

Determination of the Need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)



**Proposed Variation No. 3 of the Monaghan County Development Plan
2013 - 2019**

(Incorporation of Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets)

January 2016

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to consider whether or not the proposed variation No. 3 of the Monaghan County Development Plan (incorporating the Development Plans for the Towns of Monaghan, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Ballybay) 2013-2019, relating to the incorporation within the Development Plan of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The variation procedure will be carried out in accordance with Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Article 13K(1) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2004 (as amended) indicates the following:

Where a planning authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan under section 13 of the Act, it shall, before giving notice under section 13(2) of the Act, consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A.

2. Detail of the Proposed Variation

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) was jointly published by the Department of Environment Community and Local Government and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2013. DMURS provides guidance relating to the design of urban roads and streets, with the overall aim of making urban areas safer through a shift in dominance from motor vehicles to pedestrians. The provisions of this manual apply to urban areas with speed limits of 60kph and below, and supersede the standards set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges for these urban areas.

DMURS principles must be incorporated into policy documents, and all future urban developments must be set within the DMURS framework. Consequently, it is proposed to make a variation to the Monaghan County Development Plan to incorporate DMURS within it.

3. Environmental Impacts of Proposed Variation

A screening exercise has been carried out in accordance with Article 13K (1) of the SEA Regulations, taking into account the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations.

The factors considered in this screening process include the criteria laid down in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (See Appendix 1) and Task 1.2 of the EPA Synthesis Report.

DMURS represents a departure from the traditional approach to road traffic design which had a highly segregated, highly regulated and vehicle centred approach. It incorporates physical design measures to develop a strong sense of enclosure such as reduced road widths, tighter radii and lower visibility standards, frequent crossing points, traffic calming, minimal signage and road markings, and use of shared surfaces, to lower vehicle speeds and reduce collisions between vehicles and pedestrians. The design measures aim to induce enhanced driver awareness of vulnerable road users and to act on the psychology of drivers causing them to moderate their behaviour and speed.

It is considered that the incorporation of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets into the Development Plan would not result in significant environmental impacts as defined under the SEA Regulations. The application of the design standards in this manual will not diminish the effect of the existing policies regarding the protection of the environment.

4. Conclusion

A Strategic Environmental Assessment is not mandatory for the proposed variation no. 3 to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013 - 2019 (incorporating the Development Plans for the towns of Monaghan, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney and Clones) as it does not meet any of the criteria outlined in Schedule 2A which is included within Appendix 1 of this report. Through the screening process it has been established that there will not be any significant environmental effects due to the adoption of this variation. As a result, there is no requirement to proceed beyond the screening stage of the SEA process.

5. Recommendation

It is considered that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required for the adoption of the proposed variation no. 3 to the Monaghan County Development Plan 2013-2019 (incorporating the Development Plans for the Towns of Monaghan, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Ballybay).

Appendix 1

“SCHEDULE 2A

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A PLAN IS LIKELY TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Articles 13A, 13K and 14A

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.