

# APPENDIX I

## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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FOR THE

### LONGFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2009-2015

### VARIATION No. 1

**for: Longford County Council**

Great Water Street,  
Longford,  
Co. Longford



**by: CAAS Ltd.**

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**SEPTEMBER 2012**

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## **Section 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference**

This is the Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report of the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 Variation No. 1 (Core Strategy). The purpose of the Environmental Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of the Variation.

### **What is an SEA?**

SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a proposed plan, or other strategic action, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic, social and other considerations.

### **Why is it needed?**

The SEA has been carried out in order to comply with the provisions of the SEA Regulations and in order to improve environmental protection and management within the County where relevant. The output of the process is an Environmental Report which should be read in conjunction with the Variation.

### **How does it work?**

All of the main environmental issues in the County were assembled and presented to the team who were preparing the Variation. This helped them to devise a Variation that protects whatever is sensitive in the environment. It also helped to identify wherever potential conflicts between the Variation and the environment exist and enabled these conflicts to be mitigated.

### **What is included in the Environmental Report which accompanies the Variation?**

The Environmental Report contains the following information:

- A description of the environment and the key environmental issues;
- A description and discussion of alternatives for the County Development Plan as varied;
- An assessment of the provisions of the Variation; and,
- Mitigation measures which set out to aid compliance with important environmental protection legislation - e.g. the Water Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive - and which will avoid/reduce the environmental effects of implementing the Variation.

### **What happens at the end of the process?**

When the Variation is adopted a document is made public, referred to as the SEA Statement.

The SEA Statement includes information on how environmental considerations have been integrated into the County Development Plan as varied and why the preferred alternative for the County Development Plan as varied was chosen in light of the other alternatives.

## **Section 2 The Variation**

### **2.1 Content of the Variation**

In summary, the Core Strategy Variation document identifies the quantum, location and phasing of development for the plan period that is consistent with the regionally defined population targets and settlement hierarchy, and, which reflects the availability of existing services, planned investment, sequential development and environmental requirements (i.e. an evidence based approach in determining the suitability of lands for zoning purposes).

In accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2011 and the Guidance Note on Core Strategies issued in November 2010, the Core Strategy includes;

- Population targets;
- Quantification of the requirements for zoning of lands for residential purposes; and
- Existing and future distribution of population within a defined settlement hierarchy.

The main policy provisions of the existing Plan to which the Core Strategy relates are contained at Sections 2 and 3 of the Plan. In this regard the population projections and Settlement Strategy contained at Section 2.3 of the existing Plan, in particular, will be replaced by the Core Strategy Table and revised Settlement Strategy which will identify population projections, distributions and zoned land availability for the County over the CDP period.

In light of the population targets and housing land requirement identified for the County of Longford within the MRPGs, this variation will involve a significant level of modification to residential zonings in particular, in addition to the amendment and addition of objectives and policies within the Development Plan.

In addition to the changes made to the Development Plan and to facilitate the revised zoning objectives, contained as part of the Core Strategy, zonings and policies contained within existing Local Area Plans in the County have to be addressed to be consistent with the Core Strategy. Core Strategy maps and objectives for the following settlements are therefore being integrated into the County Development Plan under the Core Strategy: Carriglass, Lanesboro, Newtownforbes, Drumlish, Kenagh, Ardagh, Granard, Ballinalee and Edgeworthstown.

With regard to Longford Town, a separate core strategy variation will be prepared in respect of Longford Town Development Plan, which will result in a set of actions to be implemented in relation to Longford Town Northern and Southern Environs Local Area Plans (lands of which are substantially contained within the Longford Town administrative area). Any lands that are located within the environs of Longford Town, outside of the Town Development boundary and that are not located within the Northern and Southern Environs Local Area Plan areas will be addressed as part of this variation.

### **2.2 Interactions with Relevant Policy, Plans or Programmes**

#### **2.2.1 National Development Plan 2007-2013**

The National Development Plan (NDP) is characterised by the principles of sustainable economic growth, greater social inclusion and balanced regional development. The National Development Plan sets out a Regional Development Strategy which centres on the framework provided within the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002. This strategic approach to regional development intends to deliver an investment programme that is environmentally and economically sustainable.

## 2.2.2 National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (NSS) is a 20-year planning framework for the entire Country to guide policies, programmes and investment. It seeks to promote a balance of social, economic and physical development between the Regions.

## 2.2.3 Midland Regional Planning Guidelines

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs) were adopted in July 2010 and document the regional spatial planning context for the region, which includes the Counties of Longford, Laois, Westmeath and Offaly. National policy contained in the NSS, is translated to a regional level in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, which will guide policy making decisions at a local level through the County Development Plan.

For the first time the MRPGs introduce population targets for Longford which are also indicated in terms of future housing land requirements for the County. This coupled with the requirements of the Planning and Development (amendment) Act 2010, ensures that County Development Plans are now consistent with the RPGs, whereas County Development Plans were previously only required to have regard to the RPGs. The 'Core Strategy' contained as part of this plan is therefore central to ensuring such compliance with the RPGs.

Relevant to County Longford, Longford Town is described as a 'Principal Town' in the MRPGs with the function of driving the northern part of the Midland Region. Granard is described as a 'Key Service Town'. The purpose of key service towns is to drive their own local economies within their area. Edgeworthstown is described as a 'Service Town' and the function of these towns is to perform important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for essentially local hinterlands and support nearby gateway and principle towns. Ballymahon and Lanesboro are described as 'Local Service Towns' and the regional guidelines envisage these towns performing important local level, residential, retailing, social and leisure functions and providing appropriate local services to a wider rural hinterland.

## 2.2.4 National Planning Guidelines

Planning Authorities are required to have regard to any guidelines issued by the Minister. Accordingly, the Variation has considered the following guidelines;

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities(2009)
- Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004)
- Architectural Heritage Protection for Places of Worship - Guidelines for Planning Authorities(2003)
- Architecture Policy Guidelines 2009-2015
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (May 09) - Part 1
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (May 09) - Part 2
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)
- Development Contribution Scheme for Planning Authorities – (Circular PD 5/2007)
- Development Contribution Scheme for Planning Authorities - Circular PD4/2003
- Development Management Guidelines- Guidelines for Planning Authorities (June 2007)
- Development Plans Guidelines - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (June 2007)
- Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (January 2012)
- Funfair Guidance
- Implementation of new EPA Code of Practice on WasteWater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses - Circular PSSP1/10
- Implementing Regional Planning Guidelines- Best Practice Guidance (December 2010)
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment
- Provision of Schools and the Planning System – Code of Practice for Planning Authorities, The Department of Education and Science and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2008)
- Quarries and Ancillary Activities- Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004)
- Retail Planning Guidelines

- Section 261A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and related provisions, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (January 2012)
- Smarter Travel, A Sustainable transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines (SEA)
- Sustainable Rural Housing Development Guidelines (2005)
- Sustainable Rural Housing Development Guidelines - Map
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (May 09)
- Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartment - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2007)
- Taking in Charge of Housing Estates / Management Companies
- Taking in Charge of Residential Developments Circular Letter PD 1/08
- Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures-Guidelines for Planning Authorities (1996)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Local Authorities (Nov 09)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Technical Appendices (Nov 09)
- Tree Preservation Guidelines
- Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations - Circular PD 7/09
- Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006)

### **2.2.5 Environmental Protection Objectives**

The Variation is subject to a number of high level environmental protection policies and objectives with which it must comply, including those which have been identified as Strategic Environmental Objectives in Section 3.11.

## **Section 3 The Environmental Baseline**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The environmental baseline of County Longford is described in this section. This baseline together with the Strategic Environmental Objectives, which are outlined in Section 3.11 of this document, is used in order to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Variation and in order to determine appropriate monitoring measures.

The environmental baseline is described in line with the legislative requirements encompassing the following components – biodiversity, flora and fauna, population, human health, soil, water, air and climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between these components.

### **3.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Variation**

In the absence of the Variation the environment would evolve under the regime of the existing County Development Plan 2009-2015 as detailed under Section 4.4 of this report and set out in Chapter 4 of the SEA Environmental Report (September 2008) of the existing Plan.

The only significant difference between the evolution of the environment under the existing County Development Plan and the evolution of the existing environment under the County Development Plan with the Variation relates to the phasing of certain residential lands. The Variation does not provide for any significant increases in land zoned for development however it does provide for the phasing of already zoned lands, with the application of both Strategic Industrial and Residential Reserve objectives. As such the Variation does not change the assessment provided in the Environmental Report of the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 [March 2009] except with regard to when potential environmental effects would be likely to occur.

The phasing of land provided for by this Variation - in addition to the existing zoning applied previously - had particular regard to both the capacity of the settlement to contribute towards achieving the objectives of the new Core Strategy - these objectives are consistent with the objectives of the existing Spatial Planning Strategy - as well as opportunities for public or sustainable travel and the availability of existing and planned critical water and waste water infrastructure. Phasing also took into account environmental sensitivities including biodiversity and flora and fauna and flood risk.

By potentially delaying the development of lands within environmentally sensitive and flood risk areas, phasing could potentially improve the protection of ecology and water status and the minimisation of flood risk. This protection is already contributed towards by the various provisions of the existing development plan.

By potentially delaying the development of lands further away from the town centre, phasing could potentially further improve the provision of sustainable mobility patterns which are contributed towards by the Plan and further facilitate the accompaniment of water services infrastructure with new development.

### **3.3 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna**

County Longford supports a wide diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats and a wide range of plant and animal species, some of which have come under threat due to development pressures and increased demand for new development land. Green space, which makes up a large part of the County, consists of a variety of habitats and corridors which provide for the movement of wildlife. This space is comprised of agricultural lands, bogs and heath, woodlands, grasslands and a number of open spaces in residential

areas. Candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas in the County are mapped below.

### 3.3.1 Existing Problems

New developments such as residential, commercial and/or transportation have resulted in loss of biodiversity and flora and fauna across the County.

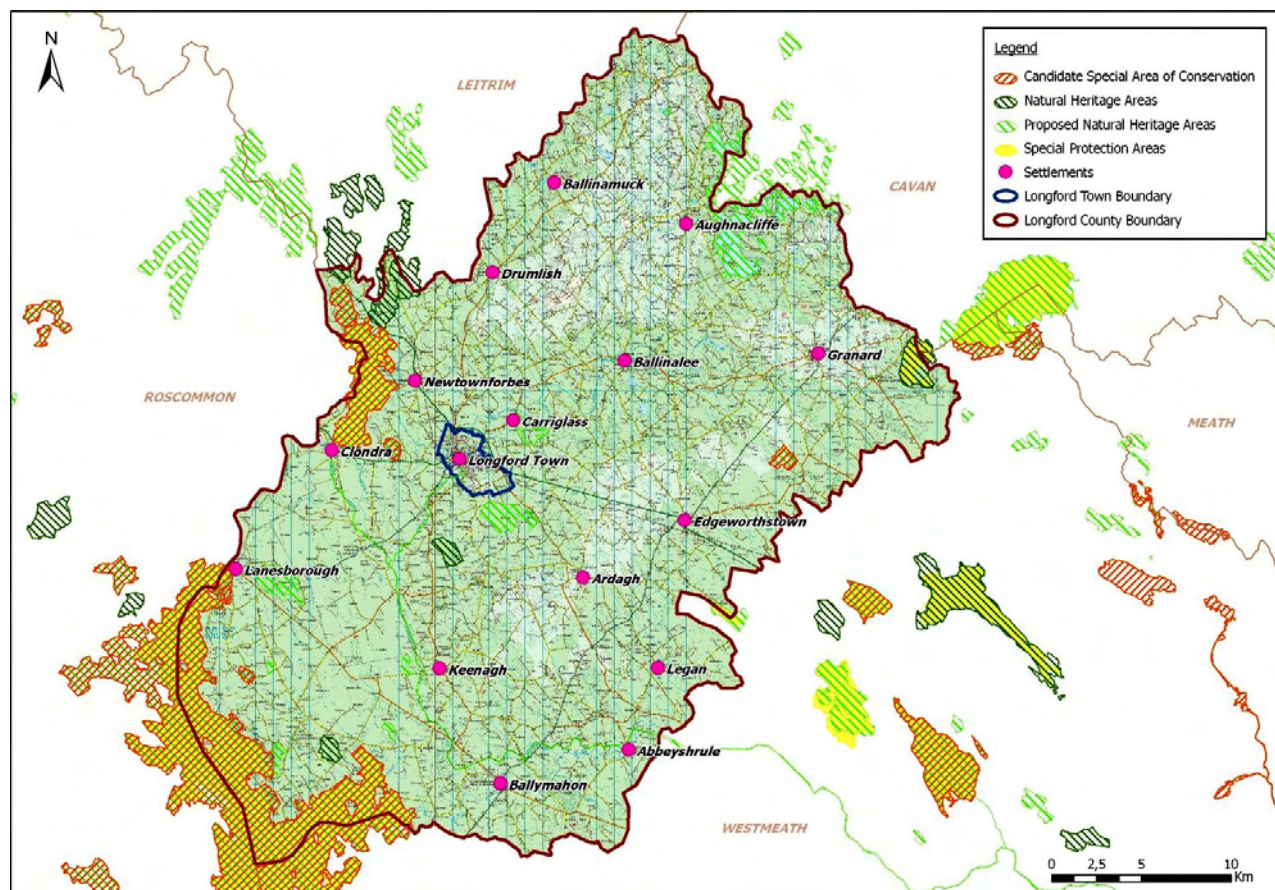


Figure 3.1 County Longford SPAs, candidate SACs NHAs and pNHAs

Source: NPWS (datasets downloaded April, 2012)

## 3.4 Population and Human Health

Longford is a relatively small county of approximately 1,091 km<sup>2</sup>. Population<sup>1</sup> for the County currently stands at 39,000 persons. This sees an increase of 4,609 persons or 13.4% on the previous Census which was carried out in 2006.

With regard to human health, impacts relevant to the SEA are those which arise as a result of interactions with environmental vectors (i.e. environmental components such as air, water or soil through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings).

Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise as a result of exposure to these vectors arising from incompatible adjacent landuses, for example. These factors have been considered with regard to the description of: the baseline of each environmental component; and the identification and evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the plan and the alternatives.

<sup>1</sup> CSO (2011), *Census 2011*: Dublin: CSO



### 3.4.1 Existing Problems

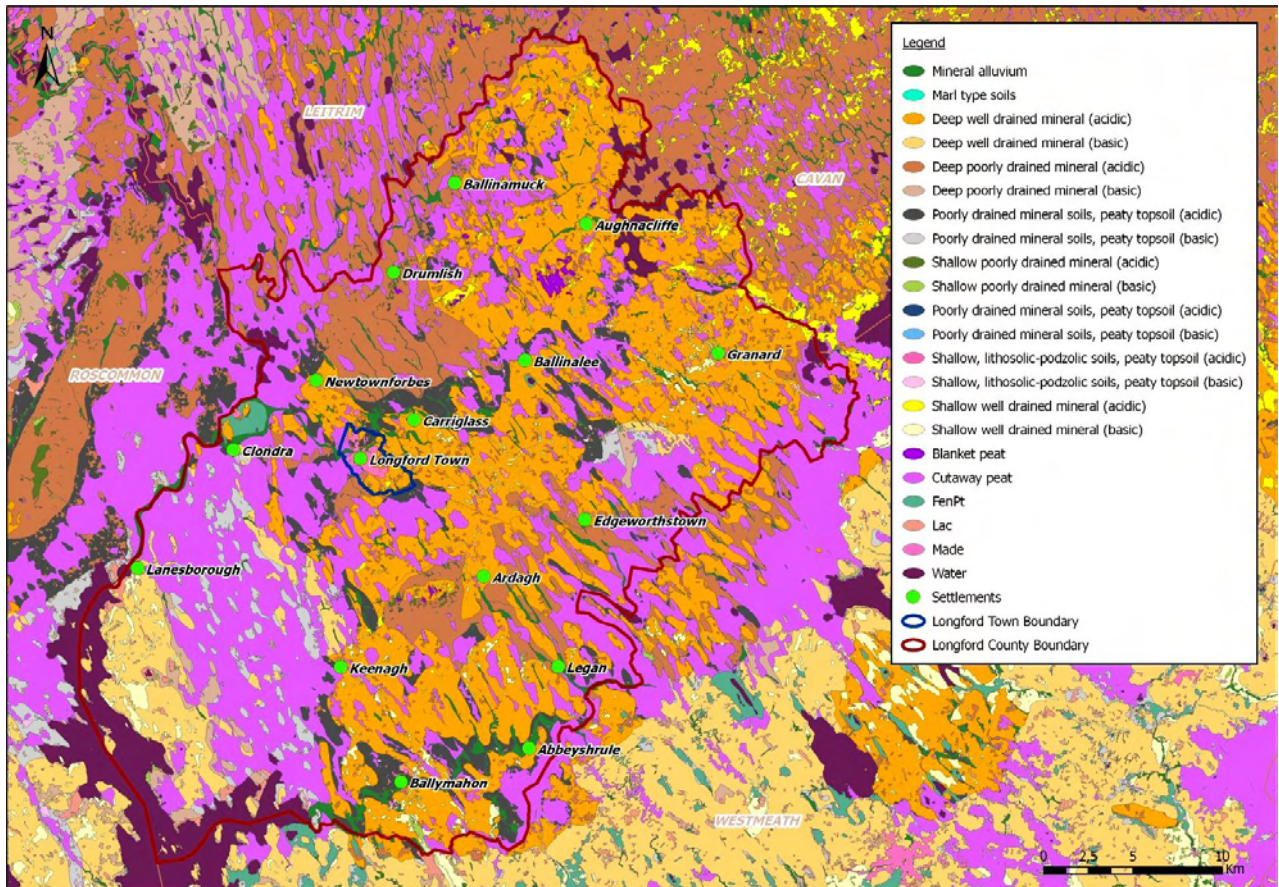
Certain environmental vectors within the County area - such as air, water or soil - have the potential to transport and deposit contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm and adversely impact upon the health of the County's population. Issues relevant to this potential in County Longford are expanded upon in the section above.

## 3.5 Soil and Geology

Soil types, as classified by Teagasc in co-operation with the Forest Service, EPA and GSI are mapped on Figure 3.2. This map indicates that deep well drained mineral soil and cutaway peat are the most prevalent soil types in the County. Areas of blanket bog occur in the south west and north of the County. There are 13 Sites of Geological Interest in Longford which are listed in the current CDP.

### 3.5.1 Existing Problems relating to Soil

Development that takes place without sufficient surveying and assessment of the potential for the presence of karsified limestone under or adjacent to the site has the potential to give rise to problems both for the structures and for the receiving environment - particularly if storage or piping infrastructure is caused to leak by a geological collapse. Ireland contains some of the best examples of intact blanket bog in Europe. Loss of quality rare bog habitats has resulted in the decline in numbers of vulnerable birds which live and breed on the bogs. Soil can be polluted and contaminated by development which is not serviced by appropriate waste water infrastructure and by agricultural activities. Soil erosion due mainly to surface erosion resulting from construction works and agricultural / forestry operations has major potential to impact on water quality and fishery resources.



**Figure 3.2 Soils**

Source: Teagasc, GSI, Forest Service & EPA (2006) *Soils and Subsoils Class* Dublin: DEHLG

## **3.6 Water**

### **3.6.1 Introduction**

The County lies within two major river catchments, the Shannon and the Erne. It falls within the secondary catchment of the River Inny, which flows into Lough Ree and forms part of the wider Shannon catchment and the Camlin River which flows from Granard through Longford Town to the Shannon at Clondra.

### **3.6.2 Potential Pressures on Water Quality**

Human activities, if not properly managed, can cause deterioration in water quality. Pressures exerted by human activities include the following:

- sewage and other effluents discharged to waters from point sources, e.g. pipes from treatment plants;
- discharges arising from diffuse or dispersed activities on land;
- abstractions from waters; and,
- structural alterations to water bodies.

### **3.6.3 The Water Framework Directive**

Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The WFD requires that all Member States implement the necessary measures to prevent deterioration of the status of all waters - surface, ground, estuarine and coastal - and protect, enhance and restore all waters with the aim of achieving good status by 2015. All public bodies are required to coordinate their policies and operations so as to maintain the good status of water bodies which are currently unpolluted and improve polluted water bodies to good status by 2015.

### **3.6.4 River Basin Districts and Water Bodies**

For the purpose of implementing the WFD, Ireland has been divided into eight river basin districts or areas of land that are drained by a large river or number of rivers and the adjacent estuarine / coastal areas. The management of water resources will be on these river basin districts.

Within each river basin district - for the purpose of assessment, reporting and management - water has been divided into groundwater, rivers, lakes, estuarine waters and coastal waters which are in turn divided into specific, clearly defined water bodies. County Longford falls within the North Western and Shannon RBDs.

### **3.6.5 River Water Quality**

The WFD defines "surface water status" as the general expression of the status of a body of surface water, determined by the poorer of its ecological status and its chemical status. Thus, to achieve "good surface water status" both the ecological status and the chemical status of a surface water body need to be at least "good". Figure 3.3 maps the WFD Surface Water Status for the County. Rivers in the south of the County are of moderate status while in the centre of the County, they are generally of moderate or good status. WFD status for rivers is good in the north west, moderate in the north and poor in the north east.

Water quality within the County is monitored by the EPA at a number of locations along rivers. Most of the monitored rivers in the County are of good or moderate status. Some areas of poor status are identified in the east of the County.

### **3.6.6 Lake Water Quality**

There are four lakes in the County, all positioned along the County boundary, whose quality is monitored by the EPA. These are Lough Kinale and Lough Gowna in the north east, Lough Forbes in the west and Lough Ree in the south west. As mapped on Figure 3.3, each of the lakes is classified as being of moderate status.

### **3.6.7 Groundwater**

Groundwater is stored in the void spaces in underground layers of rock, or aquifers. These aquifers are permeable, allowing both the infiltration of water from the soils above them and the yielding of water to surface and coastal waters. Groundwater is the part of the subsurface water that is in the saturated zone - the zone below the water table, the uppermost level of saturation in an aquifer at which the pressure is atmospheric, in which all pores and fissures are full of water. Most of the County's groundwater is of good status. An area in the west of the County is of poor status.

### **3.6.8 Register of Protected Areas**

The WFD requires that Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs) are compiled for a number water bodies or part of water bodies which must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by people and by wildlife. A number of water bodies within and surrounding the County Longford area have been listed on the WFD Register of Protected Areas (RPAs) - these are mapped on Figure 3.4. There are six different types RPAs in Longford, namely Nutrient Sensitive Rivers and Lakes, Lakes and Groundwater listed for drinking water and water dependent habitats – SPAs and cSACs.

### **3.6.9 Flooding**

#### **3.6.9.1 Flood Risk Assessment**

A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) was carried out alongside the preparation of the Core Strategy Variation (see Appendix II). This assessment considered the OPW's PFRA and flood extent and event mapping and focused on the provisions contained within the County Development Plan and the Variation. Recommendations which came out of the assessment were integrated into the Variation thereby further contributing towards the Council's compliance with the DEHLG Flood Guidelines.

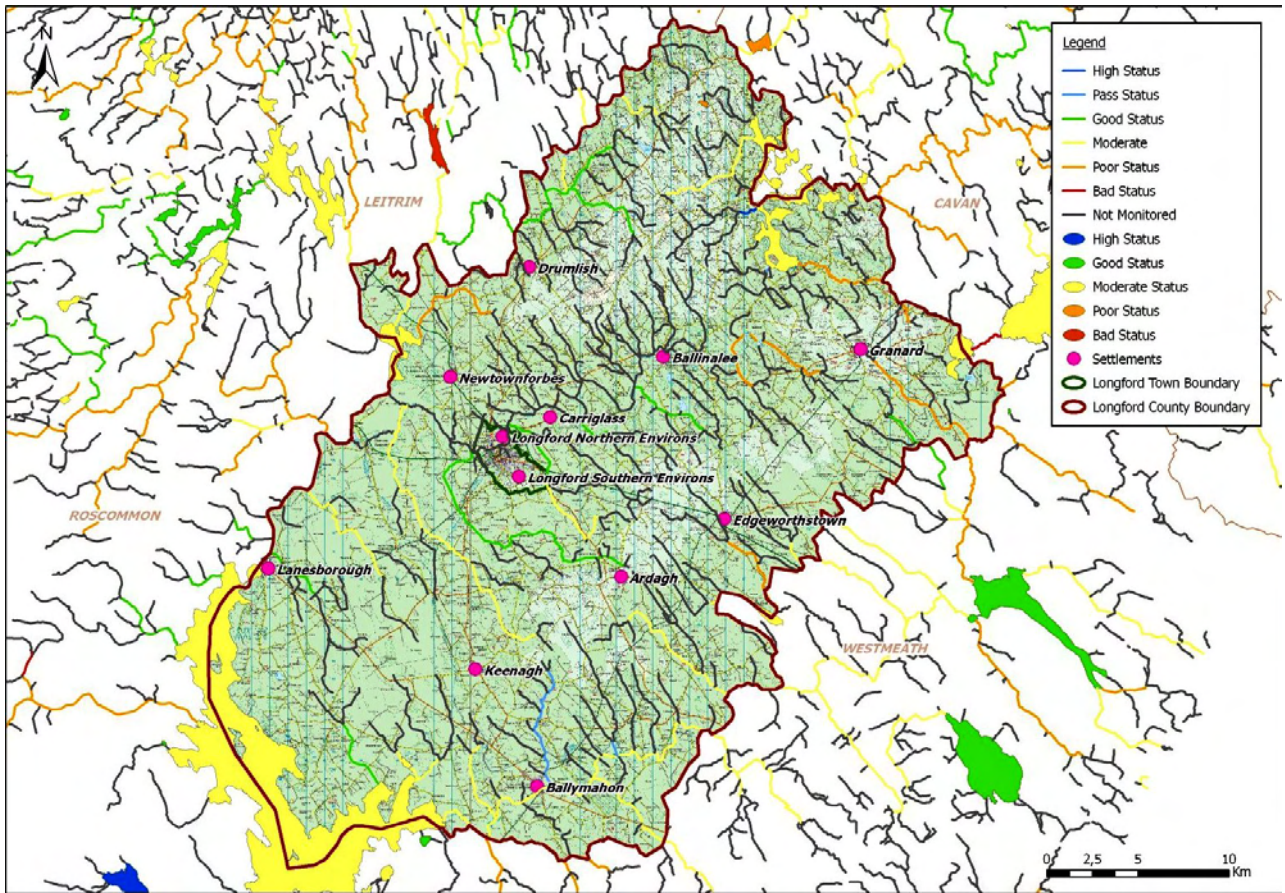
#### **3.6.9.2 Flood Extents and Events**

Recorded flood event and extent information from the OPW is shown on Figure 3.5. A flood event is the occurrence of recorded flooding at a given location on a given date. The Flood event is derived from different types of information (reports, photographs etc.). A flood event that has occurred more than once at a certain area is named a recurring flood event. Recorded flood extent information provides historic evidence of flooding adjacent to the River Shannon and Lough Ree in the west of the County - including within the towns of Clondra and Lanesborough - as well as within Ballimahon and Longford Town and Environs, while flood event data provides historic evidence of flooding in settlements including Ballimahon, Ballinallee, Clondra, Lanesborough, Longford Town, Newtownforbes.

### **3.6.10 Existing Problems**

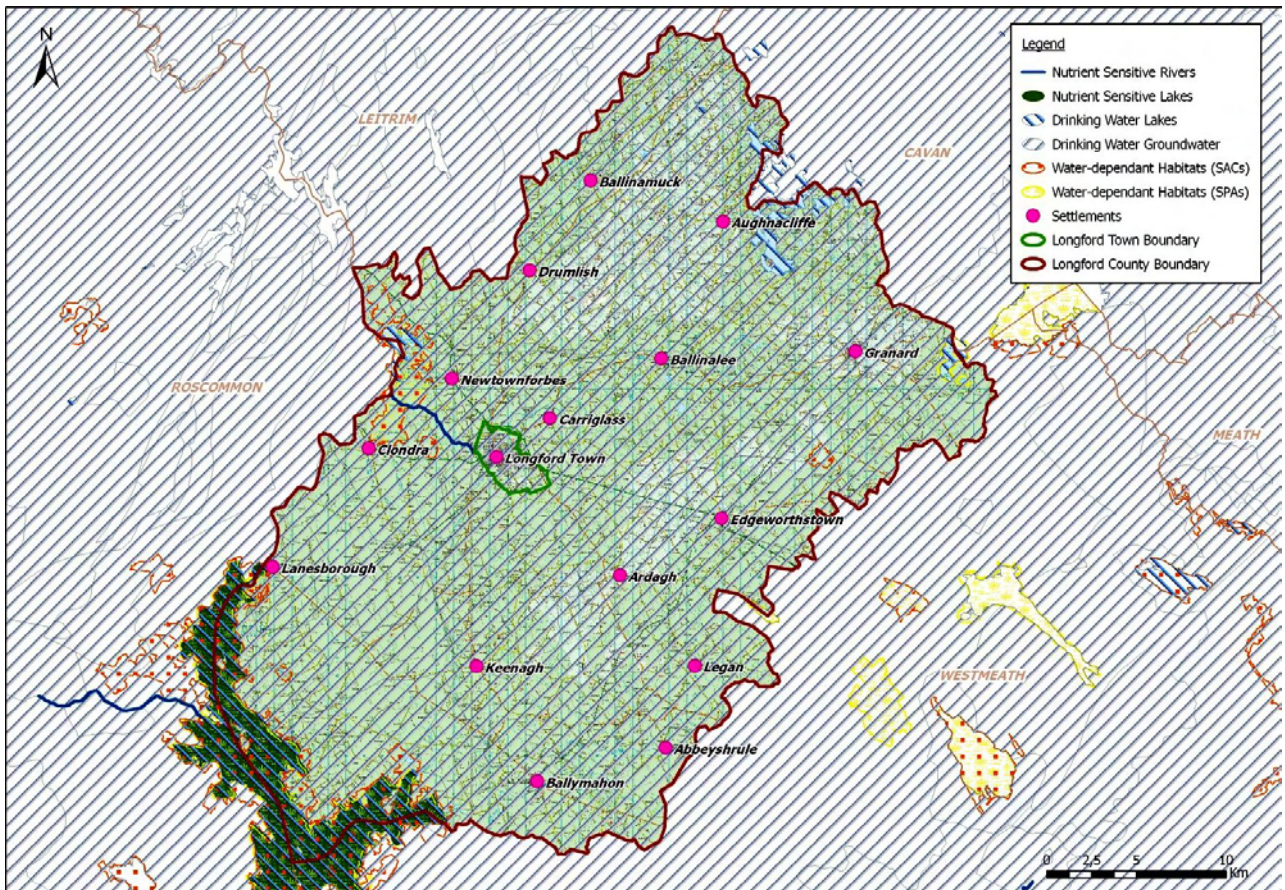
Some areas of poor water quality exist in the east of the County. Lough Gowna is moderately eutrophic. Groundwater in the west of the County is of poor status. Based on available water data, some of the Counties water bodies will need improvement in order to comply with the objectives of the WFD. The ShIRBD and NWRBD Management Plans and associated Programmes of Measures include provisions to help ensure that these water bodies meet the objectives of the WFD. The Longford County Development Plan and its Variation contribute towards the achievement of the objectives of the WFD and the ShIRBD and NWRBD Management Plans.

Recorded flood extent and event information from the OPW (Figure 3.5) provides historic evidence of flooding in various locations across the County.



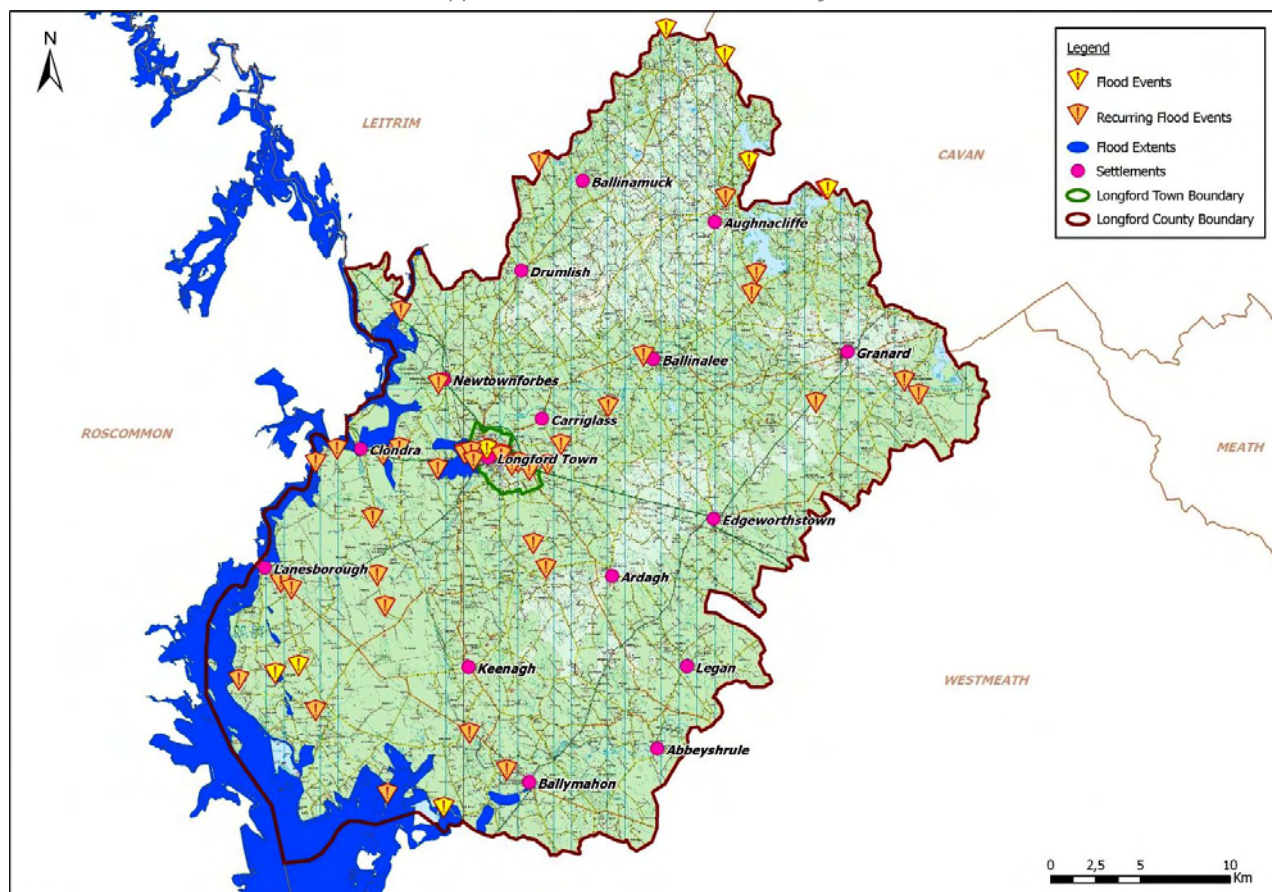
**Figure 3.3 WFD Surface Water Status**

Source: WRBD (2010)



**Figure 3.4 WFD Registers of Protected Areas**

Source: EPA (2009)



**Figure 3.5 Flood Events (OPW)**

Source: OPW (Various)

## 3.7 Air and Noise

### 3.7.1 Air

In order to protect human health, vegetation and ecosystems, EU Directives set down air quality standards in Ireland and the other member states for a wide variety of pollutants. These pollutants are generated through fuel combustion, in space heating, traffic, electricity generation and industry and, in sufficient amounts, could affect the well being of the County's inhabitants. The EU Directives include details regarding how ambient air quality should be monitored, assessed and managed.

In order to comply with these directives, the EPA measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants. For the purposes of monitoring in Ireland, four zones are defined in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2002 (SI No. 271 of 2002). The main areas defined in each zone are:

- Zone A: Dublin Conurbation.
- Zone B: Cork Conurbation.
- Zone C: Other cities and large towns comprising Longford, Limerick, Waterford, Clonmel, Kilkenny, Sligo, Drogheda, Wexford, Athlone, Ennis, Bray, Naas, Carlow, Tralee and Dundalk.
- Zone D: Rural Ireland, i.e. the remainder of the State - small towns and rural areas of the country - excluding Zones A, B and C.

The administrative area of Longford County Council is located in Zone D. Air quality in Zone D is currently "good".

### **3.7.2 Noise**

Noise is unwanted sound. The Environmental Noise Regulations (SI No. 140 of 2006) transpose into Irish law the EU Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise, which is commonly referred to as the Environmental Noise Directive or END. The END defines a common approach intended to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise. The END does not set any limit value, nor does it prescribe the measures to be used in the action plans, which remain at the discretion of the competent authorities. Limit values are left to each member state. At this point in time, Ireland does not have any statutory limit values.

### **3.7.3 Existing Problems**

If new dispersed development occurs in the County, adverse impacts upon air quality and noise levels, and resultant impacts upon human health, could arise if unmitigated.

## **3.8 Material Assets**

### **3.8.1 Waste Water**

Each waste water treatment plant in County Longford is operating within capacity and has spare capacity. Infrastructure that is planned and under construction in combination with the provisions of the County Development Plan as varied will contribute towards Longford County Council's compliance with the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and other related legislative requirements.

### **3.8.2 Drinking Water**

Public drinking water within the County is abstracted from the Shannon in the north and west of the County and from groundwater aquifers in the west and south of the County. Longford County Council produces over 14.5 million litres of water each day which is collected at source, treated and distributed to over 25,000 people.

County Longford has six main Regional Water Supply Schemes (RWSSs). Two of the schemes are operating at capacity - Longford RWSS and Lanesborough RWSS - and four of the schemes are operating under capacity - Granard RWSS, Gowna RWSS, Ballymahon RWSS and Newtowncashel RWSS.

Granard and Longford Central have been identified by the EPA as having excessive levels of aluminium in the treated water. Newtowncashel was flagged by the EPA as having inadequate treatment for Cryptosporidium. Actions are being undertaken in order to solve the issues at these plants.

### **3.8.3 Waste**

At present, there are a number of private companies providing a waste collection service to both householders and businesses within the County. There are no active landfill sites in the County.

### **3.8.4 Transport**

The central position of County Longford is important in terms of the road network within it. Two national primary routes traverse the County from east to west, the N4 from Dublin to Sligo and N5 from Longford to Castlebar. Longford Town is strategically positioned where the two national roads divide. The national secondary route, N63 leaves Longford Town for Roscommon/Galway and the N55 from Cavan to Athlone takes a north-south route through the east of the County, passing through Granard, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon.

Nine regional routes connect these, serviced by a network of county roads. The Dublin-Sligo rail line traverses the County from east to west, generally following the line of the N4 and serves Longford and Edgeworthstown stations.

### **3.8.5 Existing Problems**

The most recently published EPA RAL (EPA, Q1 of 2012) includes Granard (Excessive levels of aluminium in the treated water) Longford Central (Excessive levels of aluminium in the treated water) and Newtowncashel (Inadequate treatment for Cryptosporidium) supplies. Actions are being undertaken in order to solve the issues at these plants.

The construction and operation of new water services infrastructure will contribute towards the protection of the environment but has the potential to result in adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated.

## **3.9 Cultural Heritage**

### **3.9.1 Introduction**

Heritage, by definition, means inherited properties, inherited characteristics and anything transmitted by past ages and ancestors. It covers everything, from objects and buildings to the environment. Cultural heritage includes physical buildings, structures and objects, complete or in part, which have been left on the landscape by previous and indeed current generations.

### **3.9.2 Archaeological Heritage**

Archaeological sites may have no visible surface features; the surface features of an archaeological site may have decayed completely or been deliberately removed but archaeological deposits and features may survive beneath the surface. County Longford's archaeological heritage is protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), Natural Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning Acts. The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is an inventory, put on a statutory basis by amendment to the National Monuments Act 1994, of sites and areas of archaeological significance, numbered and mapped. The RMP includes all known monuments and sites of archaeological importance dating to before 1700 AD, and some sites which date from after 1700 AD. Over 1700 archaeological sites and monuments are recorded in County Longford under the Record of Monuments and Places.

### **3.9.3 Architectural Heritage**

#### **3.9.3.1 Introduction**

The term architectural heritage is defined in the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act 1999 as meaning 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, social, or technical interest.

The physical form of the individual structures in the countryside and in the towns and villages of County Longford has evolved through many periods. The built heritage which has developed has attained a character that contributes to varied, locally distinctive areas in the County.

#### **3.9.3.2 Record of Protected Structures**

The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) included in the Development Plan is legislated for under Section 12 and Section 51 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Protected Structures are defined in the Planning and Development Act (2000) 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.

In relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, the following are encompassed:

- (i) the interior of the structure;
- (ii) the land lying within the curtilage<sup>2</sup> of the structure;
- (iii) any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors; and,
- (iv) all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures referred to in subparagraph (i) or (iii).

Entries to the RPS in County Longford are mapped on Figure 3.7.

### **3.9.3.3 Architectural Conservation Areas**

In addition to these Protected Structures, Ardagh was adopted in the current County Development Plan as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

An ACA is a place, area or group of structures or townscape which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures, whose character it is an objective to preserve in a development plan. The ACA designation requires that planning permission must be obtained before significant works can be carried out to the exterior of a structure in the ACA which might alter the character of the structure or the ACA.

ACAs enable the protection of the existing character of areas within the settlements listed above throughout the County. This character is a combination of the various layers of development from earliest times to the present. Though often not individually very important, vernacular buildings contribute to the acknowledged distinctive character of many of the County's towns. Collectively, if properly used and maintained, they can make a significant impact on the retention and enhancement of that character which is important in maintaining local distinctiveness for both inhabitants and visitors.

Figure 3.7 shows the location of the ACA within the County.

### **3.9.4 Existing Environmental Problems**

Archaeology can be previously unknown but can be damaged through development causing ground disturbance. This is particularly relevant whereby development encroaches onto areas within the Zones of Archaeological Potential of certain monuments.

Developments which involve material alteration or additions to protected structures can detract from the special character of structures and their settings, and have the potential to result in the loss of features of architectural or historic interest and the historic form and structural integrity of structures.

Development on sites adjoining protected monuments, places or structures can also impact upon the setting of these cultural heritage items.

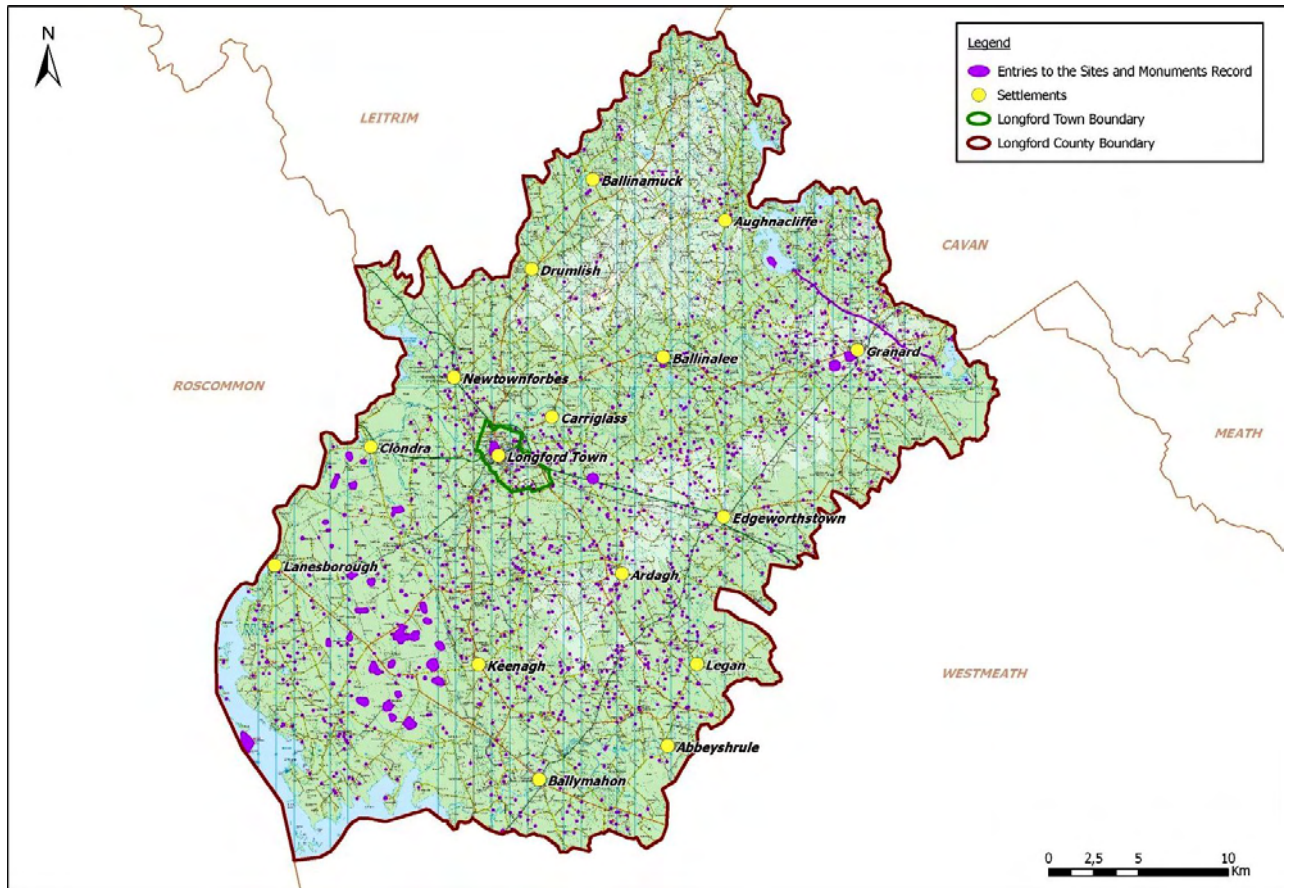
Encouraging and facilitating the accommodation of growth on brownfield sites will contribute to mitigating a number of the adverse impacts associated with greenfield development, however, brownfield development has the potential to significantly adversely impact upon cultural heritage - both archaeological and architectural - if unmitigated against. These impacts are most likely in the oldest settlements within the County.

The cumulative accommodation of large scale development in the County's various settlements has the potential to cumulatively impact upon cultural heritage.

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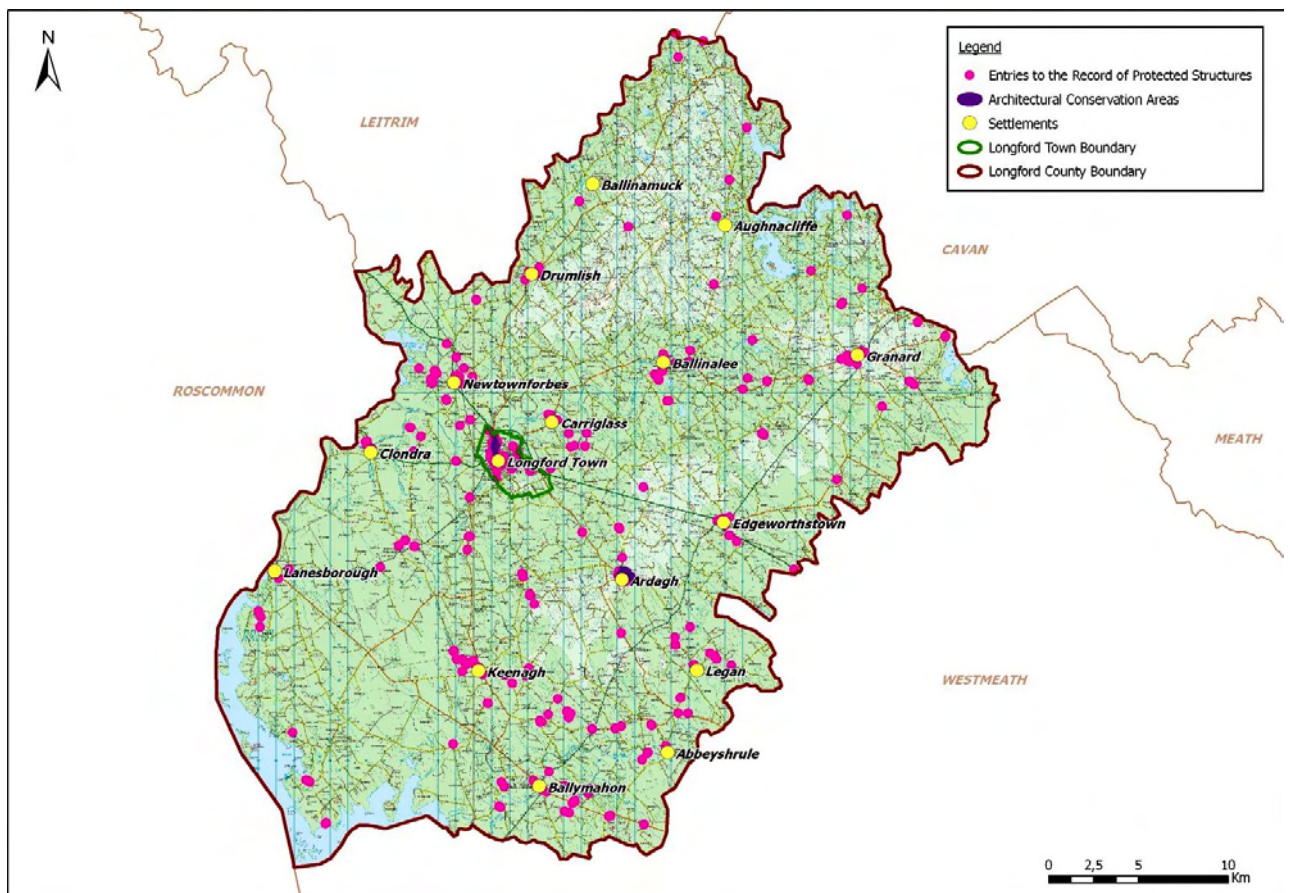
<sup>2</sup> Curtilage is normally taken to be the parcel of ground immediately associated with the Protected Structure, or in use for the purposes of the structure. Protection extends to the buildings and land lying within the curtilage. While the curtilage sometimes coincides with the present property boundary, it can originally have included lands, features or even buildings now in separate ownership, e.g. the lodge of a former country house, or the garden features located in land subsequently sold off. Such lands are described as being attendant grounds, and the protection extends to them just as if they were still within the curtilage of the Protected Structure.





**Figure 3.6 Entries to the Record of Sites and Monuments**

Source: Longford County Council (Unknown)



**Figure 3.7 Architectural Heritage - Entries to the RPS and Architectural Conservation Areas**

Source: Longford County Council (Unknown)

## 3.10 Landscape

County Longford is richly endowed with a variety of landscape types. The general topography of the County may be described as undulating lowland, however, within this classification comes several sub-types such as the extensive commercial peatlands of the southwest, lakeland of the west, south and north-east and agricultural lowland with deciduous forest of the south-east and intermittent pockets of coniferous forest. Ardagh Mountain and the Cornhill area through to Lough Gowna represent the two upland areas. Longford County Council has prepared a Landscape Character Assessment for the County which classifies the different landscapes of the County in relation to their different characteristics and values and their degree of sensitivity to various kinds of development.

### 3.10.1 Landscape Character Assessment

Character can be defined as a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another. Landscape character assessments differ from landscape evaluations in that they attempt to classify landscapes on their individuality rather than defining one as better as or worse than another.

Landscape character types (LCT)<sup>3</sup> are defined as landscapes that may occur in many areas throughout the Country and are composed of similar combinations of elements such as topography, geology, drainage and settlement patterns, landcover and use. Landscape character areas (LCA) are sections of the County that are treated as a unit in visual and physical terms, and that may consist of several landscape character types. Landscape Character types in County Longford would include the peatlands/wetlands, Shannon basin and northern uplands. Landscape character areas are the individual representation of a landscape character type, e.g. Begnagh Bog.

In broad terms, there are seven basic landscape character units in Longford which are listed below.

- Unit 1 - Northern Drumlin Lakeland.
- Unit 2 - Northern Upland.
- Unit 3 - Shannon Basin/Lough Ree.
- Unit 4 - Central Corridor.
- Unit 5 - Inny Basin.
- Unit 6 - Peatlands.
- Unit 7 - Open Agricultural.

### 3.10.2 Existing Environmental Problems

Housing development has the potential to threaten valuable and sensitive landscapes throughout the County.

Individual one-off housing developments often do not have significant adverse impacts, however cumulatively they have the potential to cumulatively and adversely significantly impact upon sensitive landscapes.

## 3.11 Overlay Mapping of Environmental Sensitivities

In order to identify where most sensitivities within the County occur, a number of the environmental sensitivities described above were weighted and mapped overlapping each other. Figure 3.8 provides an overlay of environmental sensitivities in County Longford.

Environmental sensitivities are indicated by colours which range from acute vulnerability (brown) extreme vulnerability (red) to high vulnerability (dark orange) to elevated vulnerability (light orange) to moderate vulnerability (yellow) to low vulnerability (green). Where the mapping shows a concentration of environmental sensitivities there is an increased likelihood that development will conflict with these sensitivities and cause environmental deterioration.

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<sup>3</sup> Text in this section is sourced from the Longford Landscape Character Assessment (Longford County Council, 2009)

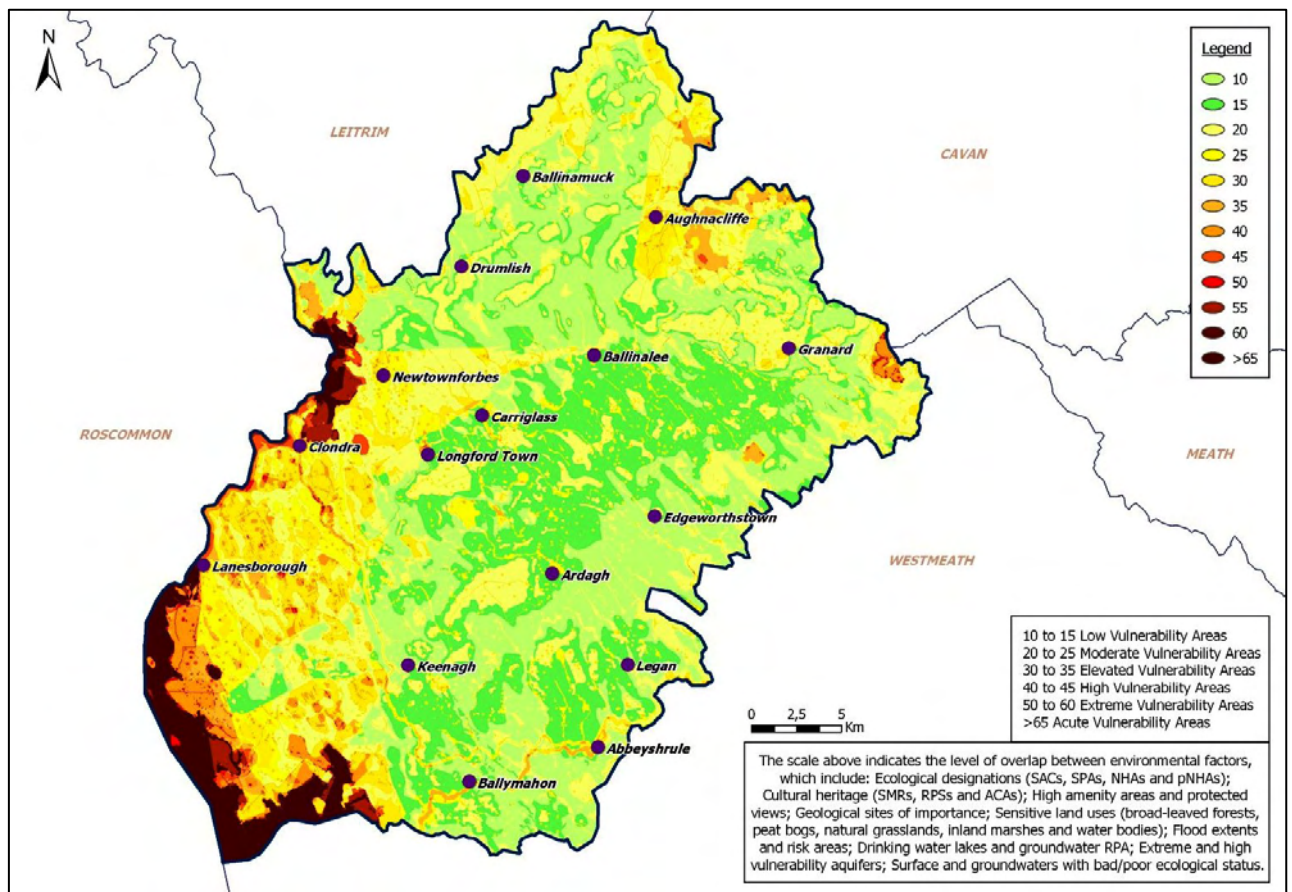
A weighting system applied through Geographical Information System (GIS) software was used in order to calculate the vulnerability of all areas in the County. Equal value is given to all environmental components.

The Overlay Mapping on Figure 3.8 shows that environmental sensitivities are not evenly distributed throughout the County. The County's western and south western boundaries are extremely and acutely vulnerable. These levels of sensitivity reflect the sensitive nature of the River Shannon and its Loughs which are protected under the Habitats Directive.

Peatland areas, due to their ecological, hydrological and amenity characteristics, present higher levels of sensitivity than most of the surrounding agricultural areas throughout the County. This is particularly the case at Clooneen Bog, Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog and Brown Bog.

Likewise, lakes in the area show higher levels of sensitivity in comparison to surrounding areas and in addition to Lough Forbes and Lough Ree on the River Shannon in the west of the County include Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough.

The remainder of the County is generally of low and moderate vulnerability.



**Figure 3.8 Overlay Mapping of Environmental Sensitivities**  
Source: CAAS (2012)

### 3.12 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives which have been transposed into Irish law and which are required to be implemented. The SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Variation can be evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects - unmitigated. SEOs are distinct from the objectives of the Variation and they are not given statutory weight by virtue of their use in Strategic Environmental Assessments.

**Table 3.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives**

SEO Code	SEO
<b>B1</b>	To ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annexed habitats and species
<b>B2</b>	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 - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species
<b>B3</b>	To avoid significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in Wildlife Sites and to ensure compliance with the Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 with regard to the protection of species listed on Schedule 5 of the principal act
<b>B4</b>	To sustain existing sustainable rural management practices - and the communities who support them - to ensure the continuation of long established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain
<b>HH1</b>	To protect human health from exposure to incompatible landuses
<b>S1</b>	Maximise the sustainable re-use of brownfield lands, and maximise the use of the existing built environment rather than developing greenfield lands
<b>W1</b>	To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality and status of surface waters
<b>W2</b>	To prevent pollution and contamination of ground water
<b>W3</b>	To comply as appropriate with the provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2009)
<b>M1</b>	To serve new development with adequate and appropriate waste water treatment
<b>M2</b>	To serve new development with adequate drinking water that is both wholesome and clean
<b>C1</b>	To reduce travel related emissions to air and to encourage modal change from car to more sustainable forms of transport
<b>CH1</b>	To protect archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context
<b>CH2</b>	To protect as appropriate architectural heritage including entries to the Record of Protected Structures and their context
<b>L1</b>	To avoid significant adverse impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to protected views and prospects and broad zones including lakes, rivers, canals and deciduous woodlands

## Section 4 Alternative Scenarios

### 4.1 Introduction

Longford County Council in preparing the County Development Plan 2009-2015 undertook a Strategic Environmental Assessment which examined 3 alternative scenarios. The findings of this assessment are provided in Chapter 6 of the SEA Environmental Report (March 2009) which accompanied the County Development Plan 2009-2015 and reproduced in the sections below.

The Variation is consistent with the alternative which was selected for the County Development Plan ('Option 3 Strong Inclusive') and the assessment of alternatives provided in the original SEA Environmental Report and reproduced below does not need to change. This alternative was chosen for the Plan having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects which were identified by the Strategic Environmental Assessment; and,
2. Planning - including social and economic - effects.

Variation No. 1 does not provide for any significant increases in land zoned for development however it does provide for the phasing of already zoned lands, with the application of both Strategic Industrial and Residential Reserve objectives. Decisions relating to the phasing of zoned lands took into account of a number of considerations - economic, technical, social and environmental. The environmental factors were those specifically and exhaustively assessed as the basis for the previous plan and SEA already referred to.

The phasing of land provided for by this Variation - in addition to the existing zoning applied previously - had particular regard to both the capacity of the settlement to contribute towards achieving the objectives of the new Core Strategy - these objectives are consistent with the objectives of the existing Spatial Planning Strategy - as well as opportunities for public or sustainable travel and the availability of existing and planned critical water and waste water infrastructure. Phasing also took into account environmental sensitivities including biodiversity and flora and fauna and flood risk.

Potential adverse effects of implementing the County Development Plan as varied will be mitigated by, *inter alia*, individual measures which have been integrated into the current Plan and additional/amended measures recommended to be integrated into the Plan by this SEA of the Variation. These measures are identified in Section 6.

### 4.2 Option 1 - 'Weak' (Worst Case)

The weak approach to the future development of County Longford can be viewed as the 'worst-case' scenario. In order to develop under this scenario, the Planning Authority would allow for development to proceed in an ad hoc manner at any location within its functional area. The scenario envisages potentially inappropriate lands around settlements zoned for development without truly assessing the overall need for, or scale of development. As a result development pressure both on the fringes of towns and villages as well as in the open countryside would result with significant levels of ribbon development between settlements. Consequently development would occur in unserved or insufficiently served areas. This policy would not require careful consideration of the environmental impacts of such development, either individually or cumulatively. There would be few or no restrictions on development.

The planning consequences would be severe and while this alternative would allow for development and would provide some short term economic benefits to the county, it is not sustainable and therefore not a viable or acceptable alternative in practice. It would lead to deterioration in the settlement structures of the county, with a significant shift towards rural rather than urban development. Ultimately it would lead to a loss of population base within key centres and consequently a loss of critical mass for the development of key services and facilities within those centres. Furthermore urban generated housing within the transport corridors would have long term implications for future road development and would compromise re-alignments, or road geometry with adverse risks to road users. Such development is

uncontrolled and essentially developer-led but without the key infrastructure in place. This option would result in the development of the county through market forces in an unsustainable manner. This scenario takes a short term view of developing the county with no consideration of the long term negative environmental consequences.

The environmental consequences potentially are severe. Aspects of the environment such as surface water and groundwater quality, ecology, cultural heritage and landscape would be negatively affected. The dispersal of rural housing and other non-agriculture related development in the countryside would lead to a deterioration in ground water quality through the proliferation of septic tanks; surface water quality would be affected through contaminated ground water and its implications on river base flows; habitats and areas of natural interest would be lost or fragmented; archaeology would be impacted through insensitive design and location of development; and finally a deterioration in landscape quality would inevitably ensue.

In summary this weak planning approach would have the following results:

- A deterioration in the rural landscape and natural environment;
- No clearly definable settlement strategy;
- Promoting development at any location throughout the county;
- Serious traffic congestion and disruption to existing residents throughout the county;
- Inadequate environmental measures, leading to a sub-standard environmental quality;
- Impact negatively on the visual amenity and potential of the County area; and
- Domination of market forces resulting in piecemeal development and a weak socio-economic county structure.

### **4.3 Option 2 - 'Mixed'**

The 'Mixed' approach sets forth a development strategy for the County with mixed emphasis on the location of development. This scenario would provide for a dispersed settlement pattern throughout the countryside while development will be curtailed outside the immediate area of the county's settlements.

The implications would be similar to that of the 'Weak' approach; settlement structure would remain weak because of poor targeting of development in key centres. Similarly the environmental consequences would be significant, with similar implications for ground and surface water quality, ecology, cultural heritage and landscape and visual amenity.

While this option is approaching a more desirable vision for the development of the County over the plan period, its negative results in terms of planning and environmental protection render it inappropriate for the Plan.

While development in broad terms will be directed to certain areas, a significant level of flexibility will be employed when considering development in other areas, particularly in sensitive parts of the county. In much the same way as the weak approach, the future development of the county would be haphazard and somewhat uncontrolled, allowing others to dictate the location and scale of development.

In summary this mixed planning approach would have the following results:

- Reasonable quantity of development within the county, in line with predictions;
- Poor control on development;
- Lack of long term focus;
- Poor environmental protection;
- A deterioration in the rural landscape and natural environment;
- No clearly definable settlement strategy;
- Inadequate environmental measures, leading to a substandard environmental quality; and
- Impact negatively on the visual amenity and potential of the County area.

## 4.4 Option 3 - 'Strong' - Inclusive

A planned approach to the approval of acceptable development within the county will enable development to be targeted to key areas in a sustainable and managed way. This approach ensures that the predicted growth is accommodated in a planned and orderly manner. The plan recognizes the role of existing settlements within the county, while also addresses the rural settlement pattern. Ultimately the core issue of sustainability is addressed and significantly a balance between development and environmental protection is enshrined in the plan. This approach offers a full spectrum of planned options, thus, this approach offers a long term vision for the County.

The environmental impacts on key environmental receptors such as ground and surface water quality, ecology, landscape and visual amenity and cultural heritage will be minimized. Severely restrictive policies towards development in highly defined sensitive areas such as those listed as NHA, SPA, SAC or indeed those areas highlighted as being sensitive in terms of ground water resource protection or visually sensitive will apply. Under this scenario the following results are envisaged:

- Implementation of Settlement Strategy and promotion of key settlements;
- Key areas for growth will be identified and promoted;
- Strategic or key routes and linkages will be identified and preserved;
- There will be a high level of environmental protection;
- Valuable natural resources such as water quality are protected.

## 4.5 Conclusion

The County Development Plan seeks to balance development with environmental protection and conservation. The matrix shows that Option 1, adopting a Weak approach, allowing development of all areas with little control exerted, will present significant environmental problems and will be contrary to the principles of sustainable development. This option would not allow for the orderly and sustainable development of the county and is therefore not considered as a desirable option for County Longford.

Similarly Option 2, the Mixed approach, is not a desirable option. While restrictions will apply in the immediate hinterland of the County's settlements, rural development elsewhere would lead to deterioration in environmental quality throughout the County. Furthermore the settlement structure would weaken as a result. This option would not realise the long term vision for the County but instead result in poor environmental protection and ad hoc, unsustainable development.

Option 3 allows for planned development and represents a sustainable approach to planning in the County. Development will be focused within zoned and serviced areas. Significant restrictions will be put in place to development in areas designated for environmental purposes such as NHA, SAC and SPA as well as areas of archaeological importance or where threats to natural resources prevail such as ground and surface waters.

In conclusion a planned approach to the further development of the county incorporating the principles of sustainable development is the option best suited to County Longford.

## **Section 5 Evaluation of Variation Provisions**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Section 7 of the SEA Environmental Report evaluates the provisions of the Variation in detail. The description and mapping of the environmental baseline (summarised in Section 3 of this document) together with Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Table 3.1) are used for this purpose.

Some provisions would be likely contribute towards the protection of a particular environmental component/components (e.g. biodiversity, water, cultural heritage) while some provisions would be likely to potentially conflict with and potentially adversely affect the protection of a particular environmental component/components. These conflicts and related effects will be mitigated by measures which have been into the existing County Development Plan and the Variation (see Section 6). Environmental impacts which occur, if any, will be determined by the nature and extent of multiple or individual projects and site specific environmental factors.

### **5.2 AA and SFRA**

The Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening process that was undertaken alongside the preparation of the Variation concluded that no Natura 2000 Sites are deemed to be at risk of likely significant effects of implementing the County Development Plan as varied. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the Variation was also undertaken which integrated flood considerations into the Variation thereby further contributing towards the Council's compliance with the DEHLG Flood Guidelines. The preparation of the Variation, SEA, AA and FRA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA and FRA have informed both the Variation and the SEA.

### **5.3 Overview**

The phasing of land provided for by the Variation - in addition to existing the zoning applied previously - had particular regard to both the capacity of the settlement to contribute towards achieving the objectives of the new Core Strategy - these objectives are consistent with the objectives of the existing Spatial Planning Strategy - as well as opportunities for public or sustainable travel and the availability of existing and planned critical water and waste water infrastructure. Phasing also took into account environmental sensitivities including biodiversity and flora and fauna and flood risk.

By potentially delaying the development of lands within environmentally sensitive and flood risk areas, phasing could potentially improve the protection of ecology and water status and the minimisation of flood risk. This protection is already contributed towards by the various provisions of the existing development plan.

By potentially delaying the development of lands further away from the town centre, phasing could potentially further improve the provision of sustainable mobility patterns which are contributed towards by the Plan and further facilitate the accompaniment of water services infrastructure with new development.

Potential conflicts still remain between future development and environmental components however these conflicts are likely to be mitigated by measures contained in the existing County Development Plan and measures proposed by the SEA and accompanying AA and FRA of the Variation.



## Section 6 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

### 6.1 Mitigation

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the County Development Plan as varied.

Likely significant beneficial effects of implementing the Development Plan to which the Variation relates have been and will be maximised and potential adverse effects have been and will be avoided, reduced or offset through:

- The consideration of alternatives for the current County Development Plan as part of the SEA for this plan (as provided in the SEA Environmental Report, March 2009);
- Mitigation through Communication of Environmental Considerations throughout both the SEA/Plan preparation process for the current Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 and the SEA/Variation preparation process for the Variation to which this report relates;
- Adherence to individual measures which have been integrated into the current Plan and adherence to additional/amended measures recommended to be integrated into the Plan by this SEA - and accompanying AA and FRA - of the Variation.

Individual measures were integrated into the current County Development Plan 2009-2015 in order to mitigate likely significant effects arising from implementation of the Plan. These measures will also mitigate likely significant effects arising from implementation of the plan as varied. These measures are linked to likely significant effects of implementing the County Development Plan as varied (if unmitigated) on Table 6.1.

In addition to these measures, this SEA - and accompanying AA and FRA - of the Variation recommends a number of additional/amended measures which have been integrated into the Variation and detailed below. These measures are also linked to likely significant effects (if unmitigated) on Table 6.1.

#### **New Policy WS is inserted as follows:**

Where required, public wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure - which fully complies with requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) including the need to provide secondary treatment and other treatment as required - shall be operational and with adequate capacity to accommodate waste water arising from development, prior to developments being occupied. Discharges arising from this collection and treatment shall also comply with the requirements of the Directive.

#### **WS(a)**

It is the policy of Longford County Council to investigate the preparation a Water Services Strategic Plan - in compliance with the Water Services Act - for the functional area of the Council. Such a Plan may be prepared jointly with other Water Services Authorities.

#### **Amend Policy WS 2 as follows:**

It is the policy of Longford County Council to investigate the feasibility of establishing additional projects in terms of improving existing water supply, establishing new supplies, sewerage mains provision (including the connection of unsewered, areas including individual properties/ premises, serviced by septic tanks to the existing and planned sewer network) and improvement of existing treatment plants in the medium and long-term and for their extension to include adjoining residential dwellings.

#### **Amend Policy WS 15 as follows:**

The Council shall ~~consult~~ implement the relevant recommendations set out in the EPA publication (and any subsequent update) ~~"Urban Wastewater Discharges in Ireland for Population Equivalents Greater than 500 persons - a Report for the Years 2004-5"~~ *Focus on Urban Waste*

*Water Discharges in Ireland* (EPA Office of Environment Enforcement, 2012) ~~in the provision, maintenance and expansion of water treatment systems in the County.~~

**Amend Policy FLO 3 as follows:**

The Council shall ~~have regard to the provisions of the guidelines issued by the DoEHLG regarding flooding~~ implement the recommendations and provisions of the DEHLG's 2009 Guidelines for Planning Authorities entitled *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management* (and any subsequent update) in the operation of its duties.

**Insert new Policy FLO4 as follows:**

Where the probability of flooding from rivers is low (less than 0.1%, flood zone C) the developer should satisfy him or herself that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. Among other things, mapping including the OPW's Pluvial and Groundwater Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment mapping should be considered for this purpose.

**Amend Policy ENV 7 as follows:**

It is the policy of Longford County Council to encourage and promote compliance with the recommendations contained in the Shannon ~~International~~ and North ~~South Western Share International~~ River Basin Management Plans.

**Amend Policy ENV 9 as follows:**

The Council shall ~~incorporate~~ implement the relevant recommendations contained within ~~any future the River Basin District/River Basin Management Plans~~ for the Shannon International River Basin District and the North Western ~~International~~ River Basin District, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

**Amend Policy NHB 6 as follows:**

It is the policy of the Council to protect sites designated in National and European legislation, and in other relevant International Conventions, Agreements and Processes. This includes sites proposed to be designated or designated as:

- Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup> (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).
- Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds).

Both the Birds and Habitats Directives have been transposed in Irish law by Ministerial Regulation. The European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 are the most important of these because they provide for the protection measures and management regime that apply to SPAs and SACs.

No projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)<sup>[1]</sup>.

**Amend Policy NHB 20 as follows:**

Proposed large-scale developments, particularly on greenfield sites and in environmentally sensitive areas, shall be assessed in terms of their impact on the biodiversity of the area. ~~All projects and plans arising from this plan will be, and, where appropriate,~~ screened for the need to undertake appropriate assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive ~~in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.~~

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

- (a) no alternative solution available,
- (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and
- (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

**Insert new Policy NHB 22 as follows:**

The National Parks and Wildlife Service will be invited to prioritise the preparation of Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites which are located in the vicinity of the County. This is in order to examine how the Conservation Objectives of the sites can be achieved in the context of the proper planning and sustainable development of the Plan area.

**Amend Policies TOU 5, TOU 11 and HS 1 to replace reference to Regional Fisheries Board with Inland Fisheries Ireland**

**Additional changes as a result of the Flood Risk Assessment are detailed under Appendix II.**

**Additional changes as a result of the Appropriate Assessment are detailed in the Appropriate Assessment document.**

## **6.2 Monitoring**

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. The Environmental Report contains proposals for monitoring the County Development Plan as varied. Monitoring enables, at an early stage, the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action.

The Environmental Report identifies indicators - which allow quantitative measures of trends and progress in the environment over time. Measurements for indicators generally come from existing monitoring sources.

A monitoring evaluation report on the effects of implementing the Development Plan is to be prepared in advance of the beginning of the review of the Plan.

Table 6.1 overleaf outlining how likely significant effects (if unmitigated) are linked to relevant mitigation measure(s) - which have been integrated into the County Development Plan as varied - and indicator(s) which will be used for monitoring.

**Table 6.1 SEA Summary Table: Likely Significant Effects, Mitigation Measures and Indicators for Monitoring**

<b>Likely Significant Effect, if unmitigated</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures, including:</b>	<b>Primary Indicator(s) for Monitoring</b>
Loss of biodiversity with regard to Natura 2000 Sites	Current County Development Plan: NHB 6, NHB 20 Variation: Amendment to NHB 6, Amendment to NHB 20, New Policy NHB 22	B1: Conservation status of habitats and species as assessed under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive
Loss of biodiversity with regard to ecological connectivity	Current County Development Plan: NHB 1, NHB 2, NHB 8, NHB 9, NHB 18	B2: Percentage loss of functional connectivity without remediation resulting from development provided for by the County Development Plan as varied
Loss of biodiversity with regard to Wildlife Sites and species listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Act 1976	Current County Development Plan: NHB 4, NHB 6, NHB 7	B3i: Number of significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in Wildlife Sites resulting from development provided for by the County Development Plan as varied B3ii: Number of significant impacts on the protection of species listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Act 1976
Loss of population involved in land management	Current County Development Plan: Various provisions of Section 3 Housing, 4 Economic Development, 5 Infrastructure and 6 Environment, Heritage and Amenities.  Variation: New Policy NHB 22	B4: Population of the County involved in land management
Spatially concentrated deterioration in human health	Current County Development Plan: ENV 2, ENV 4, ACA 2, ENV 12  Also see measures related to water quality, flooding, waste water treatment and drinking water supply and quality.	HH1: Occurrence (any) of a spatially concentrated deterioration in human health arising from environmental factors as identified by the Health Service Executive and Environmental Protection Agency
Failure to maximise urban consolidation	Current County Development Plan: General Policy 4, CHAR 1, RPS 6	S1: Area of brownfield lands developed in the County over the lifespan of the Development Plan as varied
Adverse impacts upon the status of water bodies	Current County Development Plan: ENV 6, ENV 7, ENV 8, ENV 9, ENV 10, WS 9, WS 10, WS 11, SW2  Variation: Amendment to ENV 7, Amendment to Policy ENV 9	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) W2: Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC

<b>Likely Significant Effect, if unmitigated</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures, including:</b>	<b>Primary Indicator(s) for Monitoring</b>
Increase in the risk of flooding	Current County Development Plan: FLO 1, FLO 2, FLO 3, SW2  Variation: Insertion of new policy FLO4, Amendment to FLO 3	W3: Number of incompatible developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk
Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment	Current County Development Plan: WS 1, WS 2, WS 3, WS 4, WS 5, WS 13, WS 15  Variation: Insertion of new policy WS, Amendment to WS 2, Amendment to WS 15	M1i: Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the County Development Plan as varied M1ii: Preparation of a Water Services Strategic Plan - in compliance with the Water Services Act - for the functional area of the Council
Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water that is both wholesome and clean	Current County Development Plan: WS 1, WS 2, WS 3, WS 4, WS 5, WS 8, WS 9, WS 10, WS 11, WS 14  Variation: Insertion of new policy WS	M2i: 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 County Development Plan as varied M2ii: Preparation of a Water Services Strategic Plan - in compliance with the Water Services Act - for the functional area of the Council
Failure to contribute towards sustainable transport and associated impacts	Current County Development Plan: ROADS 2, PED 1, PED 2, PED 3, PED 4, PED 5, PT 1, PT 2, RL 1, RL 2, RL 3, RL 4, RL 5, RL 6, RL 7, RL 8, BUS 1, BUS 2, BUS 3	C1: Percentage of population working within the County travelling to work by public transport or non-mechanical means
Effects on entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and other archaeological heritage	Current County Development Plan: HER 1, HER 5, ARC 1, ARC 2, ARC 5, ARC 6, ARC 9, ARC 10, ARC 11, ARC 12	CH1: Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places - including Zones of Archaeological Potential (and the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant) - protected
Effects on entries to the Records of Protected Structures and other architectural heritage	Current County Development Plan: HER 5, ARCH 6, RPS 1, RPS 2, RPS 3, RPS 4, RPS 5, RPS 6, ACA 1, ACA 2	CH2: Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures (and/or their context within the surrounding landscape where relevant) protected
Occurrence of adverse visual impacts	Current County Development Plan: HER 2, LCA 1, LCA 2, LCA 3	Number of complaints received from statutory consultees regarding avoidable impacts on the landscape - especially with regard to protected views and prospects and broad zones including lakes, rivers, canals and deciduous woodlands - which is granted permission under the County Development Plan as varied