. Chapter Eight details the mitigation measures necessary to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the LAP.

2.7 Monitoring

Article 10 of the SEA Directive sets out the requirement that monitoring is to be carried out of the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the LAP in order to identify at an early stage any unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Chapter Nine presents the monitoring requirements for the plan, aligned where possible with those of the SEA of the Laois CDP 2017-2023.

2.8 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (DoEHLG 2009) provide a methodology to incorporate flood risk identification and management into land use strategies. It also requires the alignment and integration of flood risk into the SEA process. The core objectives of the Guidelines are to:

- Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
- Avoid new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface water run-off;
- Ensure effective management of residual risks for development permitted in floodplains;
- Avoid unnecessary restriction of national, regional or local economic and social growth;
- Improve the understanding of flood risk among relevant stakeholders; and
- Ensure that the requirements of EU and national law in relation to the natural environment and nature conservation are complied with at all stages of flood risk management.

Potential flood issues in the plan area are an important consideration in the preparation of the LAP. Therefore the plan has been guided by the information on flood risk currently available and has been informed by the currently up to date flood risk information for Mountmellick including Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) studies. These findings have been integrated into the LAP and this SEA ER (See Chapters Four and Seven in particular).

2.9 Data Gaps

Data gaps are present in terms of human health and population; however the Census 2016 Small Area Population statistics will address some of these data gaps.

3.0 Relationships to Plans, Policies and Programmes

3.1 Introduction

Under the SEA Directive, the relationship between the LAP and other relevant plans and programmes must be taken into account. A review of the relevant plans and programmes can be found in Appendix A.

The LAP must be considered within the context of a hierarchy of policies, plans and strategies which include international, national, regional and local level policy documents. These documents set the policy framework within which the plan will operate. The Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 (LCDP 2017-2023) operates as the primary land use framework for the County. The LAP has been prepared having regard to the policies and objectives outlined within the above LCDP 2017-2023. The key environmental protective objectives and policies of the LAP are consistent with the County Development Plan.

A list of the key relevant international, national, regional and county policies included in the review are provided below in Section 3.2; Section 3.3 identifies key principles that have informed the SEA process arising from this review.

3.2 Relevant Plans, Policies and Programmes

3.2.1 International

- UN Convention of Biological Diversity, 1992
- The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (The Ramsar Convention) 1971 and subsequent amendments
- EU Environmental Action Programme to 2020
- EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020
- EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, (2009/147/EC) 1979. Known as the Birds Directive
- EU Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna, (92/43/EEC), 1992 known as the Habitats Directive
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011
- EU Green Infrastructure Strategy 2013
- The Stockholm Convention 2001
- EU Soil Thematic Strategy
- Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) as amended
- Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)
- The Drinking Water Directive (DWD), (98/83/EC) 1998
- Groundwater Directive, (2006/118/EC) 2006
- EC Bathing Water Quality Directive, (2006/7/EC) 2006
- Paris (Climate Change) Agreement
- Kyoto Protocol
- The Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive
- EU Directive on Waste, (2006/12/EC), 2006
- EU Directive on Waste (2008/98/EC), 2008

- EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC), 1991
- Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources
- European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1992 (The Valletta Convention)
- Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, 1985 (Granada Convention)
- The European Landscape Convention 2000
- The Aarhus Convention
- Environmental Liability Directive 2004/35/EC
- SEA Directive - Assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment, (2001/42/EC) 2001
- Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC) (97/11/EC), 1985 and Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2014/52/EC)

3.2.2 National

- National Planning Framework (2018)
- The National Spatial Strategy 2002 -2020
- 3rd National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021
- The Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2012 National Mitigation Plan (in preparation)
- Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plans (in preparation)
- Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines, EPA 2016
- Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plans (in preparation)
- Our Sustainable Future A framework for sustainable development in Ireland (2012)
- National Landscape Strategy (2015-2025)
- National Heritage Plan (2002)
- Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plans (2nd cycle in preparation)
- Irish Water's Capital Investment Programme
- Water Services Act (2007)
- Water Services (Amendment) Act (2012)
- Irish Water Services Strategic Plan SEA and AA (2015)
- Irish Water Capital Investment Programme (2017-2021)
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns & Villages) (2009)
- Geological Heritage Sites Designation (under the Wildlife Amendment Act 2000)
- Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan 2014-2020
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (and Technical Appendices) for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, OPW), 2009
- National Climate Change Strategy (2007-2012)
- Review of Ireland's climate change policy and Climate Action and Low Carbon Bill 2013
- Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020
- National Monuments Act 1930 with subsequent amendments
- Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)
- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

- Draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines, (2000)
- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)
- Planning Policy Statement, 2015

3.2.3 Regional and County

- Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2020- to be replaced by Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies
- Eastern Catchment and Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan (draft)
- Eastern River Basin District Management Plan (second cycle in preparation)
- Eastern-Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan 2015
- Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023
- Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016
- Laois County Heritage Plan 2014-2019

3.3 Key principles identified from review

Following the review of the relationship between the above plans, policies and programmes (see also Appendix A), the following key principles have been identified and this have been considered through the SEA and helped to inform the LAP development.

Table 3: Key Principles from review

SEA Topic	Principles/Implications for the LAP and SEA	EPA State of Irelands Environment 2016 Key Issues
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance biodiversity at all levels • Avoid and minimise effects on nationally and internationally rare and threatened species and habitats through sensitive design and consultation, recognising ecological connectivity where possible • Facilitate species and habitat adaption to climate change • Avoid and minimise habitat fragmentation and seek opportunities to improve habitat connectivity • Ensure careful consideration of non-native invasive and alien species issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of legislation - Climate change - Environment and health and well being - Nature and wild places
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for sustainable communities with key services • A high quality environment to live, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment and health and well being - Implementation of

SEA Topic	Principles/Implications for the LAP and SEA	EPA State of Irelands Environment 2016 Key Issues
Water	<p>work and play in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid pollution and environmental health impacts (noise and air quality) through mitigation and design • Maintain and improve water quality • Avoid and minimise effects on natural processes, particularly natural flood management and catchment processes through sensitive design and consultation • Adapt and improve resilience to the effects of climate change, particularly flood risks associated with extreme weather • Minimise water consumption/ abstractions • Design SUDS to facilitate ecological improvement/ enhancement where possible 	<p>legislation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate change - Community engagement - Sustainable economic activities - Restore and protect water quality - Implementation of legislation - Climate change - Environment and health and well being
Soil and Geology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve soil resources where possible and avoid waste of soil resources • Maintain productive capacity and prevent erosion of soils • Ensure careful consideration of non-native invasive and alien species issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate change - Environment and health and well being - Sustainable economic activities
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid and minimise waste generation • Maximise re-use of material resources and use of recycled materials • Minimise energy consumption and encourage use of renewable energy • Promote sustainable transport patterns and modes where possible. • Plan and provide for sustainable water management and wastewater treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restore and protect water quality - Implementation of legislation - Climate change - Environment and health and well being - Sustainable economic activities
Air Quality and Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt and improve resilience to the effects of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate change - Implementation of

SEA Topic	Principles/Implications for the LAP and SEA	EPA State of Irelands Environment 2016 Key Issues
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage reduction in greenhouse gases through transport, energy, built development. • Minimise adverse impacts associated with air and noise quality • Conserve, preserve and record architectural and archaeological heritage • Avoid and minimise effects on historic environment features through sensitive design and consultation 	<p>legislation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment and health and well being - Environment and health and well being - Sustainable economic activities
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the landscape character of the area through design • Integrate green infrastructure considerations • Improve landscape connectivity to surrounding area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment and health and well being - Nature and wild places
Climate change and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt and improve resilience to the effects of climate change • Promote local/ sustainable sourcing of materials • Promote sustainable design and innovation to reduce material consumption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment and health and well being - Sustainable economic activities - Climate change - Implementation of legislation
Inter-relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve the health of people, ecosystems and natural processes • Minimise effects on landscape and historic environment features • Adapt and improve resilience to climate change and extreme weather events • Actively seek to integrate opportunities for environmental enhancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment and health and well being - Sustainable economic activities - Climate change - Implementation of legislation - Nature and wild places - Restore and protect water quality - Community engagement

4.0 Environmental Baseline

4.1 Introduction

Article 5 of the SEA Directive states that the environmental report shall 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 or programme and its stage in the decision-making process; and
- The extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process in order to avoid duplication of the assessment.

In addition, particular issues as they relate to the environment have been identified through the pre-draft submission process, as well as the responses to the SEA Scoping Report; these are summarised in the relevant section of this chapter.

The sphere of influence of the plan is variable, with potential water resources extending well beyond the plan area and potential interactions with the wider catchment, downstream of the plan area. For other parameters, the sphere of influence is more closely defined to a specific place, for example in relation to cultural heritage features.

4.2 Population and Human health

This section provides information on the current population, demographic trends and changes in the LAP area adjacent DEDs between 2011 and 2016 Census. In addition, information is provided on economic and human health trends in the County. Impacts can arise on people's health and quality of life from a range of environmental factors, often through a combination of environmental impacts such as land use, water quality, air quality, noise and transport patterns.

Figure 2 below presents the LAP boundary and Census Data (2016) for Electoral Districts within the plan boundary. Figure 3 shows population density for the LAP.

Figure 2: Population (Census 2016)

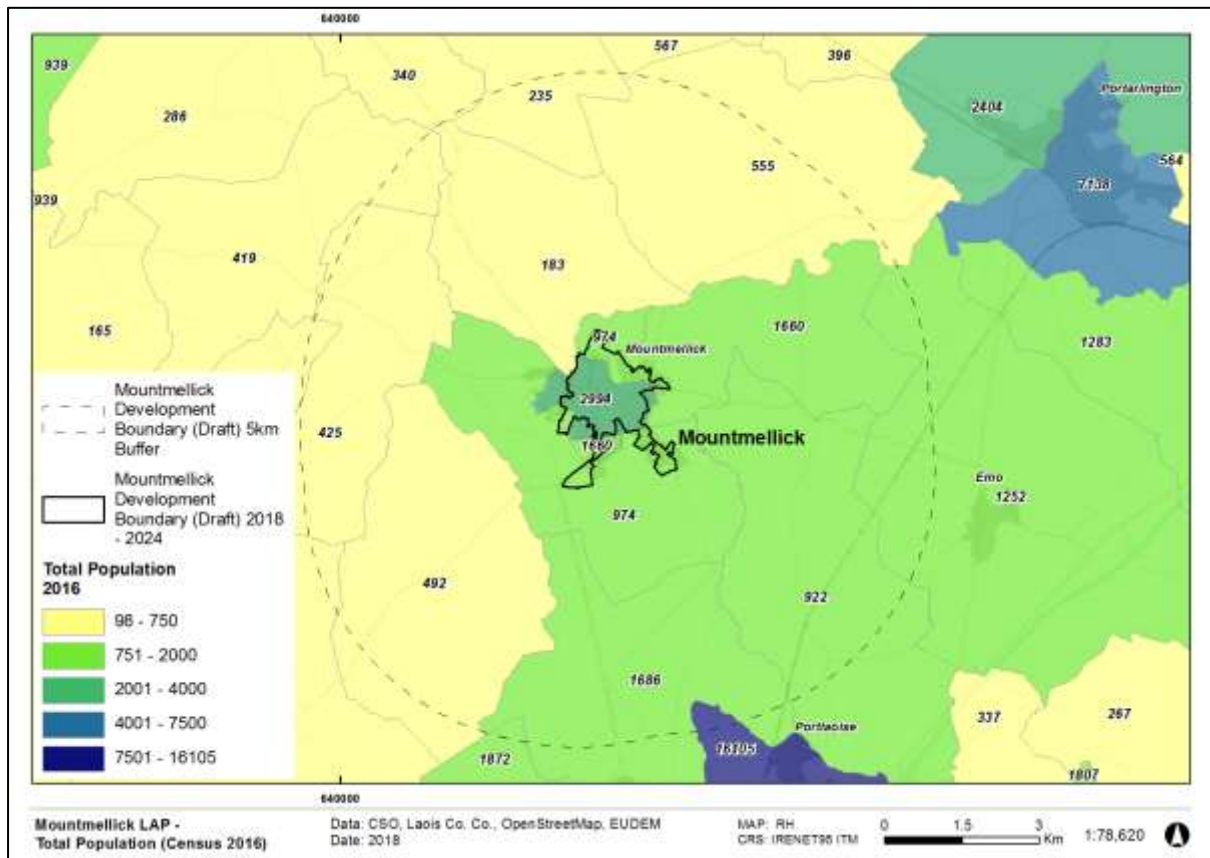
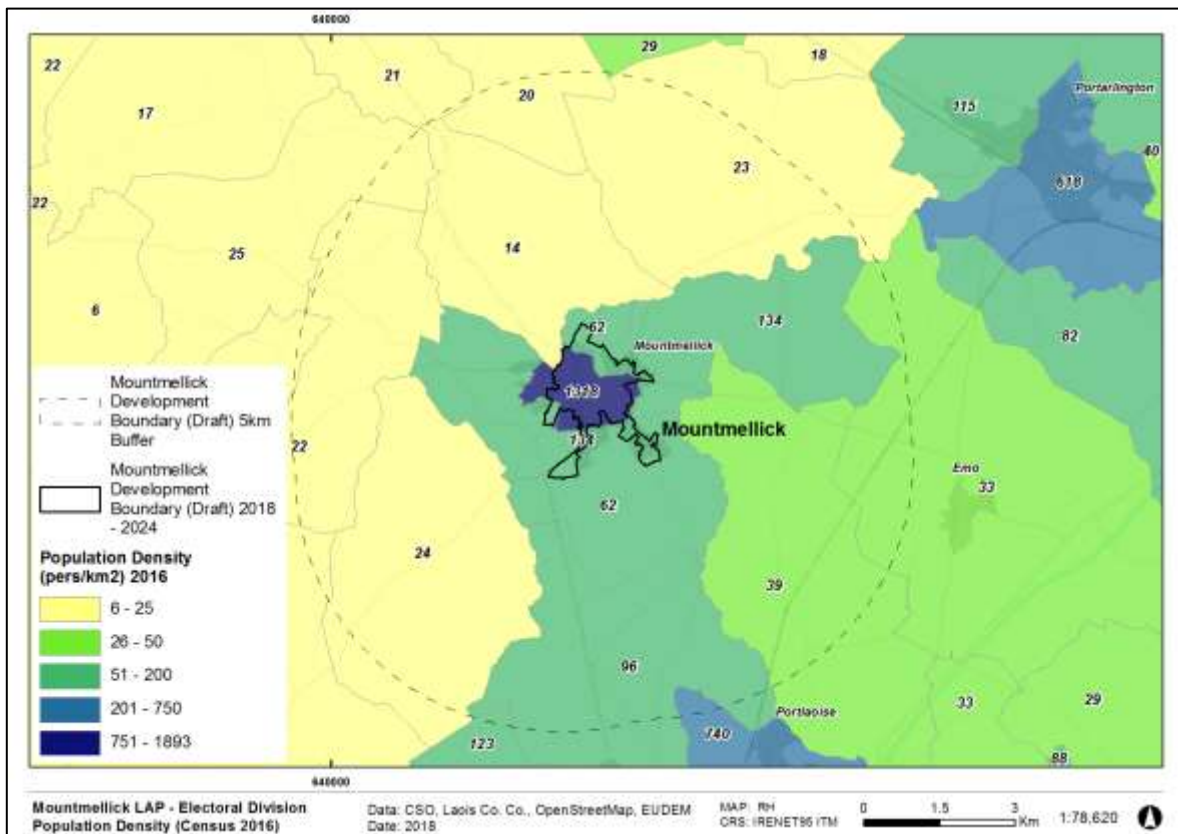


Figure 3: Population Density



4.2.1 Population

County Laois has experienced significant population growth in the past decade, growing by 26.3% over the ten year period between 2006 and 2016. In the same ten year period, Mountmellick experienced a population growth rate of 17.4%. However, the proportion of the county's population living within Mountmellick has marginally decreased over this period, falling from 6.1% in 2006 to 4.1% in 2016.

Mountmellick benefits from a relatively young population, with 50% of the population below 35 years of age, compared to 47.1% elsewhere in the State. Mountmellick has a lower proportion of middle-aged and older residents, with just 21% of the population aged 55 or older, compared to 24% elsewhere in the State. Mountmellick also benefits from ethnic diversity with 7% of its population being non-Irish. Of particular note, is that almost 5% of the population is made up of EU nationals excluding the UK.

A summary of key population, housing stock and HP Deprivation and employment data from this census for the relevant EDs is provided below in Table 4.

Table 4: Electoral Districts 2016 Census Data

Electoral District	Mountmellick (Urban)		
Total Population	2,994		
Total housing stock	1389	Vacant	203
HP Deprivation Index¹	Disadvantaged		
Unemployment Male	25.69%	Unemployment	24.18%

4.2.2 Human Health

Human health can be determined by social, environmental and economic factors, among others. Human health may be impacted upon in a variety of ways and by a number of environmental receptors such as water, biodiversity, climate, flooding, air and major accidents, etc. The exposure to contaminants or pollutants can have serious implications for human health. Potential impacts on population and human health include inadequate water and wastewater and waste infrastructure, contamination of soils, excessive noise, flooding and poor air quality in areas where there are large volumes of traffic.

The Institute of Public Health states:

'Where people live affects their health. There are a number of elements of the living environment that influence health including the built environment, travel choices and the communities in which people live. The design, maintenance and location of buildings influence health. Similarly, public spaces and transport networks can facilitate health by providing opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and access to social goods'.

¹ <https://maps.pobal.ie/WebApps/DeprivationIndices/index.html>

Disadvantaged people are more likely to live in poor quality built environments and have limited access to transport and local amenities supporting healthy choices. Figure 4 below identifies key factors that contribute to human health. This is followed by a summary of the key environmental factors that can effect human health as identified through the SEA Scoping process.

Figure 4: The determinants of health and well being²



Human Health and Noise

Environmental noise is treated in a different way to noise nuisance. A nuisance noise is something that occurs from time to time and is not usually considered to be a feature of life in the local area. For example, a noisy dog or late night parties are short term occurrences. Even if they happen regularly, they are not caused by any long term activities and so they are thought of as nuisance noise. Environmental noise is from long term or permanent sources, like major transport routes and factories. Noise from these sources has a different effect on people and is managed in a different way. The Environmental Noise Directive was written into Irish law in 2006, through The Environmental Noise Regulations (Statutory Instrument No. 140 of 2006). This law relates to the assessment and management of environmental noise. They provide for a common approach intended to avoid, prevent or reduce the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise.

² The determinants of health and well-being (Barton & Grant 2006)

These regulations do not apply to nuisance noise which can be dealt with under the Environmental Protection Agency Act.

Noise Action Plans are required under the Environmental Noise Directive (EU 2002/49/EC) transposed in to Irish law by SI 140 of 2006. Laois County Council prepared a Noise Action Plan for 2014-2018. This plan establishes the measures that the council intend to take to manage environmental noise exposure. This Action Plan follows the practice set down in the EPA Guidance and accordingly, hospitals, schools and housing are designated as noise sensitive premises.

In the context of the LAP, existing roads operate as the greatest noise generators. Noise mapping was undertaken on roads that meet the criteria of more than 8,000 vehicles per day. For Mountmellick, the closest road to meet these criteria is the N80 (south of Mountmellick to Portlaoise town). Therefore no noise mapping was required for Mountmellick under the Noise Action Plan.

The location of new residential properties, mixed residential/commercial use buildings or noise sensitive premises such as schools or hospitals, adjacent to existing roads, railways, airports, industry or recreational activities can result in significant noise management issues. Noise sensitive locations such as those above have particular requirements for low level noise environments in order to be able to function effectively. A high standard of insulation can be applied to improve noise attenuation in these buildings but this measure is rendered relatively ineffective when windows are opened. It also does not protect the external environment around the noise sensitive location from community/environmental noise.

Human Health and Air Quality

The Air Framework Directive 96/62/EC (CEC, 1996) details how ambient air quality should be monitored assessed and managed. This Directive requires that member states divide their territory into zones for the assessment and management of air quality. Mountmellick is designated as Rural under the Air Quality Index for Health (EPA). The Air Quality Index of health³ is based on hourly monitoring data from sites around Ireland and is based on measurements of five air pollutants all of which can harm health. The five pollutants are:

- Ozone gas
- Nitrogen dioxide gas
- Sulphur dioxide gas
- PM2.5 particles and
- PM10 particle

Mountmellick achieved 'good' air quality under this index when checked on 13th March 2018.

The Air Pollution Regulations (2012) were signed into law by the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government on 31st August 2012. One of the key elements of the

³ <http://www.epa.ie/air/quality/>

regulations has been the designation of new towns as smokeless zones and the expansion of the ban areas in towns that were previously covered under the old regulations. The smoky coal ban will apply nationally from Autumn 2018.

The EPA State of the Environment Report (2016) has further highlighted the role of environmental quality and health and in turn has highlighted the adoption of the newer more stringent World Health Organization guideline values for air quality. The Clean Air Policy Package (EC 2014) involves a move to tackling air emissions at source with potentially tighter air quality standards from 2020 onwards⁴.

Radon

The greatest health risk from radiation in Ireland is caused by radon. It accounts for more than half of the total radiation dose received by the Irish population. As a known carcinogen, in the same category as tobacco smoke and asbestos it is a cause of lung cancer. Up to 250 cases of lung cancer in Ireland every year can be linked to radon. These lung cancer cases are principally associated with exposure to radon in the home, but exposure in the workplace is also a contributor. In the workplace, the employer must protect the health of workers from this identifiable risk.

Radon is only a problem if it is ignored and some simple, inexpensive and straightforward solutions are available to reduce excessive levels both in the workplace and in the home. The EPA Radon map shows that the majority of the LAP is situated within a 10km grid square in which between one to five percent of homes are estimated to be above the reference level for radon.

4.2.3 Existing issues Population and human health

- Provision of community facilities, public open space, housing and design;
- Transport Network and Public Transport;
- Environmental Health relating to noise and air quality in particular;
- Addressing and increasing employment opportunities;
- Town centre revitalisation and economic activity.

As the noise maps show, much of the LAP area is subject to ongoing high sound levels and these can have long term negative effects on populations and human health.

4.3 Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

Much of the LAP lands can be classified as Built Land and Artificial Surfaces. In turn, this makes the areas of open space and water courses potentially important as green corridors and stepping stones for biodiversity.

⁴ SEA ER of draft National Mitigation Plan , 2017.

4.3.1 Designated Nature Conservation Areas

There are no European designated (EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC) Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas located within the plan boundary. However, the Owenass River flows through the town which is a tributary of and forms part of the River Barrow Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002162). The Mountmellick SAC is located approximately 3km east of the settlement

The following Figures show designated (and proposed) nature conservation areas occurring within a 15 km radius of the LAP.

In addition to the River Barrow and Nore SAC, other conservation areas within 15km of the LAP are:

- Mountmellick SAC (site code:002141) - 3km east of Mountmellick
- Slieve Bloom Mountains Special Protection Areas - 6.4km west
- Slieve Bloom Mountains Special - Area of Conservation (site code) - 8.8km west
- Clonreher Bog Natural Heritage Area (site code: 002357) - approximately 4km south of the town.

The Natura Impact Report that accompanies this LAP provides further information on the European Sites within this area.

Clonreher Bog NHA is the closest NHA to the plan area this comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded by the N80 to the east and the abandoned railway line (Mountmellick Branch) to the west. It can be accessed from bog tracks off the N80, to the north-east and south-east of the site. Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Midland Raised Bog, dominated by bog moss (*Sphagnum*) species, over which grow Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*). To the north and south of the intact dome are expanses of cutaway bog, which are no longer in use and which are now overgrown with Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). In some areas Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and/or Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) are colonising and creating patches of scrub. There is an extensive area of scrub along the abandoned railway line to the west. Clonreher Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising as it does a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. This site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats and its southerly location, is of ecological interest.

Figure 5: Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas within 15km of Mountmellick LAP

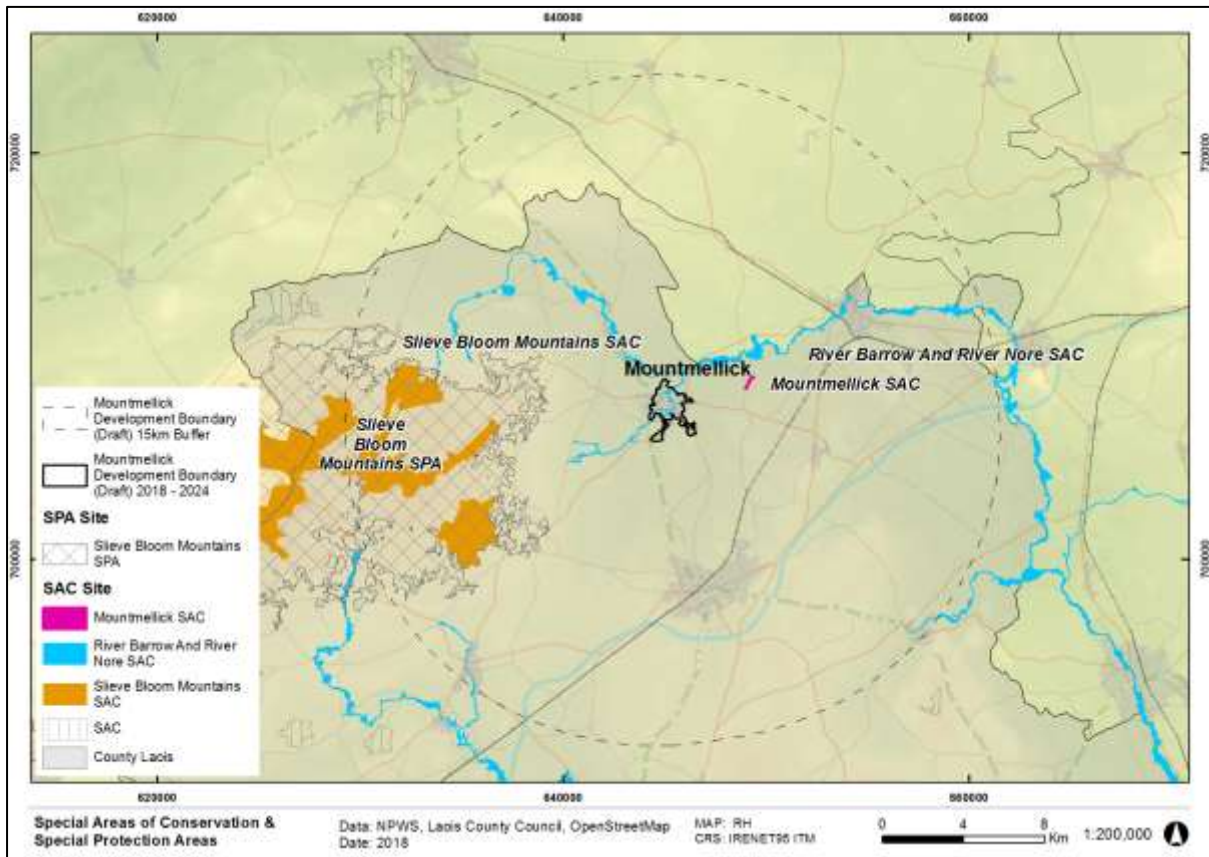
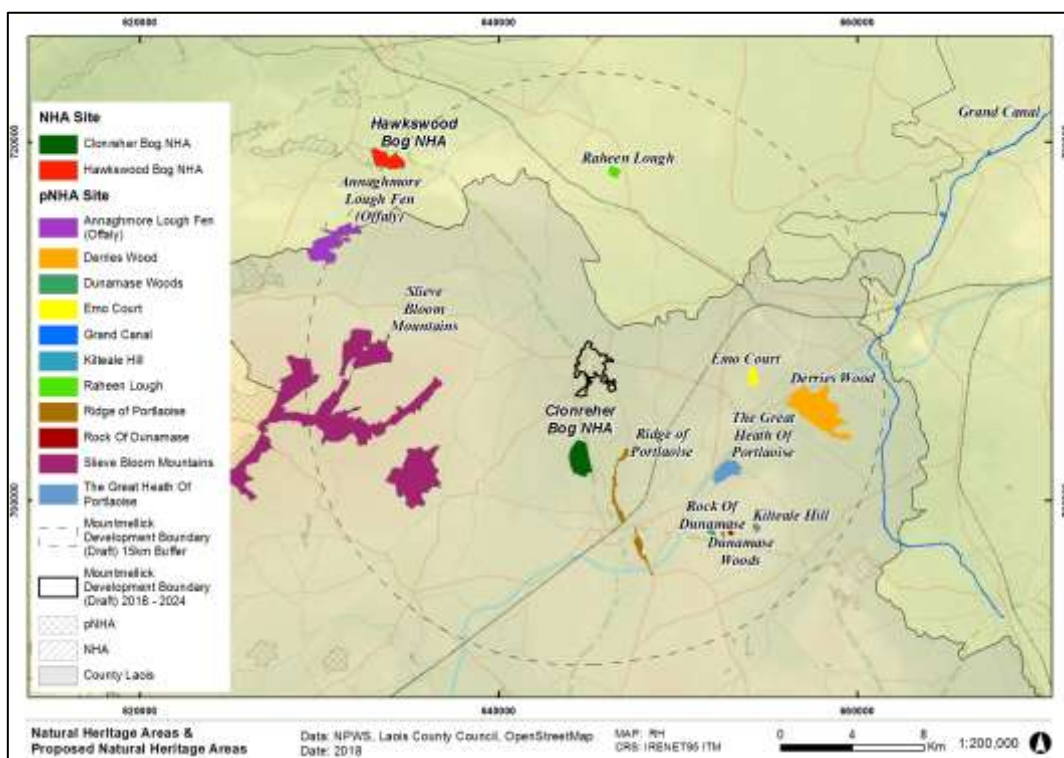


Figure 6: Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas within 15km of Mountmellick LAP



4.3.2 Ecological Corridors, Stepping Stones and Green Infrastructure

As natural habitats become more fragmented as a result of human activity, habitat patches and corridors within a landscape mosaic become increasingly important for species to allow movement between populations, Figure 9 below presents an overview of the landscape mosaic with stepping stones and corridors.

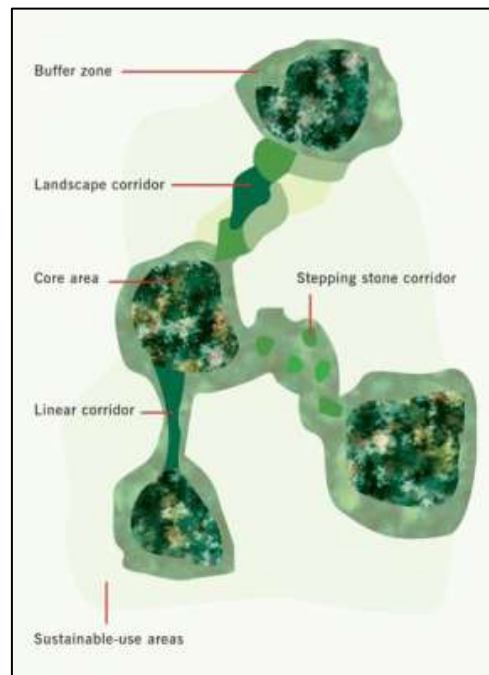


Figure 7: Landscape mosaic with stepping stones, corridors and core areas
(source: <http://www.sicirec.org/definitions/corridors>)

The Mountmellick Local Area Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2019 provides a useful overview of biodiversity within the town:

Mountmellick is a large town situated in north Co. Laois. As the aerial image in Fig. 2 below shows, the town is surrounded by the green of agricultural land with a mix of pasture and arable fields and some small woodland areas. The image shows how the hedgerows and treelines around the town connect up different areas and provide 'nature corridors' which are most important for biodiversity. This aerial image shows a diversity of habitat type in the general Mountmellick area from pastures to hedgerows to gardens to buildings. The Owenass river flows through Mountmellick. This river is one of the main tributaries of the upper section of the River Barrow. This river supports a wealth of biodiversity and is part of the River Barrow and Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is a designation under the E.U. Habitats Directive.

The habitat survey carried out as part of the Action Plan identified the following habitats as being of particularly high Local Biodiversity Value:

- Hedgerows (WL1)
- Drainage Ditches (FW4)

- Mixed broadleaved/ conifer woodland (WD2)
- Depositing/lowland rivers (FW2).

Measures included in the Biodiversity Action Plan include meadow planting, bird and bat boxes and additional planting along riparian zones.

Stepping stones relate to small pockets of habitat that can be used by species to shelter, rest or for food provision. They can play an important role in facilitating longer distanced dispersal as well as refuges for species to breed in⁵. These can provide important links between larger protected areas and corridors, in this context, this could include small areas of wet grassland, ponds, old graveyards, and treelines.

Whilst the dominant land use is urban lands comprising built lands and artificial surfaces. Potential linkages along the Rivers Owenass and Barrow offer another opportunity to enhance ecological connectivity around the town and the wider landscape

4.3.4 Existing issues Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

Key issues relate to the following:

- Enhancing existing ecological resources
- Promoting and facilitating ecological connectivity
- Enhancing ecological considerations within the urban realm
- Provision of green and blue infrastructure to enhance ecological connectivity and provide mitigation in relation to air quality and noise emissions as appropriate as well as water storage/surface water attenuation where possible.
- Managing and controlling alien invasive plant species
- Minimising soil sealing and sustainable use of soil and water resources.
- Water quality of the surface waters.

4.4 Water Resources including surface water management and flood risk

Water resources and their quality have a clear interaction and impacts with other environmental parameters, therefore its protection and enhancement is of particular importance.

4.4.1 Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is a key initiative aimed at improving water quality throughout the EU. It applies to rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuarine and coastal waters. The Directive requires an integrated approach to managing water quality on a river basin basis; with the aim of maintaining and improving water quality. The WFD identifies River Basin Districts as the key management units with clearly defined water bodies forming the basis for assessment reporting and management. The first cycle of RBD management plans

⁵ "Science for Environment Policy": European Commission DG Environment News Alert Service, edited by SCU, The University of the West of England, Bristol.

were from 2009 to 2015 and the second cycle is currently being prepared. Currently the LAP is located within the Eastern River Basin District. However, for the second cycle the Eastern, South Eastern, South Western, Western and Shannon River Basin Districts will be merged to form one national River Basin District.

The most recent data for the new plans being prepared (with adoption due 2018) is from the catchments.ie website. A catchment is an area where water is collected by the natural landscape and flows from source through river, lakes and groundwater to the sea. The LAP lands are situated within the Barrow Catchment (Catchment code: 14) summarised as follows⁶:

*This catchment includes the area drained by the River Barrow upstream of the River Nore confluence and all streams entering tidal water between the Barrow railway bridge at Great Island and Ringwood, Co. Kilkenny, draining a total area of 3,025km². The largest urban centre in the catchment is Carlow. The other main urban centres in this catchment are New Ross, Graiguenamanagh, Athy, Portlaoise, **Mountmellick**, Portarlinton, Monasterevin and Kildare. The total population of the catchment is approximately 188,117 with a population density of 62 people per km². The Barrow catchment is underlain in its flat northern area by limestones of varying purity which continue down the western side of the catchment and sustain good groundwater resources in places. On the eastern side of the catchment, granites dominate, culminating in the summits of the Blackstairs Mountains.*

Mountmellick Town straddles two sub catchments (sub catchment codes 010 west of the Owenass River and Sub catchment 020 east)

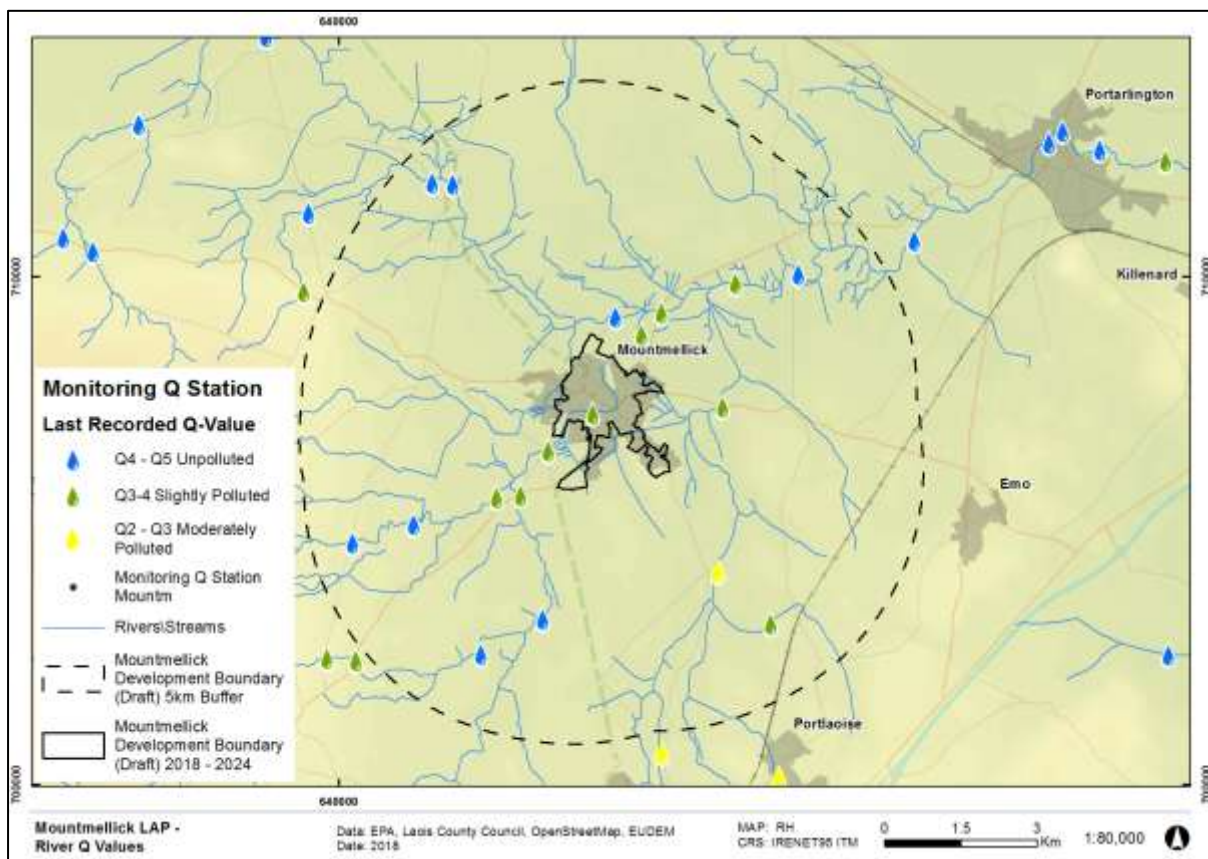
4.4.2 Surface Water

Three surface waters run through Mountmellick area; whilst the River Owenass is the principal river that runs through the town centre, the River Barrow drains the northern plan area; and the River Triogue flows southwards towards Portlaoise Town.

Surface water status is classified under the WFD from 'high' to 'bad' status. In measuring this status both ecological and chemical parameters are measured and the overall status is determined by the lower threshold achieved for both ecological and chemical parameters. The latest information from the catchments.ie website shows the overall WFD status of the three surface waters as Moderate (Q value 3-4) as they flow through the plan area.

⁶ www.catchments.ie

Figure 8: Surface Water Quality Mountmellick



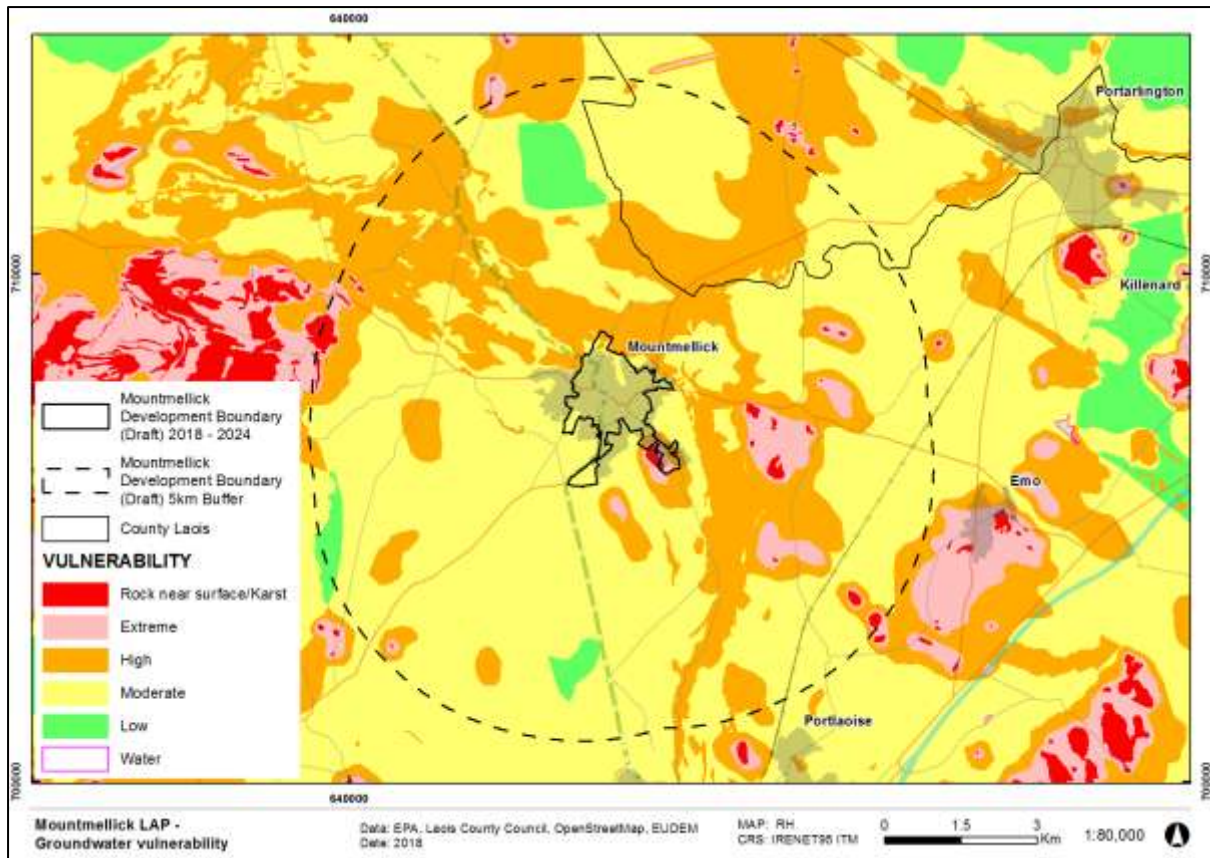
4.4.3 Groundwater

Groundwater is a further significant resource and refers to water stored underground in saturated rock, sand, gravel, and soil. Surface and groundwater functions are closely related and form part of the hydrological cycle. The protection of groundwater from land uses is a critical consideration and groundwater vulnerability is becoming an important management tool. The entire island of Ireland has been designated as a Protected Area for Groundwater under the WFD. Groundwater is important as a drinking water supply as well as the supply to surface waters. In addition, groundwater supplies surface waters. Groundwater is exposed to higher concentrations of pollutants that are retained in the layers of rock and soil. The exposure to pollutants lasts much longer as groundwater moves at a slower pace through the aquifer. The quality of our drinking water supply, fisheries and terrestrial based habitats is intrinsically linked with groundwater quality. The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) aquifer categories are based on their vulnerability to pollution, i.e. the ease at which it can enter the subsurface layers. The classification of extreme or high vulnerability means that the groundwater in these areas is very vulnerable to contamination due to hydrogeological and soil factors.

The Geological Survey of Ireland’s Groundwater Vulnerability Mapping shows the groundwater vulnerability for the area of the LAP within a catchment where groundwater vulnerability is considered moderate for much of the LAP Area; the groundwater of the

townlands of Acragar (south west) is classified as high to extreme. The Figure below shows the groundwater vulnerability for the LAP.

Figure 9: Groundwater Vulnerability

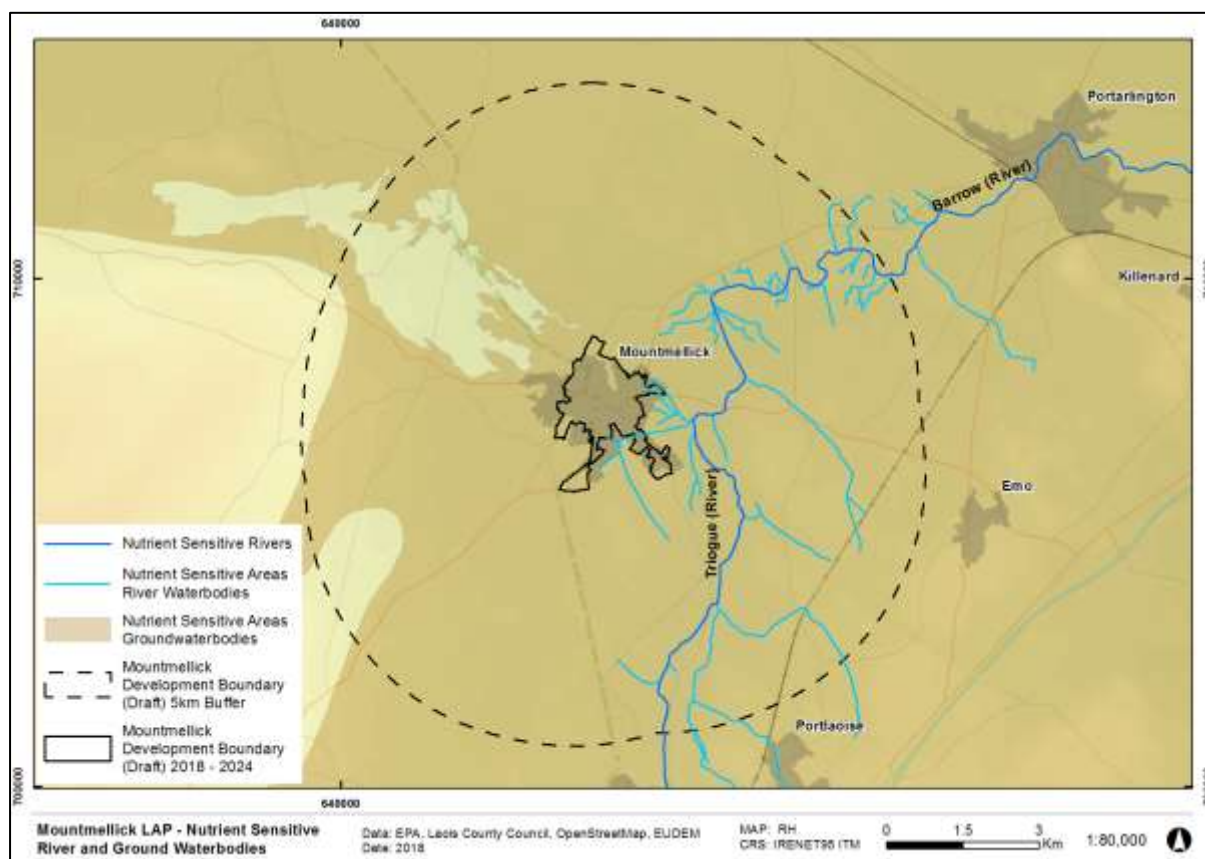


4.4.4 Register of Protected Areas (RPA)

In response to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive a number of water bodies or parts of water bodies which must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by people and by wildlife have been listed on Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs). Protected areas are areas that have been designated as needing special protection because of their particular importance for use as bathing waters, drinking water supply, growing and harvesting of shellfish, conserving sensitive habitats and species or because they are particularly affected by eutrophication due to excessive inputs of phosphorus and/or nitrogen.

Entries to the RPAs in County Laois include the channels of the Triogue River and the River Barrow by virtue of their nutrient sensitivity. Nutrient Sensitive Areas comprise nitrate vulnerable zones designated under the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) and areas designated as sensitive under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC). The LAP is also within a groundwater area designated as Nutrient Sensitive.

Figure 10: Nutrient Sensitive Waters



4.4.5 Flooding and Flood risk

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009, issued by the DoEHLG and undertaken in conjunction with the OPW, requires Planning Authorities to prepare a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The primary purpose of the SFRA is to determine flood risk within a particular geographical area. It should be noted the SFRA is an ever evolving document, which is to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis in the light of emerging information, flood data and an improved understanding of flood risk. Section 4.20 of the above Guidelines states:

'Flood risk identification (Stage 1) to assess whether full flood risk assessment is required, should ideally be carried out in a manner that is integrated with the SEA process rather than constituting an additional and separate process. Any subsequent stages of flood risk assessment should also be carried out in a way that is integrated with the SEA process.'

Following the severe and unprecedented flooding in November 2017 Laois County Council has agreed in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW) the urgent commencement of detailed design and engineering specifications for flood defences in Mountmellick. The detailed design will include a review of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management mapping (CFRAM) taking into account the recorded flood depths on 22nd November 2017 and the identification of any additional flood defences necessary. A Project Office will be established locally to manage the design, implementation and construction of

a flood relief scheme on behalf of an in partnership with the OPW during the lifetime of this plan. The Council is considering further short term actions including an improved flood/ rainfall community alert system, further river and channel clearance works and the provision on a pilot basis, of defence equipment for flood prone and flood affected domestic properties. A programme of river channel clearance in the Blackwater and Owenass catchments has taken place in recent months.

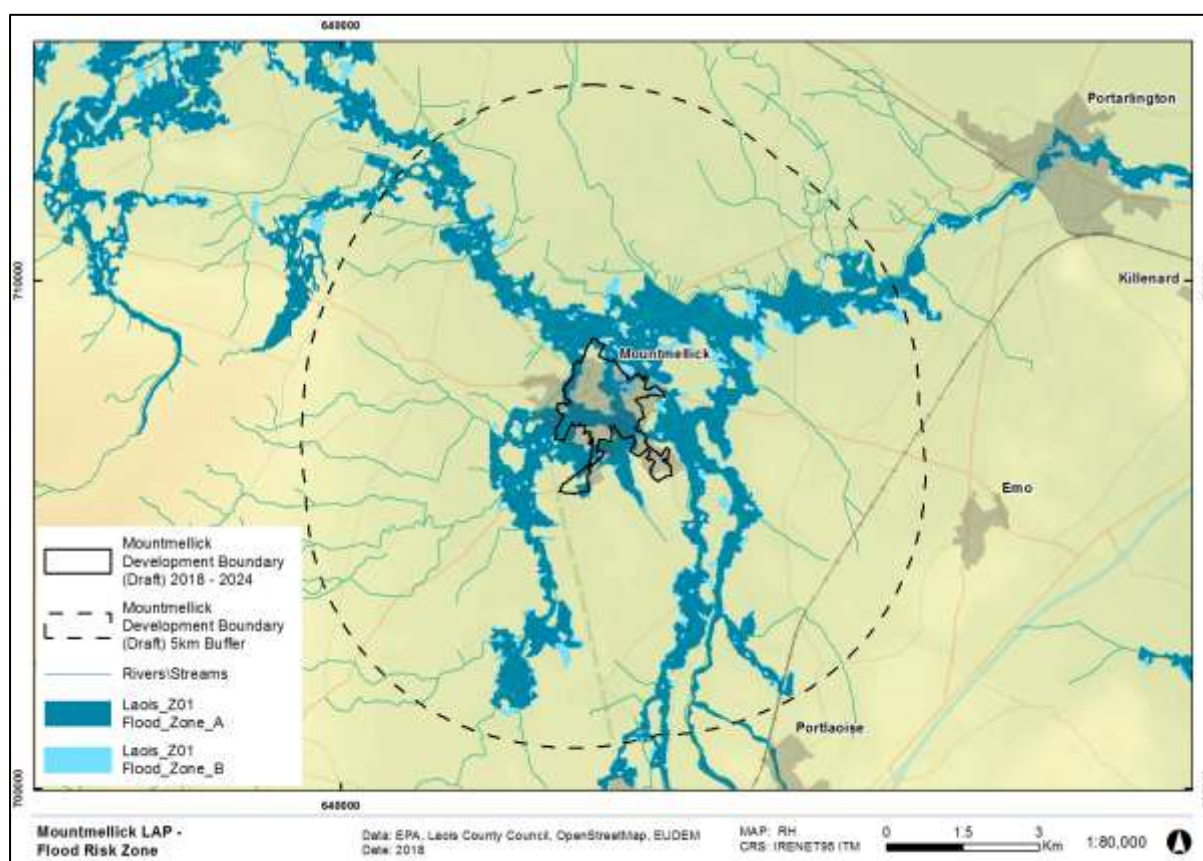
As the frequency, pattern and severity of flooding are expected to increase as a result of climate change, it is vitally important to take account of flood risk in the preparation of development plans such as this Draft LAP and ensure that any development does not individually or cumulatively give rise to flood risk. The Draft LAP avoids development in areas at risk of flooding and has substituted vulnerable land uses with less vulnerable uses where this is not possible. Where neither is possible, mitigation and management of risks must be proposed. Justification tests were carried out on a number of sites and are detailed in the SFRA report accompanying this Draft LAP. The SFRA has recommended that development proposals for a number of areas within the plan boundary should be the subject of site-specific flood risk assessment appropriate to the nature and scale of the development being proposed.

The Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme is a medium to long term strategy for the reduction and management of flood risk in Ireland covering seven river basin districts in Ireland. Portarlinton and its environs lie within the South Eastern River Basin District and were identified as an “Area for Further Assessment” (AFA) through CFRAM. A Hydraulics Report and Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) mapping has been completed as part of the CFRAM study which provides the complete assessment of flood risk in the town.

A number of approaches to managing flood risk in Mountmellick have and will be employed during the making of this Local Area Plan and also in dealing with planning applications for particular developments. These include:

1. Areas at risk of flooding have been identified;
2. A precautionary approach has largely been employed to land use zoning to avoid directing development towards areas at risk of flooding;
3. Areas at risk of flooding as identified which are being put forward for land use zoning have been subject to assessment through the justification test;
4. Where particular areas were examined as being strategically important for the consolidated and coherent growth of the town and zoned accordingly, area specific flood risk assessment will be required and mitigation measures for site and building works will be required to be integrated.

Figure 11: Flood Risk



4.4.6 Existing issues – Water Resources

Key issues include:

- Planning and mitigating flood risk
- Ensuring flood risk is fully considered and embedded in the LAP
- Improving surface water quality
- Ensuring no further deterioration in surface water
- Ensuring the status of Not at risk (of meeting WFD objectives) is kept and maintained for Groundwater
- Avoiding the spread of alien and invasive species

4.5 Geology⁷ and Soil

4.5.1 Geology

Mountmellick is located within broad bedrock of Lower Carboniferous Limestones. Mostly these limestones accumulated as horizontal layers on a fairly shallow 'shelf' sea floor although some of the younger layered limestones, around 325 Ma, are much darker in colour and were deposited in considerably deeper water. Although the limestones mostly

⁷ The Geological Heritage of County Laois An audit of County Geological Sites in County Laois by Matthew Parkes, Ronan Hennessy, Robert Meehan, Vincent Gallagher and Sarah Gatley 2016

form low ground across the centre of the county, they are well exposed in various working and disused quarries and on some of the low hills in the south of the county.

As elsewhere across Ireland, the ice sheets and glaciers of the last Ice Age have modified the Laois landscape, although in a more subdued way than in some of the more mountainous regions of Ireland. The main effect has been to blanket much of the lowlands with glacial till, or ‘boulder clay’.

Another notable feature associated with glaciation is the eskers that are found particularly around the midland and one of which is south of the plan area – the Ridge of Portlaoise. These features, although long subjected to quarrying and extraction, are important geo-diversity features in the landscape.

Only two Geological Heritage Sites are located close to the LAP area, and none within the plan area itself. The figure below shows such sites within 15km of the LAP boundary and the accompanying table provides a brief description of those sites closest to the LAP boundary.

Table 5: Geological Heritage Sites closest to LAP boundary

Name	Brief Description
Darkin Well	<p>This site comprises a significant spring rising within a fenced compound.</p> <p>Site Importance: The site is of County Geological Site importance, as a complement to the Sluggory Cross Roads swallow hole site, and as part of a suite of karstic features within the limestone terrain surrounding Mountmellick Town</p>
Ridge of Portlaoise	<p>The Ridge of Portlaoise and its surrounding sands and gravels include a long, sinuous accumulation of sands and gravels deposited both under the ice sheet and at its margin as the ice withdrew northwards across central Laois at the end of the last Ice Age.</p> <p>Site Importance: What remains of the feature is still a high, striking example of a dry sand and gravel ridge, which stands proud of the surrounding landscape. This esker and the associated sands and gravels in the locality are a good example of a deglacial, meltwater-deposited complex, with portions deposited under the ice, and portions at the ice margin.</p>

The bedrock geology, quarries and geological heritage sites relevant to the Plan area is shown below:

Figure 12: Bedrock Geology

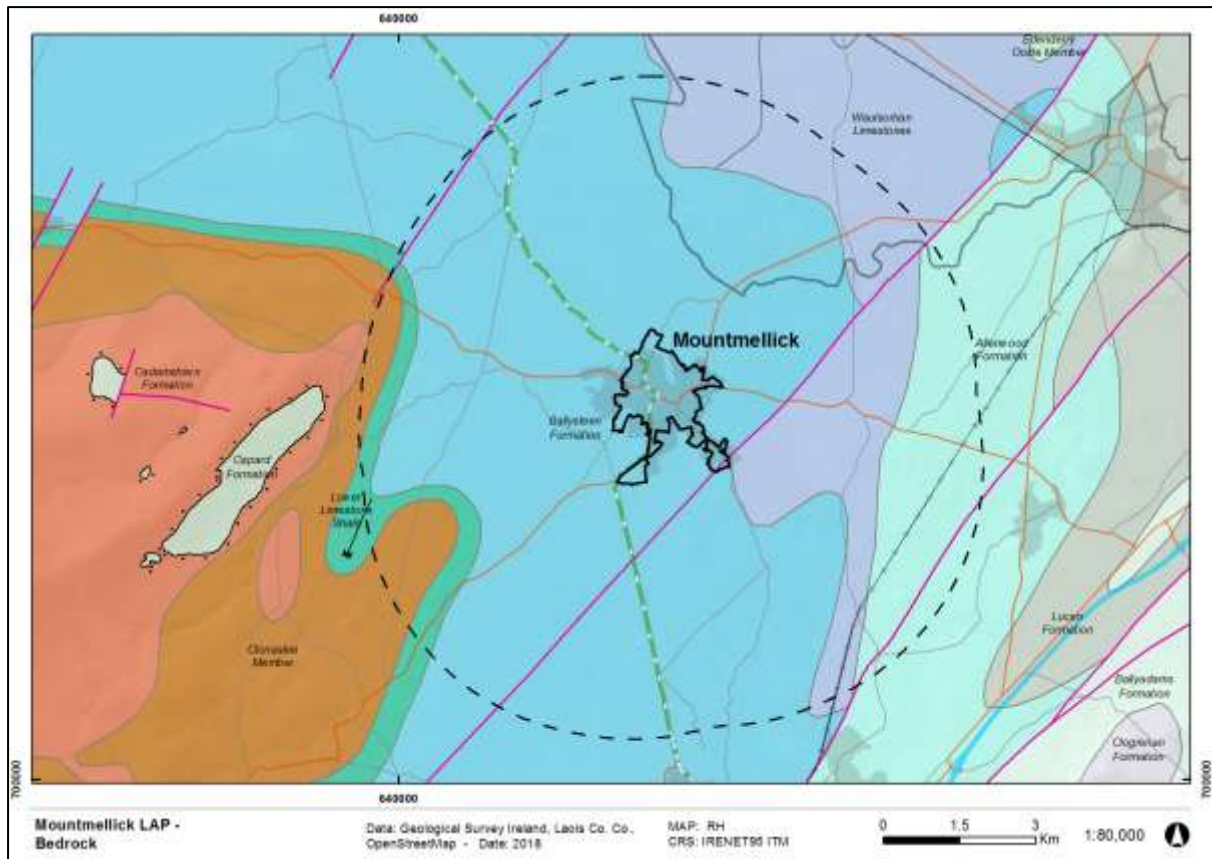
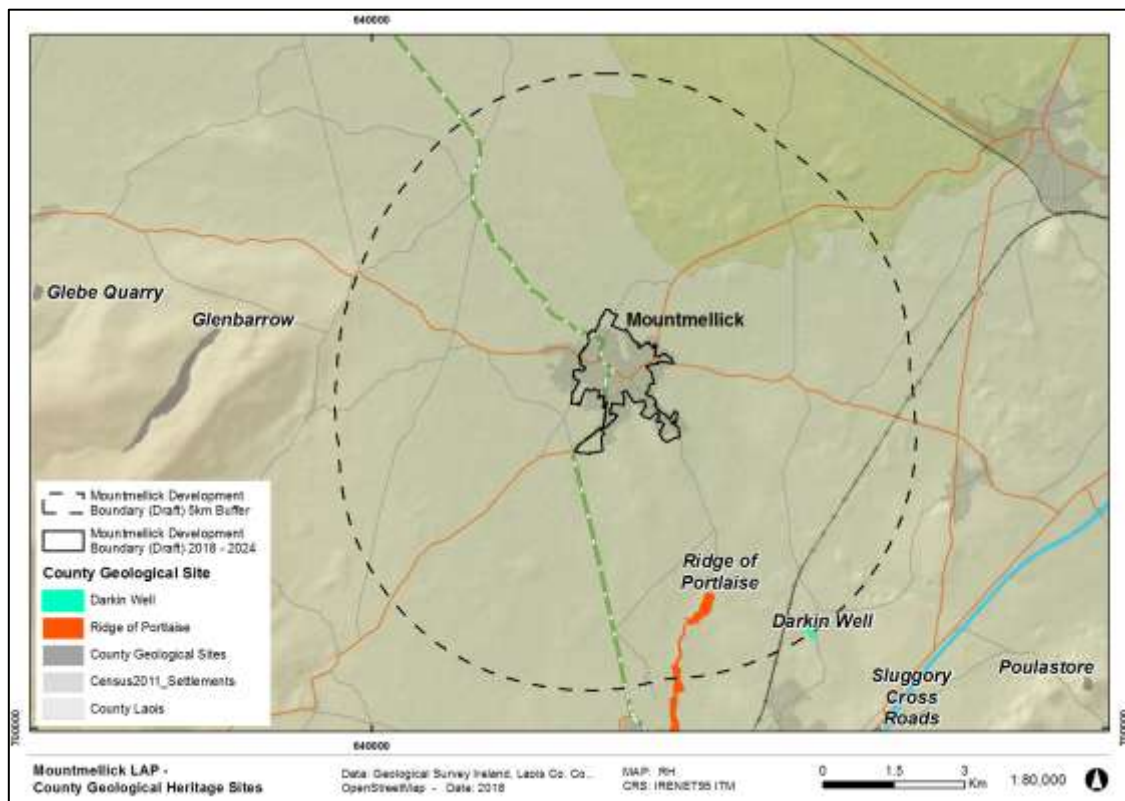


Figure 13: Geological Heritage Sites within 15km of LAP



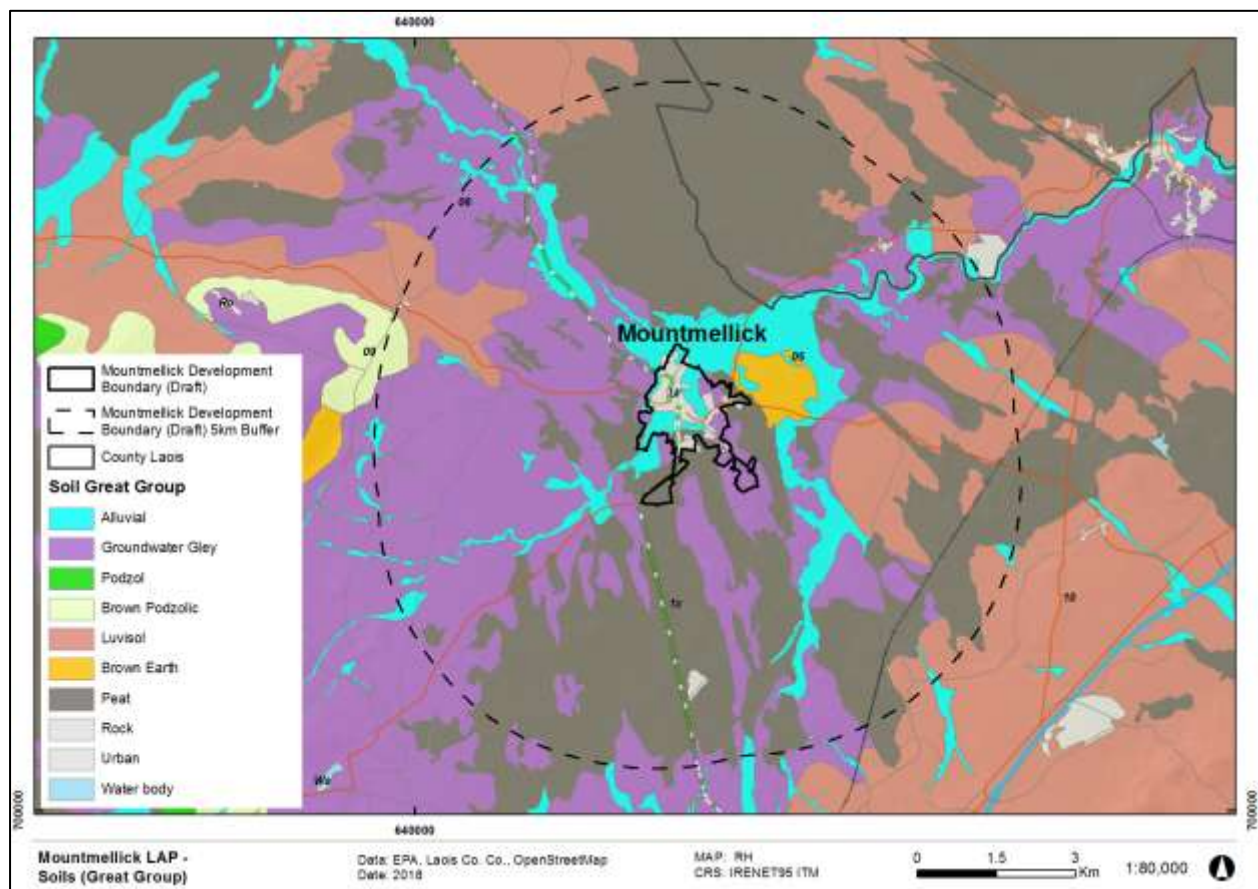
4.5.2 Soil

Soil can be considered as a non-renewable natural resource because it develops over very long timescales. It is an extremely complex, variable and living medium and performs many vital functions including: food and other biomass production, storage, filtration and transformation of many substances including water, carbon, and nitrogen. Soil has a role as a habitat and gene pool, serves as a platform for human activities, landscape and heritage and acts as a provider of raw materials. Such functions of soil are worthy of protection because of their socio-economic as well as environmental importance. Soils in any area are the result of the interaction of various factors, such as parent material, climate, vegetation and human action.

There is no overarching soil legislation in place currently, however the 7th Environment Action Programme (EAP) recognises the challenge of soil degradation and provides by 2020 that land be managed sustainably with soil adequately protected.

Whilst much of the LAP lands are classified as urban according to the Teagasc soil map, reflecting the built up character of much of the LAP, the surrounding soils are largely alluvial soils associated with the Rivers Barrow, Owenass and Triogue. Surrounding soils are identified as the Mylerstown subseries of soils, defined by fine loamy drift with limestones and an extent of peat soils south of the plan area.

Figure 14: Soil Types



4.5.3 Existing issues – Geology and Soil

- Maintaining and enhancing soil function and its carbon storage role where possible.
- Retention of areas of greenfield in terms of flood risk, water storage, open space, green infrastructure and biodiversity considerations.
- Potential soil contamination associated with brownfield sites or sites subject to previous industrial activities.

Because of the complex interrelationship between water, air and soil, declining soil quality can contribute to negative or declining water or air quality and function.

4.6 Climatic Factors and climate change

The context for addressing climate change and energy issues in Laois County, are set within a hierarchy of EU and National Legislation and Policy. At a European level these directives include, the EU Climate and Energy Package 2008, EU Renewables Directive 2009/28/EC and EU Energy Efficiency Directive 2012/27/EU.

The EU Climate Change and Energy Package 2008 resulted in the 2020 EU wide '20-20-20' energy targets as follows:

- A 20% reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels, raising the share of EU energy consumption produced from renewable resources to 20%; and
- A 20% improvement in the EU's energy efficiency.

Under the EU Energy Efficiency Directive 2009/28/EC, each Member State has been assigned a legally binding individual renewable energy target. The Directive's target for Ireland is that 16% of the national gross final consumption of energy will comprise renewable energy sources by 2020, across the electricity, heat and transport sectors.

The Climate Change and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 now provides a statutory, overarching basis for climate change in Ireland. It provides structures to transition to a low carbon economy through the following:

- A national mitigation plan (to lower Ireland's level of greenhouse emissions);
- A national adaptation framework (to provide for responses to changes caused).

4.6.1 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Agriculture is the largest contributor to overall emissions, however in terms of the LAP – energy and transport – the next largest contributors are the most relevant. Promoting a modal shift in transport patterns, along with energy efficiency are key measures to assist in reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

4.6.2 Key Issues for consideration

- Planning for and adapting to climate change;
- Sectoral policies can assist in this including transport and energy;
- Measures including carbon sequestration in existing soils and additional appropriate vegetation planting associated with green infrastructure and ecological corridors.

4.7 Material Assets

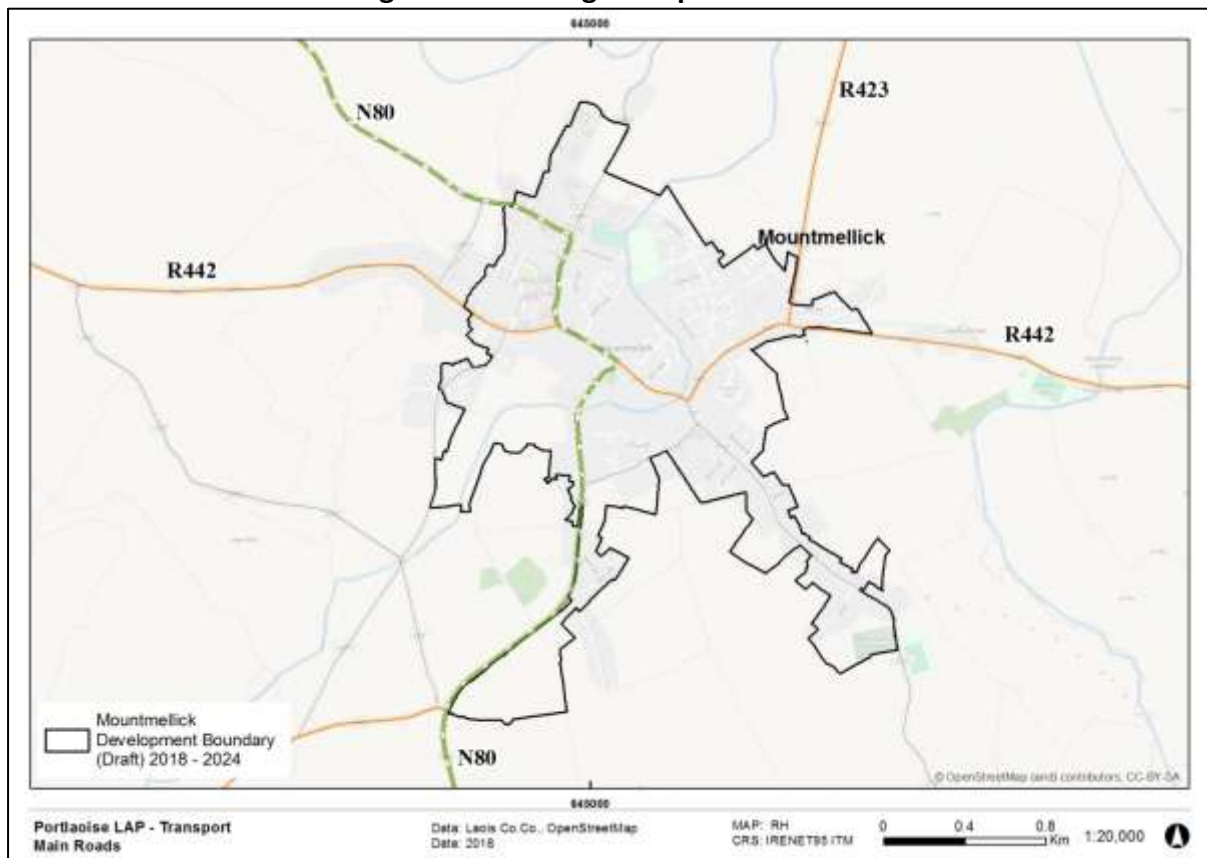
The EPA SEA Process Draft Checklist (2008) defines material assets as the critical infrastructure essential for the functioning of society such as: electricity generation and distribution, water supply, wastewater treatment, transportation, etc. An overview is provided below.

4.7.1 Transport

Mountmellick is located on the N80 National Secondary Route in close proximity to Portlaoise, Tullamore and the Greater Dublin Area. Mountmellick has strategic road links to the entire country via the M7 and M8 motorways in close proximity at the Togher Interchange, Portlaoise, the N80 National Secondary Road and a network of regional (including the R423 Mountrath to Mountmellick and R422 Clonaslee to Emo) and local roads. The N80 is designated a National Transport Corridor in the National Spatial Strategy

2002. Local bus routes provide services in the town and a service linking Mountmellick to Portlaoise and Tullamore.

Figure 15: Existing Transport Network



4.7.2 Water Services

The treatment of wastewater is governed by the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) transposed into Irish law by the Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations 2001 (SI 254 of 2001) and the Urban Waste Water Treatment (Amendment) Regulations 2004 (SI 440 of 2004). The Directive aims to protect the environment from the adverse effects of the wastewater discharges by ensuring that wastewater is appropriately treated before it is discharged to the environment. The treatment of wastewater is relevant to the Water Framework Directive which requires all public bodies to coordinate their policies and operations so as to maintain the good status of water bodies which are currently unpolluted and bring polluted water bodies up to good status by 2027.

Currently, within the settlement of Mountmellick 1,634 households are connected to the public mains water supply and 1,565 households are connected to the public sewer system. The Mountmellick Wastewater Treatment Plant has the capacity to cater for a population equivalent of 3,000.

Irish Water has recently (February 2018) commenced upgrading the Wastewater Treatment Plant at Mountmellick which discharges treated wastewater to the Owenass River. The

works will improve the level of treatment at the plant and improve the discharge quality of treated water from the plant into the Owenass River. The upgrade will also improve the energy efficiency of the plant. The project includes upgrades to the existing pumping station, a new inlet works and grit removal system to prevent large debris from entering and damaging the treatment plant and an upgrade to the aeration system which will improve the overall treatment processes at the plant.

Awaiting departmental approval is the joint Portlaoise and Mountmellick Water Supply Scheme under which the following are planned: construction of 10 new wells, 12 kms. of new watermains, new reservoirs at Emo, Straboe, and Acragar and extended capacity at Kilminchy Water Treatment Plant.

The River Owenass acts as the receiving waters for this plant. Currently there is capacity in the waste water treatment plant and public water supply. However, extra capacity is required to implement the policies and objectives of this plan.

4.7.3 Waste Management and IPPC

The Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 for the Eastern-Midlands Region encompasses the local authorities: Dublin City, Dún Laoghaire- Rathdown, Fingal, South Dublin, Kildare, Louth, Laois, Longford, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath and Wicklow. The regional plan provides the framework for waste management for the next six years and sets out a range of policies and actions in order to meet the specified mandatory and performance targets.

The Waste Framework Directive"(WFD) has incorporated previous separate directives that addressed waste oils and hazardous waste. Principles in relation to waste prevention, recycling, waste processing and the polluter pays principle are included within this Directive.

In 2014 the EC adopted a communication promoting the Circular Economy, The circular economy considers waste as a resource which in turn can be recirculated into systems that focus on maintaining, repairing, reusing, refurbishing and recycling materials.

Denmark, Sweden, Japan, Scotland and the Netherlands⁸ are currently the most advanced countries in terms of embedding the circular economy into their waste management system. Key elements of the communication include:

- Increase recycling and preparing for municipal waste to 70% by 2030
- Increase recycling and preparing for reuse of packaging waste to 80% by 2030
- An aspiration to eliminate landfill by 2030
- Member states to be responsible for ensuring the separate collection of biowaste by 2025
- Reduction of food waste by at least 30% by 2025.

⁸ <http://circulatenews.org/2015/04/an-introduction-to-circular-economy-in-scandinavia-sweden-and-denmark-leading-the-race-to-circularity/>

In terms of existing waste facilities, the sole landfill site for the County is at Kyletalesha. The landfill site operates under an Environmental Protection Agency Waste Licence since May 2000. The landfill site accepts waste at a rate of up to a maximum of 47,100 tonnes per year. Glass and can Bring Banks are also available at two locations in Mountmellick.

4.7.4 Energy and Broadband

Mountmellick is served by a high capacity electricity system. Within the settlement 1,130 households have broadband internet services.

4.7.5 Key Issues for consideration

Transport considerations and integrated land use as well as increasing permeability around the plan area are key issues for the LAP and SEA.

Key issues to consider for material assets include:

- Planning for and maintaining sufficient water services and capacity for the plan area
- Consideration of receiving waters for wastewater
- Encouraging sustainable use of resources
- Reducing reliance on private transport, and enhancing walking/cycling measures
- Workable alternatives to private transport and future public transport services and infrastructure in the area
- Development standards affecting transport e.g. car parking
- Energy efficiency
- Promotion of the circular economy.

4.8 Cultural Assets –archaeology and built heritage

Mountmellick is a recent town with little historic reference predating the seventeenth century. The Y-shaped plan of the town came about as the meeting place of the old roads from Tullamore and Birr with the axis of the main street following the line of traffic to a ford in the river. A later bridge to the southeast of the town afforded crossing of the river (Feehan 1983). The Irish ghetto lay south of the town in the area still known as Irishtown.

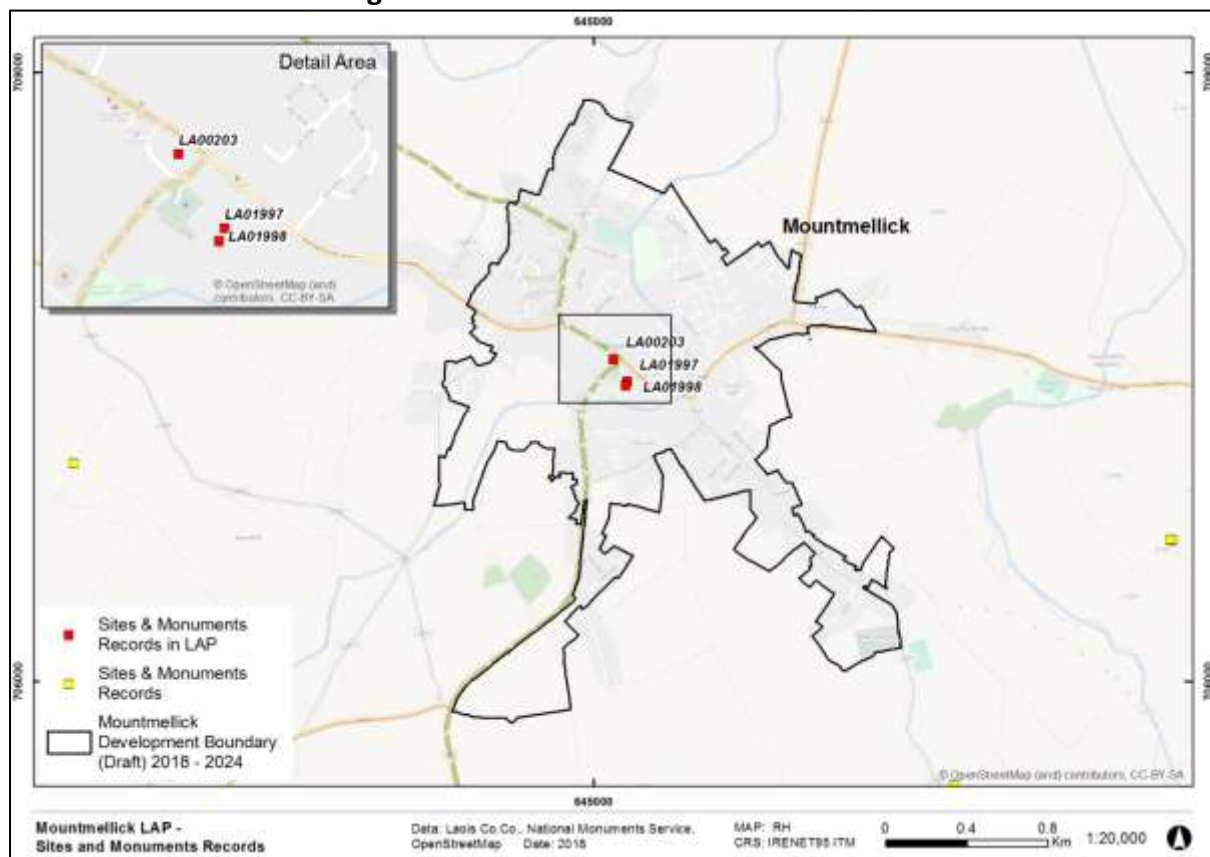
Timber fuelled Mountmellick's first industry. Laois had some of the greatest primeval woods in Ireland,). Wood was used to make charcoal, for ship building and in buildings. River access allowed easy transport to England but the River Barrow was inadequate and wood around Mountmellick was used mainly for the smelting of iron (Meredith 2004) and an ironworks at Mountrath employed 2000 people (QHP, 1994). Loftus founded an ironworks in the 1650s on the river and they are shown on the Down Survey to include a large mill pond, watermill, and an iron furnace north of the village (Lane & Nolan, 1999). This area became known as Forgeland in 1641.

The Cromwellian regime treated the Quakers relatively well and in 1659 a number of settlers came to the town to found a Quaker meeting in the town. Mountmellick was to become the most important Quaker centre outside Dublin⁹.

4.8.1 Archaeology

Only three sites are listed on the Sites and Monuments Record within the LAP, these are a church, graveyard and the historic town. See Figure 17 below for the location of these sites.

Figure 16: Sites and Monuments Record



4.8.2 Built Heritage

The Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act 1999 defined architectural heritage as being all *'structures and buildings together with their settings and attendant grounds, fixtures and fittings; groups of structures and buildings; and, sites which are of technical, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific or social interest.'*

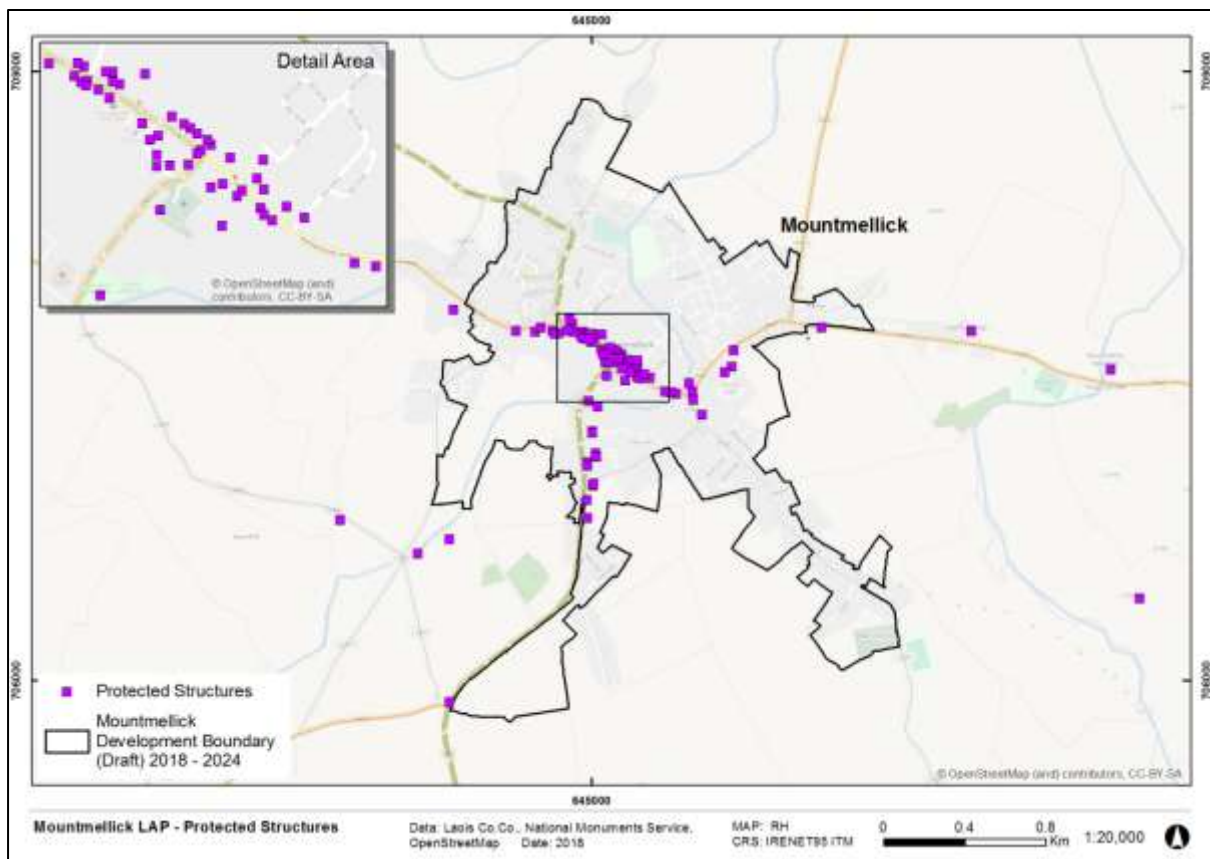
The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), provides for a number of methods of preservation of such structures. These include the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA). Mountmellick's Historical Centre is proposed for designation as an ACA as part of the LAP and a Character Appraisal in support of same was carried out in 2013.

⁹ MOUNTMELICK ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA DECEMBER 2013 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

In addition to the historic core, numerous additional structures worthy of preservation are located within the LAP boundary. Such buildings or structures are noted within the RPS. Protected Structures are defined as structures, or parts of structures that are of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. There are approximately 74 no. Protected Structures within the development boundary of Mountmellick. The following figure shows the structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures.

More generally, there are a number of older buildings that are unoccupied as well as one site that is identified as Opportunity Sites in the LAP; reuse of these buildings is both more sustainable and adds a further lifespan to these structures, adaptive re-use of these buildings contributes to the cultural heritage, as well as townscape, town centre viability and is a more efficient use of resources.

Figure 17: Record of Protected Structures



4.8.3 Key issues – Cultural Assets

Key issues include:

- Potential for additional archaeological resources
- Enhancing and linking cultural heritage of the area
- Designation, Conservation and enhancement of ACA

- Promotion of heritage features as tourist attractions
- Archaeological input on the archaeological implications of any new development proposed in the Local Area Plan.

4.9 Landscape and townscape

Mountmellick is located at the point where an esker running north for Portlaoise meets the Owenass River. This was a natural route through the bogs and woodlands of north Laois. The river was a traditional political divide since Medieval times.

Landscape and Open Spaces

Mountmellick is located in the Lowland Agricultural Areas landscape character type. The type is comprised primarily of pastoral and tillage agriculture. It is generally a flat open landscape with long- range views towards the upland areas. Field patterns tend to be large scale and are generally bounded by deciduous hedges containing mature trees.

The landscape type has been more extensively developed than the other LCT's particularly in the north east where Mountmellick is located, on the border with Co. Offaly. This has resulted in significant changes to the landscape character. The LCA recommends that future developments of this LCT should be carried out sensitively and with particular reference to the rural nature of the landscape.

The LCA notes in relation to townscape and urban design that growth over recent years has resulted in 'a myriad of architectural styles' which are out of keeping with the historic built vernacular. It is recommended that future development relates to the existing vernacular in terms of building scales and materials.

General Recommendations in the LCA include:

- Diversify the urban fringe by developing mixed use amenity areas which will establish a landscape buffer thereby creating a transition between urban and rural areas
- Define the urban fringe with planting of native species and mixed woodland to tie into the existing rural landscape.

Landscape and Townscape

Mountmellick is located in the heart of an agricultural landscape and serves a large agricultural hinterland. The town retains, to a degree, a relationship to the surrounding landscape. The surrounding agricultural lands, the River Dee, and rising ground to the south of the town are the important features shaping that connection. Extensive walled rear gardens attached to residences along the main streets provide an important green component to the town.

The River Owenass meanders along a south to north trajectory through the town and is another important natural feature lending particular identity to the town. A riverside walk

runs along the river bank. Trees are intermittently scattered through the town. The town centre has as its primary focus an elegant Georgian Square O’Connell Square. Heavy town centre traffic results in pedestrian /vehicular conflict. The town lacks comfortable and safe facilities for cyclists. Poor quality interventions have degraded the town centre. The Architectural Character Appraisal (ACA) refers to clutter, to a myriad of street furniture types, and paving materials and to over prominent use of traffic marking and pedestrian barriers.

Open Space and Amenities

Open Space provision in Mountmellick comprises c.50ha. of public open spaces associated with residential areas, together with privately owned and operated sports grounds/ playing fields at Smith Fields. The town does not as yet have a town park and an objective to this effect set out in the Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012 -2018 has not as yet been realised.

Trees

The council will not normally grant planning permission for developments which requires the felling of sound mature trees except where it is absolutely necessary in the interest of safety (both for the developer and for traffic) or the siting of development. The Character Appraisal for the proposed Architectural Conservation Area notes that trees played important roles in defining the spatial character of Mountmellick. Most of these trees no longer exist. They were presumably not replaced when they achieved maturity. Trees would have a notable positive impact on the public realm. The upgrading of O’Connell Square will clearly benefit from tree planting. The Character Appraisal also notes the value of mature garden trees to the character of the public realm.

4.9.1 Key Issues for Landscape and Townscape

- Enhancing the public realm
- Integrating blue and green infrastructure
- Encouraging re-use of buildings
- Sensitive and appropriate interventions relating to the River Owenass
- Enhancing permeability for pedestrians and cyclists

4.10 Likely evolution of the environment in the absence of the Mountmellick LAP

The SEA legislation requires that consideration is given to the likely evolution of the current baseline where implementation of the LAP does not take place. In the absence of the new LAP the environment would evolve under the regime of the existing LAP and the requirements of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 - 2023.

Principal environmental issues in the absence of the LAP include:

- **Material Assets:** The LAP has integrated the most recently available information relating to flood risk management which is a key issue for the plan area; in the absence of the plan, the opportunity to fully integrated land use and flood risk

considerations, as well as adaptation through measures such as green and blue infrastructure may not be fully realised.

- **Air Quality:** In the absence of the new LAP opportunities to promote greater permeability, enhanced measures relating to public transport, pedestrian and cycle movement may not be fully implemented.
- **Landscape:** The new LAP includes additional public realm measures that seek to improve connectivity between the different land uses and functions around the LAP area; in the absence of the new LAP, these enhancement measures would not be implemented.
- **Biodiversity, flora and fauna:** Habitat surveys and green infrastructure considerations are not included in the current LAP, therefore enhancement measures for open spaces and opportunities to improve ecological connectivity, particularly with the River Owenass and Barrow would not be implemented.
- **Population and human health:** In the absence of mitigation associated with the LAP human health has the potential to interact with environmental problems identified under other parameters including biodiversity, flora and fauna, cultural assets, soil and geology, water resources, material assets, landscape and green infrastructure.

The existing LAP does not allocate measures relating to the Opportunity Sites identified in the plan area; in the absence of the new plan, these sites and associated measures in terms of potential new housing provision and open space would not be implemented.

- **Cultural Heritage, Material Assets, Landscape, Population, Climate Change and Biodiversity:** In the absence of the plan, measures included as part of the development vision and strategy would not be fully integrated to the plan and represent a lost opportunity to embed these proposals within the LAP framework.

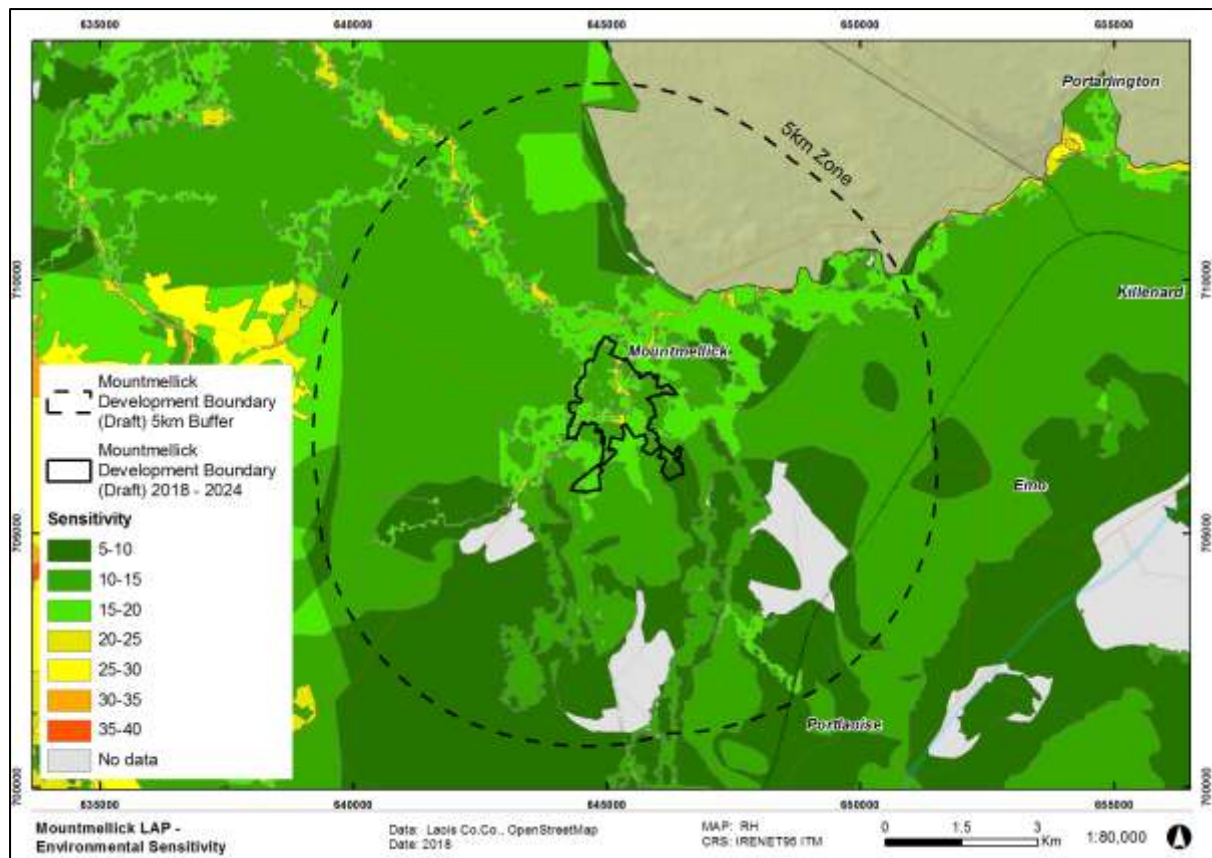
4.11 Interrelationship of the above components

In accordance with the SEA Directive, the interrelationship between the environmental parameters above must be taken into account. Although all such parameters may be considered interrelated and may impact on each other at some level, environmental sensitivity mapping is commonly used to help identify areas of greater or lesser sensitivity. Figure 21 shows the overall environmental sensitivity for the plan area and sphere of influence, and follows the same approach (ie: ranking of environmental parameters) as that used in the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 SEA process.

By mapping key environmental layers (GIS) to produce an environmental sensitivities map, it provides a visual impression which can assist in identifying which areas within the Plan area that experience the highest concentration of environmental sensitivities and consequently the areas potentially most vulnerable to environmental impacts from development. This can be a useful guide when considering the strategic options in relation to the plan during the

early stages in the plan making process, and identifying areas that are of greater or lesser vulnerability. Figure 21 shows the environmental sensitivity map for the LAP.

Figure 18: Environmental Sensitivity Mapping



Reflecting the designations and the hydrological regime within the plan area, the areas of greatest environmental sensitivity are the areas designated for natural heritage, flood zones and water courses. Based on this modeling, the areas of greatest sensitivity are the Rivers Owenass, Barrow and their associated floodplains.

In understanding this sensitivity map it is important to stress how these resources interact with each other; declining water quality will impact downstream on both water quality and species dependent on the high quality character of this water body. Inappropriate land uses, could, over time, generate soil impacts that in turn would contribute to declining groundwater resources with subsequent impacts on human health and biodiversity.

5 Strategic Environmental Objectives



5.1 Introduction







The overall aim of the SEA is to facilitate environmental protection and to allow the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and implementation of the Mountmellick LAP. To that end, the SEA process assesses the draft LAP as it evolves in terms of its environmental impacts, positive, negative, neutral, cumulative and synergistic and also in terms of duration ie: short, medium, long term, temporary, permanent, and secondary effects. This process highlights how improvements can be integrated into the LAP to increase its environmental performance and maintain environmental resources. The purpose of the SEA Objectives is to ensure that the assessment process is transparent and robust and that the LAP considers and addresses potential environmental effects.

These SEA Objectives are presented in this chapter and are developed into a monitoring programme in the form of targets and indicators which are presented in more detail in Chapter Nine Monitoring Programme. To facilitate consistency with the primary land use plan for the County and reflect data gathering requirements, these SEOs reflect where possible the SEOs developed for the SEA of the Laois CDP 2017-2023. Where necessary the SEOs are adapted to reflect particular environmental considerations for this Mountmellick LAP. Where they differ from the above CDP SEA objectives, the text is shown in ***italic bold font***. The results of this will be summarized in a table, called an evaluation matrix.

The Strategic Environmental Objectives are as follows:

Table 6: Strategic Environmental Objectives for Mountmellick LAP

SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity Flora and Fauna 	B1: To ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annexed habitats and species B2: To ensure compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the management of features of the landscape which - by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function act as stepping stones (designated or not) - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species B3: To avoid significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites and to ensure compliance with the Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 with regard to the protection of listed species
Population and human health Noise 	PHH1: To protect populations and human health from exposure to incompatible land uses <i>including adverse noise and air quality impacts</i>
Water	W1: To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality and status of surface waters W2: To prevent pollution and contamination of ground water

SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives
	W3: To comply as appropriate with the provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2009)
Soil and Geology	S1: To avoid damage to the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource
	S2: <i>To maximise the sustainable re- use of brownfield lands, and the existing built environment, rather than developing greenfield lands</i>
Material Assets	M1: To serve new development with adequate and appropriate wastewater treatment
	M2: To serve new development with adequate drinking water that is both wholesome and clean
	M3: To reduce waste volumes, minimise waste to landfill and increase recycling and reuse
Climate Change, Air Quality and Noise	C1: To reduce travel related emissions to air and to encourage modal change from car to more sustainable forms of transport
	C2: <i>Ensure that the LAP proposals are adaptive to expected climate change patterns in line with Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines (EPA) as appropriate</i>
Cultural Heritage	CH1: To protect archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context
	CH2: To protect architectural heritage including entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context
Landscape	L1: To minimise significant adverse visual impacts within and adjacent to the County
	L2: <i>To protect and enhance landscape character and quality within and adjacent to the LAP area</i>
Interrelationships	Maintain and improve the health of people, ecosystems and natural processes Actively seek to integrate opportunities for environmental enhancement.
	

6 Consideration of Alternatives

6.1 Introduction

One of the critical roles of the SEA is to facilitate an evaluation of the likely environmental consequences of a range of alternative development scenarios, in this case the Mountmellick LAP 2018-2024.

These alternative development scenarios should meet the following considerations:

- Take into account the geographical scope, hierarchy and objectives of the plan –be realistic
- Be based on socio-economic and environmental evidence – be reasonable
- Be capable of being delivered within the plan timeframe and resources –be implementable
- Be technically and institutionally feasible – be viable.

In developing, refining and assessing the alternatives for the LAP, the toolkit included in Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment Good Practice Guidance (EPA 2015) was utilised.

In addition to the above, the Mountmellick LAP will function within the policy hierarchy established by national, regional and county strategic plans, as well as relevant legislation. This chapter presents the approach to considering and assessing the alternatives for the LAP. Section 6.2 presents the alternative scenarios. Section 6.3 explains how the assessment of alternatives was undertaken; Section 6.4 presents the evaluation of the alternatives for potential environmental effects. This in turn informed the selection of a preferred alternative for the LAP which is presented in Section 6.5.

6.2 Alternative Scenarios for LAP

In the case of the Draft Mountmellick LAP, possible alternatives include different land uses and scales of development will be examined.

1. **Continuation of Existing LAP land use zonings and policies/objectives (The Do-Nothing Scenario).** Continues with the existing LAP in its current context.
2. **Town centre consolidation:** This approach would be to focus explicitly on the densification of the town centre with intensification of land uses and focus on employee intensive sectors.
3. **Town centre consolidation and designation of future development lands in a tiered structure:** Promotion of development lands within the town centre for development and the designation of sequential areas where this type of development is considered appropriate in certain circumstances. It would also promote the development of neighbourhood centres to provide a level of retail services locally.

In considering these alternatives, regard was had to the Preferred Alternative (Scenario 3 Balanced Growth, Strong Plans) identified for the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023. Within this scenario, the main population centres for prioritised development would remain to be Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Mountmellick and Graiguecullen, this is where development both residential and commercial is most likely to happen in a controlled manner. This fulfils the objectives of the current NSS, the RPGS and the new National Planning Framework in terms of achieving balanced regional growth which is of benefit to both the county and the region as a whole. Policies will be formulated to promote residential and commercial development within these areas.

6.3 Assessment of potential effects for each alternative scenario

This section presents the assessment of potential environmental effects for each Alternative Scenario. This is undertaken by assessing each alternative against the SEOs presented in Chapter 5 of this SEA ER. It is informed by the environmental baselines as well as the policy review.

The assessment of Alternatives is categorised as follows:

Positive	
Neutral	
Uncertain	
Negative	

6.4 Summary Evaluation against SEOs

Strategic Environmental Objectives	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
	Continuation of Existing LAP land use zonings and policies/objectives (The Do-Nothing Scenario). Continues with the existing LAP in its current context	Town centre consolidation: This approach would be to focus explicitly on the densification of the town centre with intensification of land uses and focus on employee intensive sectors	Town centre consolidation and designation of future development lands in a tiered structure
Biodiversity			
B1: To ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annexed habitats and species.	Uncertain	Positive	Positive
B2: To ensure compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the management of features of the landscape which by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function act as stepping stones (designated or not) - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.	Negative	Negative	Neutral
B3: To avoid significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites and to ensure	Uncertain	Uncertain	Neutral

compliance with the Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 with regard to the protection of listed species.			
Population and Human Health			
PHH1: To protect populations and human health from exposure to incompatible land uses <i>including adverse noise and air quality impacts.</i>	Negative	Negative	Positive
Water			
W1: To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality and status of surface waters.	Neutral	Neutral	Positive
W2: To prevent pollution and contamination of ground water.	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
W3: To comply as appropriate with the provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2009).	Uncertain	Positive	Positive
Soil and Geology			
S1: To avoid damage to the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource.	Neutral	Positive	Positive
S2: <i>To maximise the sustainable re- use of brownfield lands, and the existing built environment, rather than developing greenfield lands.</i>	Neutral	Positive	Positive
Material Assets			
M1: To serve new development with adequate and appropriate wastewater treatment.	Positive	Positive	Positive
M2: To serve new development with adequate drinking water that is both wholesome and clean.	Positive	Positive	Positive

M3: To reduce waste volumes, minimise waste to landfill and increase recycling and reuse.	Uncertain	Positive	Uncertain
Climate and Air Quality			
C1: To reduce travel related emissions to air and to encourage modal change from car to more sustainable forms of transport.	Uncertain	Uncertain	Positive
C2: <i>Ensure that the LAP proposals are adaptive to expected climate change patterns.</i>	Negative	Uncertain	Positive
Cultural Heritage			
CH1: To protect archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context.	Positive	Positive	Positive
CH2: To protect architectural heritage including entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context.	Positive	Positive	Positive
Landscape			
L1: To minimise significant adverse visual impacts within and adjacent to the County.	Neutral	Neutral	Positive
L2: <i>To protect and enhance landscape character and quality within and adjacent to the LAP area.</i>	Uncertain	Uncertain	Positive
Inter-relationships			
Maintain and improve the health of people, ecosystems and natural processes	Negative	Uncertain	Positive
Actively seek to integrate opportunities for environmental enhancement	Negative	Uncertain	Positive

6.5 Preferred Alternative

From the above Table it can be seen that the comparative assessment of Alternatives shows that Alternative 3 provides for the most positive effects when assessed against the SEOS. This alternative provides for the promotion of development lands within the town centre for development and the designation of secondary and edge of centre areas where this type of development is considered appropriate in certain circumstances. It would also promote the development of neighbourhood centres to provide a level of retail services locally.

It acknowledges the need to consolidate Mountmellick through town centre revitalisation whilst helping to meet the key objectives of the LAP.

Therefore, the preferred alternative was developed by the planning team and others having regard to the key requirements of:

- Environmental effects identified through the SEA consideration of alternatives;
- Objectives of the Mountmellick LAP including social and economic effects of the development;
- National Policy documents.

By complying with appropriate mitigation measures - including those which have been integrated into the LAP - potential adverse environmental effects which could arise as a result of implementing this scenario would be likely to be avoided, reduced or offset.

7 Assessment of Significant Effects

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of the Environmental Report is to predict and evaluate as far as possible the environmental effects of the LAP.

SEA is an iterative process and the LAP has taken consideration of environmental issues raised during the SEA process to date. These issues have been incorporated into the Draft LAP and the principal purpose of this chapter is to discuss the evaluation of these. The discussion of likely impacts is grouped around each of the following environmental parameters as described in Chapter Four:

- Population & Human Health
- Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna
- Water
- Soil & Geology
- Climatic Factors and Climate change
- Cultural Assets
- Material Assets
- Landscape
- In-combination and cumulative effects.

The individual evaluation of relevant requirements contained in the LAP is presented in Annex A. The identification of impacts through the evaluation matrix and discussion of significant impacts detailed below, in turn informs the development of mitigation measures presented in Chapter Eight, Mitigation Measures. The table below identifies the significant environmental issues that were identified for all alternatives considered through the SEA process.

7.2 Population and Human Health- Significant Effects

Land use planning impacts on the everyday lives of people and can either hinder or help promote healthy sustainable environments and communities. For example the provision of safe walking routes, cycle-ways, parks, playgrounds, safe routes to school, public transport facilities, etc. result in direct and indirect health benefits and allow for healthier transportation choices to be made by communities above private motor car. Both the Key Plan objectives and those included in *Movement and Transport such as TM 05 and TM 06* create positive direct effects on this parameter due to promotion and design of pedestrian and cycle friendly movement and accessibility to public transport options. The zoning of lands, and promotion of employment opportunities (ED01, ED 02 and ED03 for example) and services in the town also will contribute to reduced commuting patterns if successfully implemented; in turn this gives rise to positive interactions with Population and Human health SEOs.

The LAP emphasises the need to integrate land use and transportation. It supports town centre viability, and focuses on infill and backlands redevelopment as well as reuse of existing buildings.

The maintenance, protection and enhancement of water quality are important and are closely allied to human health generally. The LAP provides for phased development with infrastructure provided in advance; see *Key Infrastructure Strategic Aims* and policies such as *KI P1* and *KI P2*. An additional mitigation measure is recommended for *KI P5* to reflect the Scoping Recommendation from the EPA. The provision of buffer zones for watercourses as detailed in Objective *NH 011* will help protect riparian zones and water quality.

The promotion of sustainable development by balancing complex sets of environmental, social and economic goals in planning decisions can deliver positive effects for population and human health. The LAP promotes the town centre, brownfield development, integrated transport and land use and environmental enhancement measures. Overall, the LAP is likely to improve the status of the SEO's on population and human health.

7.3 Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna- Significant Effects

The promotion of compact, sustainable settlements, reuse of existing buildings and infill sites, integrating land use and transport, green and blue infrastructure, ecological corridors and buffer zones for watercourses all strengthen overall protection of biodiversity resources and the Biodiversity SEOs.

Particular measures identified as generating positive effects on Biodiversity SEOS include, buffer zones for water courses (*NH 011*) which allows for 30 to 50m for greenfield lands, Green Infrastructure (*NH 02*) and preservation of mature vegetation (*NH 03*).

Infrastructure has the potential to generate adverse impacts on biodiversity, with key potential impacts relating to disturbance, disruption, fragmentation and loss of habitats. However, the focus on backfill lands, reusing existing buildings and identification of town centre Opportunity Sites, reference to relevant guidelines, and promotion of green/blue infrastructure and buffer zones does assist in reducing the overall adverse impacts and many impacts are identified as being addressed through recommended mitigation.

Indirect and cumulative impacts are identified for biodiversity in the event of damage to soil and water resources associated with development activities. Water pollution or surface water run off could give rise to negative effects on water quality and streams/ rivers within the lands with subsequent adverse effects on biodiversity.

Flood risk and flood events remain a challenge for the LAP and adverse effects can arise in the event of extreme flooding through soil contamination, inundation of soil and increased siltation of surface waters.

Therefore, a number of mitigation measures are recommended for the above. Mitigation measures are recommended for a number of policies and objectives to further enhance

biodiversity protection including NH05 and NH06 as well as for the Opportunity Site, the Maltings.

7.4 Water - Significant Effects

Potential effects on water resources (and frequently biodiversity) in the absence of mitigation include:

- A reduction in water quality in groundwater, springs and watercourses associated with the construction phase of new developments (short to medium term impacts);
- Surface water runoff from impermeable surfaces leading to reduced water quality in groundwater springs or surface waters affecting qualifying habitats and species downstream (impacts can range from short to long term);
- Changes in the flow rate of watercourses arising from an increased footprint of impermeable surfaces within the Plan area - increasing the extent of impermeable surfaces will result in a decrease in infiltration and an increase in runoff;
- Inadequate wastewater treatment resulting in pollution of groundwater springs or surface watercourses;
- Generally, land use practices can result in water quality impacts and whilst surface water impacts may be identified quickly, impacts to groundwater can take much longer to ascertain due to the slow recharge rate of this water resource;
- Interruptions in hydrological regimes, particularly in wetlands that can have direct impacts on biodiversity, and
- Water quality impacts can also have human health impacts in the case where bacterial or chemical contamination arises.

The LAP includes a range of provisions and measures to address and minimise the above effects, including:

- Green and blue infrastructure, buffer zones for watercourses (*NH 011*), invasive species control measures (*NH 012*) as detailed in the *Natural Heritage chapter*. More positive, long term impacts are associated with these measures;
- The recognition of the Water Framework Directive and roles and responsibilities for same, currently act as a key driver toward long term positive impacts for water quality and water management generally;
- The requirement for Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SUDs), green and blue infrastructure and flood risk management also create positive effects on Water SEOs;
- By encouraging infill development, and reuse of existing buildings, the potential for increased greenfield land requirements are reduced; though not fully avoided;
- The delivery of critical infrastructure (including water and wastewater services) in tandem with built development is also supported through this LAP; this will allow for a phased and managed approach to service delivery and capacity of WWTP in the plan area.

Notwithstanding the above provisions that will minimise adverse effects, at LAP level Infrastructural and built development may adversely affect water resources due to potential

impacts on water quality; to provide for greater protection of water resources, additional mitigation measures are recommended.

7.5 Soil and Geology - Significant Effects

Soil quality and function may be enhanced through particular measures associated with water quality and land use and achieving the Water Framework Directive Objectives. The quality of groundwater is directly related to soil quality and land use, and abstraction of geological and soil resources can also affect the water table over time.

The most significant potential soil and geology effect identified relates to new built development on greenfield lands. Soil sealing and increased risk of surface run off are addressed largely by identification of brownfield opportunity sites; also reuse of existing buildings creates positive effects for Geology and Soil SEOs.

Additional measures in relation to control and management of invasive species, (*NH 012*) will assist in addressing and controlling this effect.

7.6 Climatic Factors and Climate Change - Significant Effects

Overall the LAP will contribute positively to climate change adaptation through the following:

- Integration of land use and transport (Transport and Movement Strategic Aim and *TM 02* and *TM 05*);
- Promotion of public and non- vehicular transport (*TM 06*);
- Design measures to enhance walking and cycling around the LAP (*TM 05* and *TM 08*);
- Interventions to reduce carbon emissions for the N80 (*TM 07*);
- Blue and green infrastructure giving rise to increased surface water storage and potential carbon sequestration (*NH 02*);
- Retention of hedgerows (*NH 03*) and provision of new planting regimes to further enhance carbon sinks (existing and new);
- Reuse of existing buildings (*TCR P3*) and infill/brownfield development (identification of Opportunity Site); and,
- Longer term positive effects in relation to air quality, population and human health and water.

7.7 Cultural Assets - Significant Effects

Overall the impacts of the LAP are long term and positive in relation to cultural heritage due to the recognition of the value of cultural heritage and the range of cultural heritage features including built heritage, natural heritage and landscapes.

Potential cultural heritage impacts arise once more in relation to built development, though existing development management control and policies/objectives of the LAP will ensure sufficient protection and oversight.

The *Built Heritage* Chapter contains specific measures to minimise adverse effects and promote reuse of architectural features for example: *BH 01* to *BH 014* and policies *BH P1* and *BH P2*. In addition to protected built heritage, the promotion of town centre (Town Centre revitalisation strategic aims, objectives and policies), use of existing buildings (*TCR P7*) and addressing vacant sites (*TCR P6* and *H 05*) all contribute to positive longer term effects on Cultural heritage SEOs.

7.8 Material Assets - Significant Impacts

For transport, provisions including in the *Movement and Transport* chapter are of particular relevance. These are identified as generating positive impacts for a number of SEOs including population and human health, air quality and climate and sustainable transport. Several transport measures (in particular public transport and walking and cycling) create positive impacts as they support more sustainable transport options with cumulative and in combination positive impacts relating to human health, biodiversity and air quality.

Objectives and policies which promote employment within the town, and key infrastructure developments support the Material Assets SEOs as they can reduce the current unsustainable commuting patterns in the LAP, and promote integration of land use and transport; as well as providing for service led development. Examples include *ED 01*, *ED 03*, *ED 04* and *KI 01*. These promote employment and enterprise within the LAP, as well as identification of community and educational facilities (*H 06*, *CSC 01* and *CSC 02*) and can promote a model shift for those living within and close to the lands; this generates positive direct permanent impacts for sustainable transport if it reduces car dependency and increases viability of public transport options. Indirect long term positive effects are identified for Population and Human health SEOs also.

Water supply and wastewater capacity and demands are addressed in conjunction with Irish Water. The key element in relation to this is ensuring the implementation of the LAP is in line with capacity to treat wastewater and water supply services. Policies and objectives in *Key Infrastructure* Chapter all strengthen and reinforce these issues by ensuring provision of critical services infrastructure on a plan led basis.

Additionally, provision is made in the LAP for water conservation measures including awareness raising (*KI P6*) and rainwater harvesting (*KI P7*).

Mitigation measures are recommended for a number of Key Infrastructure policies /objectives to strengthen environmental protection and align with plans such as the Water Framework Directive.

7.9 Landscape - Significant Effects

Green and blue infrastructure provisions as detailed in the Natural Heritage and objectives such as NH02, as well as buffer zones and contribute to positive landscape effects associated with the implementation of the LAP. In particular, public realm key objectives

(TCR 06) are very positive in relation to townscape and landscape SEOs as they address public realm enhancement.

Additional green and blue infrastructure measures and enhanced walking and cycling, as well as the reuse of existing buildings and vacant sites contribute positively to landscape parameters.

7.10 Land use zonings – Significant Effects

The Table below presents the landuse zonings and amount of lands zoned

Table 7: Landuse Zonings and Amounts

Landuse Zoning	Amount
Town Centre	24.64
Residential R1 –Established	90.64
Residential 2	15.45
Strategic Reserve 2018-2024	1.5
Amenity and Open Space	55.89
Community-Educational-Institutional	20.27
Industrial	25.48
Enterprise and Employment	15.56
Utilities	2.41
Neighbourhood centre	1.14

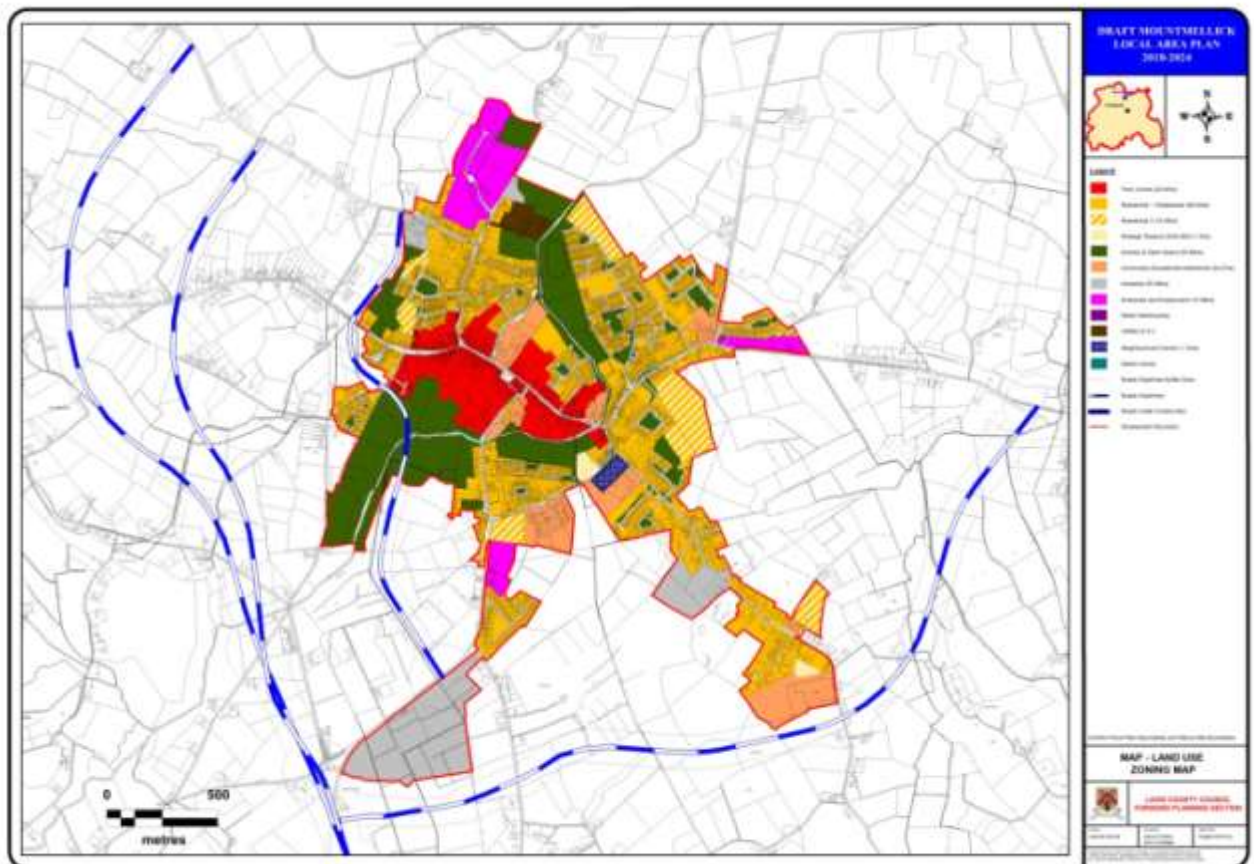


Figure 19: Land use zonings Mountmellick LAP

7.10.1 Discussion

The main elements of the draft Plan with the potential to result in such impacts relate to the zoning of development land in undeveloped sites close to or part of European Sites, the development of infrastructure and the pressures associated with the adequate supply of water throughout the lifetime of the Plan.

The general impacts (in the absence of mitigation measures) to the qualifying interests of European Sites associated with elements of the Plan will include:

- A reduction in water quality in surface waters associated with the construction phase of new developments, surface water runoff from impermeable surfaces and the use of the Rivers Owenass and Barrow as a tourist and amenity attraction.
- Inadequate wastewater (i.e. sewer) collection system resulting in pollution of surface watercourses and groundwaters.
- Unsustainable abstraction of water from surface and groundwaters leading to the drawdown of baseline water levels.
- Disturbance to qualifying habitats and species from increased human presence particularly associated with tourism and amenity activity on the River Barrow.

The Natura Impact Report that accompanies this SEA ER provides further information in relation to the above.

The following section discusses the impacts associated with each zoning proposed for the plan area:

7.10.2 Town Centre

The town centre zonings are concentrated in the existing centre of Mountmellick, confirming existing and established land uses and an area of 24.64ha are provided for within this zoning.

Whilst there is generally little greenfield land identified for this zoning, many of the town centre structures are established a considerable time and have a number of backlands or areas that could be expanded to the rear of the town centre. For much of this zoning, the lands are established urban areas; based on a review of aerial photography, some of the backlands associated with the town centre, support scrub/mature treelines and policies such as *NH 03*, *NH 04* and *FM 10* would apply. This is important as the most easterly of this zoning are backlands/gardens that adjoin the Owenass River.

Positive and consistent with all SEOs, reflects national policy, core strategy and promotes consolidation of town centre. Subject to adherence and implementation of relevant policies and measures including *NH 01*, *FM 07* and *FM 08* positive long term impacts are identified in particular for population and human health, material assets, Landscape, Cultural Heritage and Soil and Geology SEOs.

The purpose of this zoning is:

- To enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre through the promotion of retail, residential, commercial, office, cultural, public facilities and other uses appropriate in the urban core.
- To prioritise the development of town centre lands in order to consolidate the development of the town.
- To encourage the use of buildings and backlands, in particular the full use of upper floors, preferably for residential purposes.

Subject to adherence and implementation of relevant policies and measures including *NH 01, FM 07 and FM 08* positive impacts are identified for population and human health, material assets, Landscape, Cultural Heritage and Soil and Geology SEOs.

7.10.3 Residential Zonings

The Core Strategy for County Laois is set out under Section 2 of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023. The LAP identifies approximately 15.45 ha. of residentially (R2) zoned land, located within and adjacent to established residential areas within the town. Over the lifetime of the LAP, priority for residential development should be given to the development of these lands to consolidate the built up area of the town.

Currently capacity exists in the Foul Sewer Network, Waste Water Treatment Plant and Public Water Supply.

Most of the impacts identified for residential development zones are identified as being mitigated at project level through development management. Positive impacts were identified for population and human health, plus a number of material assets such as flood risk and sustainable transport. Seven areas are identified for this land use zoning, and all are adjacent to existing residential development. The largest of these is land in the eastern plan area and a review of aerial photography shows the lands characterised by two large tillage fields and with hedgerows. Another area in the north east of the plan area is adjacent to the River Owenass, so key policies and objectives relating to Natural heritage and Flood management would apply.

Most of the impacts identified for residential development zones are identified as being mitigated at project level through development management. Positive impacts were identified for population and human health, plus a number of material assets such as flood risk and sustainable transport.

7.10.4 Amenity and Open Space

Large areas particularly adjacent to the River Owenass are zoned for open space in the LAP. These reflect areas of flood risk and also provide a buffer area around the river as it flows through the town centre. A considerable extent of the open space zoning in the southwest plan area relates to flood zones and is characterised by agricultural farmland and hedgerows. Potential Impacts identified with such zonings include disturbance to species

through increased access and accompanying noise or human presence. The Objective for this zoning in the LCC plan is *to preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational open space*. Other areas of open space in the LAP commonly relate to existing open green space associated with residential development.

Generally, impacts are positive for a range of parameters including soil and geology, population and human health, flood risk, water quality and landscape. The opportunities to enhance these areas through public realm improvements and/or green and blue infrastructure measures contribute positively longer term to biodiversity, water and climate change adaptation SEOs also.

7.10.5 Community/Educational/Institutional

These lands are largely concentrated close to the existing town centre and the Land use objective for this zoning is: *To protect and provide for local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities*.

Again on undeveloped lands, negative impacts are identified for biodiversity and soil due to development on greenfield sites, but for many SEOs these can be mitigated through development management and relevant policies and objectives in the draft Plan. Positive impacts are identified for population and human health, transport and air quality for these zonings. In all cases the areas zoned under this land use confirm existing land use (eg: educational, or the cemetery) and zone land adjacent to these existing land uses.

Other undeveloped lands zoned for this use are close to the town centre where possible to facilitate and promote town centre viability and easy access to these facilities for inhabitants of the town.

7.10.6 Industrial

25.48 ha are zoned for Industrial use. This in part reflects the historical land uses within the town, as well as confirming existing industrial land use, for example in the northwest of the plan area at Chapel Street.

A large area is zoned in the southwest of the plan area, currently characterized by agricultural grassland, with drainage ditches, hedgerows and dispersed farm houses; these lands are adjacent to the N80. The range of impacts will vary according to the potential use; however for most of the SEOs, the impacts are considered to be addressed through mitigation at development management level.

Mitigation measures in the plan relating to retention of hedgerows, additional tree planting and green infrastructure should be considered in relation to development on these lands.

7.10.7 Enterprise and Employment

There are 15.56ha. zoned for Enterprise and Employment. These are all located on the perimeter of the town boundary and the objective of this zoning is *To accommodate*

commercial and enterprise uses that are incapable of being situated in a town centre location, including low input and emission manufacturing, campus style offices, storage uses, wholesaling and distribution, commercial services with high space and parking requirements. Business Park type development shall be provided in high quality landscaped campus style environments, incorporating a range of amenities.

The land use zoning partly confirms existing landuse; the area in the northwest of the plan area extends this landuse zoning; as this area lies between the River Owenass to the east and River Barrow to the north, application of appropriate mitigation measures are required. For example, *FM 10, NH 011 and NH 09*. Subject to implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, no significant adverse effects are identified for this zoning.

7.10.8 Utilities

One area in the LAP is zoned for utilities and this relates to the wastewater treatment plant. This confirms an existing land use.

7.10.10 Neighbourhood Centre

A small area of 1.14ha is zoned for General Business. No interactions with SEOs are identified.

7.10 In-combination and cumulative significant effects

This section of the Environmental Report provides an outline of the potential cumulative effects on the environment as a result of implementation of the LAP. Figure 21 presented overall environmental sensitivity mapping for the LAP.

Cumulative effects are referred to in a number of SEA Guidance documents and are defined in the EPA SEA Process Checklist as *“effects on the environment that result from incremental changes caused by the strategic action together with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions. These effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time or space”*¹⁰. These effects can be insignificant individually but cumulatively over time and from a number of sources can result in the degradation of sensitive environmental resources. The assessment of cumulative effects is a requirement of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).

The 2004 Guidelines produced by the DECLG outlines that the SEA process is in a good position to address cumulative effects for which the Environmental Impact Assessment process is not equipped to deal with. Due to the strategic nature of the SEA process a forum is provided in which cumulative effects can be addressed. The EPA is presently undertaking a study in relation to cumulative effects and it is anticipated that a draft Cumulative Effects – Best Practice Guidance Document will be available soon to SEA practitioners.

¹⁰ (EPA SEA Process Checklist (2011)).

The EPA Strive Report 2007-2013 on ‘Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment’ describes cumulative effects as incremental effects resulting from a combination of two or more individual effects, or from an interaction between individual effects – which may lead to a synergistic effect (i.e. greater than the sum of the individual effects), or any progressive effect likely to emerge over time.

The SEA ER of the Laois CDP 2017-2023 provided a cumulative assessment of national level plans and programmes as they relate to the CDP, as this are more appropriately assessed at County level, they are not included within this cumulative impact assessment; rather the focus is on regional/locals plans and projects, as these are considered to be the most appropriate scale and potential relevance to the plan area and zone of influence.

7.10.1 Potential cumulative effects from other plans and projects

Table 8: Potential cumulative and in combination effects

Plan	Comment	Cumulative effects
Water Services Strategic Plan	Ireland’s first integrated national plan for the delivery of water services, the Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) addresses six key themes and was adopted in 2015. It was subject to full SEA and AA and concluded that Overall, the assessment has identified that the implementation of the draft WSSP is likely to have positive effects on the majority of the SEOs that have been used in the assessment to help characterise the environmental effects of the WSSP and no significant negative effects were identified.	No in-combination impacts were predicted as a result of implementation of the Plans.
Neighbouring County Development Plans	These plans were subject to full SEA and AA and concluded that subject to full adherence and implementation of measures likely significant effects were not identified.	No in-combination impacts were predicted as a result of implementation of the Plans.
River Basin District Management Plans.	The second cycle of these plans (2015 to 2021) are currently in preparation and will provide management measures to achieve WFD Objectives up to 2021. This plan is undergoing both SEA and AA and is in draft form.	No in-combination impacts are predicted as a result of implementation of the Plans.
CFRAMS Study	The Eastern CFRAM study has been commissioned in order to meet the	Flood Risk Management is being

Plan	Comment	Cumulative effects
	requirements of the Floods Directive, as well as to deliver on core components of the 2004 National Flood Policy, in the Eastern district.	addressed in the LAP and in conjunction with the OPW. No adverse effects identified.
Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021	The plan supports a range of high level goals, actions and objectives. It was subject to SEA and AA Screening, and was developed with support from the Forward Planning Section.	The plan is consistent with the CDP and no adverse in combination or cumulative effects are identified.
Laois Heritage Plan 2014-2019	<p>Key objectives as follows:</p> <p>Objective 1: Increase understanding of the heritage of Laois;</p> <p>Objective 2: Record the heritage of Laois;</p> <p>Objective 3: Protect and promote active conservation of the heritage of Laois;</p> <p>Objective 4: Promote community participation in heritage plans and projects;</p> <p>Objective 5: Promote enjoyment and accessibility of heritage sites.</p>	Positive interactions with SEOs in relation to this plan; no adverse cumulative effects identified.
Irelands Ancient East and Laois Tourism Strategy 2018-2023	<p>A range of proposed actions and projects and targets in terms of aligning with the Ancient East and increasing tourism numbers form part of this strategy. Key project identified for Mountmellick relates to the Laois Town Experience Product - the identification of a strong theme built on a rich bank of heritage and stories associated with the towns. The subsequent phases will focus on engaging the local tourism industry and communities to build on the opportunity it can present. Mountmellick would be associated with the history of the Quakers in this plan.</p> <p>A secondary objective relates to promoting the Slieve Blooms and Barrow Blueway potential. The town is not identified as such within these actions</p>	The Town Experience product is not identified as giving rise to adverse in combination /cumulative effects. Proposals on the Barrow and relating to the Slieve Bloom if they were to significantly increase disturbance along these habitats may give rise to adverse in combination effects. However, the provisions of the Laois CDP 2017-2023 are considered appropriate

Plan	Comment	Cumulative effects
	on the rivers, lakes and canals.	to address any potential in combination effects at this juncture. Policies TRANS 06 and NHO8 apply in particular.

8 Mitigation Measures

8.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the mitigation measures that will prevent, reduce, and offset as much as possible any significant adverse effects on the environment of the plan area resulting from the implementation of the LAP. Section (g) of Schedule 2B of the SEA Regulations (as amended) requires: *‘The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the Plan’*.

Mitigation involves ameliorating significant negative effects. Where the environmental assessment identifies significant adverse effects, consideration is given in the first instance to preventing such impacts or where this is not possible, to lessening or offsetting those effects. Mitigation measures can be generally divided into those that:

- Avoid effects;
- Reduce the magnitude or extent, probability and/or severity of effect;
- Repair effects after they have occurred; and,
- Compensate for effects, by balancing out negative impacts with positive ones.

The iterative process of the LAP preparation has facilitated the integration of environmental considerations into the LAP. In addition, potential positive effects of implementing the LAP have been and will be maximised and potential adverse effects have been and will be avoided, reduced or offset.

Many impacts will be more adequately identified and mitigated at project and EIA level. In general terms, all proposals for development will be required to have due regard to environmental considerations outlined in this Environmental Report and associated assessments including the Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Proposals for development which are deemed contrary to the environmental objectives contained in the Laois CDP 2017-2023 and Mountmellick LAP 2018-2024 will not normally be permitted, and if permitted, not without the appropriate site and development specific mitigation measures.

There were also a number of policies/objectives associated with the LAP that were identified as potentially generating significant adverse impacts on the environment, and suggested rewording of these proposals are put forward for consideration and recommended for inclusion in the draft LAP.

This chapter is structured as follows:

- 8.2 Environmental Protection Measures in the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023;
- 8.3 Mitigation measures – amendment of text in the Mountmellick LAP.

8.2 Existing Environmental Policies and Objectives in the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023

Ref	Text
CS13	Contribute towards compliance with EU Directives - including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended), the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC, as amended) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) – and relevant transposing Regulations.
CS14	Ensure that lower levels of decision making and environmental assessment consider the sensitivities identified in the SEA Environmental Report that accompanies the Development Plan, Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023.
CS15	Assess proposals for development in terms of, inter alia, potential impact on existing adjacent developments, existing land uses and/or the surrounding landscape. Where proposed developments would be likely to have a significant adverse effect on the amenities of the area through pollution by noise, fumes, odours, dust, grit or vibration, or cause pollution of air, water and/or soil, the Council shall ensure the introduction of mitigation measures in order to eliminate adverse environmental impacts or reduce them to an acceptable operating level.
CS10	Provide for active and efficient use of derelict sites, vacant premises, neglected lands, disused (brownfield) or underused lands that are zoned and served by existing public infrastructure and facilities, to consolidate the urban form, improve streetscapes, support housing delivery and smarter travel as well as strengthen the vitality and vibrancy of urban areas, by way of the development management process and other mechanisms including the imposition of levies under the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 and Derelict Sites Act 1990, the preparation of opportunity site briefs and the consideration of incentives in the preparation of Development Contributions Scheme(s).
CS11	Encourage the re-use of the existing building stock in an appropriate manner in line with standard conservation principles and the Council's policy on sustainable development in order to integrate proposed development into the existing streetscape and to reduce potential construction and demolition waste.
NRA 1	Encourage and facilitate, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, the development of green infrastructure that recognises the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the following: i. Provision of open space amenities; ii. Sustainable management of water; iii. Protection and management of biodiversity; iv. Protection of cultural heritage; v. Protection of protected landscape sensitivities.
ECN13	Direct labour intensive enterprises to town centre/edge of centre locations and brownfield sites and favour brownfield sites over greenfield sites for general enterprise development in the interests of sustainability and orderly development.
ECN17	Seek to provide opportunities for highly skilled outbound commuters to work locally through local employment opportunities, tourism opportunities, the development of an e-working centre or working-from-home arrangements facilitated by high-speed broadband in the interests of sustainable economic development, smarter travel and quality of life considerations.

EC 18	Support community initiatives to foster stronger engagement between commuters and their local towns and villages.
ECN21	Encourage the maintenance of town/village centre buildings and improve the quality of the public realm in town/village centres making them more attractive and safe to locals and visitors, as well as more pedestrian and cycle-friendly. Prepare Public Realm Strategies, where appropriate, liaising closely with residents, visitors and other relevant stakeholders.
TRANS6	Ensure that all proposed plans or projects relating to transportation (including walking, cycling, rail, bus and roads) and any associated improvement works, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, are subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening to ensure there are no likely significant effects on the integrity (defined by the structure and function) of any Natura 2000 site(s) and that the requirements of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive are fully satisfied. Where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, or there is uncertainty with regard to effects, it shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment. The plan or project will proceed only after it has been ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site or where in the absence of alternative solutions, the project is deemed imperative for reasons of overriding public interest, all in accordance with the provisions of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive.
PWS 1	Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment.
WS4	Work with IW on developing and upgrading the water supply schemes so as to ensure an adequate, resilient, sustainable and economic supply of piped water meeting targets in relation to quality as set out in the IWs WSSP is available for domestic, commercial, industrial, fire safety and other use for the sustainable development of the county in accordance with the settlement structure identified in this Plan. All Capital projects and programmes associated with the provision of water supply or wastewater and surface water treatment must be assessed in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive in order to avoid adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites.
WS30	Protect and develop, in a sustainable manner, the existing groundwater sources and aquifers in the County and control development in a manner consistent with the proper management of these resources, in accordance with the County Source Protection Zones.
WS31	Ensure the protection of groundwater dependant Natura 2000 sites which rely on the continued supply of groundwater resources to secure the key environmental conditions that support the integrity of the site and through the protection of groundwater standards as defined by the relevant River Basin Management Plan. Where no detailed Plan for protection of a specific source is available wastewater discharge will not be permitted within a radius of 300 metres of that source.
WS32	Ensure the protection of groundwater dependant Natura 2000 sites which rely on the continued supply of groundwater resources to secure the key environmental conditions that support the integrity of the site and through the protection of groundwater

	standards as defined by the relevant River Basin Management Plan. All Capital projects and programmes associated with the provision of water supply or wastewater and surface water treatment must be assessed in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive in order to avoid adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites.
WS33	Consult as necessary with other competent authorities with responsibility for environmental management.
WS34	Comply with the provisions of the Water Framework Directive 2000.
WS35	To assist and co-operate with the EPA and the Lead Authorities in the continued implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.
WS36	To ensure, through the implementation of the River Basin Management Plans and their associated Programmes of Measures and any other associated legislation, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground water.
FD1	Ensure that flood risk management is incorporated into the preparation of all local area plans through the preparation in accordance with the requirements of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG 2009).
CC1	Support and facilitate the national objectives for climate adaptation and work with the EPA, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and adjoining planning authorities in implementing future guidance for climate change proofing of land use plan provisions as is flagged in the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (DECLG, 2012).
CC2	Prepare a Climate Change Adaptation plan following the adoption of the Development Plan, in line with relevant Government Guidelines.
ES1	Facilitate and promote the implementation of the Eastern-Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 within its functional area.
ES11	Promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011) (or any updated/superseding documents).
ES18	Encourage the maintenance of dark skies in rural areas and limit light pollution in urban and rural areas.
ES21	Ensure good soil quality throughout the county by requiring developments of a certain nature (as specified in the relevant environmental legislation) to carry out assessments of the impact of the development on soil quality.
ES22	Recognise the significant impacts of land use, land use change and sludge generation and treatment in relation to carbon loss/stocks and recognise the function of soil assessment and management, carbon sinks, carbon sequestration and restoration of degraded lands in plan led settlement and development strategies.
EN4	Promote and encourage the development of energy from renewable sources such as hydro, bio-energy, wind, solar, geothermal

	and landfill gas subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Section 8.
BH 6	Encourage the full use of Protected Structures, subject to compatibility of the use with the character of the Protected Structure.
BH11	Consider favourably development proposals within an ACA that would either preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of the ACA. In considering applications for changes of use, the Council will be concerned with maintaining the character of that area.
ARCH5	Ensure protection of Zones of Archaeological Potential, as identified in the Record of Monuments and Places.
BIO1	Comply with the objectives of the National Biodiversity Plan 2011-2016 (and any future National Biodiversity Plan which may be adopted during the period of this plan) as appropriate to County Laois.
BIO2	Contribute, as appropriate, towards the protection of designated ecological sites including candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs); Ramsar Sites; Wildlife Sites (including Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas and Nature Reserves); Salmonid Waters; Flora Protection Order sites; and Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchments (the River Nore Freshwater Pearl Mussel sub-basin management Plan should be referenced in this regard).
NH08	All projects and plans arising from this plan ¹⁸ (including any associated improvement works or associated infrastructure) will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. A plan or project will only be authorised after the competent authority has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, Screening for Appropriate Assessment, and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that: 1. The Plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or 2. The Plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type/and or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000, or the Plan or project will have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons for overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

8.3 Mitigation Measures-amendment of text

Additional text identified through the SEA process is included in **blue, bold** font.

Table 9: Mitigation Measures –Amendment of Text

LAP	Mitigation Measure	Included in LAP Yes/No
Key Plan Objectives Additional objective:	7. To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications in the plan area to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report that accompany this LAP.	Yes
Opportunity Site: Maltings, Portlaoise Road, Zoning: Residential 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategically located on the Portlaoise Road entrance into the town with direct access onto National Secondary Route N80; A 0.37ha. brownfield site formerly used as a grain mill; Protected Structures on site; Fully serviced site; Extant permission for residential development of 37 no. apartments; Outside of Flood Zones A and B; Ecological survey including bat surveys may be required and results inform landscaping and design; Opportunity to intensify development to provide a key landmark or gateway building to signify the approach and entrance to the town from Portlaoise to create a sense of arrival; The building should address the extensive street frontage and be designed to an exceptional standard. 	Yes
KIP5:	Assess all applications in the context of available and sufficient public infrastructural facilities, the protection of Surface Water and Groundwater Resources and their associated habitats and species¹¹ .	Yes
KI O9:	Maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of surface waters and groundwater in accordance with the South Eastern River Basin District River Basin Management Plan /National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG) and associated Programme of Measures.	Yes

¹¹ On foot of EPA Scoping submission

KI O10:	Ensure developments will not adversely impact on the status of waterbodies in accordance with the Water Framework Directive and South Eastern River Basin District River Basin Management Plan ; National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG).	Yes
KI O11	Facilitate, promote and encourage the expansion and improvement of telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas networks infrastructure subject to proper planning and sustainable development.	Yes
KI 08	Co-operate with and facilitate the work of national telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas network providers in the improvement, expansion and provision of energy and communication infrastructure subject to proper planning and sustainable development.	Yes
NH O5:	Carry out and require the planting of native trees, hedgerows and vegetation in all new developments;	Yes
NH P2:	NH P2: Develop a greenway/blueway walking and cycling route along the River Owenass having regard to ecological considerations including protected species and habitats.	Yes
NH O5	NH O5: Carry out and require the planting of native trees, hedgerows and vegetation in all new developments.	Yes
NH O6:	Open up visual and physical access via the River Owenass as a continuous pedestrian and cycle link through the town centre, having regard to ecological considerations including protected species and habitats.	Yes
NH O10:	Protect environmental quality and implement site appropriate mitigation measures with respect to air quality, greenhouse gases, climate change, light pollution, noise pollution and waste management.	Yes

9 Monitoring

9.1 Introduction

It is proposed, in accordance with Article 10 of the SEA Directive, to base monitoring on a series of indicators which measure changes in the environment, especially changes which are critical in terms of environmental quality, for example water pollution levels. Monitoring will focus on the aspects of the environment that are likely to be significantly impacted upon by the implementation of the LAP.

The targets and indicators are derived from the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) discussed in Chapter Five. The target underpins the objective whilst the indicators are used to track the progress of the objective and targets in terms of monitoring of impacts.

The monitoring programme will consist of an assessment of the relevant indicators and targets against the data relating to each environmental component. Similarly, monitoring will be carried out frequently to ensure that any changes to the environment can be identified.

9.2 Frequency of Monitoring and Reporting

Should new data or the following occur, additional monitoring will be required:


- Pollution events associated with construction;
- Boil notices on drinking water;
- Fish kills;
- Court cases taken by the DEHLG regarding impacts upon archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places; and,
- Complaints received from statutory consultees regarding avoidable impacts resulting from development which is granted permission under the LAP.

In turn the list below is subject to review at each reporting stage to reflect new data. Laois County Council are responsible for the implementation of the SEA Monitoring Programme including:



- Monitoring specific indicators and identifying any significant effects, including cumulative effects;
- Collating the Environmental Reports (such as Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, Natura Impact Reports etc) submitted by developers in the LAP area;
- Reviewing the effectiveness of monitoring/mitigation measures during the lifetime of the LAP; and,
- Identifying any cumulative effects.


It is recommended that the monitoring report be made available to the public upon its completion.



Table: 10 SEA Monitoring


SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicator	Selected Target	Source (Frequency)
Biodiversity Flora and Fauna 	B1: To ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annexed habitats and species	B1: Conservation status of habitats and species as assessed under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive	B1: Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under National and International legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal monitoring of likely significant effects - Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years) - Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs’s National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every 3 years) - Consultations with the NPWS
	B2: To ensure compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the management of features of the landscape which - by virtue of their linear and continuous	B2: Percentage loss of functional connectivity without remediation resulting from development provided for by the Plan	B2: No significant ecological networks or parts thereof which provide functional connectivity to be lost without remediation resulting from development provided for by the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) - CORINE mapping resurvey (every c. 5 years) - Review of Council Ecological Network Mapping



SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicator	Selected Target	Source (Frequency)
	<p>structure or their function act as stepping stones (designated or not) - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species</p>			
	<p>B3: To avoid significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites and to ensure compliance with the Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 with regard to the protection of listed species</p>	<p>B3i: Number of significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites resulting from development provided for by the Plan</p> <p>B3ii: Number of significant impacts on the protection of listed species</p> <p>B3i</p>	<p>B3i: Avoid significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites resulting from development provided for by the Plan</p> <p>B3ii: No significant impacts on the protection of listed species</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) - Consultations with the NPWS

SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicator	Selected Target	Source (Frequency)
Population and human health Noise 	PHH1: To protect populations and human health from exposure to incompatible land uses <i>including adverse noise and air quality impacts</i>	PHH1: Occurrence (any) of a spatially concentrated deterioration in human health arising from environmental factors resulting from development provided for by the Plan, as identified by the Health Service Executive and Environmental Protection Agency	PHH1: No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan	- Consultations with EPA and Health Service Executive
Water 	W1: To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality and status of surface waters	W1: Classification of Overall Status (comprised of ecological and chemical status) under the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (SI No. 272 of 2009)	W1: Not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve ‘good status’ 47 by 2015	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) - Data issued under the Water Framework Directive Monitoring Programme for Ireland (multi-annual)
	W2: To prevent pollution and contamination of ground water	W2: Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC	W2: Not to affect the ability of groundwaters to comply with Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) - Data issued under the Water Framework Directive Monitoring Programme for Ireland (multi-annual)
	W3: To comply as appropriate with the provisions of	W3: Number of incompatible developments granted permission on lands which	W3: Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)

SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicator	Selected Target	Source (Frequency)
	the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2009)	pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk	pose in the future - a significant flood risk in compliance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities	
Soil and Geology	S1: To avoid damage to the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource	S1: Soil extent and hydraulic connectivity	S1: To minimise reductions in soil extent and hydraulic connectivity	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)
	S2: <i>To maximise the sustainable re- use of brownfield lands, and the existing built environment, rather than developing greenfield lands</i>	S2: Permission granted on Opportunity Sites. % Occupancy of buildings in town centre	S2: Number of Opportunity Sites developed over lifetime of the plan	- Grant by grant
Material Assets	M1: To serve new development with adequate and appropriate wastewater treatment	M1: Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan	M1: All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)

SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicator	Selected Target	Source (Frequency)
	M2: To serve new development with adequate drinking water that is both wholesome and clean	M2: Number of non-compliances with the 48 parameters identified in the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations (No. 2) 2007 which present a potential danger to human health as a result of implementing the Plan	M2: No non-compliances with the 48 parameters identified in the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations (No. 2) 2007 which present a potential danger to human health as a result of implementing the Plan	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)
	M3: To reduce waste volumes, minimise waste to landfill and increase recycling and reuse	M3i: Total collected and brought household waste M3ii: Packaging recovered (t) by self-complying packagers	M3i: Minimise increases in and, where possible, reduce household waste generation M3ii: Maximise increases in packaging recovered (t) by self-complying packagers	- EPA National Waste reports
Climate Change, Air Quality and Noise	C1: To reduce travel related emissions to air and to encourage modal change from car to more sustainable forms of transport	C1: Percentage of population travelling to work, school or college by public transport or non-mechanical means	C1: An increase in the percentage of the population travelling to work, school or college by public transport or non-mechanical means	- CSO Population Data
	C2: <i>Ensure that the LAP proposals are adaptive to expected climate</i>	C2: Number of SUDs measures included and developed as part of planning applications. Number/extent of additional	C2: An increase in extent of Blue and Green infrastructure linkages in plan area	- Grants of permission

SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicator	Selected Target	Source (Frequency)
	<i>change patterns</i>	tree planting as part of planning applications		
Cultural Heritage	CH1: To protect archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context	CH1: Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places - including Areas of Archaeological Potential and Significance (and the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant) - protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan	CH1: Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places - including Areas of Archaeological Potential and Significance (and their context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant) from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan	- Grants of Permission
	CH2: To protect architectural heritage including entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context	CH2: Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan	CH2: Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) - Consultation with Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Landscape	L1: To minimise significant adverse visual impacts within and adjacent	L1: Number of complaints received from statutory consultees regarding avoidable adverse visual	L1: No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)

SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicator	Selected Target	Source (Frequency)
	to the County	impacts on the landscape resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	
	L2: To protect and enhance landscape character and quality within and adjacent to the LAP area.	L2: Opportunity Site and interventions the development vision and strategy implemented over lifetime of plan	L2: Adherence to all principles in the development vision and strategy	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)
Interrelationships	Maintain and improve the health of people, ecosystems and natural processes	Blue and Green Infrastructure measures implemented over lifetime of plan	Increased network of blue and green infrastructure achieved over lifetime of the plan	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)
	Actively seek to integrate opportunities for environmental enhancement	As above	As above	- Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant)

9.3 Conclusion










This SEA Environmental Report demonstrates how environmental parameters have been addressed in the plan preparation process. Consultation has been undertaken for the Scoping of this Environmental Report and further opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan will be possible over the forthcoming weeks.










The SEA and Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken in line with the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 to 2011 (as amended). Subject to the full and proper implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in this SEA Environmental Report and the Mountmellick LAP 2018-2024 including detailed design at planning application stage, it is considered that significant adverse impacts on the environment will be avoided.










Annex A: Assessment Matrix of Mountmellick LAP 2018-2024










Additional text recommended through the SEA process is presented in **bold blue font**.










No likely interaction with /insignificant impact with SEOs	0	Potential conflict with SEOs – likely to be mitigated	↕
Likely to improve status of SEOs	↑		
Probable conflict with SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	↓		










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
<p>Strategic Vision: To develop Mountmellick as a sustainable low carbon settlement centred on a vibrant town centre, utilising the location strengths to attract employment and promote the unique settlement as an attractive town in which to work, live and play, while ensuring the protection of the unique built and natural heritage and managing flood risk.</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
Objectives: Key Plan Objectives:									
1. To support and facilitate sustainable intensification and consolidation of the town centre and in established residential areas	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
2. To promote balanced economic development and employment ensuring a diverse range of economic sectors are developed and supported	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
3. To support and facilitate development on zoned land based on the policies and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023									
4. To focus new residential development primarily into infill and backland sites									
5. To protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment, through promoting awareness, utilising relevant heritage legislation and promoting good quality urban design									
6. To develop and improve flood alleviation measures throughout the town and rural hinterland									
7. To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications in the plan area to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report that accompany this LAP									
8. To require projects to be fully informed by ecological and									










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
environmental constraints at the earliest stage of project planning and any necessary assessment to be undertaken, including assessments of disturbance to habitats and species, where required.									
Comment: Objectives 7 and 8 in particular supports environmental assessments and measures arising from the SEA, AA and SFRA. Positive effects across all SEOs.									
Policies: Key Policies:									
1. Implement the development strategies for Mountmellick in order to be consistent with, and in accordance with policies of higher tier plans	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
2. Support strategic enterprise and employment opportunities at other appropriate locations in Mountmellick and environs, having regard to proper planning and sustainable development and relevant development control standards	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
3. Facilitate and promote Mountmellick’s role as a “Service Town” as designated in the MRPGs and Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
4. Monitor and manage the delivery of population and housing in Mountmellick, in line with national, regional and county level objectives, through the development strategy in this plan and also through the development management process	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
5. Facilitate and support the provision of new, and expansion of existing services, facilities and community infrastructure.	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
Comment: Alignment with hierarchy of plans and policies, including core strategy and support Service Town Designation are all consistent with SEOs.									
Economic Development: To promote, facilitate and enable economic development and employment generation activities in appropriate locations and in a sustainable manner.	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Objectives: It is an objective of the Council to:									
ED O1: Facilitate the future sustainable development of Mountmellick so as to optimise the benefits of its location, in accordance with the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
ED O2: Promote balanced and sustainable economic development and employment, ensuring that a diverse range of economic sectors are developed and supported	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
ED O3: Promote employment opportunities by facilitating development on appropriately zoned lands	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
ED O4: Facilitate the provision and expansion of all services and infrastructure which would contribute positively to the attraction of the town to economic development	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
ED O5: Facilitate and promote the up skilling and training of the labour force in conjunction with NUI Maynooth, Athlone and Carlow IT and other education providers	O	↑	O	O	O	O	O	O	↑











Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
ED O6: Facilitate the improvement and expansion of established enterprises and industries	↑	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
ED O7: Facilitate and promote the provision of incubator units for start up businesses and SMEs	O	↑	O	O	↑	↑	O	O	O
ED O8: Facilitate development of a digital hub/creative cluster	O	↑	O	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
ED O9: Accommodate small employment generating activities at first floor level and vacant ground floor commercial premises on the town centre	O	↑	O	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
ED O10: Facilitate home based economic activities which do not adversely impact on existing amenities	O	↑	O	O	↑	↑	O	O	↑
ED O11: Develop lands for industry at Derrguile and Debbicot to support existing industry at Bay Road and Acragar	↕	↑	↕	↕	↕	↕	↑↕	↑↕	↑
ED O12: Support the continued operation and reasonable expansion of non-conforming uses subject to maintenance of existing environmental, visual and residential amenity.	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
ED O13: Promote Mountmellick as a tourist destination as a gateway to the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains and on the Quaker Experience	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
ED O14: Promote the Georgian and Quaker character of the town as a basis for tourism development	↑	↑	↕	↕	↕	↕	↑	↑	↑
ED O15: Facilitate the provision of tourism accommodation and ancillary services	↑	↑	↕	↕	↕	↕	↑	↑	↑
ED016: Facilitate the development of the Rivers Owenass and Barrow for recreational amenities whilst avoiding significant effects on habitats and species of the River Barrow and Nore SAC	↕	↑	↕	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
ED017: Facilitate the provision of standardized tourism signage and interpretation facilities for tourist attractions	↕	↑	↕	↕	↑		↑	↑	↑
ED O18: Facilitate the development and expansion of new and existing food-agri businesses	↕	↑	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:									
ED P1: Co-operate with Mountmellick Development Association, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Office and other agencies, organisation and individuals in promoting enterprise and employment in Mountmellick	↕	↑	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
ED P2: Support strategic enterprise and employment opportunities at other appropriate locations, having regard to proper planning and sustainable development and relevant development control standards	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
ED P3: Facilitate the continuity of and encourage the expansion of established enterprises and to promote start-up enterprises, having regard to the protection of the amenity value of neighbouring properties	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
ED P4: Support the further development of broadband in Mountmellick to facilitate the development of internet based businesses and home based economic activities	0	↑	0	0	↑	↑	0	0	↑
ED P5: Encourage, in co-operation with the Local Enterprise Office and Laois Partnership, the development of further small to medium scale industries and services	0	↑	0	0	↑	↑	0	0	↑
ED P6: Create an integrated and sustainable public and private	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
transport system to move people and goods efficiently within and through Mountmellick									
ED P7: Develop high quality business infrastructure	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ED P8: Identify opportunities to improve the tourism product in cooperation with relevant statutory agencies, private providers and community groups	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<p>Comment: Promotion of Town Centre development and objectives to enhance existing employment are positive in relation to MA, CC and PH SEOs in particular. Direct, long term positives in terms of reducing commuting patterns through increased economic activity and direct population and human health effects also relating to reduced commuting patterns for population of the town (ED04 and ED07 for example).</p> <p>ED 09 is positive as it promotes reuse of existing buildings in the town centre and contribute again to altering commuting patterns, promoting adaptive reuse of buildings, and contribute to town centre viability. Reuse of older structures indirectly contributes to townscape quality and character as promotes soil and geology SEOs as it represents reuse of existing buildings/brownfield. For other objectives such as ED 011, potential effects can be addressed through existing mitigation measures.</p> <p>Policies: As with the objectives, enhancing existing economic opportunities are consistent with SEOs for PHH, MA and CC in particular. For other SEOs potential adverse effects associated with the development are identified as being mitigated through existing development management measures.</p>									
<p>Town Centre Revitalisation: To support the sustainable long-term growth of Mountmellick, in accordance with the Core and Retail Strategies of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Objectives: It is the objectives of the Council to:</p>									










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
TCR O1: Improve the quality, vitality and vibrancy of the town centre	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR O2: Encourage the opening up of the backlands to the north and south of Parnell Street and Sarsfield Street facing on to the Owenass River	↕	↑	↕	↕	↑	↕↑	↕	↕	↑
TCR O3: Facilitate the redevelopment of strategic sites within the town centre for a mixture of uses that will contribute to vitality of the central core area	○	↑	○	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR O4: Renew, consolidate and develop the existing fabric of the town by achieving a high quality of design in new development and refurbishments while safeguarding the built heritage of the town	○	↑	○	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR O5: Facilitate public realm improvement projects and landscaping integrating blue and green infrastructure measures where appropriate	↕	↑	↕	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR O6: Ensure the type, quantum and location of future retail floor space is consistent with the requirements and recommendations of the County Development Plan, relevant regional policy frameworks and national planning guidelines	○	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR O7: Promote an appropriate mix of day and night time uses	○	↑	○	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR O8: Create attractive and secure pedestrian and cycling links including green infrastructure through the town	↕	↑	○	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:									
TCR P1: Promote the town centre as a priority location for commercial, civic, social and cultural development and	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
sustainable consolidation									
TCR P2: Promote the consolidation of the town centre through the use of brownfield, infill and backland sites without compromising streetscapes	O	↑	O	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR P3: Promote the reuse of existing town centre buildings through appropriate design and adaptation	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR P4: Prohibit the proliferation of uses in the town centre which would detract from the amenities of the area or the vitality and viability of the town centre	O	↑	O	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR P5: Encourage retail development within the existing town centre. Proposals which would undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre will not be permitted. The sequential approach to retail development set out in the “Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012” will be strictly enforced	O	↑	O	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR P6: Encourage and facilitate the reuse and regeneration of derelict and vacant sites and disused buildings, especially upper floors	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TCR P7: Promote living over the shop and conversion of town centre buildings into housing units	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
TCR P8: Encourage the maintenance of original shop fronts, or the reinstatement of traditional shop fronts where poor replacements have been installed	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
TCR P9: Ensure new shop fronts have regard to existing shop fronts and complement the existing character	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
TCR 10: Prohibit internally illuminated fascias or projecting box signs. Concealed strip or flood lighting of fascias and traditional	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑

Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
hand painted signs lit by spotlight may be an acceptable alternative									
Opportunity Site 1: Maltings, Irishtown, Portlaoise Road Zoning: Residential 2	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
	↕	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↕	↑
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategically located on the Portlaoise Road entrance into the town with direct access onto National Secondary Route N80; • A 0.37ha. brownfield site formerly used as a grain mill; • Protected Structures on site; • Fully serviced site; • Extant permission for residential development of 37 no. apartments; • Outside of Flood Zones A and B; 									










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological survey including bat surveys may be required and results inform landscaping and design; • Opportunity to intensify development to provide a key landmark or gateway building to signify the approach and entrance to the town from Portlaoise to create a sense of arrival; • The building should address the extensive street frontage and be designed to an exceptional standard. 									
<p>Comment: Objectives cover a range of proposals which are broadly positive medium to long term, across all SEOs as they relate to town centre viability, public realm and walking and cycling. TCR 06 recommended for mitigation to enhance integration of blue and green infrastructure. Town centre promotion supports Geology and Soil SEOs, as well as PHH, Landscape and modal shift to pedestrian/cycling.</p> <p>Policies: Town centre viability and support for appropriate uses, and design features provide together for positive long term effects on PHH, Soil and Geology (through promoting reuse), Landscape/townscape, Cultural Heritage and material assets as well as indirectly promoting modal shifts away from car dependency. The policies are broadly positive and consistent with SEOs – mitigation measure recommended to provide for ecological considerations given scale, size of older building and potential bat roosts present.</p>									
<p>Key Infrastructure: To enable development in line with the capacity of supporting infrastructure and to require the timely provision of infrastructure needed for the planned development of lands.</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:</p>									










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
KI 01: Facilitate economic and social development through the provision of infrastructure and optimise the return of infrastructure investment	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI 02: Phase growth in line with the capacity of supporting infrastructure	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI 03: Facilitate Irish Water in the maintenance, expansion and upgrading of wastewater disposal and water supply infrastructure	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI 04: Ensure a good quality of life, through maintaining and improving waste water treatment and water supplies and to minimise the adverse impacts of development on the environment, through policies for the management of wastes and emissions	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI 05: Seek compliance with the standards and requirements of Irish Water in relation to water and wastewater infrastructure	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI 06: Maintain a development free buffer around the Mountmellick wastewater treatment plant of a minimum of 100 metres	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI 07: Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchments	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI 08: Require all new developments to include proposals for Sustainable Drainage Systems	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI 09: Maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of surface waters and groundwater in accordance with the South Eastern River Basin District River	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
Basin Management Plan /National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG) and associated Programme of Measures									
KI O10: Ensure developments will not adversely impact on the status of waterbodies in accordance with the Water Framework Directive and South Eastern River Basin District River Basin Management Plan; National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG)	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI O11: Facilitate, promote and encourage the expansion and improvement of telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas networks infrastructure subject to proper planning and sustainable development	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:									
KI P1: Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI P2: Work with Irish Water on developing and upgrading the water supply schemes so as to ensure an adequate, resilient, sustainable and economic supply of piped water	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI P3: Work with Irish Water on upgrading the wastewater treatment plant in line with the projected future growth of the settlement of Mountmellick	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI P4: Promote and support the implementation of Irish Water's Eastern and Midlands Region Water Supply Project	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
KI P5: Assess all applications in the context of available and sufficient public infrastructural facilities, the protection of Surface Water and Groundwater Resources and their associated habitats and species ¹²	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI P6: Promote public awareness and involvement in water conservation measures by households, businesses and industries and supports the implementation of Energy Efficiency solutions in Water and Waste Water Systems	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI P7: Promote and encourage the harvesting of rainwater to meet non-potable water needs	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
KI P8: Co-operate with and facilitate the work of national telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas network providers in the improvement, expansion and provision of energy and communication infrastructure subject to proper planning and sustainable development	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
<p>Comment: Broadly consistent for a range of SEOS, a number of objectives are recommended for additional mitigation measures to align with the current draft National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 as highlighted in the Scoping Submission by the EPA. Positive and consistent long term effects across all SEOs, final policy recommended for mitigation as well as KIP 5 on foot of EPA scoping submission.</p>									
<p>Transport and Movement: To promote and facilitate a sustainable transport system that prioritises and provides for walking, cycling and public transport facilities while ensuring sufficient traffic management.</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










¹² On foot of EPA Scoping submission










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:									
TM 01: Promote and encourage the development of Mountmellick to enhance its strategic location on the National and Regional road network	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TM 02: To cooperate with NTA and other relevant transport planning bodies in the delivery of a high quality, integrated transport system	↑	↑	○	○	↑	↑	○	○	↑
TM 03: Facilitate the economic and social development of the town through the provision and efficient use of transport infrastructure	○	↑	○	○	↑	↑	○	○	↑
TM 04: Cooperate and facilitate Bus Eireann and private operatives in the provision and frequency of public transport services, operation of services and facilities	○	↑	○	○	↑	↑	○	○	↑
TM 05: Encourage, promote and facilitate a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport in all new developments	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TM 06: Promote sustainable and compact forms of development which reduce reliance of private car based transport	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TM 07: Significantly reduce carbon emissions through interventions on the N80	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TM 08: Improve the pedestrian experience by reducing car dominance on the N80	○	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TM 09: Improve pedestrian links, based on desire lines, from Main to surrounding areas	○	↑	○	○	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:									
TM P1: Improve and provide pedestrian linkages, cycle networks and permeability including blueways and greenways throughout the town	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TM P2: Examine the feasibility of introducing clear, direct pedestrian routes between the Main Street and surrounding areas	O	↑	O	O	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TM P3: Provide adequate, secure and dry bicycle parking facilities at appropriate locations	O	↑	O	O	↑	↑	O	O	↑
TM P4: Ensure all footpaths provide access for disabled and mobility impaired persons	O	↑	O	O	↑	↑	O	↑	↑
TM P5: Facilitate and implement appropriate measures to reduce or manage traffic associated with schools to regularize vehicular movements and alleviate congestion	↑	↑	O	O	↑	↑	O	↑	↑
TM P6: Reserve all lands for future relief roads free of development in conjunction with the requirements of the Roads Authority	O	O	O	O	↑	O	O	O	O
TM P7: Provide for improvements to the national road network, including reserving corridors for proposed routes, free of development, so as not to compromise future road schemes	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
TM P8: Prevent inappropriate development on lands adjacent to the existing national road network, which would adversely affect the safety, current and future capacity and function of national roads and having regard to possible future upgrades of	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
the national roads and junctions									
TM P9: Ensure that any development permitted along national roads is in accordance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads–Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoECLG, 2012) or any updated version	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
TM P10: Facilitate a limited level of new accesses or the intensified use of existing accesses to the national road network on the approaches to or exit to Mountmellick that are subject to a speed limit zone between 50 kmh and 60 kmh otherwise known as the transition zone. Such accesses will be considered where they facilitate orderly urban development and would not result in a proliferation of such entrances, leading to a diminution in the role of these transitional zones. The Council will have regard to the nature of the proposed development and the volume of traffic to be generated by it and the implications for the safety, capacity and efficient operation of the national road. A Road Safety Audit, prepared in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (NRA, 2010), shall be submitted where appropriate	0	↑	0	0	↑	0	0	0	0
<p>Comment: Broadly positive and consistent with SEOS relating to PHH, MA, CC and Air Quality. Certain objectives such as the strategic aim and TM02 provide for integrated landuse and transport planning, identified as given rise to a wider range of long term, direct and indirect effects across all SEOs. Other objectives will contribute also to a higher quality public realm as well as improved air quality (TM 07 and TM 08); this in turn positive effects Landscape and Cultural heritage SEOs. Increasing modal shift (TM 06) indirectly contributes to noise and air quality emissions reductions; positive effects for these SEOs also identified.</p> <p>Positive effects identified for all SEOs relating to TMP01 and TMP 02 in particular. Other measures such as bicycle spaces, and addressing school congestion will indirectly reduce emissions associated with traffic, with positive long term effects relating to climate change and air quality and noise.</p>									










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
<p>Examples of existing mitigation measures in the CDP 2017-2023 include the following: TRANS6 Ensure that all proposed plans or projects relating to transportation (including walking, cycling, rail, bus and roads) and any associated improvement works, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, are subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening to ensure there are no likely significant effects on the integrity (defined by the structure and function) of any Natura 2000 site(s) and that the requirements of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive are fully satisfied. Where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, or there is uncertainty with regard to effects, it shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment. The plan or project will proceed only after it has been ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site or where in the absence of alternative solutions, the project is deemed imperative for reasons of overriding public interest, all in accordance with the provisions of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive. It is assessed that for several of the SEOS above, sufficient and appropriate mitigation measures through development management and design measures exist to address potential adverse effects relating to policies such as reservation of lands –TMP 7-which as is proposed relates to reservation of lands only, and not landuse activities.</p>									
<p>Housing: To deliver new residential development, to support the existing community infrastructure, recreation and amenity facilities and provide new facilities in tandem with new housing.</p>	↕	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Objectives: It is an objective of the Council to:</p>									
<p>H O1: Ensure that sufficient zoned land is available at appropriate locations to cater for the envisaged population growth of the Core Strategy</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>H O2: Promote and encourage the development of the critical mass of Mountmellick and to enhance its strategic location on</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
the National and Regional road network									
H 03: Facilitate the provision of housing in a range of locations to meet the needs of the population, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to housing to suit different household and tenure needs, in a sustainable manner	0	↑	0	0	↑	0	0	0	0
H 04: To ensure compliance with the provisions of Part V of the Act (as amended) and to integrate such housing so as to prevent social segregation within residential developments	0	↑	0	0	↑	0	0	0	0
H 05: To utilise the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (Vacant Site Levy) to facilitate the appropriate development of vacant sites (residential zoned) that are in need of renewal or regeneration	↑	↑	0	↑	↑	0	↑	↑	↑
H 06: To encourage the sequential development of sustainable serviced residentially zoned lands in a sustainable manner subject to compliance with relevant Department Guidelines and Development Management Standards of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 - 2023;	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
H 07: To promote a higher density at appropriate locations, particularly close to the town centre and public transport facilities	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
H 08: To encourage appropriate housing development on infill and brownfield sites subject to preservation of existing residential amenity, the provision of a high quality design respecting the established character, density and layout, compliance with all traffic safety, quantitative and qualitative standards of the Laois County Development	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
H 09: To promote the reoccupation of vacant residential stock	0	↑	0	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	0










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
within Mountmellick Town Centre, including ‘Living Above the Shop’ units									
H O10: To ensure an appropriate and sustainable mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures to cater for all members of society, including homeless persons, the elderly, disabled and travellers	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
H O11: To ensure provision of lifetime adaptable homes that can accommodate the changing needs of a household over time	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
H O12: To identify, acquire and provide suitable sites, accommodation and facilities for the housing and resettlement of travelling families	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
H O13: To secure the provision of social infrastructure, community and recreational facilities in tandem with residential development	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:									
H P1: Ensure that sufficient zoned land is available at appropriate locations to cater for the envisaged population growth of the Core Strategy	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
H P2: Require all new residential developments to be consistent with the Core Strategy of the Laois County Development Plan 2107-2023 and the settlement strategy of this plan	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
H P3: Promote and encourage the development of Mountmellick and to enhance its strategic location on the National and Regional road and rail network	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
H P4: Facilitate the provision of housing in a range of locations	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
to meet the needs of the population, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to housing to suit different household and tenure needs, in a sustainable manner									
<p>H P5: To require the creation of sustainable communities and high quality residential areas at appropriate locations with a mix tenure and adequate amenities and facilities and to meet the standards and guidance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Residential Development In Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHG (2009); • Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2015); • The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, DTTS and DECLG (2013); • The development management standards of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023; • Technical Guidance Document L – Conservation of Fuel and Energy – Dwellings. 	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Comment: Objectives such as H06 and H009 are positive for a range of SEOs as they promote sequential development, and reinforce town centre development and land use; reuse of existing buildings; this in turn reduces car based travel requirements and longer term positive effects related to higher density development in serviced town centres, with accompanying benefits for climate change, air quality and noise, reuse of existing buildings contributes to cultural heritage and enhanced streetscapes. Others such as H005 promote use of vacant sites; these policies contribute to more efficient use of material assets through higher density development –with indirect long term positive effects on MA and W SEOs.</p> <p>Policies: Positive effects across SEOS relating to housing provision and variety due to adherence to Core Strategy, Opportunity Sites and Town Centre promotion incentives, allocation of residential zoning lands, service led infrastructure and national guidance and guidelines.</p>									










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
<p>Community Services & Culture: To deliver, facilitate and support the provision of a broad range of high quality community, educational and cultural facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of the population</p>	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:									
<p>CSC O1: Facilitate the provision of social infrastructure and to provide access to new and existing community and social facilities</p>	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<p>CSC O2: Facilitate the improvement and provision of community facilities, library and emergency services in appropriate locations</p>	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<p>CSC O3: Facilitate the improvement and provision of educational, childcare and healthcare facilities in appropriate and accessible locations</p>	0	↑	0	0	0	↑	0	0	0
<p>CSC O4: Facilitate implementation of the Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2016-2021</p>	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<p>CSC O5: Promote the amenities and ensure the accessibility of arts and cultural facilities within the ownership of Laois County Council</p>	0	↑	0	0	0	0	↑	0	0
<p>CSC O6: Facilitate the roll out of community policing and neighbourhood watch schemes</p>	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:									










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
CSC P1: Ensure provision of sufficient zoned lands to allow for expansion of existing and provision of community facilities	0	↑	0	0	↑	0	0	0	0
CSC P2: Facilitate the development of and expansion of services, amenities and facilities to cater for all society members, ages and community groups	0	↑	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CSC P3: Facilitate the development of primary, second-level, third-level outreach, vocational and lifelong learning facilities and digital capacity for distance learning including fourth level education, lifelong learning and up-skilling	0	↑	0	↑	0	0	0	0	↑
CSC P4: Ensure the provision and implementation of primary and secondary education facilities in concert with the planning and sustainable development of residential areas in order to maximise the opportunities for use of walking, cycling and public transport	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Comment: Positive effects for PHH SEOs in particular; indirect positive effects can be identified for objectives around community policing in relation to sense of place and potential antisocial behaviour, littering etc. Where facilities are provided within walking distance of communities, increased opportunities for modal shift away from car based journeys therefore indirect, positive long term effects for Material Assets and climate change. Policies: CSP P1 promotes integrated landuse and planning which creates positive, long term effects and consistency with a range of SEOs including PHH, and MA. CSC P4 also positive as it supports integrating educational facilities and opportunities for sustainable transport options longer term indirect positive effects across a number of SEO relating to this provision.</p>									
Built Heritage: To protect, conserve and manage the built heritage of the town	0	↑	0	↑	0	0	↑	↑	0










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
and to encourage sensitive and sustainable development to ensure its preservation for future generations									
Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:									
BH O1: Protect, conserve and enhance the built environment, through promoting awareness, utilising relevant heritage legislation and promoting good quality urban design	O	↑	O	↑	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH O2: Conserve, protect and enhance the built heritage of Mountmellick, including the proposed Architectural Conservation Area, all Protected Structures and attendant grounds, Recorded Monuments and Places in accordance with best conservation practice	O	↑	O	↑	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH O3: Positively consider proposals to improve, alter, extend or change the use of protected structures so as to render them viable for modern use, subject to consultation with suitably qualified Conservation Architects and / or other relevant experts, suitable design, materials and construction methods	O	↑	O	↑	O	↑	↑	↑	↑
BH O4: Ensure all development works on or at the sites of protected structures, including any site works necessary, shall be carried out using best heritage practice for the protection and preservation of those aspects or features of the structures / site that render it worthy of protection	O	↑	O	↑	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH O5: Support the re-introduction of traditional features on protected structures where there is evidence that such features (e.g. window styles, finishes etc.) previously existed	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
BH O6: Strongly resist the demolition of protected structures, unless it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH O7: Consider the change of use of protected structures, provided that it can be shown that the structure, character, appearance and setting will not be adversely affected or where it can be shown it is necessary to have an economic use to enable its upkeep	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH O8: Ensure the protection within the traditional town centre, of all those buildings, spaces, archaeological sites, trees, street furniture, views and other aspects of the environment which form an essential part of their character, as set out in their character appraisals	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH O9: Ensure the design of any development in the traditional town centre, including any changes of use of an existing building, should preserve and / or enhance the character and appearance of the Architectural Conservation Area as a whole	O	↑	O	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
BH O10: Promote schemes for the conservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the traditional town centre	O	↑	O	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
BH O11: No development in the vicinity of a feature included in the Record of Monuments & Places (RMP) will be permitted which seriously detracts from the setting of the feature or which is seriously injurious to its cultural or educational value	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH O12: Ensure archaeological assessment is carried out as required and promote ‘preservation in situ’ of archaeological remains and settings in developments that would impact upon	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
archaeological sites and/or features									
BH O13: Protect previously unknown archaeological sites and features, including underwater sites, where they are discovered during development works	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH O14: Facilitate public access to National Monuments in State or Local Authority care	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:									
BH P1: Ensure heritage assets that are the focus for tourism development are appropriately managed and their special interest conserved from potential adverse effects from visitors or development in general and that best practice standards in relation for the environmental management of tourism enterprises are adhered to	O	↑	O	↑	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH P2: Support and promote, with the co-operation of landowners, public access to heritage sites and features at appropriate locations whilst ensuring heritage related development does not result in negative impacts on the fabric or setting of Laois’s heritage assets	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH P3: Support the implementation of Ireland’s Ancient East by facilitating the provision of visitor information– in line with the policies and objectives with respect to heritage sites, and integrating the objectives of Ireland’s Ancient East with transport programmes in the County	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑
BH P4: Encourage and support the provision of foreign language	O	↑	O	O	O	O	↑	↑	↑










Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
interpretation interventions in order to ensure the appropriate interpretation and appreciation of the county’s heritage asset.									
<p>Comment: The objectives above are positive for PHH, Cultural Heritage and landscape in particular. In addition, they complement the promotion and support of the town centre by encouraging reuse of existing buildings and the fabric of the streetscape; indirect positive effects relating to soil and geology (reuse rather than new build) and Climate change (reuse above new build), making the town centre attractive through enhancing access and existing heritage can indirectly enhance greater residential and economic activity within the town centre. As above, these policies are broadly positive for PHH, CH and Landscape SEOs in particular.</p>									
<p>Natural Heritage: To protect, enhance, create and connect natural heritage, green spaces and high quality amenity areas throughout Mountmellick for biodiversity and recreation</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Objectives: It is the Objective of the Council to:</p>									
<p>NH O1: Identify, protect and conserve natural heritage sites, nationally designated conservation sites and non designated sites in co-operation and consultation with the relevant statutory authorities</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>NH O2: Seek integration of all elements of existing green infrastructure into new developments, prevent fragmentation and mitigate potential impacts on the existing green infrastructure network</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>NH O3: Require the preservation and maintenance of suitable</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑

Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
mature trees, hedgerows and natural heritage features in new developments									
NH O4: Seek to preserve, protect and maintain trees of special amenity, conservation or landscape value	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH O5: Carry out and require the planting of native trees, hedgerows and vegetation in all new developments	⇅	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH O6: Open up visual and physical access via the River Owenass as a as a continuous pedestrian and cycle link through the town centre, having regard to ecological considerations including protected species and habitats	⇅	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH O7: Identify, protect, conserve and enhance wherever possible, wildlife habitats, stepping stones, corridors and features	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH O8: Provide recreational amenities such as playgrounds and outdoor gym equipment within existing areas of open space	O⇅	↑	↑	↑⇅	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH O9: Protect environmental quality and implement site appropriate mitigation measures with respect to air quality, greenhouse gases, climate change, light pollution, noise pollution and waste management	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH O11: Maintain riverbank vegetation along watercourses and ensure protection of a 30 to 50m riparian buffer zone on Greenfield sites and maintain free from development	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH O12: Facilitate the work of agencies redressing the issue of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Policies: It is a Policy of the Council to:									

Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
NH P1: Ensure heritage assets that are the focus for tourism development are appropriately managed and their special interest conserved from potential adverse effects from visitors or development in general and that best practice standards in relation for the environmental management of tourism enterprises are adhered to	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH P2: Develop a greenway/blueway walking and cycling route along the River Owenass having regard to ecological considerations including protected species and habitats	↕	↑	↕	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH P3: Support and promote, with the co-operation of landowners, public access to heritage sites and features at appropriate locations whilst ensuring heritage related development does not result in negative impacts on the fabric or setting of the town’s heritage assets	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
NH P3: Support the implementation of Ireland’s Ancient East by facilitating the provision of visitor information in line with the policies and objectives with respect to heritage sites; and integrating the objectives of Ireland’s Ancient East with transport programmes in the County.	0	↑	0	0	0	0	↑	0	0
<p>Comment: Overall positive effects for SEOS identified relating to natural heritage and also multifunctional aspects of ecological enhancement including landscape. Health and air quality.</p> <p>Mitigation measures recommended for NH05, NH06 and NH09 to further strengthen and enhance natural heritage considerations.</p> <p>Regarding the Natural Heritage Policies - Broadly positive effects across a range of SEOs as these policies support and promote natural heritage with direct and indirect longer term positive effects across all SEOs. Mitigation measure recommended for NH P2 to ensure likely significant effects on River Barrow and Nore SAC are avoided.</p>									

Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
<p>Flood Management: To develop and improve flood alleviation measures throughout the town and rural hinterland so as to complement the overall strategy for economic and population growth and to achieve improved physical and environmental protection.</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Objectives: It is an Objective of the Council to:</p>									
<p>FM O1: Manage flood risk in accordance with the requirements of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG and OPW (2009) and Circular PL02/2014 (August 2014)</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>FM O2: Support and co-operate with the OPW in delivering the South Eastern CFRAM Programme</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>FM O3: To carry out a programme of infrastructure and flood defence works in conjunction with the OPW to alleviate flooding in the town and hinterland</p>	↕	↑	↕	↕	↑	↑	↑	↕	↑
<p>Policies: It is the Policy of the Council to:</p>									
<p>FM O1: In conjunction with the OPW implement a program of flood defence works for the town</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>FM O2: Ensure development proposals within the areas outlined on Flood Risk Map are the subject of Site-Specific Flood</p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑

Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
Risk Assessment as outlined in “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines” 2009									
FM 03: Ensure development proposals within the areas outlined on Flood Risk Map are the subject of Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment as outlined in “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines” 2009	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
FM 04: Ensure all development on lands identified as being at risk of flooding must demonstrate, through the carrying out of a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment flood impact assessment and the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, that any flood risk can be adequately managed and the use or development of the lands will not cause unacceptable adverse impacts elsewhere	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
FM 05: Co-operate with the OPW in relation to the development of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment (CFRAM) South Eastern River Basin and for the River Triogue and its tributaries in particular and to comply with any guidance and recommendations of this flood risk management plan	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
FM 06: Incorporate the recommendations of the South Eastern CFRAM into any site specific flood risk assessment undertaken for individual sites/areas	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
FM 07: Provide an appropriate set back from the edge of the watercourse and proposed developments to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
FM 08: Adhere to the requirements of the Inland Fisheries and National Parks and Wildlife Service in the construction of any	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑

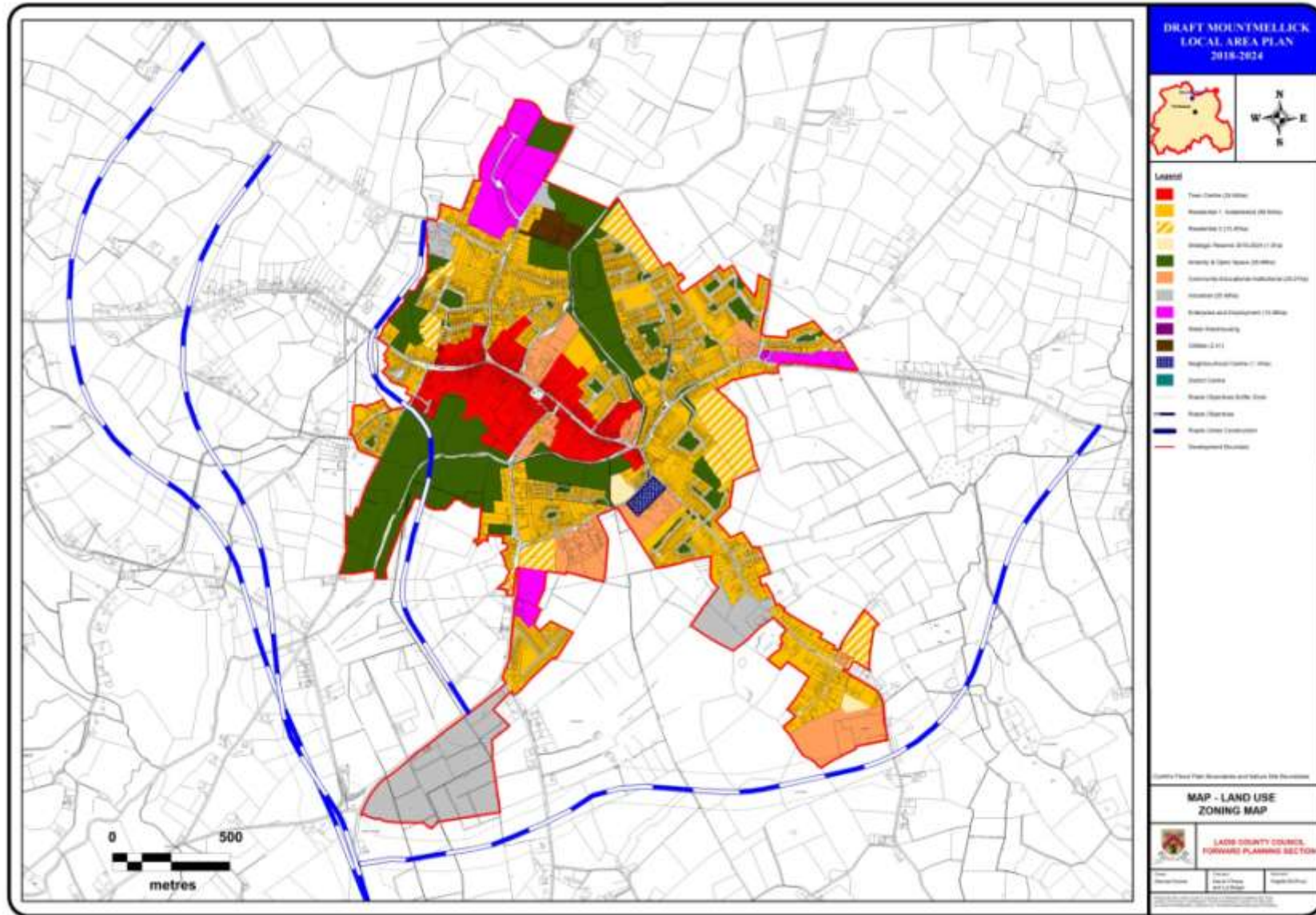
Mountmellick LAP Policies and Objectives									
flood alleviation measures									
FM 09: Comply with relevant provisions of the Arterial Drainage Action, 1945 and the Arterial Drainage (Amendment) Act 1995	↕	↑	↕	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
FM 10: Ensure protection of Natura 2000 sites supporting rivers and streams by avoiding development on flood plains and ensure flood risk assessment policies, plans or projects are compliant with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and avoid or mitigate negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Comment: Application of guidelines is consistent with SEOS and avoids potential adverse effects arising from in appropriate development and landuse activities.</p> <p>FM 07 in particular and FM06 are positive and provide for input and recommendations from statutory bodies such as NPWS to be fully applied in flood risk management which is a very important consideration.</p>									

Landuse Zoning Assessment










The Table below presents the landuse zonings and amount of lands zoned










Table 11: Landuse Zonings and Amounts










Landuse Zoning	Amount
Town Centre	24.64
Residential R1 –Established	90.64
Residential 2	15.45
Strategic Reserve 2018-2024	1.5
Amenity and Open Space	55.89
Community-Educational-Institutional	20.27
Industrial	25.48
Enterprise and Employment	15.56
Utilities	2.41
Neighbourhood centre	1.14



Assessment Matrix

Land Use Zoning									
<p>Town Centre (Primary / Core Retail Area) Tier 1 lands Objective: <i>To protect and enhance the special physical and social character of the existing Town Centre and to provide for and improve retailing and commercial activities.</i></p>	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Comment: Positive and consistent with all SEOs, reflects national policy, core strategy and promotes consolidation of town centre. Subject to adherence and implementation of relevant polices and measures including NH01, FM07 and FM08 positive long term impacts are identified in particular for population and human health, material assets, Landscape, Cultural Heritage and Soil and Geology SEOs. Based on a review of aerial photography, some of the backlands associated with the town centre, support scrub/mature treelines and policies such as NH03, NH04 and FM10 would apply. This is important as the most easterly of this zoning are backlands/gardens that adjoin the Owenasss River.</p>									
<p>Residential 1 Existing Residential Objective: <i>To protect and improve the amenity of developed residential communities.</i></p>	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<p>Comment: Confirms existing land use</p>									
<p>Residential 2 – New Proposed Residential Objective: <i>To provide for new residential development, residential services and community facilities.</i></p>	↕	↑	↕	↕	↑	↕	↕	↕	

Land Use Zoning									
<p>Comment: Most of the impacts identified for residential development zones are identified as being mitigated at project level through development management. Positive impacts were identified for population and human health, plus a number of material assets such as flood risk and sustainable transport. Seven areas are identified for this land use zoning, and all are adjacent to existing residential development. The largest of these is land is the eastern plan area and a review of aerial photography shows the lands characterised by 2 large tillage fields and with hedgerows. Another area in the north east of the plan area is adjacent to the River Owenass, so key policies and objectives relating to Natural heritage and Flood management would apply.</p>									
<p>Strategic Residential Reserve Objective: <i>To provide lands for future development in line with national and regional targets.</i></p>	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	
<p>Comment: Confirms existing land use</p>									
<p>Open Space & Amenity Objective: <i>To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational open space.</i></p>	↕↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<p>Comment: Generally, impacts are positive for a range of parameters including soil and geology, population and human health, flood risk, water quality and landscape. The opportunity to enhance these areas through public realm improvements and/or green and blue infrastructure measures contributes positively longer term to biodiversity, water and climate change adaptation SEOs also. A considerable extent of the open space zoning in the southwest plan area relates to flood zones and is characterised by agricultural farmland and hedgerows.</p>									
<p>Community, Educational & Institutional Services/Facilities Objective: <i>To protect and provide for local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities.</i></p>	↕	↑	↑	↕	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑

Land Use Zoning									
<p>Comment: Again on undeveloped lands, negative impacts are identified for biodiversity and soil due to development on greenfield sites, but for many SEOs these can be mitigated through development management and relevant policies and objectives in the draft Plan. Positive impacts are identified for population and human health, transport and air quality for these zonings In all cases the areas zoned under this land use confirm existing land use (eg: educational, or the cemetery) and zone land adjacent to these existing landuses.</p>									
<p>Industrial & Warehousing Objective: <i>To provide for and improve industrial and warehousing development.</i></p>	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
<p>Comment: A large area is zoned in the southwest of the plan area, currently characterized by agricultural grassland, with drainage ditches, hedgerows and dispersed farm houses; these lands are adjacent to the N80. The range of impacts will vary according to the potential use; however for most of the SEOs, the impacts are considered to be addressed through mitigation at development management level.</p>									
<p>Enterprise & Employment Objective: <i>To provide for enterprise and employment activities</i></p>	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
<p>Comment: Partly confirms existing landuse, the area in the northwest of the plan area extends this landuse zoning; as this area lies between the River Owenass to the east and River Barrow to the north, application of appropriate mitigation measures are required. For example FM 10, NH 011 and NH 09. Subject to implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, no significant adverse effects are identified for this zoning.</p>									
<p>Transport & Utilities Objective: <i>To provide for the needs of all transport users and other utility providers.</i></p>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<p>Comment: Confirms existing landuse, this relates to the wastewater treatment plant for the town.</p>									

Appendix B: Review of Plans, Policies and Programmes

Title	Summary
Sustainable Development	
EU Environmental Action Programme to 2020	<p>The 7th EU Environmental Action Programme is more strategic in nature and identifies three main areas to guide EU environmental policy and research. The three thematic priority objectives are intended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect nature and strengthen ecological resilience • Boost sustainable resource-efficient low-carbon growth, and • Effectively address environment-related threats to health.
Environmental Assessment	
SEA Directive - Assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment, (2001/42/EC) 2001	This Directive requires plan-makers to carry out an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before the plan or programme is adopted.
Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC)	The EIA Directive (85/337/EEC) came into force in 1985 and applies to a wide range of defined public and private projects, which are defined in Annexes I and II of the Directive. This has been amended with Directive 2011/92/EU and the 2014 Directive (see below).
Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2014/52/EC)	It is necessary to amend Directive 2011/92/EU in order to strengthen the quality of the environmental impact assessment procedure, align that procedure with the principles of smart regulation and enhance coherence and synergies with other Union legislation and policies, as well as strategies and policies developed by Member States in areas of national competence. The Directive now applies from May 2017.

Title	Summary
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	
UN Convention of Biological Diversity, 1992	<p>The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) entered into force in December 1993. It has 3 main objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The conservation of biological diversity. 2. The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity. 3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.
The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (The Ramsar Convention) 1971 and subsequent amendments	<p>Protection and conservation of wetlands and habitats of importance to waterfowl</p>
EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020	<p>In 2011 the European Commission adopted a new strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020. There are six main targets, and 20 actions to help Europe reach its goal. The six targets cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full implementation of EU nature legislation to protect biodiversity. • Better protection for ecosystems, and more use of green infrastructure. • More sustainable agriculture and forestry. • Better management of fish stocks. • Tighter controls on invasive alien species. • A bigger EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.
EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, (2009/147/EC) 1979. Known as the Birds Directive	<p>This Directive ensures far-reaching protection for all of Europe's wild birds, identifying 194 species and sub-species among them as particularly threatened and in need of special conservation measures. Member States are required to designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for 194 particularly threatened species and all migratory bird species. SPAs are scientifically identified areas</p>

Title	Summary
	critical for the survival of the targeted species, such as wetlands. They are part of the Natura 2000 ecological network established under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
<p>EU Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna, (92/43/EEC), 1992 known as the Habitats Directive</p>	<p>The main goal of the Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain, protect or restore natural habitats, animal and plant species to a favourable conservation status, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance. For Ireland, these habitats include raised bogs, active blanket bogs, turloughs, sand dunes, machair (flat sandy plains on the north and west coasts), heaths, lakes, rivers, woodlands, estuaries and sea inlets. The Directive provides for a network of protected sites known as The Natura 2000 network, which limits the extent and nature of development which may have a detrimental effect on the flora or fauna identified therein.</p>
<p>European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011</p>	<p>These regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats)(Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in the CJEU judgements. Articles 6(1) and (2) of the Regulations require Member States to take appropriate conservation measures to maintain and restore habitats and species, for which a site has been designated, to a favourable conservation status. Furthermore the Regulations require Member States to avoid damaging activities that could significantly disturb these species or deteriorate the habitats of the protected species or habitat types. Under these regulations any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall undergo an Appropriate Assessment to determine its implications for the site. The competent authorities can only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned. In exceptional circumstances, a plan or project may still be allowed to go ahead, in spite of a negative assessment, provided there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project is considered to be of overriding public interest.</p>

Title	Summary
Green Infrastructure Strategy	The European Commission in May 2013 adopted a Green Infrastructure Strategy, ' <i>to promote the deployment of green infrastructure in the EU in urban and rural areas</i> '. This is a key step in implementing the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and specifically Target 2 that requires that 'by 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems'. Green Infrastructure (GI) is contributing to all other targets of the EU Biodiversity strategy – in particular the full implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directive (target 1) – and to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the wider countryside and the marine environment (targets 3 and 4).
Population and Human Health	
The Stockholm Convention	The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from chemicals that remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically, accumulate in the fatty tissue of humans and wildlife, and have adverse effects to human health or to the environment.
Several environmental parameters interact and impact on human health including water quality, infrastructure, air quality, soil, cultural heritage and landscape; the plans, policies and programmes associated with these are presented under thematic headings as appropriate.	
Geology and Soil	
EU Soil Thematic Strategy	In September 2006, the European Commission published the final Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection (COM(2006)231 final) and a proposal for a Directive establishing a framework for the protection of soil across the EU (COM(2006)232). The objective of the strategy is to protect and ensure the sustainable use of soil, based on the guiding principles of preserving soil functions, preventing further degradation and restoring degraded soils to a level of functionality consistent with current and intended use. Once adopted the European Soil Thematic Strategy will guide and frame Ireland’s approach to developing its own soil protection strategy.

Title	Summary
Water Resources	
Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) as amended	<p>The Water Framework Directive (WFD) was adopted in 2000 in an effort to establish a framework for the protection of waterbodies within the EU including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inland surface waters; groundwater; transitional waters; and coastal waters. <p>The key aims of the WFD are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expanding the scope of water protection to all waters, surface waters and groundwater; • achieving "good status" for all waters by a set deadline • water management based on river basins; • "combined approach" of emission limit values and quality standards. • getting the prices right; • getting the citizen involved more closely, and • streamlining legislation. <p>Its ultimate objective is to achieve “good ecological and chemical status” for all Community waters by 2015.</p>
Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	<p>The Directive aims to establish a common framework for assessing and reducing the risk that floods within the European Union pose to human health, the environment, property and economic activity.</p>
The Drinking Water Directive (DWD), (98/83/EC) 1998	<p>This Directive is intended to protect human health by laying down healthiness and purity requirements which must be met by drinking water within the Community.</p>
Groundwater Directive, (2006/118/EC) 2006	<p>This directive establishes a regime which sets underground water quality standards and introduces measures to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater.</p>
EC Bathing Water Quality Directive, (2006/7/EC) 2006	<p>This Directive strengthens the rules guaranteeing bathing water quality It supplements Directive 2000/60/EC on water protection and management. Each year, the Member States are required to identify the bathing waters in their territory and define the length of the bathing season. They shall</p>

Title	Summary
	establish monitoring at the location most used by bathers or where the risk of pollution is greatest.
Climate and Air Quality	
Kyoto Protocol	The Protocol was initially adopted on 11 December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, and entered into force on 16 February 2005. To date 191 states have signed and ratified the protocol. Following the Conference of Parties to the Climate Change Convention (COP) meeting in Copenhagen 2009, the EU revised its commitment to reducing greenhouse gases by increasing the target to 20% reduction on 1990 levels by 2020.
The Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive	The EU objective in relation to air quality is ‘to achieve levels of air quality that do not result in unacceptable impacts on, and risks to, human health and the environment’.
Material Assets	
EU Directive on Waste, (2006/12/EC), 2006	This Directive requires EU States to publish waste management plans. It requires a system of permits and registrations to be put in place to authorise all waste management infrastructure, as well as setting down the basic requirements that need to be satisfied for these statutory authorisations to be issued.
EU Directive on Waste (2008/98/EC), 2008	<p>This Directive establishes a legal framework for the treatment of waste within the Community. It aims at protecting the environment and human health through the prevention of the harmful effects of waste generation and waste management.</p> <p>The Directive requires Member States to take measures for the treatment of their waste in line with the following hierarchy which is listed in order of priority:· prevention;· preparing for reuse;· recycling;· other recovery, notably energy recovery and disposal.</p>
EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC), 1991	The aim of the Urban Waste Water Directive is to protect inland surface waters from the adverse effects of discharges of urban wastewater and discharge of certain biodegradable industrial waste water (particularly from the agro-food industry).
Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from	Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources establishes the basis for the achievement of the EU’s 20% renewable energy target by 2020. Under the terms of the

Title	Summary
renewable sources	Directive, each Member State is set an individually binding renewable energy target, which will contribute to the achievement of the overall EU goal. Each Member State is required to adopt a national renewable energy action plan.
Cultural Heritage Archaeology and Built Heritage	
The World Heritage Convention	<p>The World Heritage Convention was adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in November 1972. The World Heritage Convention aims to promote cooperation among nations to protect heritage around the world that is of such outstanding universal value that its conservation is important for current and future generations.</p> <p>The following sites are on the tentative list for World Heritage Site Designation in the county: Inis Cealtra and the Burren.</p>
European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1992 (The Valletta Convention)	This Convention was ratified by Ireland in 1997 and as such the Planning Authority is legally bound by it. The aim of the Convention is to ‘protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study’. It requires that appropriate consideration be given to archaeological issues at all stages of the planning and development process.
Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, 1985 (Granada Convention)	Ratified by Ireland in 1997, the 1985 Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe is intended to reinforce and promote policies for the conservation and enhancement of Europe’s heritage. The Convention is dual purpose, involving the promotion of architectural heritage policies while fostering European-wide co-operation measures. Covering monuments, groups of buildings and sites of importance, the Convention requires a national inventory of architectural heritage to be developed. Legal protection measures must be established, with a system of formal authorisation required for works affecting protected sites and structures. Architectural heritage conservation considerations are required to feature in the Convention signatories’ town and Regional planning processes.

Title	Summary
Landscape	
The European Landscape Convention 2000	The 2000 European Landscape Convention, adopted in Florence (and was ratified by Ireland in 2002), requires a commitment to introduce policies on landscape protection and management. It promotes the protection, management and planning of EU landscapes as a response to European-wide concerns that the quality and diversity of landscapes were deteriorating. The underlying purpose of the Convention is to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, Regional, National and International level to protect and manage landscapes throughout Europe.
Other relevant conventions, plans, policies and programmes	
The Aarhus Convention	The Aarhus Convention establishes a number of rights of the public (individuals and their associations) with regard to the environment. The Parties to the Convention are required to make the necessary provisions so that public authorities (at national, regional or local level) will contribute to these rights to become effective.
Environmental Liability Directive 2004/35/EC	<p>The overall objective of the Directive and the Regulations is to prevent and remedy environmental damage by holding operators whose activities have caused environmental damage financially liable for remedying the damage. The Environmental Liability Regulations 2008 define environmental damage under three categories:</p> <p>Damage to natural habitats and protected species - any damage that has significant adverse effects on reaching or maintaining the favourable conservation status of European designated habitats or species (i.e. those covered by the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)).</p> <p>Water damage - damage which significantly adversely affects the ecological, chemical and/or quantitative status and/or ecological potential of waters covered in the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).</p> <p>Land damage - any contamination that creates a significant risk of human health being adversely affected as a result of the direct or indirect introduction in or under the land of substances, preparations, organisms or micro-organisms.</p>

Title	Summary
Sustainable Development	
Our Sustainable Future A framework for sustainable development in Ireland	Our Sustainable Future timeframe is to 2020 to tie in with other national and international frameworks, but a longer-term horizon to 2050 is also taken where appropriate, to provide a framework for guiding and reporting on long-term broad development trends such as on climate change.
The National Spatial Strategy 2002 - 2020	The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020 is the national strategic planning framework to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective planning. It recognises that regions of the country have different roles and seeks to organise and coordinate these roles in a complementary way making all regions more competitive according to their strengths. It seeks also to promote a high quality urban environment, as well as vibrant rural areas. A review of same was announced in 2012 but the current NSS remains in place for now.
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	
Actions for Biodiversity 2011 – 2016, Ireland’s 2nd National Biodiversity Plan	The National Biodiversity Plan is intended to play a central part in Ireland’s efforts to halt biodiversity loss and was developed as in line with the EU and International Biodiversity strategies and policies. It sets out the strategic objectives of the government in relation to biodiversity.
Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000	The Wildlife Act is Ireland’s primary national legislation for the protection of wildlife. It covers a broad range of issues, from the designation of nature reserves, the protection of species, regulation of hunting and controls in wildlife trading. It is implemented by a series of regulations. The Act provides strict protection for nearly all birds, 22 other animal species, and 86 plant species. These species are protected from injury, or from disturbance / damage to their breeding or resting place wherever these occur. The 2000 Act was amended in 2010.
National Heritage Plan (2002)	The Department of Arts Heritage Gaeltacht and the Islands published the National Heritage Plan in April 2002. The plan sets out a vision for the management of the heritage of Ireland. A key element of the process of formulating the National Heritage Plan is the requirement to prepare Local Heritage Plans at County and City level.

Title	Summary
Population and Human Health	
Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns & Villages) (2009)	The aim of these guidelines is to set out the key planning principles which should be reflected in development plans and local area plans, and which should guide the preparation and assessment of planning applications for residential development in urban areas.
Geology and Soil	
Geological Heritage Sites Designation (under the Wildlife Amendment Act 2000)	The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 provides for designation of Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) which will include geological sites. Until actually designated, there is no real protection for any important sites identified by GSI and recommended for NHA status. However, a number of geological features are protected because they are the underlying reason for a biological or ecological site protected as a National Nature Reserve, National Park or as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). In addition many local authorities have scheduled County Geological Sites within their County Development Plans.
Water Resources	
Eastern River Basin District Management Plan (2010)	The key objectives of the Water Framework Directive for the Eastern River Basin District (IRBD) are aimed at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining "high status" of waters where it exists; • Preventing any deterioration in the existing status of waters and; • Achieving at least "good status" in relation to all waters by 2015. The Management Plan presents a series of measures to achieve these.
Water Services Act (2007)	The Act sets down a comprehensive modern legislative code governing functions, standards, obligations and practice in relation to the planning, management, and delivery of water supply and waste water collection and treatment services. The Act focuses on management of water "in the pipe", as distinct from broader water resources issues such as river water quality, etc.
Water Services (Amendment) Act (2012)	The 2012 Act amends the 2007 Water Services Act in order to comply with a European Court of Justice ruling against Ireland in October 2009. The Court found that Ireland had failed to fulfil its obligations under the Waste Directive (75/442/EEC) regarding domestic waste waters disposed of through septic tanks and other individual waste water treatment systems. The new Part 4A requires each water

Title	Summary
	services authority to establish and maintain a register of domestic waste water treatment systems situated within their functional area.
Irish Water Services Strategic Plan SEA and AA	The 25 year plan for strategic delivery of water services is currently being prepared and the SEA Scoping report was issued for consultation with a deadline in September 2014.
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (and Technical Appendices) for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, OPW), 2009	<p>In relation to planning at the County level the guidelines require planning authorities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce flood risk assessment as an integral and leading element of their development planning functions at the earliest practicable opportunity; • Align strategic flood risk assessment (SFRA) with the SEA process; • Establish flood risk assessment requirements as part of the preparation of the County Development Plan; • Assess planning applications against the guidance set out in the Guidelines; • Ensure development is not permitted in areas of flood risk except where there are no suitable alternative sites.
Climate and Air Quality	
National Climate Change Strategy (2007-2012)	The National Climate Change Strategy 2007 - 2012 sets out a range of measures, building on those already in place under the first National Climate Change Strategy (2000) to ensure Ireland reaches its target under the Kyoto Protocol. The Strategy provides a framework for action to reduce Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions.
Review of Ireland’s climate change policy and Climate Action and Low Carbon Bill 2013	The National Economic and Social Council submitted a review of Ireland’s climate change policy to the Minister of Environment in late 2012. The review includes the development of potential policies and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture, transport, heat in buildings and renewable energy supply and a basis for a national transition to a low-carbon future by 2050.
Material Assets	
Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020	Smarter Travel is the transport policy for Ireland that sets out how the vision of a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved.

Title	Summary
Cultural Heritage Archaeology and Built Heritage	
National Monuments Act 1930 with subsequent amendments	This is the primary legal protection to archaeology in Ireland and has been amended a number of times, most recently 2004.
Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)	The 2004 guidelines were reissued in 2011 following the transfer of architectural heritage protection functions to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Part IV of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2011 sets out the legislative provisions for the protection and conservation of our architectural heritage.
National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)	The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is a state initiative under the administration of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The purpose of the NIAH is to identify, record, and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland, uniformly and consistently as an aid in the protection and conservation of the built heritage. NIAH surveys provide the basis for the recommendations of the Minister to the planning authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures (RPS).
Landscape	
A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland –2015	The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has issued A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland which sets out objectives and principles in the context of a proposed National Landscape Strategy for Ireland.
Draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines, (2000)	These Guidelines attempt to approach landscape appraisal in a systematic manner and recommend Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) as the method for assessment. LCA involves the characterisation of landscape based primarily on landcover (trees, vegetation, water etc.) and secondly on the value (i.e. historical, cultural, etc.). LCA is intended to aid the development management process as it gives indicators of development types which would be suited to certain locations using certain design criteria and consequently the character of the landscape remains intact.

Title	Summary
Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)	<p>This Act consolidated all planning legislation from 1963 to 1999 and remains the basis for the Irish planning code, setting out the detail of regional planning guidelines, development plans and local area plans as well as the basic framework of the development management and consent system. Among other things, it provides the statutory basis for protecting our natural and architectural heritage, the carrying out of Environmental Impact Statements and the provision of social and affordable housing.</p> <p>There have been a number of changes to the legislation since 2000, the most significant of which are set out in The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002 and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004, which made substantial changes to Part V of the Act.</p> <p>In addition, a suite of new planning policies are being prepared most notably the National Planning Framework due to be finalised first quarter of 2017 which will replace the National Spatial Strategy. Prior to this a non-statutory Planning Policy Statement was issued in 2015 establishing then key principles including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. 8. Planning will conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural and cultural heritage of Ireland – - No. 9. Planning will support the protection and enhancement of environmental quality.

Title	Summary
Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2020- to be replaced by Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies	<p>The aim of the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) is to provide a framework for long term strategic development of the Eastern and Midland Region for the period 2010 – 2022 which is consistent with the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002 – 2020 and which ensures the successful implementation of the NSS at regional, county and local level. This NSS is being replaced by the National Planning Framework and the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies for the Eastern and Midland Region are replacing the existing RPGs.</p> <p>The accompanying SEA ERs and NIRs for the above will be used in this SEA as appropriate and relevant.</p>
Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023	<p>This plan sets out on a statutory basis the development framework for Laois County. The main sections relate to core strategy, housing, social, community and recreation, infrastructure, heritage and economic development.</p>
Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016	<p>The socio-economic framework centres around a number of key themes and goals which underpin the LECF. These themes and goals contribute to realising the overall vision. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives and Actions to Diversify and Strengthen a Sustainable Laois Economy (Goal 2); • Objectives and Actions to Support Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Goal 3); • Objectives and Actions to Enrich Civic Participation and Empower Communities (Goal 4); • Objectives and Actions to Promote Equality and Inclusiveness across all Sectors (Goal 5); • Objectives and Actions to Recognize and Support the Diverse Needs of People (Goal 6); • Objectives and Actions to Cultivate a Strong Laois Identity and an Excellent Quality of Life (Goal 7); • Objectives and Actions to Create an Integrated and Holistic Approach to Education, Training and Employment (Goal 8); • Objectives and Actions to Develop and Promote Ways of Living and Doing business that Support a Sustainable Environment and Resilient Communities (Goal 9); • Objectives and Actions to Enhance and Sustain our Town and Village Centres and their Function as Focal Points for their Rural Hinterlands (Goal 10).

<p>Laois Heritage Plan 2014-2019</p>	<p>The heritage plan is underpinned by a number of objectives and supporting actions as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1: Increase understanding of the heritage of Laois • Objective 2: Record the heritage of Laois; • Objective 3: Protect and promote active conservation of the heritage of Laois; • Objective 4: Promote community participation in heritage plans and projects; • Objective 5: Promote enjoyment and accessibility of heritage sites.
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