

# MONAGHAN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2025 - 2031

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## Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement

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Monaghan County Council



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Unit 3/4, Northwood House, Northwood Crescent,  
Northwood, Dublin, D09 X899, Ireland

**T: +353 1 658 3500 | E: [info@ftco.ie](mailto:info@ftco.ie)**

**CORK | DUBLIN | CARLOW**

**[www.fehilytimoney.ie](http://www.fehilytimoney.ie)**

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### REVISION CONTROL TABLE, CLIENT, KEYWORDS AND ABSTRACT

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**Abstract:** Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement for the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025 - 2031.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025 - 2031 (the Plan or CDP). AA is required by the Habitats Directive, as transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act (as amended). Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act (as amended) requires that a statement is produced which summarises, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme subject to AA in order to avoid and prevent adverse effects on the integrity of European sites.

AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action (such as a plan or programme) or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of any European Site in view of its conservation objectives.

AA was undertaken for the Plan. This AA Conclusion Statement documents the AA process applied during the preparation of the Plan and should be read in conjunction with the Plan and associated documents including the Natura Impact Report (NIR) for the Plan.

### 1.2 Requirements in relation to AA Conclusion Statements

Guidelines entitled 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities' (2009) published by the then named Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government recommend that plan-making competent authorities include a clear and discrete AA Conclusion Statement as a distinct section in the written statement of the plan separate to the SEA Statement. These guidelines recommend that the following information is included in an AA Conclusion Statement:

- Summary of how the findings of the AA were factored into the plan (provided in Section 2 of this document).
- Reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives and impacts on European Sites considered as part of the AA process (provided in Section 3 of this document).
- A declaration that the plan as adopted will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site or sites (provided in Section 4 of this document).
- Copy of NIR (the NIR has been published alongside the AA Conclusion Statement and is available for review).



## 2. HOW THE FINDINGS OF THE AA WERE INTEGRATED INTO THE PLAN

### 2.1 Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Approach

The environmental assessment for the Plan undertaken was carried out in accordance with an Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment based methodology in accordance with EPA's guidance document entitled 'Final Report: Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment, Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes. Best Practice Guidance.' (2012).

The methodology employed facilitated the integration of SEA and AA processes relating to biodiversity impact assessment to ensure the effective and streamlined assessment of biodiversity impacts. The plan-making, SEA and AA processes - including scoping, baseline evaluation, impact assessment and mitigation/monitoring measure development processes - were carried out concurrently to facilitate holistic and complete assessment of biodiversity impacts. The effective communication and integration of scientific knowledge and analysis between assessments took place. The SEA was suitably informed by the analysis and conclusions in AA.

### 2.2 Mitigation through Integration of Environmental Considerations into the Plan

The plan making process was carried out in parallel with the SEA and AA processes. Regular communication and interaction took place between the environmental assessment team and the plan making team. Environmental considerations that came to light during the SEA and AA processes, including consultation processes, were regularly communicated to the plan making team during the plan making process. As necessary, environmental mitigation measures to ameliorate the potential negative environmental effects of implementing the CDP were developed and then integrated into the CDP. Much of the environmental mitigation was embedded in the plan early on in the process as a result of this. This process was carried out in an iterative manner to ensure optimal plan making and environmental outcomes. Environmental considerations were also integrated into the plan so as to facilitate maximizing identified positive environmental effects of the CDP.

Mitigation measures have been proposed that maximise the co-benefits of positive environmental action for other environmental components such as local air quality, human health, biodiversity, water quality and other interrelated areas (i.e., win-win solutions).

Environmental mitigation measures integrated into early iterations of the Plan to mitigate potential effects on European sites are presented in Table 2-1

Additional Environmental Mitigation Measures (additional objectives/policies) recommended to mitigate potential effects on European sites are presented in Table 2-2

Additional text clarifying environmental protection related obligations and environmental enhancement opportunities has been attached to various previously defined objectives/policies in the Plan. Such recommendations that serve to mitigate potential effects on European sites are presented in Table 2-3.



**Table 2-1: Embedded Environmental Mitigation**

Objective/Policy Reference	Objective/Policy
WPO 1	The protection of groundwater reserves in the Plan Area will have direct positive effects on population and human health, biodiversity, flora and fauna, water and soil. No interactions with other environmental receptors have been identified.
WPO 2	To support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the relevant River Basin Management Plan, and associated Programmes of Measures, or any such plans that may supersede same during the lifetime of the plan.
WPO 3	To contribute towards the protection of existing and potential water resources, and their use by humans and wildlife, including rivers, streams, groundwater and associated habitats and species in accordance with the requirements and guidance in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/EC), the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (SI No. 272 of 2009) (as amended), the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC and the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 9 of 2010) (as amended) and other relevant EU Directives, including relevant transposing regulations and policy guidance and any superseding versions of same).
WPO 6	To support the application and implementation of a catchment planning and management approach to development and conservation, including the implementation of Sustainable Drainage System techniques (SuDS) for new development.
WPO 8	To protect waterbodies and watercourses from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains. This will include protection buffers in riverine and wetland areas as appropriate.
FRMO 4	To protect rivers, streams, riparian corridors, flood plains and wetlands from inappropriate development which will contribute to increased flood risk.
SWDO 1	To promote and encourage the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems and Green-Blue Infrastructure in new developments including the public realm and retrofitted in existing developed areas, in line with National Policy Objective 57 of the National Planning Framework.
AQO 1	To promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air, to ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC) and Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011) (or any updated/superseding documents).
HCLSO 1	To promote and encourage the conservation and preservation of the County's natural environment, cultural heritage and amenities in accordance with legislation, plans and policies developed to specifically address these areas and to ensure a rich cultural landscape, healthy environment and the full provision of ecosystems services in the county.
HCLO 2	To contribute as appropriate towards the protection of designated sites in compliance with relevant EU Directives and applicable National Legislation.
HCLP 1	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 ).
HCLO 6	To ensure the preservation of the County's landscapes, by having regard to the character, value and sensitivity of the landscape as identified in the County Monaghan Landscape Character Assessment (2008), and any new or updated/subsequent versions, when considering planning applications.
HCLP 2	To protect the landscapes and natural environments of the County by ensuring that any new developments in designated sensitive rural landscapes do not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of the area. Any development which could unduly impact upon such landscapes shall be resisted.
HCLP 4	To resist development in or adjacent to any Natura 2000 site (SPA or SAC) where it would result in the deterioration of that habitat or any species reliant on it. The onus will be on the developer to



Objective/Policy Reference	Objective/Policy
	demonstrate that any such development will not adversely impact on the qualifying interest of such sites subject to the preparation of an appropriate assessment exercise under the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive.
HCLP 7	Any plan or projects that could have a significant adverse impact (either by themselves or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site will not be permitted.
SRP 1	To prohibit development that would disrupt or adversely affect a view from/along any scenic route as identified in Appendix 5 of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025 - 2031.
GIO 4	To contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, wetlands, rivers, streams, other landscape features and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.
TWP 2	To preserve trees and/or groups of trees that have a significant amenity value, and to designate Tree Preservation Orders where appropriate.
ISP 1	To ensure that development proposals do not lead to the spread of invasive species and to ensure that landscaping proposals do not include invasive species.
PMP 3	To protect the setting of archaeological sites and monuments which are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places in Appendix 4 (and any subsequent additions by the National Monuments Service) from being adversely impacted upon, co-operating with all of the recommendations of statutory bodies in the achievement of this objective.
TISO 1	To promote and facilitate a sustainable, efficient, and integrated transport system and ease of movement throughout County Monaghan by enhancing the existing and delivering new transport infrastructure in terms of road transport, public transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities, and by promoting more compact urban forms close to existing facilities to encourage more sustainable movement patterns and to reduce carbon emissions.
TO 4	To support the creation of an integrated and sustainable transport system to promote a choice of transport modes and low-carbon travel options, including public transport and transport sharing, cycling, and walking facilities, and through the provision of ancillary infrastructure that facilitates modal shift or improves user experiences.
TO 5	To optimise use of the County's transport infrastructure through projects, maintenance strategies and traffic management solutions to manage traffic appropriately, improve road safety, support sustainable mobility, improve climate resilience and reduce the impact of climate change on transportation in the County.
TO 7	To support transport options that provide for reductions in carbon emissions by facilitating the transition to lower emission fuels and energy sources, promoting public transport, walking, and cycling, and by actively seeking to reduce car use in circumstances where alternative options are available.
TO 8	To identify and develop projects that can deliver climate resilience, subject to funding and resources.
ATP 3	With reference to national, regional and local plans and strategies, develop over time an integrated network of high-quality Active Travel and recreational walking, wheeling and cycling routes with ancillary infrastructure that enhances and improves the user experience and comfort to create an environment where people are encouraged and supported to make a modal shift toward sustainable, low-carbon travel options for everyday journeys.
ATP 4	To encourage that all new developments are designed to integrate into an active travel network, linking with adjoining developments and institutions, providing cycle and pedestrian-friendly development layouts, infrastructure, and facilities. Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure shall be designed in accordance with DMURS and/or the NTA's Cycle Design Manual. The interface with the road network and connectivity to other local walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure will be considered as part of the design, and where appropriate proposals shall be included to mitigate or improve connectivity to the network as part of the development. Such proposals may include the payment of a contribution toward the cost of any required mitigation or improvement works.





Objective/Policy Reference	Objective/Policy
PTO 4	Support the creation of safe and appropriately located bus stops and ancillary facilities along the road network, and make provision for the safe and effective use of those facilities by passengers and bus service operators.
PTO 5	Support the development of an integrated public transport service through the development of bus depots, bus parking or bus waiting areas in appropriate locations and where a need has been identified.
PTO 6	Provide and support the development of Park and Ride facilities that support the dispersed population of County Monaghan to access public transport services.
PTO 7	Provide Park and Share facilities that can safely and efficiently allow people to opt for low-carbon travel options.
PTO 10	Where viable, to support the delivery (or development) of the infrastructure required to support cycle sharing or rental schemes.
PTO 11	Support the development of mobility hubs that can support and integrate a range of transport modes and can connect with other complementary facilities such as bus services, Park and Ride and/or Park and Share facilities.
CAO 3	To support and assist a shift to a low carbon society and a reduction in the dependence on fossil fuels in County Monaghan by implementing measures to deliver reduced energy use, energy efficiency, compact urban forms and sustainable transport patterns.
CAO 6	To support the implementation of the Monaghan County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 in consultation and partnership with stakeholders including the Eastern & Midlands Climate Action Regional Office (CARO).
GIP 1	Development proposals located within or adjacent to areas of Green Infrastructure shall incorporate any important biodiversity features into the overall development in a sustainable manner.
BHP 3	Planning permission for the demolition or inappropriate alteration of any protected structure shall not be granted except in exceptional circumstances and in accordance with Section 57(10)(b) of the Act 2000 (as amended).
PMPO 1	To safeguard and enhance archaeological monuments, town defences, medieval structures, historic graveyards, industrial heritage, battlefields, national monuments, and heritage sites that offer tangible historical evidence.
NPO 1	To promote the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006.
LP 1	To control lighting in urban and rural areas and in sensitive locations, in order to minimise impacts on residential amenity and habitats and species of importance.
LP 3	To require that lighting fixtures should provide only the amount of light necessary and should be designed to avoid creating glare or emitting light above a horizontal plane. Lighting fixtures should also have minimum environmental impact and protect light sensitive species such as bats.
EECSO 1	To afford a high level of environmental protection in County Monaghan through: the provision of quality environmental services which adhere to the precautionary principle. the adoption and application of the principles of sustainable development the promotion of reduced energy consumption, energy efficiency and renewable energy to deliver a low carbon future for County Monaghan, and the implementation of measures to reduce the human causes of climate change and to consider its effects when formulating development plan policies.
AQO 2	To contribute towards compliance with air quality legislation, greenhouse gas emission targets, management of noise levels, and reductions in energy usage.
HCLO 3	To recognise that nature conservation is not just confined to designated sites and acknowledge the need to protect non-designated habitats and landscapes, and to conserve their biological diversity and provide ecosystem services.



Objective/Policy Reference	Objective/Policy
HCLO 4	To support the implementation of any relevant recommendations contained in the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2020 - 2030, Heritage Ireland 2030, the All – Ireland Pollination Plan 2021 - 2025 and the National Peatlands Strategy and any new or updated/subsequent versions.
WPO 4	To encourage the use of catchment-sensitive farming practices, in order to meet Water Framework Directive targets and comply with the relevant River Basin Management Plan.
WPO 7	To encourage collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including government departments, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Irish Farmers Association with the aim of facilitating sustainable development related to intensive farming.
WMO 4	To encourage best environmental practice in all agricultural, industry, business and local authority activities.
AGFO 2	To control, through the development management process and the relevant environmental legislation, effluent spreading on land in order to protect ground and surface water sources in the County. Developers are required to comply with relevant Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Guidelines and the Nitrates Regulations in this regard.
HCLO 1	To implement in partnership with all relevant stakeholders the objectives and actions detailed within the Monaghan Biodiversity and Heritage Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025 and any new or updated/subsequent versions.
FRMO 1	To fully implement and support, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works, the provisions of the EU Flood Risk Directive, The Flood Risk Regulations, The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) and any updated legislation or guidelines issued during this plan period.
TMO 17	To work in conjunction with adjoining local authorities to extend and design new walking and cycling routes that will promote sustainable tourism development and enhance access and links to the great outdoors of Monaghan.
TO 1	To support the delivery of EU, national, regional and local plans, strategies and policies in relation to supporting development and transport objectives and climate actions by developing transport plans and projects, protecting identified transport projects from development that could prejudice their future delivery, and protect existing transport routes from development that could reduce their efficiency or contribution to those plans or policies.
ISO 1	To support, as appropriate, the National Parks and Wildlife Service's efforts to seek to control and manage the spread of non-native invasive species on land and water. Where the presence of non-native invasive species is identified at the site of any proposed development or where the proposed activity has an elevated risk of resulting in the presence of these species, details of how these species will be managed and controlled will be required.
TO 4	To support the creation of an integrated and sustainable transport system to promote a choice of transport modes and low-carbon travel options, including public transport and transport sharing, cycling, and walking facilities, and through the provision of ancillary infrastructure that facilitates modal shift or improves user experiences.
TO 5	To optimise use of the County's transport infrastructure through projects, maintenance strategies and traffic management solutions to manage traffic appropriately, improve road safety, support sustainable mobility, improve climate resilience and reduce the impact of climate change on transportation in the County.
TO 6	To protect, improve and invest in our national, regional, and local roads and to safeguard the strategic transport links to and from urban centres which are identified as key economic drivers in the region.
TP 5	To develop and implement strategies and projects to optimise the operation and maintenance of the Regional and Local Road network in line with available resources and priorities, including improvement works, road resurfacing and surface maintenance, bridge replacements, upgrades and repairs, signage, road markings, footpaths, public lighting, and traffic management facilities to improve road safety and traffic management, with a focus on critical infrastructure routes, strategic routes or roads carrying higher volumes of traffic.



Objective/Policy Reference	Objective/Policy
TP 6	Subject to funding and resources, design and implement projects and traffic management solutions to manage traffic appropriately, improve road safety, support sustainable mobility, improve climate resilience and reduce the impact of climate change on transportation in the County.
HCLO 7	To co-operate with adjoining local authorities north and south of the Border, to ensure that the natural environment is maintained in a sustainable manner, to encourage a collaborative and consistent policy approach with adjoining areas on matters of environmental and landscape protection, and to identify threats to the integrity of such sites through a transboundary approach.
HCLO 8	To contribute towards the protection of County and local level landscape designations from incompatible developments.
WWO 1	To support and co-operate with Uisce Éireann, as appropriate, to deliver a sustainable water supply in line with the objectives set out in the Core Strategy.
WWO 2	To co-operate with Uisce Éireann in order to identify, prioritise and advance the delivery of water and waste water projects throughout the County during the Development Plan period.
WWP 1	To only permit development in instances where there is sufficient capacity in the public water and wastewater infrastructure.
WMO 8	To require that treatment/management of any contaminated material shall comply as appropriate with the Waste Management Act 1996 (waste licence, waste facility permit) and under the Environmental Protection Act 1992 (Industrial Emissions licensing, in particular the First Schedule, Class 11 Waste).
TO 3	To promote sustainable land use planning to facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public and active transport throughout the County.

**Table 2-2: Additional Environmental Mitigation Measures**

Objective / Policy Reference	Objective / Policy
NO 2	Ensure development design considers noise alleviation measures, where appropriate, to reduce noise and vibration impacts on surrounding amenities, particularly residential amenity and other noise sensitive locations (e.g., places of worship, healthcare facilities).
ATIP 14	Ensure that traffic noise levels are considered as part of new developments along major roads in accordance with best practice guidelines.
ATIP 15	Apply the provisions of the County Noise Action Plan to protect the designated 'Quiet Areas' within the Plan Area from increased exposure to noise.
HCLO 17	Promote and encourage planting of native hedgerow species in new developments and as part of the Council's own landscaping works.



Objective / Policy Reference	Objective / Policy
HCLO 16	To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, where appropriate, and take account of their views and any licensing requirements, when undertaking, approving or authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.
CAO 14	Promote the use of construction materials that have low to zero embodied energy and CO2 emissions.
HCLO 18	A Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be prepared and implemented for all development projects, where appropriate, that may give rise to significant, adverse construction related environmental effects.
ATIP 17	A Mobility Management Plan shall be prepared for all major development in the county, where appropriate.
HCLO 15	To consult with, as appropriate, the Inland Fisheries Ireland in relation to any development that could have a potential impact on the aquatic ecosystems and associated riparian habitats.
HCLP 10	The effects of agriculture related air pollution on habitats and species shall be considered by the Planning Authority when deciding on planning applications for significantly scaled agriculture development proposals. Where necessary, Applicants shall be asked to provide appropriate supporting air dispersion modelling and ecological assessment - completed in accordance with relevant guidelines - confirming proposals will not generate adverse effects on protected species or designated sites in Ireland or Northern Ireland.

**Table 2-3: Amendments to Pre-existing Plan Objectives/Policies**

Objective / Policy Reference	Objective / Policy	Amendment
SO 7	To prepare and implement a Masterplan and Development Framework for Lough Muckno and its environs, which will act as a blueprint for its evolution and sustainable development as an exemplar recreational and amenity facility.	To prepare and implement a Masterplan and Development Framework for Lough Muckno and its environs, which will act as a blueprint for its evolution and sustainable development as an exemplar recreational and amenity facility - <b>having due regard to constraints and sensitivities associated with the area and relevant environmental protection requirements.</b>
HSO 3	To encourage and promote the re-use of vacant units for residential use subject to compatibility with existing and proposed surrounding uses.	To encourage and promote the re-use of vacant units for residential use subject to compatibility with existing and proposed surrounding uses - <b>whilst also having due regard to the need to not adversely affect: surrounding residential amenity, protected bat species, European sites, and areas of biodiversity value; and the need to appropriately conserve built heritage.</b>
RTO 6	To encourage reuse of derelict sites and vacant town centre commercial premises for alternative uses and adapt a flexible approach	To encourage reuse of derelict sites and vacant town centre commercial premises for <b>appropriate and acceptable</b> alternative uses, and adapt a flexible approach to reoccupation,



Objective / Policy Reference	Objective / Policy	Amendment
	to reoccupation, particularly where this can complement the existing service base.	particularly where this can complement the existing service base - whilst also having due regard to the need to not adversely affect: surrounding residential amenity, protected bat species, European sites, and areas of biodiversity value; and the need to appropriately conserve built heritage.
TMO 3	To support potential tourist and amenity attractions of scale in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and other relevant authorities.	To support potential tourist and amenity attractions of scale in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and other relevant authorities - having due regard to the existing character, sense of place, distinctive features and environmental constraints and sensitivities of the Plan Area.
CFO 15	To promote and facilitate the development of walkways, cycleways and recreational routes in appropriate locations throughout the County, in accordance with the objectives of the County Walking and Cycling Strategy 2021-2026 and any updated or subsequent strategy document.	To promote and facilitate the sustainable development of walkways, cycleways and recreational routes in appropriate locations throughout the County, in accordance with the objectives of the County Walking and Cycling Strategy 2021-2026 and any updated or subsequent strategy document - having due regard to relevant environmental considerations, including the need to protect and enhance biodiversity, prevent habitat fragmentation, and maintain and enhance ecological connectivity.
CFO 16	To promote and encourage the development of walks and cycle ways in accordance with the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP), Department of Transport, 2022 and to protect established routes from development which would adversely impact upon them.	To promote and encourage the sustainable development of walks and cycle ways in accordance with the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP), Department of Transport, 2022 and to protect established routes from development which would adversely impact upon them.
GIP 2	Any development which impacts on the integrity of existing Green Infrastructure shall be resisted, an exception to this may be where compensatory features can be provided.	Any development which impacts on the integrity of existing Green Infrastructure shall be resisted, an exception to this may be where compensatory features comprising native species can be provided.
TWP 1	To minimise loss of tree(s) and hedgerow associated with any development proposal and encourage the retention of existing mature trees, hedgerows and woodlands in new developments. Where removal is unavoidable consideration should be given to transplanting trees and/or providing compensatory planting on the site.	To minimise loss of tree(s) and hedgerow associated with any development proposal and encourage the retention of existing mature trees, hedgerows and woodlands in new developments. Where removal is unavoidable consideration should be given to transplanting and/or providing compensatory planting of native tree species on the site.
TO 3	To promote sustainable land use planning to facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public and active transport throughout the County.	To promote sustainable land use planning, having due regard to existing constraints and environmental sensitivities and relevant environmental protection requirements, to facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public and active transport throughout the County.
TP 5	To develop and implement strategies and projects to optimise the operation and maintenance of the Regional and Local Road network in line with available resources and priorities, including improvement works, road resurfacing and surface maintenance, bridge replacements, upgrades and repairs, signage, road markings, footpaths, public lighting, and traffic management facilities to improve road safety and traffic management, with a focus on critical infrastructure routes, strategic	To develop and implement strategies and projects to optimise the operation and maintenance of the Regional and Local Road network in line with available resources and priorities, including improvement works, road resurfacing and surface maintenance, bridge replacements, upgrades and repairs, signage, road markings, footpaths, public lighting, and traffic management facilities to improve road safety and traffic management, with a focus on critical infrastructure routes, strategic routes or roads carrying higher volumes of traffic, and



Objective / Policy Reference	Objective / Policy	Amendment
	routes or roads carrying higher volumes of traffic.	in accordance with all relevant environmental protection requirements, including conservation requirements.
LRP 1	To prioritise improvement works at locations where road safety and traffic management issues can be addressed, including specific works at junctions, at bridges, signage, road markings, footpaths, public lighting, and traffic management facilities, subject to available resources.	To prioritise improvement works at locations where road safety and traffic management issues can be addressed, including specific works at junctions, at bridges, signage, road markings, footpaths, public lighting, and traffic management facilities, subject to available resources, and in accordance with all relevant environmental protection requirements, including conservation requirements.
ATIP 3	To support the development of infrastructure for Renewable Transport Fuel	To support the development of infrastructure for Renewable Transport Fuel - having due regard for the need for interoperability, requirements of Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Regulations and all relevant health and safety considerations.
WSP 1	To prepare an annual Winter Maintenance Plan to maintain a clearly defined network of priority traffic routes in a passable manner in adverse winter conditions, subject to resource availability.	To prepare an annual Winter Maintenance Plan to maintain a clearly defined network of priority traffic routes in a passable manner in adverse winter conditions, subject to resource availability. Best available methods should be adopted to ensure Winter Maintenance activities do not generate significant adverse environmental effects.
WWO 2	To co-operate with Uisce Éireann in order to identify, prioritise and advance the delivery of water and waste water projects throughout the County during the Development Plan period.	To co-operate with Uisce Éireann in order to identify, prioritise and advance the delivery of appropriately designed water and waste water projects at appropriate locations, having due regard to the existing constraints and environmental sensitivities and relevant protections, throughout the County during the Development Plan period.
REO 2	To prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy for the County over the lifetime of this plan and subject to the availability of resources.	To prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy for the County over the lifetime of this plan and subject to the availability of resources. Such a Strategy shall be shaped and informed by environmental considerations, constraints and sensitivities relevant to the Plan Area - including biodiversity, European sites, and landscape and visual amenity related designations.
SSO 12	To designate development envelopes around the towns and Tier 4 villages in order to manage development in a sustainable manner and restrict urban sprawl and the merging of distinctive areas.	To designate development envelopes around the towns and Tier 4 villages in order to manage development in a sustainable manner and restrict urban sprawl and the merging of distinctive areas - having due regard to environmental constraints and sensitivities.
URO 5	To support the preparation and implementation of Town Centre First Plans in accordance with the Town Centre First Policy.	To support the preparation and implementation of Town Centre First Plans in accordance with the Town Centre First Policy - having due regard to the protection of biodiversity and protected species, and the need to conserve/enhance built heritage (including protected structures and historic fabric) and townscape/streetscape.
CMO 79	To facilitate the provision of a Park and Ride facility at an appropriate location subject to planning criteria, within the lifetime of the plan.	To facilitate the provision of a Park and Ride facility at an appropriate location subject to relevant planning and environmental criteria, within the lifetime of the plan.
CMO 17	To investigate the potential to develop and expand facilities at Lisanisk Lake during the lifetime of the plan.	To investigate the potential to develop and expand facilities at Lisanisk Lake in a sensitive manner with appropriate planning and environmental considerations during the lifetime of the plan.
MTO 14	To support festivals and events and to encourage the delivery of increased bed	To support sustainable and well-planned festivals and events and to encourage the delivery of increased bed nights in suitable locations in Monaghan Town.



Objective / Policy Reference	Objective / Policy	Amendment
	nights in suitable locations in Monaghan Town.	
CBO 10	To prepare and implement a Masterplan and Development Framework for Lough Muckno and its environs which will act as a blueprint for its evolution as an exemplar recreational and amenity facility.	To prepare and implement a Masterplan and Development Framework for Lough Muckno and its environs, which will act as a blueprint for its evolution and sustainable development as an exemplar recreational and amenity facility - <b>having due regard to constraints and sensitivities associated with the area and relevant environmental protection requirements.</b>



### 3. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

#### 3.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of reasonable Plan alternatives considered during the plan-making processes. The environmental effects of reasonable alternative, including effects on biodiversity and European sites, were considered when choosing the preferred Plan.

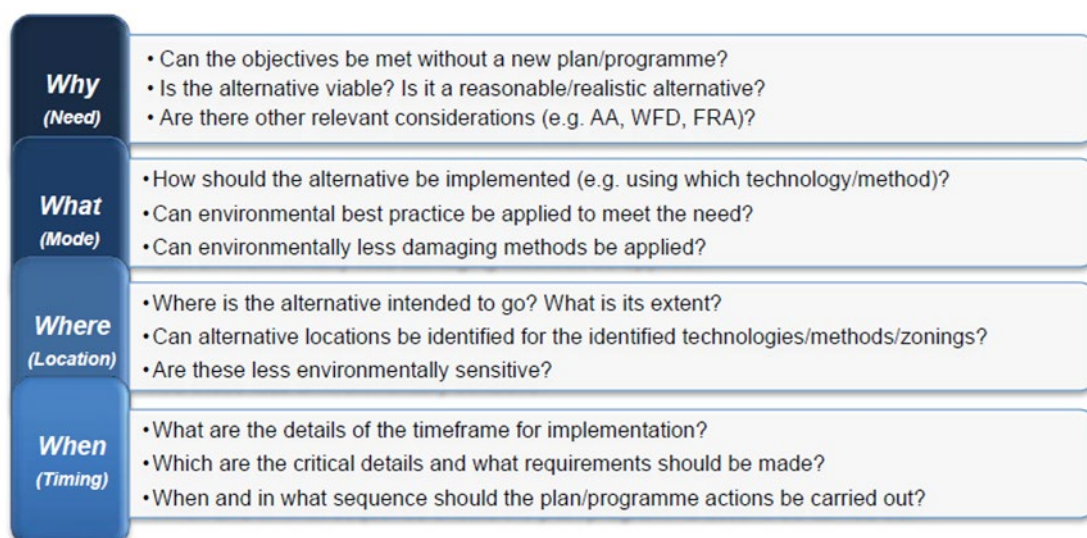
#### 3.2 Approach to Developing Reasonable Alternatives

A range of alternatives to the Plan were considered during the Plan-development process. The approach for identifying reasonable alternatives to the Plan is defined below:

1. Iterative communication was held between the Plan-development and environmental assessment teams to identify the various alternative approaches and options being considered to achieve the Strategic Aim and Objectives of the Plan.
2. Reasonable alternatives considered were identified. For an alternative to be considered reasonable, it must be practical/functional, realistic and implementable. An evaluation of whether each alternative was practical/functional, reasonable and implementable took place. This evaluation considered the following factors:
  - The strategic aim and objectives of the Plan.
  - The geographic scope of the Plan.
  - The actual powers and functions of the Local Authority.
  - The genuine ability of the alternative to achieve the Plan aims and objectives.
  - The technical feasibility of the alternative.
  - The availability of resources, including financial resources to deliver the Plan within the required timeframe.
  - The policy hierarchy and the parameters placed around the Plan by higher-level policy.
  - The legislative context and the parameters placed around the Plan by climate action and environmental related legislation.

The toolkit contained in the EPA's guidelines entitled 'Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment Good Practice Guidance' (2015) was utilized when identifying reasonable alternatives. The 'Why? What? Where? When?' Model defined in the guidelines were used when framing reasonable alternatives, as shown in Figure 3.1.





**Figure 3-1: 'Why? What? Where? When?' Model for framing alternatives - Adapted from Figure 4.3 Developing and Assessing Alternatives in the Strategic Environmental Assessment Process (EPA, 2015).**

### 3.3 Identification and Description of Reasonable Alternatives

Reasonable alternatives to the Plan were identified. A description of these reasonable alternatives and the reasons for selecting these reasonable alternatives are presented in Tables 3-1 and 3-2.

A 'Do Nothing' or 'Do Minimum' alternative was not a reasonable alternative in this instance as the preparation a Plan is a statutory requirement in this instance under Section 9(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

**Table 3-1: Reasonable Alternatives considered during the Plan-making Process**

Theme	Description of Reasonable Alternatives
Planning for development at Lough Muckno at its environs	Alternative 1: Using the County Development Plan land use planning framework to provide for and control planning and development at Lough Muckno and its environs.
	Alternative 2: Preparing and utilising a focused Masterplan and Development Framework, which would sit under the CDP, to provide for and control planning and development at Lough Muckno and its environs.
Approach to Rural Development and Settlement Development	Alternative 1: Ad Hoc Rural Development and Settlement Expansion - Presumption in favour of rural housing throughout the County and settlements expanding beyond existing built up footprint (mainly greenfield development).
	Alternative 2: Managed Rural Development and Settlement Expansion - Presumption against rural housing in pressure areas only (justification required) with settlements expanding beyond existing built up footprint (mainly greenfield development).
	Alternative 3: Managed Rural Development and Settlement Consolidation - Presumption against rural housing in pressure areas only (justification required) with settlement growth contained within existing built up footprint (mainly brownfield development).
	Alternative 4: Controlled Rural Development and Settlement Expansion - Presumption against rural housing throughout the County (justification required) with settlements expanding beyond existing built up footprint (mainly greenfield development).



Theme	Description of Reasonable Alternatives
	Alternative 5: Controlled Rural Development and Settlement Consolidation - Presumption against rural housing throughout the County (justification required) with settlement growth contained within existing settlement built up footprint (mainly brownfield development).
	Alternative 6: Ad Hoc Rural Development and Settlement Expansion - Presumption in favour of rural housing throughout the County and settlements expanding beyond existing built up footprint (mainly greenfield development).
Level of Residential Land Use Zoning in Clones	Alternative 1: No change to Residential land use zoning in Clones.
	Alternative 2: Change to Residential land use zoning in Clones.
Industry/Enterprise/Employment Zoning in Castleblayney and Ballybay	Alternative 1: Change of Industry/Enterprise/Employment land use zoning at peripheral areas of the settlement.
	Alternative 2: Retention of Industry/Enterprise/Employment land use zoning at peripheral areas of the settlement.
Noise Alleviation	Alternative 1: Continue to rely on Noise Alleviation objectives previously defined in the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 - 2025.
	Alternative 2: Augment Noise Alleviation objectives - improving the focus and specificity of these objectives.

### 3.4 Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives and Reasons for Choosing the Preferred Plan

An evaluation of the potential effects of the reasonable alternatives on the baseline environment was carried out in accordance with the SEA Directive and best practice guidelines. This evaluation is documented in the SEA Environmental Report for the Plan. AA considerations were taken into account during this evaluation process. A summary of this evaluation and the reason for choosing the preferred Plan is presented in Table 3-2.



**Table 3-2: Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives**

Theme	Reasonable Alternative	Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives	Preferred Alternative
Planning for development at Lough Muckno at its environs	Alternative 1: Using the County Development Plan land use planning framework to provide for and control planning and development at Lough Muckno and its environs.	<p>Lough Muckno covers a wide geographical area and includes various attributes such as lakeland habitats, woodlands / recreational areas and protected structures and given its environmental attributes, its size, characteristics and features, it is of great importance to County Monaghan and the wider region.</p> <p>Using the CDP land use planning framework to provide for and control planning and development at Lough Muckno and its environs has the potential to generate a range of positive environmental effects across various environmental components. Appropriate environmental mitigation was incorporated into the CDP to support environmental enhancement, and avoid, prevent and offset as far as possible adverse environmental associated with the implementation of the Plan.</p> <p>It was agreed that a Masterplan would be more suitable to sensitively address all features contained within this area. A Masterplan would set clear and area-specific policy and objectives to address any development in a sustainable, appropriately managed and balanced manner. Such a Masterplan shall be subject to SEA and AA, which would serve to define a framework of environmental protection measures specific to the area. A Strategic Objective to provide a Masterplan for Lough Muckno was therefore included in the CDP.</p>	Alternative 2.
	Alternative 2: Preparing and utilising a focused Masterplan and Development Framework, which would sit under the CDP, to provide for and control planning and development at Lough Muckno and its environs.		
Approach to Rural Development and Settlement Development	Alternative 1: Ad Hoc Rural Development and Settlement Expansion - Presumption in favour of rural housing throughout the County and settlements expanding beyond existing built up footprint (mainly greenfield development).	<p>It was determined that the Managed Rural Development and Settlement Consolidation was the most favourable alternative - having regard to positive and negative environmental effects associated with the various alternatives considered.</p> <p>This alternative would facilitate appropriately located and scaled rural development in areas not designated as pressure areas. Well-balanced rural development has the potential to generate positive effects on a number Population and Human Health elements e.g., rural communities, local cultural heritage, rural economic activity and growth - whilst ensuring an appropriate level of environmental management and protection.</p> <p>Settlement Consolidation aligns with compact growth principles defined under the NPF and has lesser potential to generate the</p>	Alternative 3.
	Alternative 2: Managed Rural Development and Settlement Expansion - Presumption against rural housing in pressure areas only (justification required) with settlements expanding beyond existing built up footprint (mainly greenfield development).		



Theme	Reasonable Alternative	Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives	Preferred Alternative
	<p>Alternative 3: Managed Rural Development and Settlement Consolidation - Presumption against rural housing in pressure areas only (justification required) with settlement growth contained within existing built up footprint (mainly brownfield development).</p> <p>Alternative 4: Controlled Rural Development and Settlement Expansion - Presumption against rural housing throughout the County (justification required) with settlements expanding beyond existing built up footprint (mainly greenfield development).</p> <p>Alternative 5: Controlled Rural Development and Settlement Consolidation - Presumption against rural housing throughout the County (justification required) with settlement growth contained within existing settlement built up footprint (mainly brownfield development).</p> <p>Alternative 6: Ad Hoc Rural Development and Settlement Expansion - Presumption in favour of rural housing throughout the County and settlements expanding beyond existing built up footprint (mainly greenfield development).</p>	<p>adverse environmental effects associated with expansive settlement referenced above. In addition, this approach supports sustainable land use and transportation and would promote the sustainable provision and optimised utilisation of Material Assets.</p> <p>Adopting the Managed Rural Development and Settlement Consolidation alternative would provide an appropriately balanced land use framework in the County. This preferred alternative had the potential to generate the greatest magnitude of positive environmental effects across environmental components, whilst ensuring rural development and settlement development will be managed and controlled in an appropriate manner that does not contribute to unsustainable land use patterns or increase the scale and magnitude of possible development related environmental effects in the Plan Area.</p>	



Theme	Reasonable Alternative	Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives	Preferred Alternative
Level of Residential Land Use Zoning in Clones	Alternative 1: No change to Residential land use zoning in Clones.	<p>During the course of the Plan-making process, MCC conducted a review of pre-existing land use zoning in Clones. MCC considered the following alternative options for Residential land use zoning in the town:</p> <p>Retaining pre-existing Residential zoning in the town - considering the need for settlement consolidation and settlement growth aspirations.</p> <p>Changing Residential zoning in the town - to avoid potential effects on sensitive environmental features at certain lands, and to ensure settlement consolidation is more compact.</p> <p>Sensitive environmental features were identified at lands in Clones previously zoned for Residential land use, including:</p> <p>The presence of the bird species Snipe at land zoned for Residential land use in the town.</p> <p>Land that are elevated and where a Protected Monument (Ref: MO011-011) is located on site.</p> <p>Thus, it was decided to change Residential zoning at the relevant lands in the town, as follows:</p> <p>Lands which contained sensitive environmental features, or which were subject to flood risk were re-zoned for Landscape Protection/Conservation.</p> <p>The serviced brownfield site was re-zoned for Residential land use so as to compensate for the reduction in the level of Residential land use zoning in the town and to promote appropriate compact growth and town regeneration.</p> <p>It was concluded that the preferred alternative has the potential to generate a variety of more positive environmental outcomes by comparison to the alternative of not changing Residential land use zoning in town.</p>	Alternative 2.
	Alternative 2: Change to Residential land use zoning in Clones.		



Theme	Reasonable Alternative	Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives	Preferred Alternative
Industry/Enterprise/Employment Zoning in Castleblayney and Ballybay	<p>Alternative 1: Change of Industry/Enterprise/Employment land use zoning at peripheral areas of the settlement.</p> <p>Alternative 2: Retention of Industry/Enterprise/Employment land use zoning at peripheral areas of the settlement.</p>	<p>A number of lands at the periphery of Castleblayney and Ballybay were previously zoned for Industry/Enterprise/Employment land use. MCC determined that a sufficient level of land was zoned for Industry/Enterprise/Employment at locations closer to the town centres of Castleblayney and Ballybay, however.</p> <p>MCC decided to change the zoning at the subject lands at the periphery of these settlements. The Industry/Enterprise/Employment land use zoning was removed at these lands. Environmental assessment informed the selection of the preferred alternative in this instance.</p>	Alternative 1.
Noise Alleviation	<p>Alternative 1: Continue to rely on Noise Alleviation objectives previously defined in the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 - 2025.</p> <p>Alternative 2: Augment Noise Alleviation objectives - improving the focus and specificity of these objectives.</p>	<p>The pre-existing CDP for the Plan Area provided for development-related noise mitigation measures that are extensive and general in nature, promoting compliance with Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and all associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006.</p> <p>During this Plan-making process, MCC considered continuing to rely on these general noise related objectives/mitigation measures relevant to development planning, or alternatively, augmenting noise-related mitigation, adding a greater degree of focus and specificity - to better focus noise alleviation considerations during the development planning process.</p> <p>MCC decided to augment noise mitigation measures defined in the CDP. The following noise-related objectives were therefore included in the CDP to augment pre-existing noise-related mitigation:</p> <p>NO 2 ATIP 14 ATIP 15</p>	Alternative 1.



## 4. AA CONCLUSION

A report to inform AA Screening was completed for the CDP. The purpose of this report was to identify whether the implementation of the CDP has the potential to have likely, significant effects on the integrity of European sites, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

It was concluded that the Plan was likely to have significant effects on 13 European sites forming part of the Natura 2000 network (in the absence of mitigation), either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. These European sites are as follows:

- Kilroosky Lough Cluster SAC (site code: 001786)
- Slieve Beagh SPA (site code: 004167)
- Magheravealy Marl Loughs SAC (site code: UK0016621)
- Slieve Beagh SAC (site code: UK0016622)
- Upper Lough Erne SPA (site code: UK9020071 )
- Slieve Beagh-Mullaghfad-Lisnaskea SPA (site code: UK9020302)
- Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (site code: 000007)
- Upper Lough Erne SAC (site code: UK0016614)
- Lough Oughter SPA (site code: 004049)
- Dundalk Bay SPA (site code: 004026)
- Dundalk Bay SAC (site code: 000455)
- Stabannan-Braganstown SPA (site code: 004091)
- Donegal Bay SPA (site code: 004151)

The CDP provides a land use planning framework for the Plan Area of County Monaghan and supports various types of development, including housing and transport development. The implementation of CDP policies and objectives, which are supportive of various forms of development, have the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites from the following: loss/reduction of habitat area; habitat or species fragmentation; disturbance to key species; reduction in species density; changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.); and climate change.

MCC therefore determined that AA of the CDP is required and that a Natura Impact Report should be prepared for the CDP.

An NIR was produced for the Draft CDP. The NIR considered the potential for the Draft CDP to adversely affect the integrity of European sites, with regard to their Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests. The Draft CDP was informed by the NIR. Mitigation measures were integrated into the Draft CDP that mitigate its potential effects on any European Site. The NIR concluded that the Draft CDP would not give rise to any adverse effects on European Sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.



Material Alterations to the Draft CDP were made following a review of the issues raised during a period of prescribed public consultation period for the Draft CDP. Further Amendments to these Material Alterations were made following the review of the issues raised during a further period of prescribed public consultation on the Material Alterations. Further AA was carried out on the amendments to the Plan, as necessary. It was assessed however that the environmental mitigation measures integrated into the Plan will prevent Plan implementation giving rise to potential adverse effects on European sites due to the implementation of the Plan, inclusive of all its amendments.

A consolidated NIR was produced for the CDP. This consolidated NIR concluded the following:

- The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and conservation objectives of the European Sites have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of adverse effects in the first place and mitigate adverse effects where these cannot be avoided. In addition, all lower-level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Draft CDP will themselves be subject to AA when further details of design and location are known.
- In-combination effects from interactions with other plans and projects was considered in the assessment and the mitigation measures incorporated into the plan are seen to be robust to ensure there will be no adverse effects as a result of the implementation of the Draft CDP either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects.
- Having incorporated mitigation measures, it is concluded that the plan will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species, for which these sites have been designated.





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