

**Meath County Council (MCC)**

# Draft Variation No. 4 of Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening

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# 1. Introduction

Meath County Council (MCC) published the Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2021. The Meath CDP has been varied three times since its original publication- Variation No. 1 and Variation No. 2 to the CDP were published on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2024, and Variation No. 3 to the CDP was published on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2025.

The Meath CDP (as varied) sets out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for the development of the County over the plan period 2021-2027. It provides a positive vision for Meath which will enable the county to continue to make a significant contribution to national economic recovery by promoting sustainable development and facilitating stable economic growth thus delivering long term benefits for the citizens of the county. The Meath CDP (as varied) consists of four volumes:

- Volume 1 - Written Statement
- Volume 2 - Written Statement and Maps for Settlements
- Volume 3 – Book of Maps; and
- Volume 4 – Environmental Assessments.

Volume 2 of the current Meath CDP (as varied) contains a Written Statement for the Maynooth Environs. This Written Statement provides a brief description and development strategy for Maynooth Environs in County Meath. It should be noted that the Written Statement for the Maynooth Environs notes the intention of MCC to prepare a joint Local Area Plan, in conjunction with Kildare County Council (KCC), for the town during the life of the CDP.

In April 2025, MCC and KCC adopted a new Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) for the Maynooth and Environs area. The Joint LAP incorporates a framework for guiding the future development of transportation, housing, retail, heritage, employment, and social and community infrastructure in Maynooth. It should be noted that the Joint LAP was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

To ensure consistency of the Maynooth and Environs Joint LAP with the Meath CDP (as varied), MCC is preparing Variation No. 4 to the Meath CDP 2021-2027 (hereafter referred to as Variation No. 4) which would see the replacement of the Maynooth Written Statement with reference to the newly adopted Maynooth Joint LAP 2025-2031.

Arup has been commissioned by MCC to prepare a report for the purposes of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening with regards to Variation No. 4.

## 2. Variation No. 4 to the Meath CDP 2021- 2027

As previously outlined, MCC is preparing Variation No. 4 to the Meath CDP 2021-2027 which would see the replacement of the Maynooth Written Statement with reference to the newly adopted Maynooth Joint LAP 2025-2031. Variation No. 4 consists of the following:

- Proposed text update to Chapter 1 Introduction;
- Proposed text update to Chapter 2 Core Strategy;
- Proposed text update to Chapter 4 – Economic and Employment Strategy; and
- Replacement of Maynooth Written Statement in Volume 2.

## 3. SEA Screening

### 3.1 Legislative Overview

Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, (also known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive), requires that an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

In Ireland, the SEA Directive has been transposed into national legislation through ‘the SEA Regulations’:

- S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011); and
- S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

As the relevant plan relates to a Variation to the Meath CDP 2021-2027, S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended, is the applicable legislation.

Under Article 7 (13K) of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004) as amended by the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011), *“where a planning authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan, it shall.....consider whether or not the variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A.”*

Thus, MCC, as the planning authority, is required to determine whether the Variation No. 4 needs to be subject to SEA. This process is referred to as ‘SEA Screening.’

### 3.2 SEA Screening Methodology

SEA Screening is the process for determining whether a particular plan - or variation to a plan -, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA. Such a determination is required to take account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A, ‘Criteria for Determining Whether a Plan is Likely to Have Significant Effects on the Environment’ of the SEA Regulations, as amended, and submissions or observations from relevant environmental authorities.

The criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations is outlined below:

1. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to:
  - the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
  - the degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,
  - the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
  - environmental problems relevant to the plan,
  - the relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:
  - the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
  - the cumulative nature of the effects,
  - the transboundary nature of the effects,
  - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
  - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).
  - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
    - a. special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
    - b. exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
    - c. intensive land-use.
  - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

## 4. SEA Screening of Variation No. 4

Table 1 below sets out the criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations. A response to each of the individual criterion is also included in the context of Variation No. 4.

**Table 1 Criteria for Determining Whether a Plan is Likely to have Significant Effects on the Environment**

<b>Schedule 2A Criteria for Determining Whether a Plan is Likely to have Significant Effects on the Environment</b>	
<b>The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to:</b>	
The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	
Variation No. 4 consists of minor text changes and deletions to the CDP (as varied), including the removal of the Maynooth Written Statement. Variation No. 4 in and of itself does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development. Thus, it is considered that there is no degree to which Variation No. 4 sets a framework for projects and other activities, in and of itself.	
The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy	
Variation No. 4 will see changes made to the Meath CDP (as varied) which is the key planning document of the county; setting out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for its development over the plan period 2021-2027. While the Meath CDP does therefore influence other plans in MCCs planning hierarchy, the degree to which Variation No. 4, which is 'the plan' in question will influence other plans is not considered to be significant.  As previously discussed, Variation No. 4 consists of minor text changes and deletions to the CDP (as varied), including the removal of the Maynooth Written Statement. Variation No. 4 in and of itself does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development.	
The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	
Variation No. 4 has limited scope to integrate environmental considerations. As previously discussed, Variation No. 4 consists of minor text changes and deletions to the CDP (as varied), including the removal of the Maynooth Written Statement. Variation No. 4 in and of itself does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development.  It is worth noting that the Meath CDP (as varied) in its totality does contain detailed provisions for the sustainable development of the county. As Variation No. 4 refers out to the newly adopted Maynooth Joint LAP 2025-2031, it is also worth noting that the Maynooth and Environs Joint LAP contains detailed provisions for the sustainable development of Maynooth and Environs and has been subject to full SEA and AA.  However, Variation No. 4 itself has limited scope to integrate environmental considerations.	
Environmental problems relevant to the plan	
Variation No. 4 consists of minor text changes and deletions to the CDP (as varied), including the removal of the Maynooth Written Statement. Variation No. 4 in and of itself does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development. Thus, it is not considered that there are any environmental problems relevant to Variation No. 4.  It should be noted that the Maynooth and Environs Joint LAP, to which Variation No. 4 makes reference has been subject to full SEA in line with the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and full AA in line with Article 6 of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC.	
The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection)	
Variation No. 4 consists of minor text changes and deletions to the CDP (as varied), including the removal of the Maynooth Written Statement. Variation No. 4 in and of itself does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development. Variation No. 4 therefore has limited scope for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment.	
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>	
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,	
An environmental screening of the detailed provisions of Variation No. 4 is contained in Appendix A. Variation No. 4 is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.	
The cumulative nature of the effects,	
An environmental screening of the detailed provisions of Variation No. 4 is contained in Appendix A. Variation No. 4 is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment. As such, no likely cumulative effects are identified.	

Schedule 2A Criteria for Determining Whether a Plan is Likely to have Significant Effects on the Environment	
The transboundary nature of the effects,	An environmental screening of the detailed provisions of Variation No. 4 is contained in Appendix A. Variation No. 4 is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment. By extension, no likely transboundary effects are identified
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),	An environmental screening of the detailed provisions of Variation No. 4 is contained in Appendix A. Variation No. 4 is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment. By extension, no likely risks to human health or the environment are identified.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	An environmental screening of the detailed provisions of Variation No. 4 is contained in Appendix A. Variation No. 4 is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,</li> <li>• exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,</li> <li>• intensive land-use</li> </ul>
	An environmental screening of the detailed provisions of Variation No. 4 is contained in Appendix A. Variation No. 4 is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.	An environmental screening of the detailed provisions of Variation No. 4 is contained in Appendix A. Variation No. 4 is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment. By extension, no likely effects on areas or landscapes with national, EU or international protection status are identified.

## 5. Appropriate Assessment

The EU Habitats Directive, its transposing Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) provide the requirement to screen for effects on Natura 2000, or ‘European Sites’. These sites have been designated or proposed for designation by virtue of their ecological importance. If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant or uncertain then Appropriate Assessment (AA) must be undertaken.

Variation No. 4 was subject to a screening process in order to establish whether or not AA must be undertaken. The Screening for AA identified that the changes proposed in respect of Variation No. 4, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will not have a likely significant effect on European Sites.

Therefore, at this stage, AA is not required. Any proposed changes to Variation No. 4 will be subject to further Screening for AA.

As the land use zoning objectives contained in the existing Meath CDP (as varied) are not being affected by Variation No. 4, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is not required to be undertaken.



## 6. Conclusion

SEA Screening is the process for determining whether a particular plan - or Variation to a plan - other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA.

The purpose of the report is to evaluate the requirement for SEA to be undertaken on Variation No. 4 of the Meath CDP.

The assessment of Variation No. 4 provided in this report (including against the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations, as amended) has found that Variation No. 4 is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.

The Appropriate Assessment Screening undertaken on Variation No. 4 has likewise determined that no Appropriate Assessment is required in relation to Variation No. 4.

Therefore, on the basis of the above assessment, including consideration of the criteria as set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2011 (as amended), Variation No. 4 to the Meath CDP does not require full SEA.

# Appendix A

## Environmental Screening of Provisions of Variation No. 4<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Note:** Changes to the text are indicated in the table below as follows: New Text is in blue and deleted text will have a ~~strike through~~.

Meath CDP (as varied) Chapter:	Meath CDP (as varied) Section/Table/ Policy Objective/ Figure:	Proposed change:	Variation No. 4 to the Meath CDP (as varied):	Is there potential for significant negative effects on the environment?						
Chapter 1 - Introduction	Section 1.5 Table of Contents of the County Development Plan 2021- 2027	Update reference to Maynooth Environs Written Statement being replaced by Joint Local Area Plan.	<p><b><u>Proposed text update to Chapter 1 Introduction</u></b></p> <p><b>1.5 Table of Contents of the County Development Plan 2021-2027</b></p> <p>Volume 2 contains the Written Statements and maps for the settlements as follows:</p> <p><b>RATOATH MUNICIPAL DISTRICT</b></p> <table><tr><td>Dunboyne (&amp; Clonee)</td></tr><tr><td>Dunshaughlin</td></tr><tr><td>Kilcock Environs</td></tr><tr><td>Kilmessan</td></tr><tr><td><del>Maynooth Environs</del></td></tr><tr><td>Ratoath</td></tr></table>	Dunboyne (& Clonee)	Dunshaughlin	Kilcock Environs	Kilmessan	<del>Maynooth Environs</del>	Ratoath	No.  Variation No. 4 relates to minor text removal, does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development.  Thus, it is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.
Dunboyne (& Clonee)										
Dunshaughlin										
Kilcock Environs										
Kilmessan										
<del>Maynooth Environs</del>										
Ratoath										
	Section 1.5.1 Written Statements for Settlements in Meath	Remove reference to Joint Maynooth Local Area Plan.	<p>Proposed text update to Chapter 2 Core Strategy</p> <p>Focus of Growth in the Metropolitan Area</p> <p>Maynooth is identified as a Key Town in the Metropolitan area in the RSES. The RSES recognises the northern environs of Maynooth, which are located in Meath, as an important Draft Variation No. 4 of Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Page 7 of 9 location for economic and residential development that will support the future development of the town and the delivery of the Maynooth Outer Relief Road, which is a key piece of infrastructure in the sustainable growth of the town. A Joint Local Area Plan for Maynooth <del>is to be</del> <b>has been</b> prepared by Meath and Kildare County Councils. This Plan provides a co-ordinated framework for the future development of Maynooth.</p>	No.  Variation No. 4 relates to minor text removal and alteration. Variation No. 4 does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development.  Thus, it is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.						

Meath CDP (as varied) Chapter:	Meath CDP (as varied) Section/Table/ Policy Objective/ Figure:	Proposed change:	Variation No. 4 to the Meath CDP (as varied):	Is there potential for significant negative effects on the environment?
<b>Chapter 2 - Core Strategy</b>	Section 2.10.1 Focus of Growth in the Metropolitan Area	Update text to clarify that a Joint Local Area Plan for Maynooth has been prepared by Meath and Kildare County Councils.	<p><b><u>Proposed text update to Chapter 2 Core Strategy</u></b></p> <p><b>2.10.1 Focus of Growth in the Metropolitan Area</b></p> <p>Maynooth is identified as a Key Town in the Metropolitan area in the RSES. The RSES recognises the northern environs of Maynooth, which are located in Meath, as an important location for economic and residential development that will support the future development of the town and the delivery of the Maynooth Outer Relief Road, which is a key piece of infrastructure in the sustainable growth of the town. A Joint Local Area Plan for Maynooth <del>is to be</del> <b>has been</b> prepared by Meath and Kildare County Councils. This Plan provides a co-ordinated framework for the future development of Maynooth.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>Variation No. 4 relates to minor text removal and alteration. Variation No. 4 does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development.</p> <p>Thus, it is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.</p>
<b>Chapter 3 - Settlement and Housing Strategy</b>	Section 3.4.7 Key Towns	Update text to clarify that Meath and Kildare County Councils have prepared a Joint Local Area Plan for Maynooth.	<p><b><u>Proposed text update to Chapter 3 Settlement and Housing Strategy</u></b></p> <p><b>3.4.7 Key Towns</b></p> <p>‘.....In order to ensure a co-ordinated approach is undertaken to the future development of Maynooth Regional Policy Objective 4.35 of the RSES, <del>requires that</del> a Joint Local Area Plan <b>is has been</b> prepared by Meath and Kildare County Council. The Maynooth Environs lands <del>is will be</del> a focal point for employment and complementary residential uses. The development of these lands will facilitate the delivery of the Maynooth Outer Relief Road (MOOR) which is strongly supported in the RSES. This is a critical piece of infrastructure in the future growth and development of Maynooth.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>Variation No. 4 relates to minor text removal and alteration. Variation No. 4 does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development.</p> <p>Thus, it is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.</p>
<b>Chapter 4 – Economic and Employment Strategy</b>	Section 4.7.1.2 Maynooth	Update ED OBJ 14 to align with Objective MEO 1.1 and 1.2 in the Maynooth Joint LAP.	<p><b><u>Proposed text update to Chapter 4 – Economic and Employment Strategy</u></b></p> <p><b>ED OBJ 14:</b> It is a priority for the Council to deliver on the significant potential of the lands in the Maynooth Environs, a designated strategic employment site to create a unique employment hub centred on a high tech/bio tech campus within the lands, supported by a ‘live work’ community with a mixture of employment, residential, community, medical and tourism uses to be progressed following the preparation of Master Plans. Said Master Plans shall be agreed in writing with the Executive of Meath County Council in advance of the lodgement any <b>future p</b>lanning applications. This area can accommodate increased building height which shall be addressed as part of the Master Plans. (Please refer to Volume Maynooth Environs Written Statement for detailed requirements in respect of Master Plans).</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>Variation No. 4 relates to minor text removal and alteration. Variation No. 4 does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development.</p> <p>Thus, it is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.</p>

Meath CDP (as varied) Chapter:	Meath CDP (as varied) Section/Table/ Policy Objective/ Figure:	Proposed change:	Variation No. 4 to the Meath CDP (as varied):	Is there potential for significant negative effects on the environment?
<b>Volume 2 – Written Statement and Maps for Settlements</b>	Maynooth Environs	Removal of Maynooth Environs Written Statement and Maynooth Environs Combined Land Use Zoning Map. Replacement with link to newly adopted Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031. Maynooth Environs Land Use Map and Maynooth Environs Cultural and Natural Heritage Map will remain in place.	<p><b><u>Replacement of Maynooth Written Statement in Volume 2</u></b></p> <p>Removal and Replacement of Maynooth Written Statement in Volume 2 with the following text:</p> <p><i>Revoked and Replaced by Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025-3031.</i></p>	<p>No.</p> <p>Variation No. 4 relates to minor text removal and alteration. Variation No. 4 does not include any new provisions and will not result in any new development.</p> <p>Thus, it is not considered likely to give rise to any significant negative effects on the environment.</p>