

SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

APPENDIX IV – NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

FOR
RELEVANT PROPOSED MATERIAL ALTERATIONS

TO THE
**DRAFT DUNDALK LOCAL AREA PLAN
2024-2030**

for: **Louth County Council**



Comhairle Contae Lú
Louth County Council

by: **CAAS Ltd.**



DECEMBER 2024

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Section 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

This is the Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report for relevant Proposed Material Alterations to the Dundalk Draft Local Area Plan (LAP) 2024-2030. The purpose of the Environmental Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the Proposed Material Alterations. The Environmental Report has been prepared as part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process for the Proposed Material Alterations.

The Proposed Material Alterations were screened for the need to undertake SEA. Certain Proposed Material Alterations were determined as requiring full SEA. The SEA Screening Determination accompanies the SEA main SEA Environmental Report and the Proposed Material Alterations document. Appendix III to the main SEA Environmental Report comprises the SEA Screening Report that was prepared to inform the SEA Screening Determination.

What is 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 SEA needed? The Benefits

SEA is the Council's and the public's guide to what are generally the best areas for development in the town.

SEA enables the Council to direct development towards robust, well-serviced and connected areas in the town – thereby facilitating the general avoidance of incompatible development in the most sensitive, least well-serviced and least well-connected areas, in the town and beyond.

SEA provides greater certainty to the public and to developers. Plans are more likely to be adopted without delays or challenges and planning applications are more likely to be granted permission. Environmental mitigation is more likely to cost less.

The Draft Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate, directs incompatible development away from the most sensitive areas in the town and focuses on directing compact, sustainable development within the existing envelope of the Plan area. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the town will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation.

Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the town to become a more desirable place to live – so that it maintains populations and services.

Compatible sustainable development in the town's sensitive areas is also provided for, subject to various requirements relating to environmental protection and management being met.

Difficulties Encountered during the SEA process

No significant difficulties have been encountered during the undertaking of the assessment to date.

What happens at the end of the process?

The SEA Environmental Report prepared for the Draft Plan will be finalised in advance of adoption of the Plan taking into account, among other things, the content of the SEA Environmental Report for the Proposed Material Alterations to which this Non-Technical Summary relates. An SEA Statement will also be prepared which will summarise, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan.

Section 2 The Draft Plan and associated Proposed Material Alterations

2.1 Introduction and Content

The Draft Dundalk Local Area Plan 2024-2030, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate, has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Act).

The Draft Plan provides a spatial framework for the future growth and development of Dundalk for the next six years and beyond, in the context of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied), the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 and the National Planning Framework¹. The Draft Plan has also been informed by Ministerial Guidelines issued pursuant to Section 28 of the Act.

2.2 Structure of the Plan

The Draft Plan comprises of a written statement with accompanying maps and appendices. The written statement shall take precedence over the maps should any discrepancy arise. The documents and maps associated with the Plan are as follows:

- Volume 1: Written Statement
- Volume 2:
 - Map 1 – Zoning and Flood Zones
 - Map 2 – Composite Map
- Volume 3:
 - Appendix 1 – Settlement Capacity Audit
 - Appendix 2 – Local Transport Plan
 - Appendix 3 – Retail Strategy Quantitative Analysis
 - Appendix 4 – Mullagharlin Masterplan
 - Appendix 5 – Social Infrastructure Audit
 - Appendix 6 – Architectural Conservation Areas
- Volume 4: Environmental Reports
 - Strategic Environmental Assessment
 - Natura Impact Report
 - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

2.3 Vision and Strategic Objectives

The Vision for the Draft Plan seeks to ensure that Dundalk fulfils its role as a Regional Growth Centre while delivering a thriving town as an inclusive, attractive place and which enshrines the principles of compact growth, environmental, social and economic sustainability, protects and enhances the natural and built environment and which supports a strong economy while ensuring a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient society.

¹ At the time of writing this report, a process to provide a First Revision to the National Planning Framework is underway.

The Vision for Dundalk intended to be achieved through the realisation of the following Strategic Objectives:

- **SO 1** To promote the development and growth of Dundalk as a Regional Growth Centre along the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor through sustainable economic development including increased and competitive enterprise and employment opportunities.
- **SO 2** To achieve sustainable growth and consolidation of the existing built environment of Dundalk through the delivery of the principles of compact growth, infill and brownfield development, the delivery of a suitable mix of quality housing in appropriate locations, the creation of neighbourhoods where there is a sense of place and where housing is supported by the requisite physical and community infrastructure.
- **SO 3** To promote and facilitate sustainable mobility, prioritising walking, cycling and public transport through the improvement of existing infrastructure, connectivity and the implementation of the Local Transport Plan.
- **SO 4** Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient town, prioritising climate mitigation and adaptation measures in line with the Louth Climate Action Plan and implementing any actions identified for the Dundalk Blackrock Decarbonisation Zone.
- **SO 5** To recognise, protect and enhance the character, and in particular, the built and archaeological heritage of Dundalk while facilitating regeneration and growth in an appropriate and sustainable manner.
- **SO 6** To protect, conserve, enhance and sustain the natural environment of Dundalk while promoting climate adaptation and enhancing biodiversity through the protection and promotion of green infrastructure for future generations.
- **SO 7** To ensure the provision of appropriate levels of community, cultural and civic amenities and infrastructure to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

2.4 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure evidence-based planning

As part of the evidence-based approach to the preparation of this Plan data was gathered and analysed in relation to population and housing growth and socio-economic trends. This data was obtained from various sources including Census 2022 and Central Statistics Office housing completions data.

A Settlement Capacity Audit (Appendix 1 in Volume 3) was carried out to ensure there is alignment and co-ordination between the zoning of lands and the availability of infrastructure, while a Local Transport Plan (Appendix 2 in Volume 3) has been prepared to ensure the integration of land use and transport planning. A Social Infrastructure Audit of community facilities in the town was carried out, details of which are in Appendix 5 in Volume 3. A Retail Strategy was undertaken as part of an analysis of retail activity and demand in Dundalk (see chapter 7 Retail Strategy and Tourism and Appendix 3 in Volume 3 for details).

The undertaking of the SEA process was part of this strategic work and contributed towards the integration of environmental considerations into individual Plan provisions as summarised in Section 6 of this report.

2.5 Proposed Material Alterations

The Proposed Material Alterations are outlined in detail in the accompanying Proposed Material Alteration document. The Alteration Numbers or descriptions provided in this report can be used to locate the associated detail in the accompanying Proposed Material Alteration document.

Alterations proposed include those relating to maps, including land use zoning, and text.

The Proposed Material Alterations were screened for the need to undertake SEA and Alterations No. 134 and 136 were determined as requiring full SEA. The SEA Screening Determination accompanies the main SEA Environmental Report and the Proposed Material Alterations document. Appendix III to the main SEA Environmental Report comprises the SEA Screening Report that was prepared to inform the Determination.

2.6 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

It is important to note that when reading the Draft Plan, the policy objectives of the County Development Plan are relevant and, in this regard, both documents should be read in tandem with each other. Policy Objective DM 1 of the Draft Plan requires planning applications to be consistent with the relevant guidance and comply with the relevant standards set out in the Development Management Guidelines of the County Development Plan and any relevant policy objectives, designation, or standards set out in the Local Area Plan, the County Development Plan, or Section 28 Guidelines.

The Draft Plan sits within a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use planning, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management. The Plan must comply with relevant higher-level strategic actions and will, in turn, guide lower-level strategic actions. These documents have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant.

The National Planning Framework sets out Ireland's planning policy direction for the years 2018-2040. The National Planning Framework is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region sets out objectives for land use planning, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been subject to environmental assessment and must, as relevant and appropriate, be implemented through the Louth County Development Plan, that sets out the overarching development strategy for the County, and the Local Area Plan.

In order to be realised, projects included in the Local Area Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

Section 3 The Environmental Baseline

3.1 Introduction

The summary of the environmental baseline of the Plan area is described in this section. This baseline together with the Strategic Environmental Objectives, which are identified in Section 3.11, is used in order to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing relevant Proposed Material Alterations and in order to determine appropriate monitoring measures.

3.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Draft Plan and associated Material Alterations

In the absence of a new Local Area Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate, the framework for development across the Plan area would be provided by the County Development Plan and other related documents. There would be no Local Area Plan to provide additional detail beyond that provided already through the existing planning framework as how to achieve sustainable development and environmental protection and management in the town.

As a result, there would be both:

- A decreased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of the positive environmental effects identified by this assessment occurring; and;
- An increased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of the adverse environmental effects identified by this assessment occurring.

3.3 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

Key ecological sensitivities within and surrounding the Plan area include:

- **Ecological designations associated with estuarine and marine waters of the Dundalk Bay:**
 - **Dundalk Bay Special Area of Conservation designated partially within and adjacent to the eastern parts of the Plan area** - the sensitive features of this site include: estuaries; mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; perennial vegetation of stony banks; *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows; and Mediterranean salt meadows.
 - **Dundalk Bay Special Protection Area designated partially within and adjacent to the eastern parts of the Plan area** - the sensitive features of this site include: great crested grebe; greylag goose; light-bellied brent goose; shelduck; teal; mallard; pintail; common scoter; red-breasted merganser; oystercatcher; ringed plover; golden plover; grey plover; lapwing; knot; dunlin; black-tailed godwit; bar-tailed godwit; curlew; redshank; black-headed gull; common gull; herring gull; and wetland and waterbirds.
 - **Dundalk Bay proposed Natural Heritage Area designated partially within and adjacent to the eastern parts of the Plan area.**
 - **Dundalk Bay Ramsar Site** - this site regularly hosts more than 50,000 wintering waterbirds, the largest concentration on Ireland's east coast.
- **Aquatic and riverine ecology associated with the Castletown River and Estuary and Rivers Ramparts and Haggardstown**, including their tributaries and riparian buffer zones. The Castletown River is an important ecological and recreational amenity.
- **Locally important habitats** within the Plan area, including coastal, estuarine, transitional and marine areas, various woodlands, trees, parks, gardens, hedgerows, old buildings/stone walls, railway lines and lands used for agriculture, within and surrounding the Plan area, providing habitats for flora and fauna and facilitating linkages and corridors to the surrounding countryside for the wildlife.

Designated sites in the wider area include Special Areas of Conservation² (SACs) and Special Protection Areas³ (SPAs). These are mapped on Figure 3.1. There are a total of seven European sites (three SACs and four SPAs)⁴ designated within 15 km of the Plan boundary (as listed below and shown on Figure 3.1):

- Carlingford Mountain SAC (Site Code: 000453)⁵;
- Dundalk Bay SAC (Site Code: 000455)⁶;
- Carlingford Shore SAC (Site Code: 002306)⁷;
- Dundalk Bay SPA (Site Code: 004026)⁸;
- Carlingford Lough SPA (Site code: 004078)⁹;
- Strabannan-Braganstown SPA (Site Code: 004091)¹⁰; and
- North-West Irish Sea SPA (Site Code: 004236)¹¹.

The CORINE 2018¹² mapping identifies the land cover of the central parts of the Plan area as urban fabric containing areas of industrial or commercial units and adjacent sport and leisure facilities. The surrounding hinterland consists of pastures, non-irrigated arable land, complex cultivation patterns, and roads and rail networks. Salt marshes, estuaries and intertidal flats are identified partially within and to the north and east of the Plan area. Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I habitats (as shown on Figure 3.2) within and adjacent to the Plan area comprise: intertidal flats; estuaries; salt marshes; and broad-leaved forests.

Existing Problems

Ireland's Article 17 report on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (DCHG, 2019) identifies various Irish, EU-protected habitats and species to be of unfavourable status and many to be still declining, although it also identifies that a range of positive actions are underway. Ireland's Article 12 Birds Directive Reports and the 6th National Report under the Convention of Biological Diversity identify similar issues.

The Plan includes measures to contribute towards the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna and associated ecosystem services.

Previous changes in land uses arising from human development have resulted in a loss of biodiversity and flora and fauna; however, legislative objectives governing biodiversity and fauna were not identified as being conflicted with. The Plan includes measures to contribute towards the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna and associated ecosystem services.

² SACs have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The Habitats Directive seeks to establish Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the EU. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SACs to protect habitats and species, which, together with the SPAs designated under the 1979 Birds Directive, form Natura 2000. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010. The Regulations have been prepared to address several judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) against Ireland, notably cases C-418/04 and C-183/05, in respect of failure to transpose elements of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive into Irish law.

³ SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the EU.

⁴ In addition and separate to these European sites, there is Northern Ireland sites Derryleckagh SAC (Site number: UK0016620); Rostrevor Wood SAC (Site number: UK0030268); Slieve Gullion SAC (Site number: UK0030277); Carlingford Lough SPA (Site number: UK9020161); and Carlingford Marine pSPA (Site number: UK9020161) afforded protection in Northern Ireland under *The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. SACs and SPAs in the UK no longer form part of the EU Natura 2000 ecological network. The 2019 Regulations have created a national site network on land and at sea, including both the inshore and offshore marine areas in the UK. The national site network includes: existing UK SACs and SPAs; and new UK SACs and SPAs designated under these Regulations.

⁵ Sensitive features comprise: Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; Alpine and Boreal heaths; species-rich *Nardus* grasslands on siliceous substrates in mountain areas; blanket bogs; transition mires and quaking bogs; alkaline fens; siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels; calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation; and siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation.

⁶ Sensitive features comprise: estuaries; mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; perennial vegetation of stony banks; *Salicornia* and other annuals colonizing mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows; and Mediterranean salt meadows.

⁷ Sensitive features comprise: annual vegetation of drift lines; and perennial vegetation of stony banks.

⁸ Sensitive features comprise: great crested grebe; greylag goose; light-bellied brent goose; shelduck; teal; mallard; pintail; common scoter; red-breasted merganser; oystercatcher; ringed plover; golden plover; grey plover; lapwing; knot; dunlin; black-tailed godwit; curlew; redshank; black-headed gull; common gull; herring gull; and wetland and waterbirds.

⁹ Sensitive features comprise: light-bellied brent goose; and wetland and waterbirds.

¹⁰ Sensitive features comprise greylag goose.

¹¹ Sensitive features comprise: red-throated diver; great northern diver; fulmar; manx shearwater; cormorant; shag; common scoter; little gull; black-headed gull; common gull; lesser black-backed gull; herring gull; great black-backed gull; kittiwake; roseate tern; common tern; arctic tern; little tern; guillemot; razorbill; and puffin.

¹² The CORINE (Co-ordinated Information on the Environment) land cover data series was devised as a means of compiling geo-spatial environmental information in a standardised and comparable manner.

3.4 Population and Human Health

The results of Census 2022 within the CSO settlement boundary of Dundalk recorded a population of 43,112 persons. The Core Strategy in Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied) sets out a significant population growth level in Dundalk and has allocated a population increase of 7,660 persons over the Plan period. The Settlement Strategy for Dundalk in the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region envisages a population of 50,000 persons by 2031.

Dundalk is identified as a Regional Growth Centre within the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region. Regional Growth Centres are large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area.

The population provided for in the Plan will interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for waste water treatment at the municipal level;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality.

Human health has the potential to be impacted upon by 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 land uses 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.

Existing Problems

The number of homes within the Plan area with radon levels above the reference level is within the normal range experienced in other locations across the country.

Parts of the Plan area are vulnerable to adverse effects from changes in the occurrence of severe rainfall events and associated flooding from surface water. Flooding in certain circumstances could pose a risk to human health. There is historic and predictive evidence of flooding within the Plan area.

3.5 Soil

Main soil types surrounding the built-up areas¹³ of Dundalk are: are brown earths (well-drained mineral soils, associated with high levels of natural fertility) surrounding the Plan area and alluvial soils (associated with alluvial clay, silt or sand river deposits) along various rivers and streams intersecting the Plan area. Tidal marshes can be found along rivers and coasts, which flood and drain by the tidal movement of the adjacent estuary, sea or ocean. Areas of tidal marsh occur along the estuary and the coast, partially within and adjacent to the Plan area. These areas are often very sensitive to development due to ecological sensitivities.

Geological Survey Ireland coordinate the Irish Geological Heritage Programme, whereby an objective has been set to identify and select sites of geological interest within each county across the country. County Geological Sites (CGSs) do not receive statutory protection like Natural Heritage Areas but receive an effective protection from their inclusion in the planning system. The audit of CGSs in County Louth was completed in 2013, which identified 34 CGSs. There is one designated CGS occurring partially within/adjacent to the eastern parts of the Plan area, namely the Dundalk Bay CGS (Site Code: LH018). The Dundalk Bay CGS is a wide coastal embayment, incorporating wide expanses of coastal flats, associated beach, dune and slack features, beaches, salt marshes and headlands. Other County Geological Sites surrounding the Plan area include Carlingford Area CGS (Site Code: LH009), located c. 1.5 km to the north-east of the Plan area.

¹³ The built-up areas are mainly made up of urban soils. Urban soils are soils, which have been disturbed, transported or manipulated by human activity in the urban environment and are often overlain by a non-agricultural, man-made surface layer that has been produced by mixing, filling or by contamination of land surfaces in urban and suburban areas.

The GSI have identified¹⁴ the Plan area as having mainly low levels of landslide susceptibility.

In the absence of mitigation, contaminated materials have the potential to adversely impact upon human health, water quality and habitats and species. As is the case with other urban and semi-urban areas across the country, there is potential for contamination at sites within the Plan area, especially where land uses occurred in the past, in the absence of environmental protection legislation. There is a former landfill site within the Plan boundary to the north of the Castletown River. There are also brownfield lands in Dundalk that have a history of industrial use which may have resulted in a contamination of the land due to spillages, leaks, and seepages of oil or other industrial products or materials.¹⁵

As identified in the Draft Plan, coastal protection from erosion and flooding is becoming a prominent issue for many coastal cities and towns across Ireland. Rising sea levels and increased storm events presents a real concern for coastal towns like Dundalk. The Office of Public Works' Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (2010-2014) erosion hazard mapping identifies parts of the coastline in the vicinity of Dundalk that are at risk from coastal erosion. Such risk will be exacerbated by climate change.

3.6 Water

Surface water at and around Dundalk is channelled by several rivers, streams and transitional waterbody. The Castletown River flows through the north of the Plan area and towards the Castletown Estuary, Inner Dundalk Bay, Outer Dundalk Bay and the Irish Sea.

The current WFD (2016-2021) status¹⁶ of the rivers and streams draining the Plan area is: *poor* (identified by the EPA as 'Ballymascanlan_010', 'Haggardstown_010' and 'Ramparts_010'); *moderate* (identified by the EPA as 'Castletown_030', 'Cully Water_010', 'Fane_060', 'Flurry_030' and 'Raskeagh_010'); and *good* (identified by the EPA as 'Fane_050', 'Kilcurry_010' and 'Rockmarshall_010'). The current WFD (2016-2021) status of transitional waters within and surrounding the Plan area is *poor* (Castletown Estuary) and *moderate* (Ballymascanlan Estuary, Fane Estuary and Inner Dundalk Bay). The current WFD (2016-2021) status of coastal waters adjacent to the Plan area is *high* (Outer Dundalk Bay). Figure 3.3 illustrates the WFD surface water status within and surrounding the Plan area.

The WFD status (2016-2021) of groundwater underlying the Plan area is currently identified as being of *good status*, meeting the objectives of the WFD.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) document accompanies the Draft Plan and the SFRA process has informed the SEA Environmental Report on relevant Proposed Material Alterations. Updates to the SFRA Report that was placed on public display alongside the Draft Plan are detailed in the Proposed Material Alterations documentation. Requirements in relation to SFRA are provided under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. Flood risk management and drainage provisions are already in force through the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied) and related provisions have been integrated into the LAP. In addition, land use zoning contained within the Draft Plan has been informed by the SFRA process and associated delineation of flood risk zones. The most significant source of flood risk within the Plan area is from fluvial (from rivers and streams) and coastal sources. There are also other sources of flooding present including from pluvial (rainwater) and surface drainage system sources.

Existing Problems

Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD, based on available water data, the recorded status of certain surface and groundwater bodies will need improvement in order to comply with the objectives of the WFD. The Plan includes provisions that will contribute towards improvements in the status of waters.

There is elevated levels of flood risk from fluvial and coastal sources at various locations across the Plan area. The preparation of the Plan, SEA and SFRA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the SFRA have informed the Draft Plan, the Proposed Material Alterations and the SEA.

¹⁴ <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/programmes-and-projects/geohazards/projects/Pages/Landslide-Susceptibility-Mapping.aspx>

¹⁵ Draft Dundalk LAP 2024-2030

¹⁶ As per EPA's WFD Status 2016-2021 classification (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>).

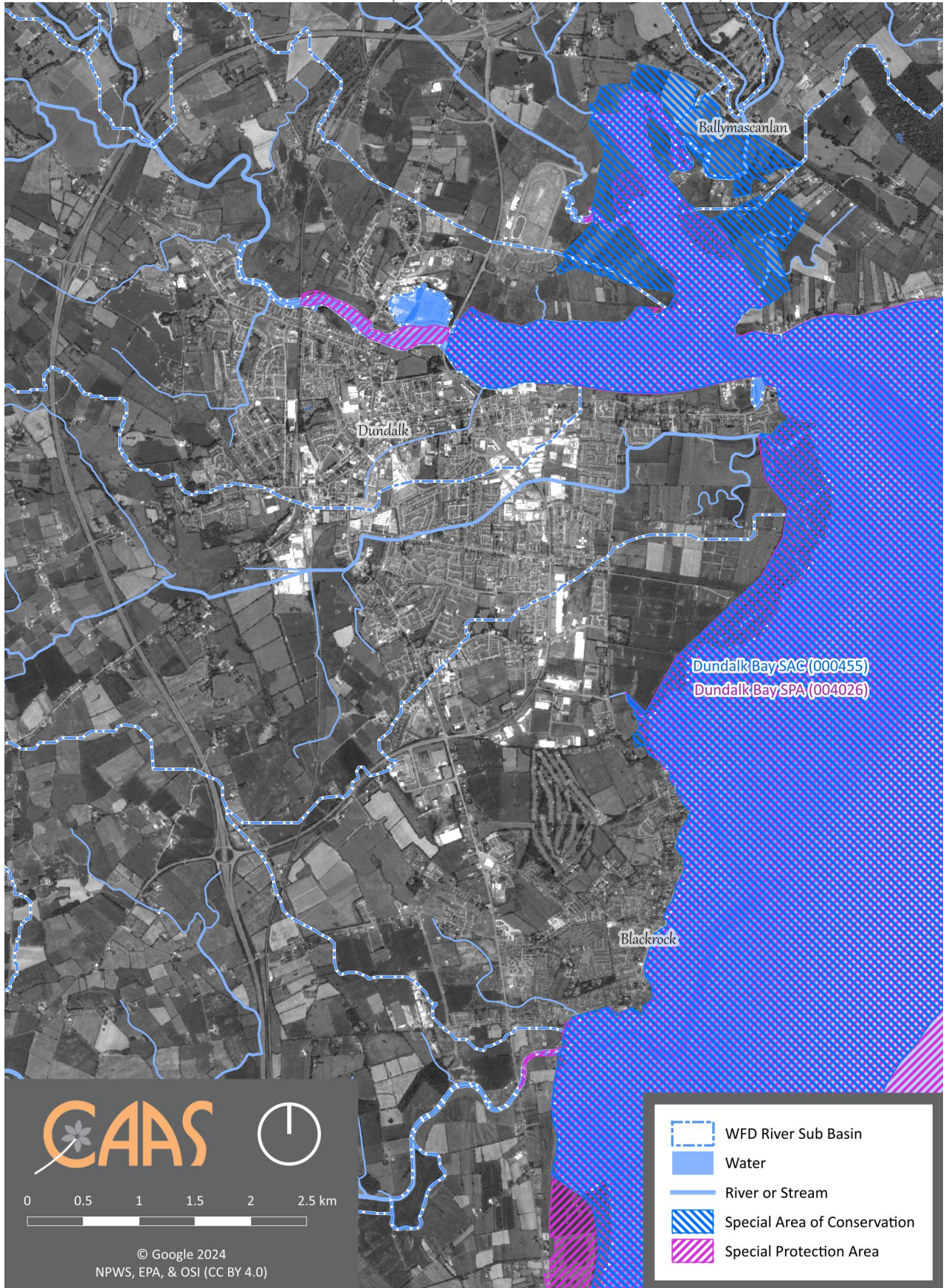


Figure 3.1 European Sites within and within 15 km buffer of the Plan area

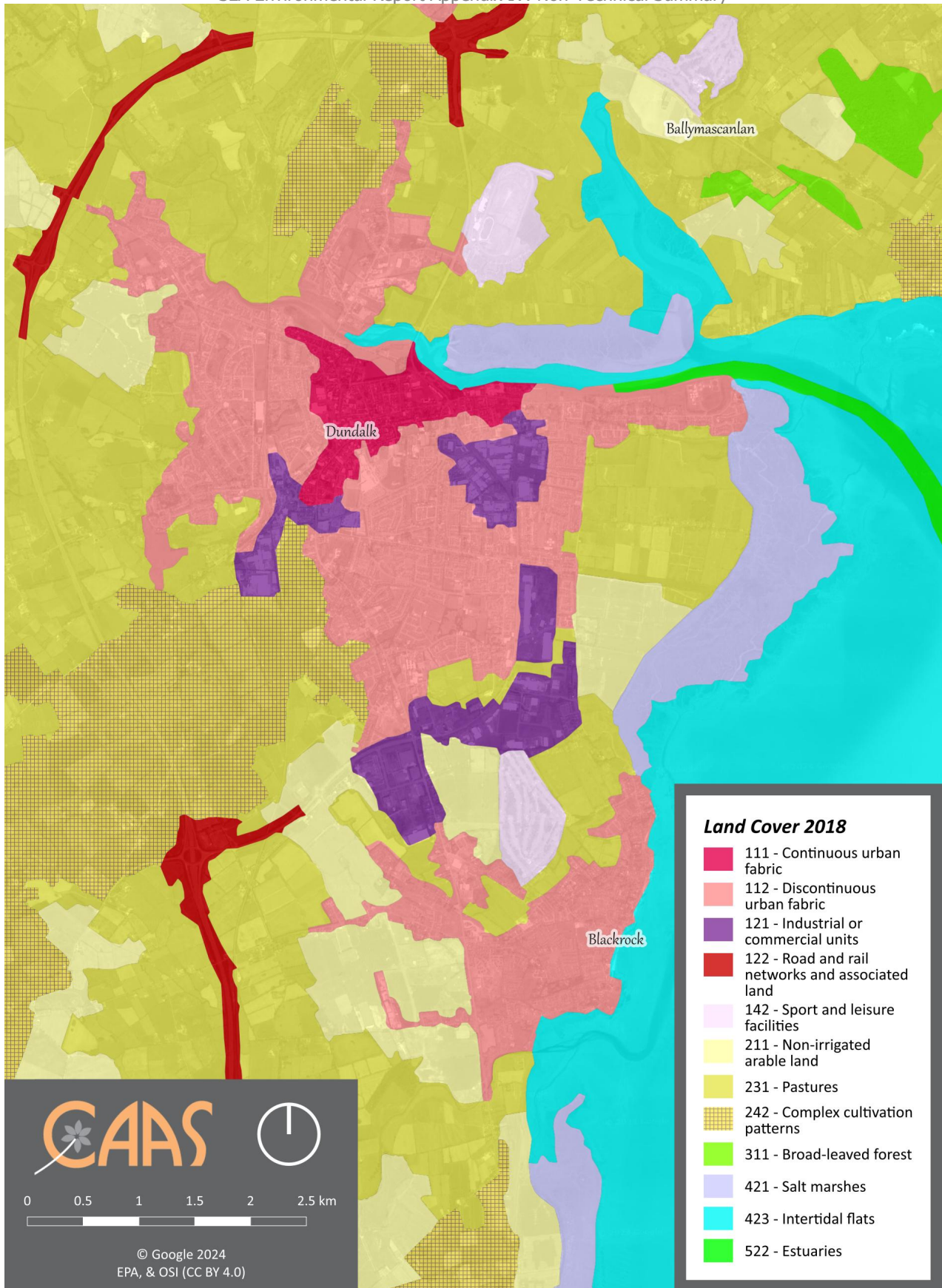


Figure 3.2 CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018

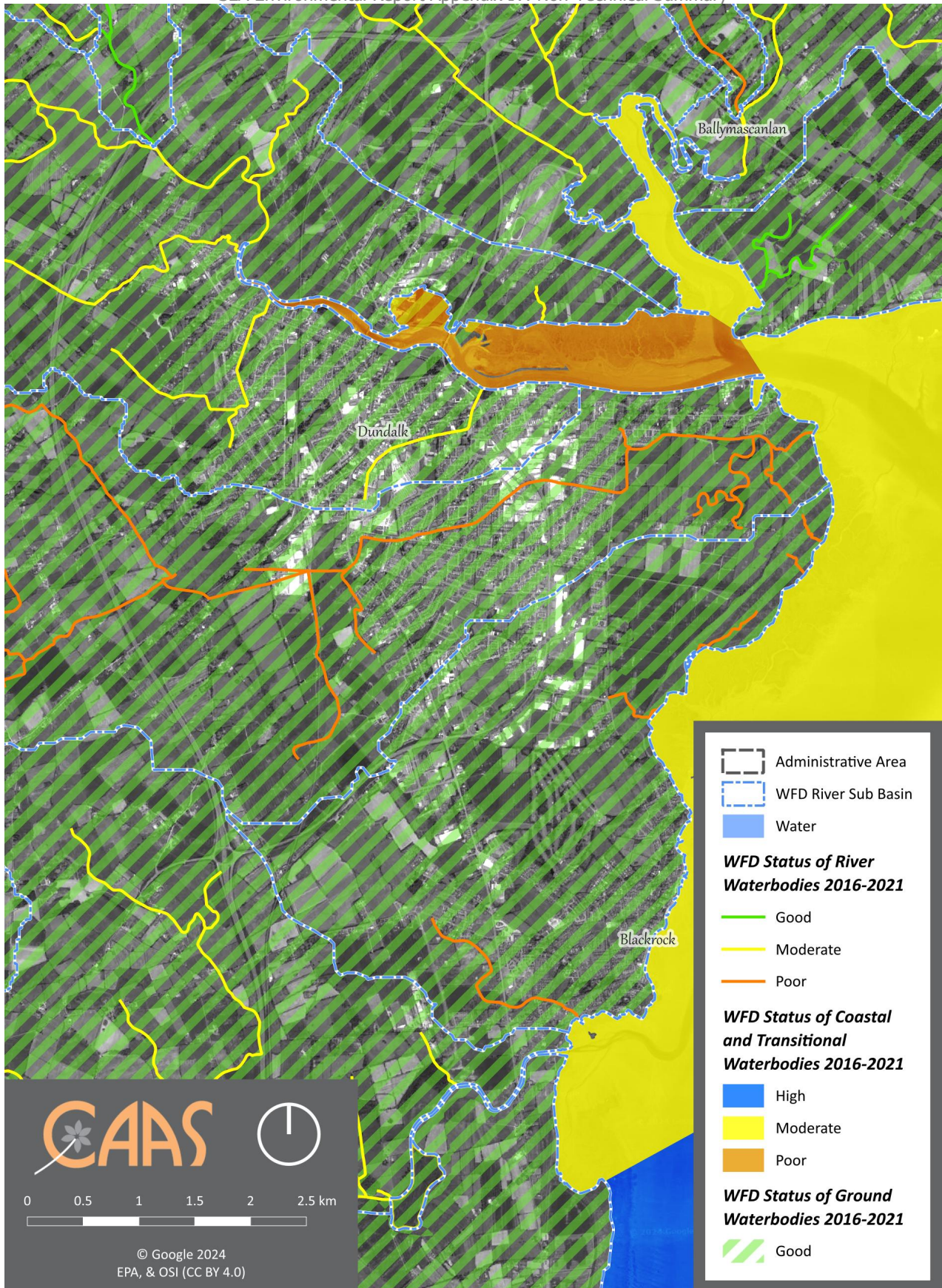


Figure 3.3 Surface Water Status (2016-2021)

3.7 Air and Climatic Factors

Climate mitigation describes the action to reduce the likelihood of climate change occurring or reduce the impact if it does occur. This can include reducing the causes of climate change (e.g. emissions of greenhouse gases) as well as reducing future risks associated with climate change.

The National Climate Action Plan 2024 is the second statutory update to the plan since the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 was signed into law, committing Ireland to 2030 and 2050 targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It builds on Climate Action Plan 2023, outlining how Ireland will accelerate the actions required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development.

Climate adaptation is a change in natural or human systems in response to the impacts of climate change. These changes moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities and can be in response to actual or expected impacts.

The National Adaptation Framework (2024) aims to create a unified approach involving both government and society to adapt to climate change. It outlines how various sectors and local authorities can implement adaptation measures to minimise Ireland's vulnerability to climate change's adverse effects while taking advantage of any beneficial impacts. The Framework emphasises the importance of integrating adaptation strategies into all levels of policy making, infrastructure development, and local planning.

The Louth Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 will contribute towards addressing the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, climate change adaptation, and strengthening the alignment between national climate policy and the delivery of local climate action. This Plan demonstrates how Louth County Council will: The local objectives of Louth County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 are grouped under five thematic areas as follows:

- Governance and Leadership
- Built Environment and Transport
- Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure
- Communities: Resilience and Transition
- Sustainability and Resource Management

The EPA's (2023) *Air Quality in Ireland 2022 Report* identifies that:

- Air quality in Ireland is generally good, however, there are concerning localised issues.
- Ireland met all of its EU legal requirements in 2022 but it did not meet the more stringent health-based World Health Organisation (WHO) Air Quality guidelines.
- Fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) from solid fuel combustion and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) from vehicle emissions are the main pollutants.
- It is estimated that there are approximately 1,300 premature deaths annually in Ireland due to poor air quality from PM_{2.5}.
- The choices people make in how they heat their homes and how they travel directly impact the quality of the air they breathe.
- Ireland's ambition in the Clean Air Strategy is to move towards the WHO Air Quality guidelines.

The report further identifies the critical role of local authorities in the enforcement and implementation of existing plans and investment in infrastructure to encourage cleaner and healthier air quality choices, including:

- Local authorities must provide more resources to increase air enforcement activities and implement the new solid fuel regulations.
- Investment in clean public transport infrastructure across the country must be maintained and increased.
- More safe footpaths and cycle lanes must be created to continue to increase active travel as a viable and safe alternative to car use and associated NO₂ emissions.

Existing Problems

In the *Annual Review 2023* the Climate Change Advisory Council advised that, at the current rate of policy implementation, Ireland will not meet the targets set in the first and second carbon budget periods unless urgent action is taken immediately and emissions begin to fall much more rapidly.

Air quality and noise can present challenges, as summarised above. The Draft Plan will help to facilitate reductions in emissions and a transition from dependence on fossil fuel combustion powered transport.

3.8 Material Assets

Other material assets, in addition to those referred to below, covered by the SEA include archaeological and architectural heritage (see Section 3.9) natural resources of economic value, such as water and air (see Sections 3.6 and 3.7).

Public Assets and Infrastructure

Public assets and infrastructure that have the potential to be impacted upon by the Plan, if unmitigated, include: resources such as public open spaces, parks and recreational areas; public buildings and services; transport and utility infrastructure (electricity, telecommunications, water supply, waste water infrastructure etc.); and natural resources that are covered under other topics such as water and soil.

Waste Water

Uisce Éireann, working in partnership with Louth County Council, is making investments to undertake essential upgrade works to waste treatment plants in towns and villages across the County. The upgrading of infrastructure will contribute towards compliance with the Water Framework Directive, EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and Drinking Water Regulations and will help to protect human health and maintain the quality of surface and ground waters.

Most Wastewater in Dundalk is directed to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) located on the Point Road. A smaller amount of wastewater from the Blackrock area is treated at a second WWTP in Blackrock on Mooretown Lane. An upgrade to the Blackrock WWTP was completed in 2020 and provided additional capacity. The Dundalk WWTP on Point Road is currently listed as a priority area¹⁷ (such areas are those where improvements are required to resolve urgent environmental issues), due to significant pressure on waters at risk of pollution. The action proposed by the EPA to resolve environmental issues identified is to upgrade the treatment plant by 2030. Uisce Éireann working in partnership with Louth County Council, is progressing plans as part of an upgrade to the Dundalk Wastewater Treatment Plant to improve the plants performance and to ensure environmental compliance. As indicated by Uisce Éireann, there is spare capacity available at both Dundalk and Blackrock (Dundalk) WWTPs.¹⁸

Water Supply

Uisce Éireann is responsible for providing and maintaining adequate public water supply infrastructure throughout County Louth. Dundalk is located within the Cavanhill and North Louth Water Resource Zone¹⁹ and as identified by Uisce Éireann, there is capacity available to meet targeted population growth by 2032, although an improvement in level of service is required.²⁰ Water supply in Dundalk is sourced from Cavanhill and Greenmount Water Treatment Plants. The Cavanhill Water Supply Scheme serves approximately 46,155 PE in Dundalk and the surrounding areas and is supplied with water abstracted from the River Fane at Stephenstown Pump Station, before being treated at Cavanhill Water Treatment Plant.²¹

The Castletown Water Network Upgrade works involve upgrading and upsizing 1.7 km of water mains and is part of a project to improve the capacity of the existing water network and operational performance in the area. This project is being delivered to support existing and future developments in the Castletown area.²²

Under Section 58 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, the EPA is required to collect and verify monitoring results for all water supplies in Ireland covered by the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2000. The EPA publishes their results in annual reports that are supported by Remedial Action Lists (RALs). The RAL identifies water supplies that are not in compliance with the Regulations mentioned above. The most recent RAL (Q4 of 2023, published in January 2024)²³ identifies

¹⁷ EPA (April 2024): <https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/waste-water/priority-areas-list-current.php>

¹⁸ Uisce Éireann: Settlements with Waste Water Discharge Authorisations - *Wastewater Treatment Capacity Register*. The register provides an indication of available wastewater treatment capacity based on loads received in 2021 and available treatment plan capacity now or by completion of a project by 2024 (where relevant). Available at: <https://www.water.ie/connections/developer-services/capacity-registers/wastewater-treatment-capacity-register/louth/> (Published in June 2023).

¹⁹ A Water Resource Zone (WRZ) is an independent water supply system serving a region, city, town or village and is governed by topography or the extent of the water distribution network in an area. A WRZ may include multiple Water Treatment Plants and/or sources.

²⁰This may take the form of leakage reduction and/or capital investment to maintain/improve levels of service as the demand increases. Proposed solutions will be developed and prioritised through the National Water Resources Plan and investment planning process. Source: <https://www.water.ie/connections/developer-services/capacity-registers/water-supply-capacity-register/louth/>

²¹ <https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/audit-reports/louth/Cavanhill-PWS---Audit-Report-25072023.pdf>

²² Draft Dundalk LAP 2024-2030

²³ Available at: <https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/annual-drinking-water-reports/Copy-of-Q4-2023-RAL-for-Drinking-Water-Supplies-FINAL.pdf>

the Cavanhill Water Supply Scheme as non-compliant, due to elevated levels of trihalomethanes (THMs) above the standard set in the Drinking Water Regulations²⁴.

Waste Management

The National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy (Regional Waste Management Planning Offices, 2024) sets out a framework for the prevention and management of waste in Ireland for the period 2024 to 2030. The Plan seeks to influence sustainable consumption and prevent the generation of waste, improve the capture of materials to optimise circularity and enable compliance with policy and legislation.

Transport

Dundalk is located along a major transportation corridor from Dublin to Belfast and has accessibility to all major transport infrastructures, including the M1 motorway and rail. The town is also well positioned relative to other national routes such as the N52 to Mullingar and N53 to Castleblaney. The rail service operates on the Dublin to Belfast train routes, as well as Dublin to Dundalk Commuter and DART Commuter lines. In addition, bus services are provided by Bus Éireann (with routes within Dundalk and to Dublin), Local Link (with a number of routes including to Carlingford and Carrickmacross) and private bus companies. National, regional and local roads provide vital links between the town and retail, service and employment centres throughout the County, adjoining counties and Northern Ireland.

The port facilities at Greenore and Dundalk provide the town with access to international markets. These ports have an important supporting role in the national and regional economy through the international connections they provide for the import and export of goods and materials.

A Local Transport Plan (LTP) has been integrated into the Plan. The purpose of the LTP is to guide the future transport and mobility needs of Dundalk, taking into account the transport demand from existing and projected development both within the Plan boundary and surrounding area.

Existing Problems

The provisions of the Plan will contribute towards protection of the environment with regard to impacts arising from material assets.

The provisions of infrastructure and supporting services for development, particularly water and wastewater services, is critical. Current challenges include those identified above.

3.9 Cultural Heritage

Archaeological Heritage

There are various Zones of Notification designated within Dundalk, with entries to the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). There are two Zones of Archaeological Potential designated in Dundalk, the historic core and Castletown.

Clusters of monuments are located within the centre of the Plan area and across the town's hinterland. Entries to the RMP include: standing stones; ringforts; souterrain; fulacht fiadh; archaeological complexes; ogham stone; bullaun stone; shops; churches; tower house; town and a castle site. Dún Dealgan Motte in Castletown is designated a National Monument in State Care (Guardianship).²⁵

Architectural Heritage

Clusters of architectural heritage are indicated within the town's centre, with notable Protected Structures including: Seatown Tower; Bellew's Castle; Custom House; St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral; Windmill; and St. Joseph's Monastery.

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of a Protected Structure. An ACA may or may not include Protected Structures. In an ACA, protection is placed on the external appearance of such areas or structures. There are eight ACAs designated within the Plan area: St. Mary's Road; Roden Place; The Crescent; Clanbrassill Street; Jocelyn Street/Seatown Place; Soldiers Point - Coastguard Houses; Magnet Road/The Demesne; and The Crescent, Blackrock.²⁶

²⁴ Draft Dundalk LAP 2024-2030: Works to the Cavanhill Water Treatment Plant have recently been completed.

²⁵<https://www.arch/aeology.ie/sites/default/files/media/pdf/monuments-in-state-care-louth.pdf>

²⁶ Louth CDP 2021-2027, as varied.

Existing Problems

The context of archaeological and architectural heritage has changed over time however no existing conflicts with legislative objectives governing archaeological and architectural heritage have been identified.

3.10 Landscape

Dundalk's landscape character is formed by the built environment, and its coastal and riverside location. The urban area of Dundalk is located within a low-lying coastal plain with a distinct surrounding landscape forming a crescent of drumlins and undulating farmland, the panoramic views extending to the Cooley and Mourne Mountains. The town centre is situated on the south side of the Castletown River flowing towards Dundalk Bay.

The purpose of landscape character assessment is to provide the foundation for policy formulation and decision making for landscape management.

There are a range of different landscapes found in the Plan area, each with varying visual and amenity values, topography, exposure levels and each containing a variety of habitats. Each landscape type has varying capacity to absorb development related to its overall sensitivity.

The existing Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied) identifies nine Landscape Character Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Areas of High Scenic Amenity, Views and Prospects within the councils' administrative area. Landscape Character Areas in County Louth are classified according to their importance. The "Feede Mountains and Cooley Area" Area of High Scenic Quality is designated to the north of the Plan area.

The Plan area is located within 'Lower Faughart, Castletown and Flurry River Basins', 'Muirhevna Plain' and 'Dundalk Bay Coast' Landscape Character Areas. These landscapes are classified as Regionally Important (Dundalk Bay Coast) and Locally Important (Lower Faughart, Castletown and Flurry River Basins; and Muirhevna Plain).

Dundalk contains many sites, areas and vantage points from which views of expansive areas of natural beauty, streetscapes and local landmarks can be obtained. There are 17 Key Views and 63 Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity value designated within the Plan area²⁷.

Existing Problems

New developments have resulted in changes to the visual appearance of lands within the Plan area however legislative objectives governing landscape and visual appearance were not identified as being conflicted with.

3.11 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies that generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives that have been transposed into Irish law and which are required to be implemented. The SEOs are set out under a range of topics (see Table 3.1) and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Draft Plan, the Proposed Material Alterations and the alternatives are 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.

²⁷ Refer to the Draft Plan for more detail.
CAAS for Louth County Council

Table 3.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	BFF	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To preserve, protect, maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function Safeguard national, regional and local designated sites and supporting features which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets To protect, maintain and conserve natural capital
Population and Human Health	PHH	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management Ensure that existing population and planned growth is matched with the required public infrastructure and the required services Safeguard citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being
Soil (and Land)	S	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield sites Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites
Water	W	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and waste water capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments Avoid inappropriate zoning and development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion, particularly coastal areas Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals
Material Assets	MA	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all which encourages a broad energy generation mix to ensure security of supply – wind, solar, biomass, energy from waste and traditional fossil fuels Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of road and rail transport modes Encourage the transition to a zero-carbon economy by facilitating the development of a grid infrastructure to support renewables and international connectivity. Reduce the average energy consumption per capita including promoting energy efficient buildings, retrofitting, smart- buildings, and grids
Air	A	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole resulting from emissions to air from all sectors with particular reference to emissions from transport, residential heating, industry and agriculture Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency Promote continuing improvement in air quality Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health – Air Quality Directive Significantly decrease noise pollution and move closer to WHO recommended levels.
Climatic Factors	C	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise emissions of greenhouse gasses Integrate sustainable design solutions into infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets. Promote development resilient to the effects of climate change Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport
Cultural Heritage	CH	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage
Landscape	L	Protect and enhance the landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To implement the Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention

Section 4 Alternatives

4.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme) are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment. Summaries of the alternatives for the Plan and their assessment are provided below.

The Proposed Material Alterations do not affect the description or assessment of strategic alternatives.

4.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The Local Area Plan is required to be consistent with the County Development Plan, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region and the National Planning Framework. The County Development Plan includes a population target and housing allocation for Dundalk, which is reflective of the designation and growth strategy for the town in National and Regional Policy. This therefore limits the alternatives available for the Local Area Plan.

4.3 Alternatives Already Considered

The alternatives considered in the County Development Plan relate to the settlement hierarchy, population allocations, densities, and land use zonings.

4.4 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The Plan is required to be prepared by the existing, already in force, Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which specifies various types of objectives that must be provided for by the Plan.

The alternatives available for the Plan are significantly limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, including those of the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Region and the County Plan. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Plan including on topics such as land use zoning.

4.5 Alternatives Already Considered

The preparation of the Louth County Development Plan and associated SEA process already considered various different types of alternatives, including those relating to population allocations, land use zoning and densities. The selected alternatives for the County Development Plan sets requirements for lower tier planning in the County and have been integrated into the Local Area Plan, as appropriate.

4.6 Alternatives Description and Assessment Summary

4.6.1 Land Uses

Alternative 1 "More dispersed settlement pattern" would be based on edge of centre development on greenfield sites with a limited focus on town centre regeneration and infill and brownfield development. Densities would be lower and development would be more car dependent. The build out of lands would

be developer driven with a limited plan-led approach in the identification of key development areas in the town.

The approach under this alternative would not allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Plan to the highest degree. Additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate edge of centre development on greenfield sites, more than would be required for Alternative 2 and some development may have to be serviced by private waste water treatment systems, which would have to be properly maintained.

The development of the town centre would be less compact and less sustainable under this scenario and would not optimally support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of residential development would be less likely to be achieved in core areas in comparison with Alternative 2. Giving less of a preference to lands that have a greater capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and giving a less focus to key development areas (there would be no clear parameters for development identified, making successful applications for the sustainable, compact development of the town less likely) would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town as envisaged by the wider planning framework to a lesser degree.

This alternative would make less of a contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the Town's core areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services. Demand to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the Plan area would be provided for. This alternative would be considered the least effective out of both alternatives in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the town.

The approach under Alternative 1 would benefit the protection of various environmental components to a lesser degree. This alternative would not provide the most evidence-based framework for development and would have the potential to undermine sustainable development and proper planning - with potential for associated unnecessary significant residual adverse environmental effects on various environmental components, including:

- Conflict with efforts to maximise sustainable compact growth, sustainable mobility and a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society (significant residual adverse effects would occur);
- Significant residual adverse effects upon the achievement of carbon emission reduction targets in line with local, national and European environmental objectives (would occur);
- Significant residual adverse effects upon the economic viability of providing for public assets and infrastructure;
- Significant residual adverse effects on ecology, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats and species;
- Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces (significant residual adverse effects would occur);
- Occurrence of visual impacts (significant residual adverse effects would occur); and
- Increased loadings on water bodies.

Alternative 2 "Integration of land use and transport planning that focuses on consolidation and build out of extant permissions" would seek to ensure that the future growth of the town and would enable the creation of more sustainable communities where there is a reduced dependence on the private car and more opportunities for people to walk and cycle by a combination of providing the requisite infrastructure and ensuring services and facilities are close to where people live. Key development areas in the town would be identified and the recommendations of the Local Transport Plan would be incorporated into the Local Area Plan.

The approach under this alternative would allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Plan to the highest

degree. Much of the infrastructure required to be in place to achieve the growth targets is already in place or planned under this alternative.

The development of the town centre would be more compact and sustainable under this scenario and would better support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of residential units would be expected to take place in the core areas of the town. Giving a strong preference to lands that have a greater capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and giving a focus to key development areas (with clear parameters for development identified, ensuring compliance with planning and environmental requirements and making successful applications for the sustainable, compact development of the town more likely) would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town as envisaged by the wider planning framework to the greatest degree.

This alternative would make the greatest contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the Town's core areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the Plan area and beyond. This alternative would be considered the most effective out of both Development Strategies considered in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the town.

The approach under Alternative 2 would benefit the protection of various environmental components. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to a significant degree. Less residual environmental effects would result.

Selected Alternative: Alternative 2

4.6.2 Vacancy and Regeneration

Both alternatives for vacancy and regeneration would facilitate the development of the town; however, they would contribute towards environmental protection and management and sustainable development to varying degrees.

Alternative 1 would take a "General approach" to promoting the redevelopment of vacant and underutilised lands by including generic policy objectives and narrative. Although this alternative would contribute towards the redevelopment of vacant and underutilised lands, it would do so to a lesser extent than Alternative 2.

The development of the town centre would be less compact and less sustainable under this scenario and would not optimally support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of residential development would be less likely to be achieved in core areas in comparison with Alternative 2. Giving less of a focus to the redevelopment of vacant and underutilised lands that would have capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and giving less of a focus to opportunity sites (there would be no clear parameters for development identified, making successful applications for the sustainable development of these properties less likely) would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town as envisaged by the wider planning framework to a lesser degree.

This alternative would make less of a contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of properties (including those within and adjacent to the Town's core areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are often already served by infrastructure and services. This alternative would be considered the least effective out of both alternatives in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the town.

The approach under Alternative 1 would benefit the protection of various environmental components to a lesser degree. Under this alternative, more development would have to be accommodated on more sensitive, less well-served, less well-connected lands elsewhere in the Plan area.

Redevelopment of vacant and underutilised lands has the potential to result in elevated levels of potential adverse effects on cultural heritage (both archaeology and architecture) in the short term, arising during construction; however, these would be mitigated and the longer-term protection of these assets would be secured, to a lesser extent under Alternative 1.

Alternative 2 "Focused and plan-led approach" would involve the identification of specific properties and areas of the town that have significant redevelopment potential. These would be identified as 'opportunity sites' and a supporting narrative would be provided setting out potential uses for the lands. Alternative 2 would contribute towards the redevelopment of vacant and underutilised lands to a greater extent than Alternative 1.

The development of the town centre would be more compact and more sustainable under this scenario and would optimally support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of residential development would be more likely to be achieved in core areas in comparison with Alternative 1. Giving more of a focus to the redevelopment of vacant and underutilised lands that would have capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and giving more of a focus to opportunity sites (a supporting narrative would be provided setting out potential uses for the lands, making successful applications for the sustainable development of these properties more likely) would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town as envisaged by the wider planning framework to a greater degree.

This alternative would make more of a contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of properties (including those within and adjacent to the Town's core areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are often already served by infrastructure and services. This alternative would be considered the most effective out of both alternatives in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the town.

The approach under Alternative 2 would benefit the protection of various environmental components to a greater degree. Under this alternative, less development would have to be accommodated on more sensitive, less well-serviced, less well-connected lands elsewhere in the Plan area.

Redevelopment of vacant and underutilised lands has the potential to result in elevated levels of potential adverse effects on cultural heritage (both archaeology and architecture) in the short term, arising during construction; however, these would be mitigated and the longer-term protection of these assets would be secured, to a greater extent under Alternative 2.

Selected Alternative: Alternative 2

4.6.3 Density

Both alternatives (**Alternative 1** "Promote high density and buildings of height in the town centre" and **Alternative 2** "Plan led approach to achieving higher densities in the town centre") for density would contribute towards consolidation of the town centre; however, they would contribute towards environmental protection and management and sustainable development to varying degrees. The selection of densities would have implications for the type and mix of development that would be provided for and the height of buildings and blocks.

Alternative 1 would facilitate the creation of a more compact settlement and consolidation. Limited consideration would be given to the appropriateness of the location for higher densities or buildings of height. Higher densities and increased building heights can contribute towards the creation of a more compact town; however, a balance is required in achieving recommended densities and creating quality developments and attractive, sustainable neighbourhoods. Not considering the appropriateness of higher densities would be likely to significantly adversely impact upon:

- The protection of built heritage (including designated archaeology and architecture) and its context and setting (which has a key role to play in place-making and contributes significantly to Dundalk's sense of identity and cultural heritage);

- The protection of the scenery and streetscape of the town and highly sensitive key scenic views of the surrounding area (which is of amenity value to tourists and residents, contributing to well-being and constituting a valuable economic asset);
- The protection of the landscape character of the town and surrounding areas, from which buildings of height would be visible; and
- The appropriate provision of local services for future residents; higher densities may not be appropriate in areas where there is insufficient or inadequate services and infrastructure (this is relevant to the environmental components of population and human health and material assets).

Under **Alternative 2**, specific areas of the town centre would be identified for higher densities. Under this approach, a greater consideration would be given to the appropriateness of higher densities and buildings of height in different parts of the town centre. This would be likely to significantly benefit:

- The protection of built heritage (including designated archaeology and architecture) and its context and setting (which has a key role to play in place-making and contributes significantly to Dundalk's sense of identity and cultural heritage);
- The protection of the scenery and streetscape of the town and highly sensitive key scenic views of the surrounding area (which is of amenity value to tourists and residents, contributing to well-being and constituting a valuable economic asset);
- The protection of the landscape character of the town and surrounding areas, from which buildings of height would be visible; and
- The appropriate provision of local services for future residents; higher densities may not be appropriate in areas where there is insufficient or inadequate services and infrastructure (this is relevant to the environmental components of population and human health and material assets).

Selected Alternative: Alternative 2

4.6.4 Building Heights

Alternative 1 "Continue with a low-rise suburban approach" would be based on the expansion of low-rise suburban development with limited focus on compact growth. Building heights and associated densities would be lower, resulting in continued commuting and car dependence.

Although the height of individual buildings would be less likely to impact upon landscape character/designations and cultural heritage (both archaeology and architecture), the low-rise suburban approach provided by this Alternative, would result in an increased need for greenfield development, with associated adverse effects upon landscape character and the context of cultural heritage in these areas.

The approach under this alternative would not allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Plan to the highest degree. Additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate edge of centre development on greenfield sites, more than would be required for Alternative 2 and some development may have to be serviced by private waste water treatment systems, which would have to be properly maintained.

Development under this alternative would be less compact and less sustainable and would not optimally support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of residential development would be less likely to be achieved in core areas in comparison with Alternative 2. Lower densities and the absence of a focus to support increased buildings of height at suitable locations would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town as envisaged by the wider planning framework to a lesser degree.

This alternative would make less of a contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services. Demand to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the Plan area would be provided for. This alternative would be considered the least effective out of both alternatives in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the Plan area.

The approach under Alternative 1 would benefit the protection of various environmental components to a lesser degree. This alternative would not provide the most evidence-based framework for development and would have the potential to undermine sustainable development and proper planning - with potential for associated unnecessary significant residual adverse environmental effects on various environmental components, including:

- Conflict with efforts to maximise sustainable compact growth, sustainable mobility and a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society (significant residual adverse effects would occur);
- Significant residual adverse effects upon the achievement of carbon emission reduction targets in line with local, national and European environmental objectives (would occur);
- Significant residual adverse effects upon the economic viability of providing for public assets and infrastructure;
- Significant residual adverse effects on ecology, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats and species;
- Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces (significant residual adverse effects would occur);
- Occurrence of visual impacts (significant residual adverse effects would occur); and
- Increased loadings on water bodies.

Alternative 2 "Support and promote increased building heights at suitably identified locations" would promote and support increased buildings of height (4 storeys or higher) at specific locations in Dundalk identified as being suitable for increased building heights with other locations being considered on a case-by-case basis. The approach under this alternative would facilitate compact growth of the Plan area, with a reduced dependence on the private car and more opportunities for people to walk and cycle.

Although the height of individual buildings would present potential conflicts with landscape character/designations and cultural heritage (both archaeology and architecture), they would only be permitted in suitable locations. Furthermore, increased building heights in these locations would reduce the need for sprawling greenfield development, which would be facilitated by Alternative 1.

Redevelopment of vacant and underutilised lands has the potential to result in elevated levels of potential adverse effects on in the short term, arising during construction; however, these would be mitigated and the longer-term protection of these assets would be secured, to a lesser extent under Alternative 1.

Redevelopment of vacant and underutilised lands has the potential to result in elevated levels of potential adverse effects on cultural heritage (both archaeology and architecture) in the short term, arising during construction; however, these would be mitigated and the longer-term protection of these assets would be secured, to a greater extent under Alternative 2.

The approach under this alternative would allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Plan to the highest degree. Much of the infrastructure required to be in place to achieve the growth targets is already in place or planned under this alternative.

Development under this alternative would be more compact and sustainable and would better support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of residential units would be expected to take place in the core areas of the town. Supporting increased buildings of height at suitable locations would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town as envisaged by the wider planning framework to the greatest degree.

This alternative would make the greatest contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the Plan area and beyond. This alternative would be considered the most effective out of both Development Strategies considered in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the Plan area.

The approach under Alternative 2 would benefit the protection of various environmental components. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to a significant degree. Less residual environmental effects would result.

Selected Alternative: Alternative 2

4.6.5 Transport

Alternative 1 “General approach” would not inform the LAP with a Local Transport Plan, but would take a general approach to transportation through the implementation of generic policy objectives, including those set out in the County Development Plan. This alternative would provide a less coordinated and less orderly provision of transport infrastructure and services (that would seek to deliver travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, with interactions with air and human health), with delivery of projects, and associated benefits with respect to sustainable mobility and compact development, less likely. This approach would be less likely to improve the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions and energy use. Potentially adverse impacts arising from more coherently planned transport developments on environmental components, including ecology and water, could be mitigated at both LAP and project level.

Alternative 2 “Focused and plan-led approach” would involve the preparation of a Local Transport Plan for the Plan area and the incorporation of recommendations into the narrative and policy objectives of the Local Area Plan. This would ensure a more coherent approach is taken to the integration of land use and transportation planning and would align with national and local guidance pertaining to climate action and modal change. This alternative would provide a more coordinated and more orderly provision of transport infrastructure and services (that would seek to deliver travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, with interactions with air and human health), with delivery of projects, and associated benefits with respect to sustainable mobility and compact development, more likely. This approach would be more likely to improve the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions and energy use. Potentially adverse impacts on environmental components, including ecology and water, could be mitigated at both LAP and project level.

Selected Alternative: Alternative 2

4.6.6 Climate

Alternative 1 “High level policy approach” would provide a generic narrative and policy objectives in the Local Area Plan that reflect those set out in the County Development Plan and support the implementation of climate action policy as set out at a national and regional level. **Alternative 2** “Focused, plan-led and collaborative approach” would ensure climate action is a cross-cutting theme of the Plan. A specific chapter would be included in the Plan relating to Climate Action with opportunities for various sectors including transport, business, and residential to include climate adaptation and mitigation measures set out. An evidence-based approach would be taken to identifying any targets or measures and the Plan would be closely aligned with the objectives of the Louth County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029. The opportunities for community participation and engagement would also be highlighted.

Both alternatives would contribute towards climate action (both mitigation and adaptation); however, Alternative 2 would contribute to a greater degree than Alternative 1. Consequently, Alternative 2 would contribute to a greater degree towards the protection and management of the environment (and associated positive environmental effects) arising from climate action interactions including:

- Population and human health – lower emissions would improve air quality and therefore human health; flood risk management approach would contribute towards protection of human health;
- Biodiversity, flora and fauna – reducing vulnerability of biodiversity to climate risks and enhancing biodiversity and flora and fauna;
- Soils – reducing risk of soils from climate change;
- Water – reducing vulnerability from coastal and fluvial flood risk;

- Air and Climatic Factors – the transition to a low carbon society and economy would contribute towards achieving targets in relation to greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality;
- Material Assets – driving modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport; contributing towards the adequate and appropriate provision of water services; contributing towards circular economy principles; contributing towards renewable energy generation targets and energy security.
- Cultural Heritage – contributing towards reuse of the existing built building stock, which includes heritage features, as well as more coordination for retrofitting.

Selected Alternative: Alternative 2

4.6.7 Natura 2000

Alternative 1 “Continue with measured approach” would follow the current method which identifies and considers appropriate land uses within and in proximity to the designated Natura sites (Dundalk Bay SPA and SAC) to facilitate development while protecting and maintaining the protection of conservation objectives of the designated Natura sites.

Alternative 2 “Enhanced approach” would seek to provide for a greater transition and compatibility of land uses in the vicinity of the designated Natura sites (Dundalk Bay SPA and SAC). This approach would result in a higher level of protection being afforded to the designated Natura sites and enhanced protection of the conservation objectives associated with the designated sites.

By providing for a greater transition and compatibility of land uses in the vicinity of the designated Natura sites, Alternative 2 would contribute towards the protection of areas outside of European sites from inappropriate development to a greater extent, benefitting all environmental components, including biodiversity and flora and fauna, soil, water, air and climatic factors and landscape.

Selected Alternative: Alternative 2

4.7 Reasons for Choosing the Selected Alternative in light of Other Reasonable Alternatives Considered

Selected alternatives for the Plan from each of the types of alternatives that emerged from the planning/SEA process are indicated above.

These alternatives have been integrated into the Draft Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate, having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects which were identified by the SEA and are summarised above; and
2. Planning – including social and economic – effects that were also considered.

Section 5 Summary of Effects arising from Proposed Material Alterations

A summary of the likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Material Alterations that were subject to SEA is provided on Table 5.1 overleaf.

Table 5.1 Summary of Effects arising from Proposed Material Alterations that were subject to SEA

Proposed Material Alterations No's. ²⁸	Commentary	Likely to Improve status of SEOs +	Potential Conflict with status of SEOs -	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs 0
134	<p>Proposed Material Alteration No. 134 is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the land use zoning of the area of lands at Haynestown identified as 'A' from H1 Open Space to E1 General Employment; • Change the land use zoning of the area of lands at Haynestown identified as 'C' from L1 Strategic Reserve to G1 Community Facilities. • Lands at Haynestown labelled B reverts to the zoning as set out in the CDP- the driving range is zoned H1 Open Space and the adjacent lands to the east and west of the Driving Range are zoned E1 General Employment. <div data-bbox="315 587 1055 917"> </div> <p>As has already been identified in the SEA Environmental Report that was placed on public display alongside the Draft Plan: "Flood risk management and drainage provisions are already in force through the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied) and related provisions have been integrated into the LAP. In addition, land use zoning contained within the Draft Plan has been informed by the SFRA process and associated delineation of flood risk zones."</p> <p>Most of the lands labelled B and proposed to be zoned E1 General Employment are within Flood Zones A/B. The site is at risk from both fluvial and coastal sources. The proposed E1 General Employment zoning would fail the Justification Test and would not be considered compatible to complying with the Flood Risk Management Ministerial Guidelines.</p> <p>However, however Policy Objective INF 21 from the Draft Plan would limit future development/ grants of permission in line with the Guidelines.</p>		BFF PHH S W MA C	A CH L

²⁸ For detail on Proposed Material Alterations please refer to Proposed Material Alterations document.

Proposed Material Alterations No's. ²⁸	Commentary	Likely to Improve status of SEOs +	Potential Conflict with status of SEOs -	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs 0
136	<p>Proposed Material Alteration No. 136 is to change the land use zoning of lands the south of Bothar Maol, from A2 Residential Phase 1 and A1 Residential Existing, within the area outlined in red, to L1 Strategic Reserve.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="320 424 864 756"> <p>Draft Plan</p> </div> <div data-bbox="880 411 1368 743"> <p>Material Alterations</p> </div> </div> <p>Environmental considerations have been integrated into the Draft Plan's zoning through an interdisciplinary approach which was informed by the environmental considerations, including those identified by the SEA and SFRA processes. Zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF, Eastern and Midland RSES and Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>While the Proposed Material Alteration would mean that potential adverse effects on environmental components such as soil, water bodies, ecology, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats and species would be less likely to occur at the subject site as a result of residential development, the Proposed Material Alteration would increase the need for more sensitive, less well serviced lands, further away from the established built envelope of the settlement with associated unnecessary potentially significant adverse effects on a variety of environmental components including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict with efforts to maximise sustainable compact growth and sustainable mobility (residual effects would be likely occur); • Adverse impacts upon carbon emission reduction targets in line with local, national and European environmental objectives (residual effects would be likely occur); • Adverse impacts upon the economic viability of providing for public assets and infrastructure (residual effects would be likely occur); • Effects on ecology, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats and species (residual effects would be likely occur); • Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces (residual effects would be likely occur); • Occurrence of visual impacts (residual effects would be likely occur); • Increased risk of flooding; and • Increased loadings on water bodies. 	BFF S W CH L	A C BFF PHH S W MA CH L	

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 Plan. These measures also apply to Proposed Material Alterations. Various environmental sensitivities and issues have been communicated to the Council through the SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes. By integrating related recommendations into the Draft Plan, the Council has ensured that both the beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan have been and will be maximised and that potential adverse effects have been and will be avoided, reduced or offset.

Mitigation as part of the Draft Plan preparation/SEA process was achieved through:

- Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development²⁹;
- Considering alternatives for the Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate³⁰;
- The integration of environmental considerations into zoning provisions of the Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate;
- The integration of individual SEA, AA and SFRA provisions into the text of the Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate; and
- The integration of individual provisions into the text of the existing, already in force, County Development Plan.

6.2 Monitoring

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. Monitoring is based around indicators that allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives identified at Table 3.1 and used in the evaluation. Monitoring indicators, targets, sources and remedial action is provided at Table 6.1 overleaf.

²⁹ As part of the evidence-based approach to the preparation of this Plan data was gathered and analysed in relation to population and housing growth and socio-economic trends. This data was obtained from various sources including Census 2022 and Central Statistics Office housing completions data.

A Settlement Capacity Audit (Appendix 1 in Volume 3) was carried out to ensure there is alignment and co-ordination between the zoning of lands and the availability of infrastructure, while a Local Transport Plan (Appendix 2 in Volume 3) has been prepared to ensure the integration of land use and transport planning. A Social Infrastructure Audit of community facilities in the town was carried out, details of which are in Appendix 5 in Volume 3. A Retail Strategy was undertaken as part of an analysis of retail activity and demand in Dundalk (see chapter 7 Retail Strategy and Tourism and Appendix 3 in Volume 3 for details).

The undertaking of the SEA process was part of this strategic work and contributed towards the integration of environmental considerations into individual Plan provisions.

³⁰ Although strategic alternatives in relation to the content of the Plan were significantly limited for the Plan (see Section 4), as part of the Plan preparation/SEA process alternatives for the Plan were considered. These alternatives were assessed by the SEA process and the findings of this assessment informed the selection of alternatives for the Plan, facilitating an informed choice with respect to the type of Plan that was prepared and placed on public display.

Table 6.1 Indicators, Targets, Sources and Remedial Action

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	BFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition of European sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions in their land use plans and as a minimum, to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species Implement and review, as relevant, Local Biodiversity Action Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHLGH report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years)³¹ DHLGH National Birds Directive Monitoring Report for the under Article 12 (every 3 years)³² Consultations with the NPWS³³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where condition of European sites is found to be deteriorating this will be investigated with the Regional Assembly and the DHLGH to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of spatial plans that have included ecosystem services content, mapping and policy to protect ecosystem services when their relevant plans are either revised or drafted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions in their land use plans and as a minimum, to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species Implement and review, as relevant, Local Biodiversity Action Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal review of local land use plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review internal systems
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEAs and AAs as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screen for and undertake SEA and AA as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of preparation of local land use plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review internal systems
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status of water quality in water bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included under Water below 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included under Water below 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included under Water below
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance of planning permissions with Plan measures providing for the protection of Biodiversity and flora and fauna – see County Development Plan Chapter 8 “Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that they comply with all Plan measures providing for the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna – see County Development Plan Chapter 8 “Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review internal systems
Population and Human Health	PHH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by County Development Plan Chapter 5 “Economy and Employment” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by County Development Plan Chapter 5 “Economy and Employment” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives Consultations with DECC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review internal systems Consultations with DECC

³¹ Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on European sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

³² Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on European sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

³³ Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on European sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

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Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All citizens will have access to speeds of 30Mbps, and that 50% of citizens will be subscribing to speeds of 100Mbps (Also relevant to Material Assets) 		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors resulting from development permitted under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultations with the Health Service Executive and EPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultations with the Health Service Executive and EPA
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSO data Monitoring of Louth County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DECC and NTA to develop a tailored response.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of spatial plans that include specific green infrastructure mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require all local level land use plans to include specific green infrastructure mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal review of local land use plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review internal systems
Soil (and Land)	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of population growth occurring on infill and brownfield lands compared to greenfield (also relevant to Material Assets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4% as per the NPF In accordance with National Policy Objectives 3c of the National Planning Framework, a minimum of 30% of the housing growth targeted in any settlement is to be delivered within the existing built-up footprint of the settlement To map brownfield and infill land parcels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPA Geoportal Compilation of greenfield and brownfield development for the DHLGH AA/Screening for AA for each application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the proportion of growth on infill and brownfield sites is not keeping pace with the targets set in the NPF and the RSES, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and coordinate actions to address constraints to doing so.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instances where contaminated material generated from brownfield and infill must be disposed of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dispose of contaminated material in compliance with EPA guidance and waste management requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal review of grants of permission where contaminated material must be disposed of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultations with the EPA and Development Management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental assessments and AAs as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screen for and undertake environmental assessments and AA as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of grants of permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review internal systems
Water	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status of water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the WFD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status' Implementation of the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPA Monitoring Programme for WFD compliance ³⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHLGH Water Section, the EPA Catchment Unit, the Regional Assembly and, as relevant, Uisce Éireann to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance. Where planning applications are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the WWTP or failure of the WWTP to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will consider whether it is necessary to coordinate a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and

³⁴ Including monitoring of water quality and nitrogen deposition due to bioenergy and agricultural projects where available

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Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uisce Éireann to achieve the necessary capacity. Where planning applications are being permitted on flood zones, the Council will ensure that such grants are in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and include appropriate flood risk mitigation and management measures.
Material Assets	MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programmed delivery of Uisce Éireann infrastructure for all key growth towns in line with Uisce Éireann Investment Plan and prioritisation programme to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan Where septic tanks are proposed, for planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that the outfall from the septic tank will not – in combination with other septic tanks – contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive Facilitate, as appropriate, Uisce Éireann in developing water and wastewater infrastructure See also targets relating to greenfield and brownfield development of land under Soil and broadband under Population and Human Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission Consultations with the Uisce Éireann DHLGH in conjunction with Local Authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where planning applications are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the WWTP or failure of the WWTP to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will consider whether it is necessary to coordinate a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Uisce Éireann to achieve the necessary capacity.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSO data Monitoring of Louth County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategies 2019-2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DECC and NTA to develop a tailored response.
Air	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous National Travel Survey levels NO_x, SO_x, PM10 and PM2.5 as part of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous National Travel Survey levels Improvement in Air Quality trends, particularly in relation to transport related emissions of NO_x and particulate matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSO data Data from the National Travel Survey EPA Air Quality Monitoring Consultations with Department of Transport and Department of Environment, Climate and Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHLGH, DECC and NTA to develop a tailored response. See also entry under Population and human health above
Climatic Factors	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Plan measures relating to climate reduction targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to climate reduction targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review internal systems
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute towards transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring of Louth County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategies 2019-2024 EPA Annual National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where targets are not achieved, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly and the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office to establish reasons and develop solutions.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share of renewable energy in transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute towards the target of the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC), 		

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Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
			for all Member States to reach a 10% share of renewable energy in transport by facilitating the development of electricity charging and transmission infrastructure, in compliance with the provisions of the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Action Regional Office Consultations with DECC (at monitoring evaluation) 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy consumption, the uptake of renewable options and solid fuels for residential heating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote reduced energy consumption and support the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating 		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in the proportion of journeys made by residents of the using private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSO data Monitoring of Louth County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategies 2019-2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where trends toward carbon reduction are not recorded, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly and the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office to establish reasons and develop solutions.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSO data Monitoring of Louth County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategies 2019-2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DECC and NTA to develop a tailored response.
Cultural Heritage	CH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, protected from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context of these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where monitoring reveals visitor or development pressure is causing negative effects on designated archaeological or architectural heritage, the Council will work with Regional Assembly, Fáilte Ireland and the National Monuments Service and other stakeholders, as relevant, to address pressures through additional mitigation.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with DHLGH. 	
Landscape	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of developments permitted that result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where monitoring reveals developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, the Council will re-examine Plan provisions and the effectiveness of their implementation