

RECEIVED: 19/01/2024

# Lobinstown Quarry

## Environmental Impact Assessment Report

### Appendix 1

### Background to Project

2024

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## APPENDIX 1. BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

### 1.1 NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT

#### 1.1.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT

The production of quarry aggregates is tied to the level of economic activity, which was significantly depressed during the recession. It is expected that production of construction aggregates will grow significantly as Ireland has emerged from recession and has returned to full economic growth.

The construction industry has been in recovery since 2013 but it is still grappling with nearly a decade of underinvestment and is playing catch up with an economy that has expanded strongly in the meantime. This has manifest itself in the acute housing supply shortage and infrastructure deficits across the country.

Ireland saw output of new dwellings rise from c. 50,000 units in 2000/2001 to a peak of c. 93,000 units in 2006 followed by a rapid decline to c. 8,000 units in 2012 and 2013.

Housing output rose to c. 21,087 units in 2019 but declined to 20,676 in 2020 due to severe lockdown restrictions imposed to arrest the Covid-19 pandemic. Housing completions reached 29,8517 in 2022 and are forecasted to reach only 26,000 units in 2023. Although estimates of future annual long-run housing demand had been in the range of 35,000 dwellings per annum (ESRI 2021), the Minister for Housing, Daragh O'Brien, stated in November 2022 that Ireland requires between 42,000 and 62,000 new homes every year.

In 2012, during the "Crash", the construction sector contributed just 5% of GDP. In comparison with other countries - and taking on board long-term trends for Ireland - an economy of our size, with our remaining infrastructure deficits and positive demographics, could be capable of sustaining a construction industry equivalent to around 12% of GNP (10% of GDP). It is recognised that Ireland needs a strong and sustainable construction sector. In May 2014, the government launched "Construction 2020 – a strategy for a renewed construction sector" (DoT 2014). The central aim of the strategy was to provide homes for people by tripling housing output by 2020 and adding 60,000 jobs to the construction sector over the same period. The strategy committed to a detailed, time-bound set of actions to support the return of the sector to sustainable levels.

In 2015, with forecasts of continuing strong economic growth, the construction sector had been expected to become a €20 billion industry by 2020. The total value of Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) investment in the sector was estimated at €26 billion in 2018, while the Department of Finance predicted this will increase to €41 billion by 2023. Growth in overall building and construction investment was forecast to average 15.6% in 2019, before moderating to 10% in 2020.

Construction output still lags significantly behind the recognised European sustainable level of 10% to 12% of GDP. The commitment to increase spending on social housing and infrastructure in the NPF is expected to act as a driver of continued growth in the construction sector. The construction sector can potentially employ 213,000 direct employees making it the largest generator of jobs in all communities around the economy. The sector is forecast to contribute around 10% of GNP to the Irish economy. Importantly, the upturn in construction has led to a significant increase in demand for aggregates across the country, most particularly in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

The increased demand for aggregates due to the upswing in the construction sector (averaging 11.3% growth per annum between 2013 and 2018), will tighten the supply available to the market over the lifespan for the quarry. In 2020, demand for aggregates equated to 12 tonnes per capita or 59 Mt per annum, while Project Ireland 2040 will require 1.5 billion tonnes or 75 Mt per annum (ICF 2020).

ESRI (2022) observed that economic growth, as measured by GDP and GNP, was forecasted to be 8.1% and 7.5 %, respectively, in 2022, but shrink to 4.4 % and 3.5 %, respectively in 2023. However, Covid-19 has had a significant adverse impact on the domestic Irish economy, and the cost in terms of economic output in 2020 and 2021 was c. €24 billion. The pre-pandemic unemployment rate was 5 % in February 2020 but peaked at 25.3 % in January 2021. ESRI (2022) found that the average overall unemployment rate was c. 16.1 % in 2021, dropping to 4.8 % in 2022 and forecasted to reach 4.1 % in 2023. Nonetheless, ESRI note that the Irish economy has continued its strong economic performance, and that GDP growth was 13.6 % in 2021, 8.1 % in 2022 and forecasted to reach 4.4 % in 2023. The scale of the economic hit has been much more severe during the ongoing Covid-19 induced crisis than that experienced during the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) over a decade ago. However, the economy appears to have bounced back more rapidly on this occasion.

Construction is a vital sector in any economy with its immediate impacts on economic growth, competitiveness, jobs and productivity. A healthy construction industry requires strong private sector demand supported by a continuous pipeline of public sector infrastructure projects, sustaining jobs right across the sector, in small, medium and large construction firms. It is essential not just for the delivery of much needed physical infrastructure but is also an important driver of competitiveness. With government policy focused on restoring competitiveness, driving down costs and increasing exports, the quantity and quality of infrastructure will play an important role. High quality infrastructure improves the efficiency of the indigenous enterprise sector and also increases the attractiveness of Ireland as an investment location for foreign direct investment.

As discussed in detail above, on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2018, the government published “Project Ireland 2040”, the new overarching public policy initiative. Project Ireland 2040 consists of the National Planning Framework to 2040 and the National Development Plan 2018-2027, which essentially replaced the revoked NSS and the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021, respectively.

The National Development Plan (NDP) is a ten year strategy for public capital investment of almost €116 billion. This equates to almost €12 billion annually, and represents a substantial increase in the average annual capital budget over that envisaged in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021. The NDP will drive long-term economic, environmental, and social progress across all parts of the country over the next ten years.

Achievement of the objectives of Project Ireland 2040 will necessitate access to significant reserves of aggregates (stone, sand and gravel) over the lifetime of the plan. It is not an exaggeration to state that many of the investment priorities within Project Ireland 2040 will not be realised without aggregates and aggregate based materials.

Rock aggregates are an integral element of all types of construction activities, and the provision of aggregates is an economic activity that is vital for society. Aggregates are used in the construction of houses, businesses and social and economic infrastructure including roads, schools and hospitals. In essence, aggregates are the backbone of sustainable construction in Ireland, without which modern and future living would not be possible (ICF 2020).

ICF (2020) state that total aggregate production in 2018 was 36 million tonnes, while Project Ireland 2040 will require the production of c. 1.5 billion tonnes of aggregates. It is critical that the Government recognises the strategic importance of a steady and dependable supply of local, high quality raw materials necessary for the construction of Ireland's future built environment. Therefore, the future supply of aggregates needs to be planned, monitored and managed in a sustainable manner. ICF (2020) recommend that:

1. It is critical that the scoping process required under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations is implemented for all quarry planning applications and that planning authorities are sufficiently resourced to carry out this process effectively. An Bord Pleanála should prioritise quarry development to ensure its statutory objective of deciding appeals within 18 weeks is achieved;
2. As the vast majority of decisions by local authorities in respect of applications for large scale extractive developments are appealed to An Bord Pleanála, a process to facilitate development applications directly to An Bord Pleanála should be introduced, subject to thresholds in terms of scale or output;
3. Given the highly capital intensive nature of the extractive industry, the regulatory certainty needed for professional operators can only be provided by the granting of permissions of long term duration — planning permission durations should be commensurate with the planned extraction of resources; and
4. The planning system should ensure steady and adequate provision of aggregate supplies by issuing sufficient planning consents to meet demand. Priority should be given to existing sites to ensure existing employment and investment is maintained.



**Figure 1.1 Range of Quarry Products**

Source: Essential Aggregates Providing for Ireland's Needs to 2040 (ICF 2020).

### 1.1.2 REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Meath County Development Plan (CPD) 2021-2027 recognises the need for extractive industries in terms of supply of aggregate materials for the construction sector and delivering transport infrastructure projects (Meath 2021). Extractive industries by their nature can give rise to detrimental environmental and residential amenity effects including traffic generation, vibration, dust, noise, water pollution, visual intrusion and loss of ground water supplies.

Meath contains a variety of natural resources such as building raw materials in the form of sand, gravel, stone reserves including high purity limestones and shale used in cement and magnesia manufacture and base metal deposits. The potential of these resources to underpin construction output and provide employment and economic growth in the local and regional economy is recognised as is the need to exploit such resources in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner.

There is a clear need for each county, including Meath, to make future provisions for the long-term supply of aggregates. These reserves are needed to meet the demand that is being placed on the extractives industry to supply raw materials for continued development within Meath. Thus, the proposed development is required to supply such materials for the continued social and economic growth of the region.

By their nature, aggregate resources can only be worked where they occur. The products are generally of low unit value and the cost of haulage affects economic

competitiveness in this sector. Thus, the most significant cost is transportation, and as a result most quarries typically operate within a c. 25 km radius of their market. Furthermore, local supplies of raw materials reduce transport distances, thereby reducing the carbon footprint.

The location of the proposed development, as shown on Figure 1.2, is strategically located in the Northeast Region c. 9 km northwest of Slane, c. 9 km west of Collon, c. 10 km southwest of Ardee, c. 14.5 km north-northeast of Navan, c. 16 km west of Dunleer, c. 17 km east of Kells, c. 19 km west-northwest of Drogheda, c. 19 km northwest of Duleek, c. 19 km southeast of Kingscourt, c. 23 km south of Carrickmacross, c. 25 km northwest of Bettystown-Laytown-Mornington, c. 25 km west of Clogherhead, and c. 25 km southwest of the most southerly outskirts of Dundalk.

This market covers the region of north and central County Meath, south and central County Louth and bordering areas of counties Cavan and Monaghan. There are two county towns within the 25 km natural market of the Lobinstown Quarry, namely Navan and Dundalk. Drogheda and Dundalk are designated as key Regional Growth Centres, which together with Dublin and Athlone form the upper two tiers in the settlement hierarchy of the Eastern and Midland Region, while Navan is designated a Key Town, as defined in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019–2031 (EMRA 2019). Furthermore, there are 13 census towns (i.e., pop. > 1,500) within the 25 km market, where development is focused under the new NDP, as well as numerous smaller towns and villages.

The GSI's online mapping website shows that there were nine other quarries within a 25 km radius of the Lobinstown Quarry in 2014 (Refer Appendix 1, Figure 1.3), six of which are active. These nine quarries are:

- Ardagh (Barley Hill) Quarry (No. MH 014) c. 4.5 km east of Kingscourt, operated by Roadstone. Active limestone quarry producing aggregates for concrete, hardcore and earthworks/fill, including Clauses 803/4/5 and Series 900.
- Gallstown Quarry (No. LH 001), c. 9.2 km north of Drogheda, operated by Kilsaran. Active greywacke quarry producing aggregates for concrete, hardcore, farm drainage, earthworks/fill, sea defence, rip rap and rock armour, including aggregate for farm/forest roads, Series 600, Clauses 803/4/5, Clause 806 and Series 900. Also, produces readymix concrete, concrete blocks, mortar aggregates, asphalt and macadam.
- Slane Quarry (No. MH 012), c. 2.5 km west of Slane, operated by Roadstone. Active basalt quarry producing aggregates for concrete, hardcore, earthworks/fill, including farm/forest roads and Clauses 803/4/5.
- Mullaghcrone Quarry (No. MH 015), c. 650 m east of Donore, operated by Roadstone. Active limestone quarry producing aggregates for concrete, hardcore, earthworks/fill, including aggregates for farm / forest roads, Series 600, Clauses 803 and 806.



- Annagor (Duleek) Quarry (No. MH 001), c. 3.75 km south of Drogheda, operated by Kilsaran. Active limestone quarry producing aggregates for hardcore, farm drainage, earthworks/fill, and rock armour/rip-rap.
- Bellewstown Quarry (No. MH 002), c. 1.25 km west of Bellewstown, operated by Kilsaran. Active quarry extracting tuffs and pebbly mudstones and producing aggregates, hardcore, farm drainage, earthworks/fill, including aggregates for farm/forest roads, Series 600, Clauses 803/4/5 and Clause 806.
- Kilmessan (Tullykane) Quarry (No. MH 004), c. 1.25 km southeast of Kilmessan. Inactive limestone quarry currently under restoration and operating as SRF.
- Faughan Hill Quarry (No. MH 003), c. 2 km north of Bohermeen, operated by Midland Contractors. Small, inactive limestone quarry formerly producing hardcore and Series 600.
- Duleek Quarry (MH 013), c. 1.7 km northwest of Duleek, operated by Roadstone. Inactive limestone quarry formerly producing hardcore, earthworks/fill, including aggregates for farm / forest roads and Clauses 803/4/5.

There were an additional five other mineral locations described in 2014 as quarries, mostly sand and gravel pits (i.e., SAGR) by the GSI. A virtual tour using current Google Earth Pro images from 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020 found that only two of these were quarries actively producing aggregates:

- Cruicetown Quarry (SAGR), c. 3.75 km southwest of Slane and north of Boyne River, operated by Doherty Quarries. Small, active/possibly inactive quarry producing crushed rock, sand, gravel and limestone.
- Balgree Quarry (SAGR), c. 9.25 km northwest of Kells, operated by Carnaross Sand & Gravel. Active quarry producing building sand, graded gravel & sand for golf courses, etc.
- Mullaghmore Quarry (SAGR), c. 7 km southeast of Kingscourt. Small, inactive sand and gravel pit.
- Mountainstown Quarry, c. 750 m northeast of Dunleer (i.e., in northern outskirts of Dunleer). Inactive, possibly worked-out greywacke quarry.
- Stallen Quarry, c. 400 m north of Donore (i.e., near Mullaghcrone Quarry). Inactive and possibly worked-out shale quarry.

Four additional quarries were identified within the 25 km market during the virtual tour using current Google Earth Pro. These are:

- Duleek Quarry, c. 4 km northeast of Duleek, operated by Kilsaran. Active limestone quarry.
- Gormanstown Quarry, c. operated by Murphy Concrete Manufacturing Ltd. Inactive, worked-out quarry under restoration operating as inert landfill facility.
- Duleek Quarry, c. 1.75 km north of Duleek, operated by Keegan Quarries and Irish Asphalt (Lagan). Inactive, possibly worked-out limestone quarry.



- Denhamstown Quarry, Heathtown Cross, c. 3.75 km south of Bellewstown, Inactive greywacke and sandstone quarry.

To our knowledge, only two of the quarries produce Series 900 product (i.e., Ardagh (Barley Hill) and Gallstown) and are hence likely to produce a high Polished Stone Value (PSV) product that can compete with that produced at Lobinstown. High PSV aggregates offer high skid resistance and low wear properties for high speed, high volume road surface coarse applications. These aggregates are used as constituents for bituminous mixtures, for surface dressing and for surface treatments and attract a higher price than lower specification aggregates.

The proposed development will ensure the continued viability of aggregate supply for Breedon's many business interests in the construction sector.

## 1.2 STRATEGIC PLANNING CONTEXT

### 1.2.1 EIA DIRECTIVES

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic process undertaken to identify and evaluate the potential environmental impact of proposed projects. The EIA also seeks to consider alternatives and propose mitigation measures to ensure the development is carried out within recognised and accepted standards. Thus, the EIA is a dynamic process in which environmental consideration delivers significantly improved project configurations in respect of environmental protection and sustainability. Projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of their nature, size and location are subject to the requirement for an EIA, prior to gaining development consent.

The first EIA Directive (85/337/EEC) came into force in 1985 and applied to a wide range of public and private projects, which were defined in Annexes I and II.

Mandatory EIAs applied to all projects listed in Annex I, which were considered as having significant effects on the environment (e.g., long-distance railway lines, include motorways, airports with a basic runway length  $\geq 2100$  m, etc.).

EIAs at the discretion of the Member State applied to projects listed in Annex II, which the national authorities had to decide whether an EIA was needed. This is done by a "screening procedure", which determines the effects of projects on the basis of thresholds/criteria or a case by case examination.

The EIA Directive of 1985 was amended three times, in 1997, in 2003 and in 2009. The initial Directive of 1985 and the latter three amendments were subsequently codified by Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011. The latter Directive was itself amended in 2014 by Directive 2014/52/EU.

Article 5 of the EIA Directive provides where an EIA is required, the developer shall prepare and submit an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) previously referred to as an Environmental Impact Statement ('EIS'). The information to be provided by the developer shall include at least:

1. A description of the project comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the project;
2. A description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment;
3. A description of the features of the project and/or measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;
4. A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the project on the environment;

5. Any additional information specified in Annex IV relevant to the specific characteristics of a particular project or type of project and to the environmental features likely to be affected.

The EIA procedure can be summarised as follows:

1. The developer may request the competent authority to specify what should be covered by the EIA information to be provided by the developer (Scoping Stage);
2. The developer must provide information on the environmental impact (EIA report – Annex IV);
3. The environmental authorities and the public (and affected Member States) must be informed and consulted;
4. The competent authority decides, taking into consideration the results of consultations; and
5. The public is informed of the decision and can appeal the decision to An Bord Pleanála and challenge the decision before the courts.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), which replaces the previous Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), is the new formal statement or document produced as a result of that process. The EIAR provides information on the receiving environment and assesses the likely significant effects of the project, and proposes mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or mitigate these effects. The function of the EIAR is to provide information to allow the competent authority to conduct the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed development.

### 1.2.2 PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000

As a member State of the EU, Ireland is required to transpose EU directives into Irish Law within specified periods of their enactment. Prior to 2000, the rules in respect of EIA contained in the various EC Directives were brought into force by the European Communities (EIA) Regulations 1989, the EC (EIA) (Amendment) Regulations, 1999 and the Local Government (Planning & Development) Regulations 1999. These were largely consolidated within the terms of Part X of the Planning & Development Act, 2000, and Part 10 and Schedules 5, 6 and 7 of the 2001 Planning and Development Regulations, 2001. Therefore, under Irish Law, proposed developments are required to comply with the Planning and Development Acts, 2000, as amended and related secondary legislation in the form of Statutory Instruments or Regulations.

A new EIA Directive 2014/52/EU came into effect in 2014, which each Member State is required to transpose into law. Although late, Directive 2014/52/EU was finally transposed into Irish Law and adopted on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. The European Union (Planning and Development)(Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018) transposed the EIA Directive 2014/52/EU, and gave further effect to the 2011 Directive by means of extensive amendments to the existing planning legislation. The amended Directive uses the term Environmental Impact

Assessment Report (EIAR) for what was formerly referred to in Irish legislation as an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

An administrative consolidation of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (No. 30 of 2000) has been issued by the Law Reform Commission on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020, and provides a valuable reference to the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.

The legislation require an EIA to be conducted, typically by specialist consultants on behalf of the developer, before consent is given for projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by reason of their size, nature or location.

The responsibility for the planning and environmental regulation of developments rests with the local authorities, the designated Competent Authority in this instance. These and An Bord Pleanála enforce compliance by attaching conditions relating to the environmental management of granted planning permissions.

In respect of the Planning & Development Regulations S.I. No. 600 of 2001, Schedule 5, Part 1 specifies projects requiring an EIA (reflecting Annex I of the EIA Directive), and Schedule 5, Part 2 specifies those projects where the Member State decides on the thresholds in terms of project scale, as to whether an EIA is required (reflecting Annex II of the EIA Directive). Schedule 6 specifies information to be contained in an EIA, while Schedule 7 specifies the criteria used for determining Sub-Threshold projects, which for reasons of location and characteristics of the development and related impacts, require an EIA.

The relevant classes/scales of development that normally require EIA are set out in Schedule 5 (Part 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. The relevant class of development in the case of a quarry relates to “*Extraction of stone, gravel, sand or clay, where the area of extraction would be greater than 5 hectares*”, as per Item 2 (b) of the Schedule. In addition, Paragraph 13(a) of Part 1 requires Environmental Impact Assessment where there is “*Any change or extension of development already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed (not being a change or extension referred to in Part 1,) which would: -*

- i. *result in the development being of a class listed in Part 1 or paragraphs 1 to 12 of Part 2 of this Schedule; and*
- ii. *result in an increase in size greater than – 25 per cent, or an amount equal to 50 per cent of the appropriate threshold, whichever is the greater.”*

## 1.3 POLICY FRAMEWORK

### 1.3.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Government's strategy for the construction sector, Construction 2020, sets out a cross-government action plan to help support a sustainable construction sector over the longer term.

The Government has through the National Development Plan and the National Spatial Strategy made clear its objective to facilitate more balanced social and economic growth throughout the State. Such balanced regional growth will result in an increased requirement for social and economic infrastructure with a consequential increase in demand for aggregates.

There are two main documents which underpin the direction of spatial development in the county. Firstly, at a National level the Project Ireland 2040, which supersedes the 2002 National Spatial Strategy (NSS), and secondly at a Regional level, the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, albeit the latter have recently been superseded by the Eastern & Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES).

The economic development of Meath can no longer be viewed in isolation from adjoining counties and regions. Ireland as a country has become an open economy and as a result the economic development of Meath must now be considered in the context of regional, national and global influences.

Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's new overarching public policy initiative, which emphasises "social outcomes and values consistent with prudent economic and budgetary policy" (DoHPLG 2018). Project Ireland 2040 consists of the National Planning Framework to 2040 and the National Development Plan 2018-2027. The objective of Project Ireland 2040 is to provide a "comprehensive social, economic and cultural infrastructure for all our people to flourish". The policy seeks to achieve ten strategic outcomes, building around overarching themes of wellbeing, equality, and opportunity. There are ten shared priorities that will ensure a consistent approach between planning objectives under the National Planning Framework and investment commitments under the National Development Plan.

Following on from the enactment of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, a number of changes were made to the regional structures in Ireland where the eight regional authorities were dissolved. Three new Regional Assemblies came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015, namely the Southern Regional Assembly, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) and the Northern & Western Regional Assembly. EMRA is part of the regional tier of governance in Ireland, primarily focused on strategic planning, EU funding and coordination of certain local government activities. One of the main statutory functions of EMRA is to prepare and adopt a RSES for the region.

Prior to the establishment of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015, the three previous Regional Authorities within the Eastern and Midland Region produced individual RPGs. These planning guidelines set out a strategic

planning framework for their respective three areas and have remained in force until the final RSES are published. The RPGs have now been replaced with the publication of the RSES for the region on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019. The current Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 came into effect on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 and incorporates the policies and objectives of the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region.

#### 1.3.1.1 National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was launched by the government in late 2002 and is designed to provide a framework for balanced social, economic, and physical development between the regions for the next 20 years (DoELG 2002). The strategy is based on a hierarchy of settlement; Gateways, Hubs and County Towns along with the need to support the role of smaller towns, villages and diverse rural economies.

The NSS provides a framework to promote balanced regional development and sustainable growth. It also guides policies, programmes and investment. The strategy emphasises continued strong growth in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), but with significant improvement in the regions outside the capital and more particularly in the nine gateway cities and nine hub towns.

The NSS recognises that quality of life is increasingly important to people and that unbalanced development affects quality of life. The growing trend of long distance commuting, and the dislocation between centres of employment and residential development are economically, socially, and environmentally unsustainable. The NSS recognises that the solution lies in balanced regional development, whereby the potential of each area to contribute to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the State is developed. Ireland's growing population can be accommodated within existing settlements, by renewing and developing our cities, towns and villages, and ensuring that urban land is used sensitively and efficiently in order to provide attractive, sustainable, compact, public transport friendly forms, whilst avoiding urban sprawl.

The strategy emphasises the critical role of 'Gateway' and 'Hubs' in delivering future economic growth. "The Dublin Gateway is recognised as an international driver of enterprise within the GDA and is supported by regionally designated strategic employment centres, serving the urban and rural hinterlands. These economic growth areas, which take advantage of nationally important transport hubs and corridors, will provide the focal point for diverse regional enterprise and economic clustering activity. There is a network of sizable urban settlements within the natural catchment of the Lobinstown Quarry, including the region of northern and central Meath, most of Louth and bordering parts of counties Cavan and Monaghan. These settlements include the Drogheda, Navan and southern outskirts of Dundalk, each with their own hinterland, sphere of influence, and extensive services.

The NSS 2002-2020 was revoked in 2013, as it had failed to meet its objectives, largely due to: (1) designation of too many hubs and gateways; (2) a lack of resources due to poor fiscal position; (3) weak political buy-in, as revealed by the decentralization

plan; and (4) lack of a statutory footing, which meant it received 'due regard' as opposed to 'compliance'.

The Government has made clear its objective to facilitate more balanced social and economic growth throughout the State, and has announced it would seek a successor National Spatial Strategy. This would take account of both the need to acknowledge changed national and international circumstances and continue to set long term national planning and development aims. Such balanced regional growth will result in an increased requirement for social and economic infrastructure with a consequential increase in demand for construction aggregates and related products including asphalt.

#### 1.3.1.2 Infrastructure & Capital Investment Plans

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013 was revoked in 2010, and was succeeded by the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2012-2016. In 2011, the Government agreed an exchequer capital programme amounting to €17 billion for the 5 year period 2012-2016. This €17 billion Exchequer investment was directed at addressing critical infrastructure investment gaps in order to aid economic recovery, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. The sectors prioritised for investment in the Framework include education, health, jobs and enterprise.

The focus of the capital spending was to be on supporting those sectors and projects which will best contribute to sustainable job creation. The review of Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-16 (DoPER 2011) assessed the existing capacity of Ireland's infrastructure and identified remaining gaps that must be addressed to aid economic recovery, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

The approach identified four main components of the investment strategy, namely:

- Economic infrastructure – encompassing transport networks, energy provision and telecommunications capacity.
- Investment in the productive sector and human capital – such as capital investment in education infrastructure.
- Environmental infrastructure – including our waste and water systems.
- Critical social investment – such as the health service and social housing programmes.

Amongst the main priorities over the medium term were:

1. Ensuring adequate maintenance of the National Road Network in order to protect the value of previous investments.
2. Targeting the improvement of specific road segments where there is a clear economic justification, including advancing two key PPP roads projects.

In September 2015, the Government launched a second Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021, whose principal stated goal is "Building on Recovery". With steadily improving public finances, the Government was able to commit to



increasing the level of expenditure on capital infrastructure gradually over the programme period, in a way that is sustainable and long term. The plan represented a €42 billion framework for infrastructure investment in Ireland over the period. The plan combined direct investment by the Exchequer of €27 billion, a third phase of PPP investments of about €500 million and State-owned sector investment of around €14.5 billion. In total, this State-backed investment package represented over 3.5 percent of GNP each year between 2016 and 2021, and it supported more than 45,000 construction-related jobs.

The Plan prioritised spending on those areas of greatest need as the economy continued its strong recovery. The considerable improvement in the public finances had allowed the Government to increase the level of expenditure on capital infrastructure gradually over the course of the next six years, in a way that was sustainable and long term in its design and focus. Economic growth is dependent on the capacity to move people and goods around the country quickly and easily, and significant strides had been made since 2000 in improving Ireland's national transport infrastructure. Nonetheless, transport was allocated the largest sectoral share of 29% of the Exchequer Capital Envelope under the Plan. In particular, the national, regional, and local road network was allocated €591 million in 2016, progressively increasing to €1,082 million in 2022, and totaling €6 billion over the period of the Plan.

Continuation of the public capital programme would have beneficial effects on the construction industry, and on the wider economy in terms of employment, continued recovery and national competitiveness. In their report Building a Better Ireland, the Construction Industry Council (2010) stated that as the economy continued to grow and the population increased towards its projected 2020 level of 5,000,000, real planning for the future is vital. It was in this context that, on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2018, the government adopted "Project Ireland 2040", the new National Planning Framework—the successor national spatial plan to replace the revoked NSS.

#### 1.3.1.3 Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's new overarching public policy initiative, which emphasises "social outcomes and values consistent with prudent economic and budgetary policy" (DoHPLG 2018). Project Ireland 2040 consists of the National Planning Framework to 2040 and the National Development Plan 2018-2027. These essentially replace the revoked NSS and the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021, respectively. The key difference with all previous spatial planning policies is that it represents an alignment of the investment strategy with the strategic planning policy, to create a unified and coherent plan for the country. Insofar as the Plan is underpinned by investment and placed on a statutory footing that it will receive 'compliance' as opposed to 'due regard', it will have the force of both funds and law.

The objective of Project Ireland 2040 is to provide a "comprehensive social, economic and cultural infrastructure for all our people to flourish". The policy seeks to achieve ten strategic outcomes, building around overarching themes of wellbeing, equality and opportunity. The ten shared priorities will ensure a consistent approach between

planning objectives under the National Planning Framework and investment commitments under the National Development Plan. These are:

1. Compact Growth
2. Enhanced Regional Accessibility
3. Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
4. Sustainable Mobility
5. A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
6. High-Quality International Connectivity
7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
8. Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society
9. Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources
10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

#### 1.3.1.3.1 National Planning Framework to 2040

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The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country. The NPF sets out a spatial strategy for Ireland, to accommodate in a sustainable and balanced fashion, the significant projected changes in demographics, such as a population growing by an extra million, and which is increasingly aging and living in smaller family units. The NPF will guide development and investment over the next two decades, and will empower each region to lead in the planning and development of their communities, based on a common set of national objectives and key principles.

The above vision will be achieved by:

- Developing a new region-focused strategy for managing growth;
- Linking the NPF to a new 10-year investment plan, the National Development Plan;
- Using state lands for certain strategic purposes;
- Supporting the NPF with more environmentally focused planning at local level; and
- Backing-up the NPF in law with an Independent Office of the Planning Regulator.

Some of the key provisions are as follows:

- A roughly 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midland region, the Southern and the Northern and Western regions, with 75% of the growth outside of Dublin and its suburbs;
- The five cities in terms of population size (pop. > 50,000): Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, will be targeted for 50% of overall national growth between them, with Ireland's large and smaller towns, villages and rural areas accommodating the other 50% of growth;

- Major new policy emphasis on renewing and developing existing settlements rather than continual expansion and sprawl of cities and towns into the countryside, with a target of at least 40% of all new housing to be delivered within the existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages on infill and/or brownfield sites;
- Implementation of the NPF will be fully supported by the Government's investment strategy for public capital investment and investment by the State sector in general, as outlined in the National Development Plan;
- The State owns key parts of our cities and towns, the development of which can play a vital role in reshaping those urban areas, providing homes, places of work and recreation, and a new national Regeneration and Development Agency will be established to harnessing public lands as catalysts to stimulate regeneration and investment;
- The future planning and development of our communities at local level will be refocused to enable a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, through harnessing the country's prodigious renewable energy potential;
- More strategic and co-ordinated planning of our cities and large towns across local authority boundaries will be introduced, including statutorily backed Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans in the five cities;
- The NPF will be given full legislative support within the planning system, including regular reviews and updates to reflect changing circumstances as necessary. The legislation underpinning the Framework will create a new independent Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) to monitor its implementation of the NPF; and
- For each of the three regions, the Regional Assemblies will prepare their own strategy in accordance with the framework, and these will be completed by early 2019 and will be known as Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES). County and City Development Plan review cycles will then fall in to line with their respective regional strategies, ensuring that the shared vision is carried through to the local planning level.

The NPF includes 75 National Policy Objectives, of which the following are considered particularly relevant here:

#### **National Policy Objective 1a**

The projected level of population and employment growth in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area will be at least matched by that of the Northern and Western and Southern Regional Assembly areas combined.

#### **National Policy Objective 2a**

A target of half (50%) of future population and employment growth will be focused in the existing five cities and their suburbs.

#### **National Policy Objective 3a**

Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements.

#### **National Policy Objective 3b**

Deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints.

#### **National Policy Objective 3c**

Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints.

#### **National Policy Objective 4**

Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.

#### **National Policy Objective 5**

Develop cities and towns of sufficient scale and quality to compete internationally and to be drivers of national and regional growth, investment and prosperity.

#### **National Policy Objective 6**

Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.

#### **National Policy Objective 12**

The Government will establish a National Regeneration and Development Agency to work with local authorities, other public bodies and capital spending departments and agencies to co-ordinate and secure the best use of public lands, investment required within the capital envelopes provided in the National Development Plan and to drive the renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential. The Government will consider how best to make State lands available to such a body to kick-start its development role and to legislate for enhanced compulsory purchase powers to ensure that the necessary transformation of the places most in need of regeneration can take place more swiftly and effectively.

#### **National Policy Objective 32**

To target the delivery of 550,000 additional households to 2040.

#### **National Policy Objective 35**

Increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights.

**National Policy Objective 75**

Ensure that all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the National Planning Framework are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA and AA as appropriate.

Key future planning and development and place-making policy priorities for the Eastern and Midland Region include:

- Enabling the complementary development of large and county towns in the wider Greater Dublin Area and Midland areas on the key strategic and public transport routes in a regionally co-ordinated manner;
- More effective strategic planning and co-ordination of the future development of nationally and regionally strategic locations at points that straddle boundaries between this and neighbouring regions as in the example of Athlone;
- A focused approach to compact, sequential and sustainable development of the larger urban areas along the Dublin – Belfast economic and transport corridor, along which there are settlements with significant populations such as Dundalk and Drogheda;
- More emphasis on consolidating the development of places that grew rapidly in the past decade or so with large scale commuter driven housing development, with a particular focus on addressing local community and amenity facility provision in many of the larger commuter towns;
- Preparing and implementing a regional priorities programme, to shape and inform delivery of the Regeneration and Development Initiative. It should identify significant ready-to-go city, rural town and village and rural rejuvenation priorities which could harness publicly owned land and other assets that are not being used presently, which together with community and wider private and public sector support and investment, could deliver transformation in an integrated manner;
- Tourism development and promotional branding to ensure that areas like the Midlands and Lakelands areas are developed and promoted in such a way as to play their full part in tapping the economic potential in the region.
- Harnessing the potential of the region in renewable energy terms across the technological spectrum from wind and solar to biomass and, where applicable, wave energy, focusing in particular on the extensive tracts of publicly owned areas of peat extraction in order to enable a managed transition of the economies in such areas; and
- Building on the progress made in developing an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways, that will support the diversification of rural and regional economies and promote more sustainable forms of travel and activity based recreation utilising canals, former railways, and other routes.

### 1.3.1.3.2 National Development Plan 2018 to 2027

The National Development Plan (NDP) is the companion document to the NPF, and is a ten year strategy for public capital investment of almost €116 billion. This equates to almost €12 billion annually, and represents a substantial increase in the average annual capital budget over that envisaged in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021. The NDP will underpin the NPF and drive its implementation, as well as driving long-term economic, environmental and social progress across all parts of the country over the next ten years.

The future success of Ireland rests on ensuring readiness for a changing world and the continued successful development of the knowledge economy, and as such on also adopting a strongly strategic approach to public capital investment in the NDP. The NDP represents a response to significant deficits in Ireland's public infrastructure, and identifies the strategic priorities for public capital investment for all sectors.

There are many major challenges that form the context for the NPF and the NDP's strategic investment priorities, and these include:

- Demographic change;
- Need for Ireland to become a low-carbon, climate-resilient society;
- Brexit; and
- Realising sustainable growth

The NDP is a blueprint, setting out a strategic framework for public capital investment over the next ten years with a particular focus, beyond simply underpinning the NPF, but on achieving the following over-arching objectives:

- Meeting Ireland's infrastructure and investment needs over the next ten years through a total investment of an estimated €116 billion over the period; and
- Reforming how public investment is planned and delivered by shifting to integrated regional investment plans, stronger co-ordination of sectoral strategies to secure mutually reinforcing outcomes, and more rigorous selection and appraisal of projects to secure value-for-money.

Substantial growth is planned in public capital investment over the coming years, but this must be consistent with the fundamental requirements of overall economic and fiscal sustainability. Over the period 1995 to 2015, Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Ireland was comparable to the EU15 average of 3% over the same period. This indicates that a value of 3% of national income can be considered as an appropriate target for the long-term average level of public capital spending. Under the NDP, it is projected that public capital investment will reach 3.8% of Gross National Income (GNI) in 2021 and 4% by 2024, with sustained investment averaging 4% on an annual basis over the period 2022 to 2027. Public capital investment in Ireland will therefore become among the highest in the EU, and will also ensure that public investment underpins the sustainability of



economic growth, but avoids contributing to economic instability and exacerbating any risks of unbalanced and inflationary growth.

Exchequer funding allocated for public capital investment over the ten-year period will amount to €91 billion, and will be supplemented with State-backed investment by commercial State owned enterprises to generate a total 10-year investment programme estimated at €116 billion. The Exchequer resources allocated for investment under the NDP are based on projected nominal growth in national income (GNI) averaging 4% over the period 2022-2027. This is consistent with long term growth forecasts for the Irish economy produced by various international organisations. The total annual capital expenditure will thus increase from €8.4 billion in 2018 to €14.0 billion in 2027 under the Plan.

Indicative resource allocations for delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes, and for named Strategic Investment Priorities under each Outcome, over the period ten-year period are detailed in the Plan (See Table 3.2, p. 21-22 of NDP). These allocations will be updated and adjusted where necessary as the Plan is implemented, in light of:

- Progress achieved in relation to public capital investment priorities currently underway or planned;
- Ongoing assessment of longer-term infrastructural priorities across sectors underpinning the implementation of NPF priorities; and
- Different planning horizons applying to different types of capital expenditure.

This will allow for appropriate flexibility and responsiveness of capital allocations to changing circumstances and priorities.

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### 1.3.2 REGIONAL CONTEXT

The *National Spatial Strategy (NSS)* for Ireland set out the basis on which all areas of the country will have the opportunity to develop to their potential within a national spatial planning framework for the period up to 2020 (DoEHLG 2002). The Regional Authorities were entrusted with the important responsibility of implementing the NSS and successor spatial plans at regional level.

The Planning and Development Act, 2000 conferred on the Regional Authorities the power to make Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for their functional areas. The RPGs, which also incorporate a socioeconomic development strategy, are intended to constitute a strategic planning framework for the period 2010-2022 for the development of each region and for inter-regional cooperation. The strategic policies and objectives set out in the RPG will form the backdrop for socio-economic planning by national and regional agencies and will constitute the policy framework within which county, city, town and local area development plans will be made. Thus, although the NSS has been revoked, its legacy persisted in the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs), which remained in effect until replaced by the Eastern & Midland RSES 2019-2031, which was published in 2019.



The Southern, the Northern and Western, and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assemblies were established on 1st January 2015, following on from the dissolution of the Border, Midland and Western and the Southern & Eastern Regional Assemblies, under the Government's regional reform process, as enacted in the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly has twelve constituent local authorities split into three Strategic Planning Areas. The Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031 was adopted by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly on June 28th 2019 (EMRA 2019). The RPGs for the Midland Region are now superseded by the RSES, and have been incorporated into the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, which was adopted on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021 and came into effect on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2021.

Lobinstown quarry is currently permitted under P.A. Ref. LB200106, ABP 309109-21 with permission extended for a 10 year period. The application for planning permission for an extension of the quarry that will accompany this document (i.e., EIAR), is being submitted while the new CDP is in effect. Thus, the prevailing CDP during the application for the existing and proposed development, and for most of the life of the development, is reflective of the 2019 RSES, and not the 2010 RPGs. Thus, the RSES for the Eastern & Midland Region 2019–2031 are discussed in the next subsection.

#### 1.3.2.1 Eastern & Midland Regional Spatial Economic Strategy 2019-2031

A Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future development and to better manage regional planning and economic development throughout the Eastern & Midland Region. The RSES identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives.

The principal statutory purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Region. The RSES is a significant evolution of regional policy-making and replaces the 2010-2022 Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs).

Developing the Strategy is achieved through the integration of spatial and economic policy. By ensuring good alignment with European and National policy, the RSES can ensure that investment is targeted towards identified policy and objectives. Key policy parameters for the RSES growth strategy are also set by national policy documents, including Project Ireland 2040 (i.e., NPF and NDP 2018-2027) and Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025, Enterprise 2025.

One of the key drivers for the NPF is the promotion of effective regional development that manages more balanced growth between the three Irish Regions—the Eastern & Midland Region, the Northern & Western Region and the Southern Region. The NPF sets out a preferred 'regional parity' scenario in which the growth of the other Regions would at least match that of the Eastern and Midland Region.

The key elements identified at the national level, which set the parameters for the development of the RSES growth strategy, include:



- Regional parity between the EMRA, and NWRA and SRA combined;
- Regional concentration toward cities and some regionally important larger settlements;
- A focus on contained growth and reduced sprawl by targeting infill and brownfield lands in existing built-up areas;
- Sequential provision of infrastructure with some critical infrastructure in place to promote investment;
- A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan to deliver compact regeneration and growth in the Dublin metropolitan area; and
- A comprehensive approach to rural fabric supporting sustainable growth and reversing decline.

The Eastern & Midland Region is the smallest in terms of land area but the largest in population size, with over 2.3 million people. The Eastern and Midland Region is also the primary economic engine of the state providing more than 1 million jobs. The main settlement is the capital city of Dublin, which is home to 1.2 million people and is supported by a network of regional and county towns and an extensive rural hinterland.

The Region contains some of the fastest growing communities in the Country which increases demand for housing, infrastructure and services in those areas. In line with the prevailing state-wide trend of urbanisation, the Region saw the continued increase in the share of population residing in urban areas. However, alongside this is a trend for counter urbanisation with strong growth in the peri-urban and rural areas surrounding Dublin.

A key objective of the NPF is to enable all parts of the Country – both urban and rural – to achieve their full potential. The RSES reflects this core objective and aims to strengthen the fabric of rural Ireland, supporting rural towns and communities as well as the open countryside, improving connectivity, and supporting job creation, particularly in a more diverse range of sectors. The rejuvenation of rural towns and villages requires that appropriate job creation can be supported in rural areas. Traditional sectors such as agriculture, tourism, extractive industries and forestry are complemented by diversification in sectors such as food, renewable energy and opportunities provided from improved digital connectivity.

The RSES sets out a settlement and economic growth strategy that seeks to ensure that the needs of the Region's citizens are met. Thus, there is significant policy alignment between the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the NPF's National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), to which the development of the Regional Strategic Outcomes in the RSES are closely aligned and supportive.

The Vision Statement of the RSES is "To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all."

The Strategy is underpinned by key cross-cutting principles that reflect the three pillars of sustainability; Social, Environmental and Economic, and expressed in a manner



which best reflects the challenges and opportunities of the Region. The three Key Principles are:

- **Healthy Placemaking:** To promote people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit, invest and study in.
- **Climate Action:** The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon society recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.
- **Economic Opportunity:** To create the right conditions and opportunities for the Region to realise sustainable economic growth and quality jobs that ensure a good living standard for all.

The NPF sets the policy parameters for the Region to better manage the growth of Dublin as a city of international scale supported by the growth of the key Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda, which form the upper two tiers in the settlement hierarchy. Drogheda and the southernmost outskirts of Dundalk lie within the 25 km market of the Lobinstown Quarry.

Drogheda is an established centre of agglomeration strategically located on the Dublin-Belfast rail corridor and M1 Motorway in proximity to both the metropolitan centres of Dublin and Belfast. Drogheda, and Dundalk have the potential to form part of a sustainable network of centres of scale, including Newry, connected by public transport within the Region and within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

Drogheda was the fastest growing town in the Country in the 2011-2016 inter-census period. Drogheda's location on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, combined with its existing physical, economic and social asset base, provides significant sustainable growth potential. If promoted, this latent potential can help to realise the growth potential of the broader Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross-border network as an engine for sustainable regional development. Key priorities are to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of Drogheda as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031.

Dundalk was one of the fastest growing towns in the country in the 2011-2016 inter-census period. Dundalk in particular, due to its proximity to Newry, provides for enhanced cross-border interactions which, if promoted, can help to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important cross-border network for regional development.

To achieve effective regional development, Dublin and the Regional Growth Centres will be supported by the complementary development and regeneration of a small number of selected Key Towns. The RSES identifies a third tier of Key Towns, such as Navan, Naas and Wicklow-Rathnew in the Core Region. They are large economically active service and/or county towns, with high quality transport links that play an important service role for their catchments and that have the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement Dublin and the Regional Growth Centres. Navan is situated c. 14.5 km south-southwest of Lobinstown, and thus lies within the natural

market of the quarry, such that proposed development and regeneration of Navan will also certainly benefit the Lobinstown Quarry through demand for aggregates.

The town of Drogheda has maintained its position as the largest town in the State with 40,956 persons in the 2016 census. It is strategically located between the Dublin and Belfast Metropolitan areas with access to the deep labour markets in both the Dublin and Belfast city regions. The further development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor providing improved accessibility for setup or relocation of indigenous businesses and FDI to the area will enhance its role as a key regional economic driver. Drogheda has developed a strong and broad employment base in the range of services and manufacturers it supports, principally in the financial, payment, shared services and food technology sectors. Drogheda will continue to promote further employment growth based on the attractiveness of its assets and the quality of life offering for workers and residents. Drogheda also provides an essential role in supporting population and job growth and in this regard acts as a crucial centre for the surrounding hinterland.

The RSES provides Regional Policy Objectives in respect of Drogheda, which are relevant to this proposal, and are given here:

**RPO 4.11:** A cross boundary statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) for the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda shall be jointly prepared by Louth and Meath County Councils in collaboration with EMRA. The UAP will support, the development of Drogheda as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Regional Centre and economic driver.

The Joint UAP will identify a functional urban area and plan boundary for the plan area and strategic housing and employment development areas and infrastructure investment requirements to promote greater coordination and sequential delivery of serviced lands for development.

**RPO 4.12:** Support the role of Drogheda Docklands and Port in particular by:

- Supporting and protecting the role of Drogheda Port as a port of regional significance
- Facilitate relocation of Drogheda Port subject to a feasibility study and appropriate coastal zone management.
- Supporting the future development of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR).

**RPO 4.13:** Promote and enhance cross-border interactions to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important crossborder network for regional development.

**RPO 4.14:** Promote self-sustaining economic and employment-based development opportunities to match and catch-up on rapid phases of housing delivery in recent years to provide for employment growth and reverse commuting patterns.

**RPO 4.15:** Promote Drogheda as an urban tourism destination while protecting its natural and built heritage resources with a particular focus on capitalising on the following assets:

- The town's role as a gateway to the Boyne Valley heritage sites and World Heritage site at Brú Na Bóinne
- Amenity potential of the River Boyne including the Boyne Greenway
- Fáilte Ireland's Ancient East designation.

**RPO 4.16:** Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development and measures to improve educational attainment levels, up skilling in key competencies and skills acquisition.

**RPO 4.17:** Support the proposed Drogheda Flood Relief Scheme, subject to the outcome of the planning process and appropriate environmental assessment.

**RPO 4.18:** Enhance Drogheda's role as a strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and provide for employment opportunities through identification of suitable sites for new industry including FDI.

Navan is a key town located in the Core Region, functioning as a dynamic urban centre and the focal point for the economic, cultural and social development of County Meath. It is one of the Country's fastest growing towns, with a young and diverse population of over 30,000 people in 2016. Navan is located on the M3 corridor and is well served by a local and regional public transport bus service including a frequent express service to Dublin. As the County Town, Navan acts as a key employment centre with potential to further strengthen the retail, employment and service functions of the town through the consolidation and expansion of the town centre along with new strategic development areas, and to improve connectivity, sustainable transport and public realm.

The RSES provides Regional Policy Objectives in respect of the Navan, which are relevant to this proposal, and are given here:

**RPO 4.42:** Support the delivery of road infrastructure to release strategic residential and employment lands for sustainable development and to improve connectivity and the efficient movement of people and services in the town.

**RPO 4.43:** Support the implementation of the Public Realm Plan 'Navan 2030' to make the town a more attractive place to live, shop, visit, and do business.

**RPO 4.44:** Support development of a regional hospital to serve the north east of the country.

**RPO 4.45:** Support the extension of the Boyne Greenway to include Navan to promote sustainable transport choices and as a recreation asset for the town, subject to the outcome of the planning process and environmental assessments.

**RPO 4.46:** Key Towns shall act as economic drivers and provide for strategic employment locations to improve their economic base by increasing the ratio of jobs to workers.

**RPO 4.47:** Support the development of strategic employment lands on the Trim Rd in Navan, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

Supporting the regional driver role of Key Towns, are Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, which are towns such as Kells, Trim, Dunshaughlin, Ashbourne, Ardee and Dunleer, that contain a reasonable level of jobs and services and which adequately caters for the people of its service catchment. This may include sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links, which have capacity for continued commensurate growth.

A key objective of the NPF is to enable all parts of the country – both urban and rural – to achieve their full potential. Hence, the RSES aims to strengthen the fabric of rural Ireland, supporting rural towns and communities as well as the open countryside. The RSES provides Regional Policy Objectives in respect of the Rural Areas, two of which are relevant to this proposal, and is given here:

**RPO 4.77** In development plan policy, local authorities shall prioritise the regeneration of rural towns and villages through identification of significant regeneration projects for rural villages and rural areas which could harness untapped assets with community and wider private and public sector support and investment including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

**RPO 4.79** Local authorities shall identify and provide policies that recognise the contribution that small towns, villages and rural areas contribute to social and economic wellbeing. As part of this policy provision that seeks to support and protect existing rural economies such as valuable agricultural lands to ensure sustainable food supply, to protect the value and character of open countryside and to support the diversification of rural economies to create additional jobs and maximise opportunities in emerging sectors, such as agri-business, renewable energy, tourism and forestry enterprise is supported.

The RSES provides Regional Policy Objectives in respect of the Rural Economy, one of which is relevant to this proposal, and is given here:

**RPO 6.7** Support local authorities to develop sustainable and economically efficient rural economies through initiatives to enhance sectors, such as agricultural and food, forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bioeconomy, tourism, and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage.



### 1.3.2.2 Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for the development of the County over the plan period 2021-2027. The Plan has been prepared at a time when the national economy displayed strong signs of continued growth. Unemployment rates had fallen to their lowest rates since 2008, consumer confidence improved, and economic forecasts are positive for the future. Despite the foregoing positive signs, concern and uncertainty regarding the potential economic impact of Brexit, and the sudden and unforeseen impact from the Covid 19 pandemic, has required careful consideration in the drafting of the Development Plan.

This Plan provides a positive vision for Meath which will enable the county to continue to make a significant contribution to national economic recovery by promoting sustainable development and facilitating stable economic growth thus delivering long term benefits for the citizens of the county.

The Strategic Vision of the Development Plan is as follows:

*'To improve the quality of life of all citizens in Meath by creating an environment that supports a vibrant growing economy and a well-connected place to live, learn and do business.'*

The Core Strategy of the Plan is required to demonstrate that the Plan is in accordance with National and Regional planning policy outlined in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The strategy includes details of the settlement hierarchy and where future growth is to be distributed in the County together with details of population and household projections and the quantum of lands to be zoned for residential and mixed-uses. An overview of the quantum of lands zoned for employment uses is also provided. The Core Strategy Vision of the Meath County Development Plan is:

*"To continue to support the creation of socio-economically progressive vibrant, dynamic, and healthy communities throughout the County and ensure that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development that delivers a high-quality living and working environment that meets the needs of all residents, in accordance with National and Regional Guidance."*

The following policy statements in the Meath Development Plan are considered relevant with respect to the quarry at Heronstown:

#### **Economic Development Strategy (CDP Section 4)**

The Economic Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 a first of its kind, recognises Meath's significant strategic location within the Eastern Midland region and the County's unique competitive advantage within Ireland. This Plan seeks to promote the County as a nationally and internationally attractive and distinctive location in which to conduct business. The policies and objectives of this Plan seek to continue the successful implementation of the Economic Strategy.



It is the policy of this Plan to promote Meath as a cost-competitive and well-connected investment location in the Greater Dublin Area. The Council has taken a very proactive approach to leading economic development in the county, which includes the establishment of the Meath Economic Forum in 2013 and the publication of the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022. The Strategy sets evidence-based measures aimed at accelerating the economic transformation, revitalisation, and sustainable development of the county.

The Economic Development Strategy recognises that Meath has an unparalleled and unique competitive advantage within Ireland, due to its:

- strategic location within the fastest growing region in Ireland;
- proximity to the Dublin Metropolitan Area and its markets;
- proximity to Dublin Airport and Dublin Port;
- location within the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor;
- highly skilled labour force;
- high-quality built and natural environment.

The Meath County Development (Section 4.4 Rural Areas) recognises that no single economic sector offers the total solution to the challenges facing rural areas. The optimal response most likely lies in the development of a variety of measures to tap into the potential that individual rural areas possess. In all areas of the County, there is a role for rural development in contributing to the general economic growth of the County. The Council will encourage diversification by promoting the unique assets of the County, its strategic location within the GDA, the availability of an indigenous highly skilled workforce coupled with the benefits of living in the gateway to Ireland's Ancient East promoting appropriate forms of rural employment development such as agriculture (arable, dairy, sheep, horticulture and organic), equine, forestry, tourism (walking, cycling, leisure, fishing, golfing, water based activities, beach and cultural heritage), mineral extraction and rural enterprises. In summary this Plan promotes and encourages economic development to meet the needs of rural areas whilst recognising and seeking to protect their environmental character and heritage.

This Plan accepts that there is a need to develop a rural economy that offers viable and sustainable employment for existing communities. There is also a need to strengthen the provision / retention of services, regenerate rural communities and promote the economic development of rural areas. This manifests itself in the need to both acknowledge the need for, and promote the development of, small scale enterprises in rural areas. Given the County's strategic location within the GDA its excellent transport links, Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Chapter 4 proximity to a multiplicity of third level institutions providing a steady stream of skilled workers and its access to urban centres served by high speed communications infrastructure the County is ideally located to attract and grow new and innovative employment sectors into its rural areas.

It is the policy of the Council to support the location of once off medium to large-scale rural enterprise if it is demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the council, that the enterprise can be more readily accommodated in a rural setting than provided in a designated settlement centre and subject to standard development management considerations being applied. It is equally accepted that there are certain types of rural enterprises, especially those that involve processing of natural resources, which serve rural communities which have a critical role to play in sustainable rural development. There are already a number of successful enterprises of this nature existing in the County in the food processing and development areas, as well as the extractive industry.

The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development "Realising our Rural Potential" highlights the potential of activity tourism to contribute to economic growth in rural areas. It states that "Outdoor adventure tourism is a key growth sector worldwide and has been identified as a priority for Irish tourism in future years. The development and promotion of this sector provides opportunities for growth, in rural areas in particular, by facilitating businesses to leverage the tourism assets in their area in a sustainable way to support recreational activities such as canoeing, cycling, angling and hill walking". The development of a new Greenways Strategy to support activity tourism in rural areas is specifically identified as an action point in the Action Plan. Given the rich cultural heritage and rural tourism present in the County, it is well placed to continue the development of its tourism product and place itself as one of the top destinations for diversity of choice in this sector.

It is the policy of the Council:

- ED POL 16** To support the location of a once off medium to large-scale rural enterprise only in instances where it is demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Council, that the enterprise can be more readily accommodated in a rural setting than in a designated settlement centre and subject to standard development management considerations being applied.
- ED POL 18** To support rural entrepreneurship and the development of micro businesses (generally less than 10 no. employees) in rural areas where environmental and landscape impact is minimal and such developments do not generate significant or undue traffic. This policy shall not apply to sites accessed from the National Road Network.
- ED POL 19** To support and facilitate sustainable agriculture, agri-food, horticulture, forestry, renewable energy and other rural enterprises at suitable locations in the County.
- ED POL 26** Meath County Council shall positively consider and assess development proposals for the expansion of existing authorised industrial or business enterprises in the countryside where the resultant development does not negatively impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding area. In all instances, it should be demonstrated that the proposal would not generate traffic of a type and

amount inappropriate for the standard of the access roads. This policy shall not apply to the National Road Network.

### ***Transportation (CDP Section 5)***

The maintenance and delivery of an efficient, integrated and coherent transport network in line with national and regional policy is fundamental to the future economic, social and physical development of the County. Failure to facilitate efficient transport creates costs for society and acts as a barrier to economic growth. A key priority for this Plan is the development of a sustainable transport system, promoting measures to increase the use of public transport, while also increasing the modal share for walking and cycling in towns and villages across the County.

National and regional transport policy recognises that current transport trends in Ireland and the Greater Dublin Area, in particular with regard to levels of car use, are unsustainable. A transition towards more sustainable modes of transport is essential to reduce Ireland's carbon emissions and reach the Government's goal of an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050.

Transport as a sector is one of the significant contributors to Ireland's national Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and as a nation we need to act on climate change and adapt and mitigate all sectors accordingly. The need to transition to a low carbon society by reducing transport usage and transitions to lower carbon options, including transition to clean renewables is a key aspect of Ireland's response to climate change. Transition to a low carbon transport system is firstly about reducing the need for travel and then shifting to economically efficient modes, i.e., active travel modes and public transport. Transitioning existing fossil fuel vehicles to clean renewable vehicles is a vital further step.

It is a strategic aim of this Development Plan to create attractive efficient compact settlements which reduce the need to travel and improve the quality of life for inhabitants. Land use and the manner in which it is developed is the primary influencing factor for travel demand. It is the Vision of this Plan to use the resources at the Council's disposal to provide safe, efficient and accessible transport networks which meet both local needs and wider regional and national strategic aims. Maintaining and improving transport networks remains a priority, particularly in relation to the delivery of important infrastructural development and transport measures which support the economic development strategy for the County.

In line with the Government target to electrify all new cars and vans by 2030, the NPF acknowledges the need to move away from 'polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems to new technologies such as electric vehicles and introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets'. The transport sector will undergo significant changes in the years ahead with technologies evolving to facilitate greater battery life and longer travel range as well as the development of alternative methods to fuel the transport sector. In this regard, the Council will also support non-EV alternative clean fuel sources as these technologies develop and subject to proper and sustainable planning considerations.

It is a policy of the Council:

**MOV POL 16** To support the provision of infrastructure for electrical vehicles and alternative fuel vehicles both on street and in new developments as such technologies advance to become viable transport options.

It is an objective of the Council:

**MOV OBJ 25** To facilitate the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electric vehicles both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards and best practice.

While the Council is committed to the promotion of sustainable means of travel, and the encouragement of modal change from the private car, it is recognised that road infrastructure retains a central position in the overall transportation network, catering for the movement of buses, goods vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, as well as the private car. In undertaking transport policies, the Council will strive to provide, maintain and enhance road infrastructure to ensure the sustainable economic development of the County.

Regional and local roads serve an important economic role and also have valuable social and community functions. These roads account for 81% of the country's roads and are often the sole means of access for local economic activity.

It is the policy of the Council:

**MOV POL 26** To provide for and carry out improvements to sections of national, regional and county roads that are deficient in terms of alignment, structural condition or capacity, where resources permit, and to seek to maintain that standard thereafter. To ensure that, where possible, any maintenance and improvement strategies have regard to future climates.

It is an objective of the Council:

**MOV OBJ 49** To support essential public road infrastructure including, bypasses of local towns and villages and proposed national road schemes and where necessary reserve the corridors of any such proposed routes free of development, which would interfere with the provision of such proposals. Such road schemes include those specified in the non-exhaustive list in Table 5.1: Each of these projects will subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process. (Note Table 5.1 includes Slane and Virginia Bypasses).

It is the policy of the Council:

**MOV POL 32** To ensure the protection of the existing roads infrastructure while improving the capacity and safety of the road network to meet future demands.

### ***Water, Drainage & Environmental Services (CDP Section 6)***

The sustainable future socio- economic growth of the County is dependent on the provision of the required water and wastewater infrastructure and ensuring high-quality reliable service provision. One of the key challenges is the ability to address and keep pace with the infrastructural demands of a growing County while safeguarding public health and managing the protection of key environmental resources in the context of a changing climate. In this regard the Council, in conjunction with other agencies and authorities needs to ensure that development of infrastructural services occurs in tandem with and facilitates physical development to ensure the continued economic growth of the County and the delivery of residential accommodation for the growing population.

#### ***Wastewater***

The provision of well-maintained quality wastewater treatment infrastructure is essential to facilitate sustainable development in the County, while also protecting the environment and public health.

It is an objective of the Council:

**INF OBJ 13** To ensure that septic tanks, proprietary effluent treatment systems and percolation areas are located and constructed in accordance with the recommendations and guidelines of the EPA and the Council in order to minimise the impact on surface water of discharges.

**INF OBJ 19** To ensure that developments permitted by the Council which involve discharge of wastewater to surface waters or groundwaters comply with the requirements of the EU Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations and EU Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations.

#### ***Flood Risk Management***

The EU Floods Directive and the National Flood Policy Review Report (2004) set the parameters for flood management in Ireland. The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG and OPW (2009) addresses flood risk management within the planning system. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) of the County is being prepared to support the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan. The SFRA was carried out in accordance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009) and will form part of the Development Plan.

It is the policy of the Council:

**INF POL 20** To require that a Flood Risk Assessment is carried out for any development proposal, where flood risk may be an issue in accordance with the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoECLG/OPW, 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to and from the potential development and shall consider the impact of climate change.

**INF POL 21** To consult with the Office of Public Works in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible.

**INF POL 22** To retain a strip of 10 metres on either side of all channels/flood defence embankments where required, to facilitate access thereto.

It is an objective of the Council:

**INF OBJ 25** To require the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques where appropriate, for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.

### *Water Quality*

Meath has a rich and extensive aquatic environment consisting of coastline, rivers, streams, lakes and estuarine waters (surface waters) and ground waters (underground water). The Rivers Boyne and Blackwater are the prime watercourses within the county. The Royal and Boyne Navigation Canals, also form part of this aquatic environment. Collectively, they constitute an important economic, recreational, ecological, and aesthetic resource for the county.

The Council is responsible for maintaining, improving, enhancing, and protecting the ecological quality of all waters in the county by implementing pollution control measures, licensing of effluent discharges, implementing and monitoring compliance with environmental legislation and drawing up pollution contingency measures on a local and regional level.

### *Groundwater*

Groundwater is a major natural resource in the County providing between 20%-25% of drinking water supplies. In rural areas that are not served by public or group water schemes, ground water is usually the only source of supply. For this reason, it is essential that this natural resource is protected. Overall groundwater quality within the County is very good with only two groundwater bodies classified at poor status in the EPA Water Quality in Ireland report 2010-2015 published in 2017.

In conjunction with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) a Groundwater Protection Scheme has been prepared for the County. This provides guidelines for the planning and licensing authorities in carrying out their functions, and a framework to assist in decision-making on the location, nature and control of developments and activities in order to protect groundwater. The Scheme aims to maintain the quantity and quality of groundwater and in some cases improve it, by applying a risk assessment-based approach to groundwater protection and sustainable development.



It is the policy of the Council:

- INF POL 31** To protect and develop, in a sustainable manner, the existing groundwater sources and aquifers in the County and to manage development in a manner consistent with the protection of these resources.
- INF POL 32** To ensure, through the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan(s) and the associated Programmes of Measures and any other associated legislation or revised plans with all relevant stakeholders, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground waters throughout the County.

It is an objective of the Council:

- INF OBJ 29** To strive to achieve 'good status' in all water bodies in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and to cooperate with the implementation of the National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021.
- INF OBJ 36** To protect and develop, in a sustainable manner, the existing groundwater sources and aquifers in the County and manage development in a manner consistent with the sustainable management of these resources in conformity with the EU Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 and the second cycle National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, and any subsequent plan and the Groundwater Protection Scheme.
- INF OBJ 37** To implement the recommendations of the Meath Groundwater Protection Scheme(s).

### *Climate Change*

Mitigation of the causes and impacts of climate change is one of the cross cutting themes of this Development Plan. In December 2015 the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 was enacted. The Act establishes the national objective of transitioning to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in the period up to and including the year 2050.

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are largely emanating from the agricultural, transport, energy, and residential sectors. It is necessary to address the causes of climate change by reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and our greenhouse gas emissions. Adaptation/climate proofing measures to counteract these harmful impacts will form part of an overall comprehensive response. A comprehensive response is required to meet our National commitments to reduce our carbon emissions by 30% for 2030 and 80% by 2050. These challenges will require significant investment, will necessitate the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures across all sectors and will demand significant behavioural changes.



It is the policy of the Council:

- INF POL 35** To seek a reduction in greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources utilising the natural resources of the County in an environmentally acceptable manner consistent with best practice and planning principles.
- INF POL 36** To support the implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy and to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

### *Light Pollution*

Artificial light is necessary for the operation of industry, recreational amenities and for illumination within our homes, however inappropriate or excessive light can be especially harmful to wildlife and human health, due to sleep patterns being disrupted. With increased development comes increased light pollution and therefore measures to minimise the harmful impacts of light pollution must be introduced to ensure that new developments are appropriately lit, and that environmentally sensitive areas are protected.

It is an objective of the Council:

- INF OBJ 74** To require that outdoor lighting proposals minimise the harmful effects of light pollution and to ensure that new street lighting is appropriate to a particular location and that environmentally sensitive areas are protected from inappropriate forms of illumination.

### ***Built & Natural Heritage (CDP Section 8)***

#### ***Built Heritage (CDP Section 8.1)***

County Meath's wealth of built heritage makes it exceptional in Ireland. It includes the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the seat of the High Kings of Ireland at Tara, the passage tombs of Loughcrew, the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Europe at Trim, the historic towns of Navan, Trim and Kells, great country houses, demesne landscapes and a significant industrial heritage of canals and mills. The county's natural heritage includes scenic river valleys, rolling farmland, a network of mature hedgerows and diverse coastal habitats.

#### ***Cultural Heritage (CDP Section 8.3)***

Cultural Heritage refers to monuments, buildings, groups of buildings, and sites which are the combined works of nature and man. Within this great variety of building types and uses are structures of significance and distinctive character that are deemed worthy of protection.

### *Archaeological Heritage (CDP Section 8.6)*

Archaeology is the systematic study of past human societies through the investigation and analysis of the material evidence left behind. Uniquely archaeology provides insights into periods and civilisations that existed prior to written records. The archaeological heritage of an area includes monuments, sites, and objects whether situated on land or under water. In this respect, the county has a significant archaeological heritage, and provides a valuable cultural, educational and tourism resource.

New sites are continually being discovered through research and development including delivery of infrastructure projects and it is advisable to check the National Monument Archaeological database on [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) when considering development on any site. Archaeological structures may, in some situations, also be considered as architectural heritage and therefore may appear on both the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and the Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

It is the policy of the Council:

**HER POL 1** To protect sites, monuments, places, areas or objects of the following categories:

- Sites and monuments included in the Sites and Monuments Record as maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht;
- Monuments and places included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under the National Monuments Acts;
- Historic monuments and archaeological areas included in the Register of Historic Monuments as established under the National Monuments Acts;
- National monuments subject to Preservation Orders under the National Monuments Acts and national monuments which are in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht or a local authority;
- Archaeological objects within the meaning of the National Monuments Acts; and Wrecks protected under the National Monuments Acts or otherwise included in the Shipwreck Inventory maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

**HER POL 2** To protect all sites and features of archaeological interest discovered subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monument and Places, in situ (or at a minimum preservation by record) having regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and The Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999).

**HER POL 4** To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, where development proposals involve ground clearance of more than half a hectare or for linear developments over one kilometre in length; or developments in proximity to areas with a density of known archaeological monuments and history of discovery as identified by a suitably qualified archaeologist.

#### *Architectural Heritage (CDP Section 8.7)*

The architectural heritage of Meath contributes to its unique sense of place. The Council wishes to ensure that those buildings, streetscapes and features which are of merit are protected and managed so that they retain their character and special interest.

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (Part II, Section 10) places an obligation on all Local Authorities to include in their Development Plan objectives for the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. These buildings and structures are compiled on a register known as the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). A Protected Structure, unless otherwise stated in the RPS, includes:

- the interior of the structure;
- the land lying within its curtilage;
- any other structures within the curtilage, and their interiors, and:
- all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any of these structures.

It is the policy of the Council:

**HER POL 16** To protect the setting of Protected Structures and to refuse permission for development within the curtilage or adjacent to a protected structure which would adversely impact on the character and special interest of the structure, where appropriate.

#### *Natural Heritage (CDP Section 8.8)*

The County's natural heritage and biodiversity is of local, national and international importance. It includes geology and forms a central component of the landscape of the County. Protecting and enhancing our biodiversity and landscapes is vital to the health, well-being, and quality of life of our communities and assists societal adaption to the challenges of climate change.

### *Biodiversity (CDP Section 8.9)*

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth – all plants and animals (including humans), fungi, algae and micro-organisms, the habitat where they live and their genetic diversity. Biodiversity is important because all of life depends on biodiversity for survival and humans in particular rely on it for food, clean air and water, clothing and building materials, as well as for medicines and places in which to unwind and reconnect with nature. Our biodiversity underpins important economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism and provides many other benefits or ecosystem services.

It is the policy of the Council:

**HER POL 27** To protect, conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity where appropriate.

**HER POL 28** To integrate in the development management process the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and landscape features wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats (whether designated or not) and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate.

**HER POL 31** To ensure that the ecological impact of all development proposals on habitats and species are appropriately assessed by suitably qualified professional(s) in accordance with best practice guidelines – e.g. the preparation of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA), Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, Natura Impact Statement (NIS), species surveys etc. (as appropriate).

**HER POL 33** To have regard to the views and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of proposed development where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on a designated European or National site or a site proposed for such designation.

**HER POL 34** To undertake appropriate surveys and collect data to provide an evidence-base to assist the Council in meeting its obligations under Article 6 of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) as transposed into Irish Law, subject to available resources.

It is an objective of the Council:

**HER OBJ 33** To ensure an Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) and in accordance with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009 and relevant EPA and European Commission guidance documents, is carried out in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site(s), either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

**HER OBJ 34** To protect and conserve the conservation value of candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas as identified by the Minister for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan in accordance with the provisions of the Habitats and Birds Directives and to permit development in or affecting same only in accordance with the provisions of those Directives as transposed into Irish Law.

There are many sites throughout the County that host a range of plant and animal species or their habitats (including Annex I Habitats, Annex I Birds, Annex II and IV species, Flora (Protection) Orders etc.), which are not designated for nature conservation but nonetheless their ecological value is of high importance in the county.

It is the policy of the Council:

**HER POL 35** To ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites and to require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professional(s) to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.

#### *Protected Species*

Certain plant, animal and bird species are protected by law. This includes plant species listed in the Flora Protection Order, 1999 (or other such Orders) and animals and birds listed in the Wildlife Act, 1976 and subsequent statutory instruments, those listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), and those listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. Proposals for developments, where appropriate, will require an assessment of the presence of bats and/or other protected species and ensure that suitable avoidance and/or mitigation measures are put in place accordingly.

It is the policy of the Council:

**HER POL 36** To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and take account of their views and any licensing requirements, when undertaking, approving or authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.

It is the objective of the Council:

**HER OBJ 35** To ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory avoidance or mitigation, on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.

### *Woodland & Hedgerows*

Although the County is one of the least wooded counties, its woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees contribute positively to biodiversity and landscape character. Hedgerows are perhaps the most characteristic feature of the County's landscape and provide an important habitat for many species and act as a wildlife corridor in a landscape dominated by large tracts of intensive agriculture.

It is the policy of the Council:

**HER POL 37** To encourage the retention of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments in rural areas and prevent loss and fragmentation, where practically possible. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, mitigation by provision of the same type of boundary will be required.

**HER POL 40** To protect and encourage the effective management of native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees and to encourage the retention of mature trees and the use of tree surgery rather than felling, where possible, when undertaking, approving, or authorizing development.

It is the objective of the Council:

**HER OBJ 36** To promote awareness, understanding and best practice in the management of the County's woodland, tree and hedgerow resource.

### *Geological Heritage (CDP Section 8.12)*

The National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) are currently drawing up a list of nationally important geological sites. As part of this process the GSI undertook an audit of the Geological Heritage of Meath in 2007, which identified 28 sites of county geological importance. These sites will be designated in due course, as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), because of their geological interest from a national perspective. In the interim, the Council, through the Plan, will protect and will maintain the geological heritage value of these sites. Any development proposals within or likely to have an impact on County Geological Sites may be referred to the GSI to seek their advice. A search of the GSI Geological Heritage Database found none are located within 2 km of the site — the nearest being Rathkenny (Side Code MH015; Theme IGH7 – Subaerial fan exposed in a sand and gravel pit, at the edge of a sandur showing hummocky topography).

### *Landscape (CDP Section 8.17)*

The European Landscape Convention (ELC), ratified by Ireland in 2002 and which came into effect on 1st March 2004, states that landscape means '...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. The Convention requires landscape to be integrated into planning policies and promotes interaction between local and central authorities and trans frontier co-operation to protect landscapes. The Convention recognises the cultural, environmental and economic value of landscape and how it contributes to our



quality of life and sense of place. The implementation of the recently published National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025 will ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention in Ireland.

It is the objective of the Council:

**HER OBJ 48** To support the aims and objectives of the European Landscape Convention by implementing the relevant objectives and actions of the National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025 and any revisions thereof.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process which describes, maps and classifies landscapes. Landscape character is defined as 'a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse'. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual landscape elements and the processes that may alter landscape character in the future. The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be subtracted from its physical and visual characteristics so all of these elements are considered. A Landscape Character Assessment for the County was carried out in 2007.

Landscape Character Types are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character and are generic in nature in that they may occur in different localities throughout the county. Nonetheless, where they do occur, they commonly share similar combinations of geology, topography, land cover and historical land use, e.g. Hills and Upland Areas.

Landscape Character Areas are units of the landscape that are geographically specific and have their own character and sense of place. Each has its own distinctive character, based upon patterns of geology, landform, landuse, cultural, historical and ecological features e.g., the Boyne Valley.

The Landscape Character Assessment 2007 divides the county into 4 landscape character types (LCTs). These are: (1) Hills and Uplands Areas; (2) Lowland Areas; (3) River Corridors and Estuaries; and (4) Coastal Areas.

The sensitivity of the Landscape Character Areas is defined as its overall resilience to sustain its character in the face of change and its ability to recover from loss or damage to its components. Sensitivity is evaluated using criteria ranging from 'High' to 'Low' and is based on the interaction of individual components such as landform, amount of evident historical features (time depth) and distribution of viewers. A highly sensitive landscape is likely to be vulnerable, fragile and susceptible to change whereas a landscape with low sensitivity is likely to be more robust and/or tolerant of change.

A Matrix of Landscape Character which indicates the Value, Importance and Sensitivity of Landscape Character Areas is included in the Meath Landscape Character Assessment 2007. The potential capacity of each LCA is based on indicative types of development that are likely to occur within the study area. Capacity is the ability that the landscape has to absorb specific types of development. It is only possible to define actual capacity on a case-by-case basis because it will vary

according to the type and form of development, its location in relation to the landscape character area in question, and its visibility from it.

It is a policy of the Council:

**HER POL 52** To protect and enhance the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the landscapes of the County in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the recommendations of the Meath Landscape Character Assessment (2007) in Appendix 5, to ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.

**HER POL 53** To discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amount of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.

It is an objective of the Council:

**HER OBJ 49** To ensure that the management of development will have regard to the value of the landscape, its character, importance, sensitivity and capacity to absorb change as outlined in Appendix 5 Meath Landscape Character Assessment and its recommendations.

**HER OBJ 50** To require landscape and visual impact assessments prepared by suitably qualified professionals be submitted with planning applications for development which may have significant impact on landscape character areas of medium or high sensitivity.

#### *Views & Prospects (CDP Section 8.18)*

The landscape of County Meath has many vantage points which offer attractive views from hilltops and upland areas, along river valleys and the coast. Many of these views are associated with heritage and tourism sites and provide vantage points over high quality landscapes. These scenic views are of an amenity and tourism value and contribute to our quality of life. It is not envisaged that the designation of a protected view would prohibit all development within the view, rather that any development proposed within the view should be designed and located so as not to obstruct the view or be unduly intrusive in the landscape as seen from these vantage points.

It is an objective of the Council:

**HER OBJ 56** To preserve the views and prospects listed in Appendix 10, in Volume 2 and on Map 8.6 and to protect these views from inappropriate development which would interfere unduly with the character and visual amenity of the landscape.

#### *Green Infrastructure (CDP Section 8.19)*

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a strategically planned and managed network featuring areas with high quality biodiversity (uplands, wetlands, peatlands, rivers and coast), farmed and wooded lands and other green spaces that conserve ecosystem values which provide essential services to society'. The environmental and heritage



resources of the county are vital resources for the county and can be described as the county's Green Infrastructure. It can include parks, open spaces, rivers, farmland, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens which surround and intersperse our towns and villages. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of economic, environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

It is the policy of the Council:

**HER POL 55** To recognise the economic, social, environmental and physical value of Green Infrastructure.

**HER POL 56** To require that all Land Use Plans protect, manage and provide where possible green infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner.

It is an objective of the Council:

**HER OBJ 60** To encourage, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.

### ***Rural Development (CDP Section 9)***

County Meath is a predominantly rural county in terms of land use, with a large rural population. The rural landscape which includes scenic river valleys and rolling farmland provides a tranquil setting. Rural areas within Meath are home to a diverse range of uses ranging from agriculture and equine industries, centres of local food production, recreational and tourist activities, established villages and one-off rural housing.

The goal of the Council is to encourage the continued sustainable development of rural communities without compromising the physical, environmental, natural and heritage resources of the county.

It is a strategic objective of Meath County Council:

**RUR DEV SO 1** To support the continued vitality and viability of rural areas, environmentally, socially and commercially by promoting sustainable social and economic development.

**RUR DEV SO 2** To identify and protect rural resources such as locally and regionally important aquifers and water sources from development which would prejudice their sustainable future usage.

**RUR DEV SO 3** To identify and protect known or potential aggregate resources, where feasible, from development which would prejudice their sustainable future usage.

**RUR DEV SO 6** To protect and enhance the visual qualities of rural areas through sensitive design.

**RUR DEV SO 8** To support and protect the existing economic base and seek to diversify the economy through both inward investment and the promotion of agriculture, forestry and tourism related industries in rural areas.

**RUR DEV SO 9** To ensure that plans and projects associated with rural development will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment Screening and those plans or projects which could, either individually or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site (or sites) undergo a full Appropriate Assessment.

**RUR DEV SO 10** To promote rural economic development by recognising the need to advance the long term sustainable social and environmental development of rural areas and encouraging economic diversification and facilitating growth of rural enterprises.

#### *Rural Area Types (CDP Section 9.3)*

The Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 identified three area types in the county, which are identified on Map 9.1 of the Plan. The areas are:

Area 1 - Rural Areas under Strong Urban Influence;

Area 2 - Strong Rural Areas; and

Area 3 - Low Development Pressure Areas.

Lobinstown is located in Area 2, in which the key challenge is to maintain a reasonable balance between development activity in the extensive network of smaller towns and villages and housing proposals in the wider rural area.

It is the policy of the Council:

**RD POL 4** To consolidate and sustain the stability of the rural population and to strive to achieve a balance between development activity in urban areas and villages and the wider rural area.

### *Extractive Industry (CDP Section 9.11)*

Meath County Council acknowledges the need for extractive industries in terms of supply of aggregate materials for the construction sector, delivering transport infrastructure projects, and for the export market. However, the potential for conflict in the operation of these industries with wider environmental issues needs careful consideration. By their nature, aggregates can only be worked where they occur. The cost of haulage affects economic competitiveness in this sector. This inevitably leads to conflicts and environmental concerns.

Extractive industries by their nature can give rise to detrimental environmental and residential amenity effects including traffic generation, vibration, dust, noise, water pollution, visual intrusion and loss of ground water supplies. The impact on the road network of the county is significant.

Meath contains a variety of natural resources, such as building raw materials in the form of sand, gravel, stone reserves. The potential of these resources to underpin construction output and provide employment and economic growth in the local and regional economy is recognised as is the need to exploit such resources in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner.

The goal of the Council is to facilitate adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the county and the wider region, while addressing key environmental, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation.

Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Quarries and Ancillary Activities were published by the DoEHLG in 2004, while 'Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry' were published by the GSI in 2008.

It is the policy of the Council:

- RD POL 21** To ensure that projects associated with the extractive industry carry out screening for Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive, where required.
- RD POL 22** To facilitate the exploitation of the county's natural resources and to exercise appropriate control over the types of development taking place in areas containing proven deposits, whilst also ensuring that such developments are carried out in a manner which would not unduly impinge on the visual amenity or environmental quality in the area
- RD POL 23** To support the extractive industry where it would not unduly compromise the environmental quality of the county and where detailed rehabilitation proposals are provided.
- RD POL 24** To seek to ensure that the extraction of minerals and aggregates minimise the detraction from the visual quality of the landscape and do not adversely affect the environment or adjoining existing land uses.
- RD POL 25** To ensure that the extractive industry and associated development minimises adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the full cost of road improvements including during operations and at time



of closure, which are necessary to facilitate those industries are borne by the industry itself.

**RD POL 26** To ensure that all existing workings shall be rehabilitated to suitable land uses and that all future extraction activities will allow for the rehabilitation of pits and proper land use management. The biodiversity value of the site should be considered in the first instance when preparing restoration plans. Where landfilling is proposed, inert material is the preferred method. Each planning application shall be considered on a case by case basis and where relevant will be dealt with under the relevant regional Waste Management Plan.

**RD POL 27** To ensure that development for aggregates / mineral extraction, processing and associated processes does not significantly impact in the following areas:

- i. Existing & Proposed Special Areas of Conservation (SACs);
- ii. Special Protection Areas (SPAs);
- iii. Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas;
- iv. Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna;
- v. Areas of significant archaeological potential;
- vi. In the vicinity of a recorded monument, and; Sensitive landscapes.
- vii. World Heritage Sites.

#### *Roadside Boundaries (CDP Section 9.16)*

Roadside boundaries, whether hedgerows, sod and stone bank, stone wall or other boundaries, provide important features that are elements of both the landscape and ecology of rural areas. The retention of such boundary treatments assists in absorbing new rural housing into its surroundings and should generally be encouraged.

Occasionally, the removal of substantial lengths of roadside boundaries is proposed as part of an element of improving visibility at the junction of a new entrance onto a road. Where an alternative site is available and otherwise suitable, applicants and Planning Authorities should consider a location that avoids the necessity for widespread boundary removal.

It is the policy of the Council:

**RD POL 41** To avoid the removal of existing roadside boundaries where they are more than 3 m from the road edge (edge of carriageway), except to the extent that this is needed for a new entrance, and where required for traffic safety reasons. (Please refer to policies contained in Section 8.9.7 Woodlands, Hedgerows and Trees in this regard).



### **Climate Change (CDP Section 10)**

Climate change refers to a long term, large scale change in global or regional climate patterns. In recent years, global temperatures have been rising. The ever-increasing rate of carbon dioxide combustion, and the emission of other greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide since the industrial revolution, has resulted in the 'greenhouse affect.' Many activities generate these gases; the production of electricity, industrial activity, transportation and agriculture are just a few of the examples contributing high quantities of these emissions. These gases build up in the Earth's atmosphere, and trap a constantly increasing amount of the sun's energy, creating an overall shift in global atmospheric patterns.

Incremental changes in climate are already evident these include:

- increases in average temperatures,
- wetter winters,
- more intense rainfall,
- more flooding,
- increase in summer droughts,
- rising sea levels,
- damage to existing ecosystems and biodiversity.

There may also be some positive impacts, such as fewer very cold days.

Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a range of international climate change agreements and frameworks have been approved that provide information on climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptations. The work of the UNFCCC provides countries with detailed technical information, including current and future climate change projections, which enables them to determine practical adaptation actions to improve their long-term resilience.

Linked to the work of the UNFCCC – The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997 and took effect from 16th February 2005. It sets binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European Community for reducing emissions. Additionally, the Paris Agreement' was agreed on 12 December 2015. All 196 members under the umbrella of the UNFCCC agreed to hold the increase in global temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to keep the more stringent target of below 1.5 degrees in sight.

The European Green Deal plans to make the EU's economy sustainable and climate neutral by 2050 and position the EU as a Global leader. This will be achieved by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities, and making the transition just and inclusive for all.

Climate Action Plan 2019 To Tackle Climate Breakdown is a national policy document adopted in 2019. The Plan identifies the critical nature of the challenge faced as a result of global warming. The Plan underpins this ambition to deliver a step-change in our emissions performance over the coming decade by setting out clear 2030 targets



for each sector and the expected emissions savings that will result. The overall aim will allow Ireland to meet its EU targets for 2030 and will also be well placed to meet our mid-century de-carbonisation objectives.

The Meath Climate Action Strategy covers the period from 2019-2025 and aims to support businesses, social enterprises, public bodies and communities to change their energy systems to produce a climate resilient economy. The Strategy focuses on changes to key areas such as mobility, the built environment, clean energy, resource management, water and natural resources identifying methods by which Meath County Council can support change in these areas.

Although the industrial and commercial sectors are large consumers of energy, there are a number of options available to help reduce emissions substantially. These include an increase in the uptake of low-carbon and energy efficient technology, and a transition to low carbon energy supplies.

It is the policy of the Council:

**INF POL 38** To encourage that new development proposals maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology.

**INF POL 39** To encourage the attainment of high standards of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability in development and to support the development of sustainable buildings that achieve certification under the Home Performance Index.

It is an objective of the Council:

**INF OBJ 43** To require, where feasible and practicable, the provision of Photovoltaic solar panels in new residential developments, commercial developments, and public buildings for electricity generation/storage and/or water heating purposes so as to minimise carbon emissions and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and reduce energy costs.

**INF OBJ 15** To require the use of SuDS in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works for new developments (including extensions).

It is the policy of the Council:

**INF POL 20:** To require that a Flood Risk Assessment is carried out for any development proposal, where flood risk may be an issue in accordance with the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoECLG/OPW, 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to and from the potential development and shall consider the impact of climate change.

It is an objective of the Council:

**INF OBJ 25:** To require the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques where appropriate, for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.

It is the policy of the Council:

**HER POL 44** To require all development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.

### ***Development Management Standards (CDP Section 11)***

Development standards and land use zoning objectives are applied in the assessment of planning applications to ensure that development takes place in an orderly manner in the interests of the common good.

### ***Environmental Impact Assessment***

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process of examining the anticipated environmental effects of a proposed project - from consideration of environmental aspects at design stage, through consultation and preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), evaluation of the EIAR by a Competent Authority, the subsequent decision as to whether the project should be permitted to proceed, encompassing public response to that decision. An EIAR is required to accompany a planning application for development of a class set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, which exceeds a limit, quantity or threshold set for that class of development.

### ***Appropriate Assessment***

Appropriate Assessment (AA) is a focused and detailed assessment regarding the implementation of a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. There are four phases to the process, firstly the preparation of a Screening Report (Stage 1) and if, following screening, it is considered that further assessment is required a Natura Impact Statement (Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) must be prepared. The remaining two phases are assessment of alternative solutions (Stage 3) and assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain (Stage 4).

### ***Pre-Application Discussions***

Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) sets out the formal procedure for prospective applicants seeking planning advice. The Planning Authority actively encourages pre-application discussions prior to the submission of any planning application. The Planning and Development Act 2018 amended Section



247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to provide for at least one pre-application consultation for specific classes of development.

### *Energy Efficiency*

The importance of reducing energy requirements associated with the built environment is one of the challenges identified in the Climate Action Plan 2019.

**DM OBJ 7** Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) measures are required to form part of the design of all developments

### *Trees and Hedgerows*

Trees and Hedgerows are an important consideration with all developments and it is considered that the retention of trees and hedgerows should be considered as part of any relevant planning application.

**DM OBJ 11** Existing trees and hedgerows of biodiversity and/or amenity value shall be retained, where possible.

### *Extractive Industry*

The Council recognises the contribution of the extractive industry in supporting jobs in the construction and aggregates section of the County.

**DM POL 22** To encourage the rehabilitation of disused pits and quarries to productive agricultural use where appropriate having regard to all appropriate environmental considerations.

**DM OBJ 63** Where possible, sites shall be subject to rehabilitation and landscaping programmes in tandem with the various phases of extraction. Possible uses post closure could include agriculture and recreation/amenities.

**DM OBJ 64** All applications for extractive industry development shall comprehensively address the following criteria as part of a pre-application discussion and/or planning application proposal:

- Impact on Natura 2000 sites, NHAs, sites of ecological importance, geological or geomorphological heritage features; (Refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage for further information);
- Impact on groundwater, surface water and important aquifers and compliance with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (Refer to Chapter 6 for further information on Water Framework Directive);
- Effective control of emissions and dust;
- Phasing programme for extraction and rehabilitation;
- A scheme of rehabilitation and after care for the site upon abandonment / exhaustion of resource. Details to be submitted should include plan and section drawings, detailing the following:

- Anticipated finished landform and surface/landscape treatments (both of each phase and the whole excavation);
- Quality and condition of topsoil and overburden;
- Rehabilitation works proposed;
- Type and location of any vegetation proposed,
- Proposed method of funding and delivery of restoration/reinstatement works, etc; Please note that provision for sinking funds under the control of the Council may be conditioned to ensure satisfactory reinstatement on completion of extraction, if considered appropriate;

- A planning application shall include a Planning Report which details the planning status and planning history of the quarry;
- Visual impact of the development, a detailed landscape and visual assessment prepared by a suitably qualified professional (Refer to Volume 3 Book of Maps for Views and Prospects, Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment, Appendix 6 Record of Protected Structures, Appendix 10 Protected Views and Prospects for further information.);
- Impact on existing local communities with regard to but not limited to noise, vibration and subsidence;
- Contents of the 'Archaeological Code of Practice' (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Irish Concrete Federation, 2009);
- The extent of land ownership, nature of the deposits and details of any ancillary processes (such as crushing, concrete manufacture, etc);
- Proposals for surface water management and flood risk minimisation;
- Transportation impacts with particular reference to details of all haul routes, trip movements etc (A special contribution may be attached to a grant of permission in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act, as amended).

### *Parking Standards*

One of the cross-cutting themes of the Development Plan is to encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of transport. The provision of sufficient car parking is important particularly in areas of the County which are currently poorly served by public transport networks. Therefore, the rationale for the application of car parking standards is to ensure that consideration is given to the accommodation of vehicles in assessing development proposals while being mindful of the need to promote a shift towards more sustainable forms of transport.

**DM OBJ 89** Car parking shall be provided in accordance with Table 11.2 and associated guidance notes.

Manufacturing Industry: 1 per 50 sq.m. gross floor area.

Offices: 1 per 25 sq.m. gross floor area. Where the floor area exceeds 1,500 sq.m. gross floor area, 1 space per 50 sq.m. gross floor area.

**DM OBJ 90** The dimension of parking bays shall comply with Table 11.3.

Applicable standard for parking dimensions (Perpendicular to Kerb) from Table 1.3: 5.0m x 2.5m to 5.0m x 2.75m.

### *EV Charging Points*

The Climate Action Plan, 2019 acknowledges that the pricing structure for EV vehicles is a major factor in consumers decision making. However, the Plan also acknowledges the importance of 'ensuring the EV Charging network underpins public confidence.' The Council will encourage the provision of EV charging points in all developments for future proofing.

**DM OBJ 94** All car parks shall include the provision of necessary wiring and ducting to be capable of accommodating future Electric Vehicle charging points, at a rate of 20% of total space numbers.

### *Cycling Parking*

The Council will require an appropriate amount of cycle parking facilities to be provided with new development.

**DM OBJ 96** To require the provision of cycle parking facilities in accordance with the Design Standards for New Apartments (March 2018) and Table 11.4 Cycle Parking Standards. Applicable cycle parking standard from Table 11.4: 1 bike space per car space, or 10% of employee numbers in general.

**DM OBJ 97** Cycle parking facilities shall be conveniently located, secure, easy to use, adequately lit and well sign posted. All long-term (more than three hours) cycle racks shall be protected from the weather.



### *Development Contributions*

Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) allows the Planning Authority when granting planning permission to include conditions requiring the payment of a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefitting development in the area of the planning authority and that is provided, or that it is intended will be provided, by or on behalf of a local authority. The current Meath County Development Contributions Scheme 2016 – 2021 (as amended) sets out the contributions applicable to development. The scheme should be consulted in advance of the making of a planning application. There are three types of development contributions; General, Special and Supplementary, where the latter does not apply in this case.

### *General Development Contributions*

These contributions apply in respect of public infrastructure and facilities provided by or on behalf of the Planning Authority that benefit development in its functional area, as noted above. Section 48 (1) of the Act outlines that a Planning Authority when making a grant of permission, may include a condition requiring the payment of a contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities such as open spaces, community and recreational facilities and amenities and landscaping works; infrastructure to facilitate public transport, cycle and pedestrian facilities; refurbishment, upgrading, enlargement or replacement of roads and surface water drainage infrastructure.

### *Special Development Contributions*

In circumstances where additional specific infrastructure for an area is required, the Council may attach a special contribution. Developers may also be required to carry out works at their own expense to facilitate their development and this would be specified as a condition of the planning permission.

## 1.4 RELEVANT GUIDANCE

The EIAR was prepared in accordance with various Government and commonly accepted standards and guidelines that have a bearing on various aspects of the proposed development.

In addition to planning policy within the County Development Plan, planning guidelines have been issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). These guidelines are titled 'Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines for Local Authorities (2004) and set out typical planning conditions and suggest environmental limits which may be imposed on any subsequent planning consent. Due consideration has been given within Sections 3 to 15 of the EIAR to comply with best practice mitigation measures set out in Chapter 3 of these guidelines. In this regard detailed best practice mitigation measures which will be implemented on site are described within the relevant sections of the EIAR.

Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (Non-Scheduled Minerals) Environmental Management Guidelines (2006) have also been produced by the EPA. These guidelines are intended to provide general advice and guidance in relation to environmental issues to practitioners involved with the planning, design, development, operation and restoration of quarry developments and ancillary facilities.

These relevant guidelines are presented below.

### 1.4.1 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) replaced the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with the transposition of Directive 2014/52/EU into Irish Law in 2018 (i.e., European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018)), and hence both terms appear in recent literature.

*Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on Carrying Out Environmental Impact Assessment.* Dept of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DoHPLG), Dublin, Ireland, 2018.

*Advice Notes on Current Practice for preparing Environmental Impact Statements,* Draft. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford, Ireland, 2015.

*Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Statements.* Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford, Ireland, 2022.

*Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU).* European Union (EU) Commission, Brussels, Belgium, 2017.

*Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on Scoping (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)*. European Union (EU) Commission, Brussels, Belgium, 2017.

*Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on Screening (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)*. European Union (EU) Commission, Brussels, Belgium, 2017.

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#### 1.4.2 EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY

*Quarries and Ancillary Activities - Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Dept. of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), Dublin, Ireland, 2004.

*Environmental Management Guidelines - Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (Non-Scheduled Minerals)*. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Johnstown Castle, Wexford, Ireland, 28 p., 2006.

In taking cognisance of the above provisions and guidance, particular attention has been given through preparation of this application and EIAR to ensure the planning and design of the proposal are to the highest standard, so as to protect the amenity value of the area.

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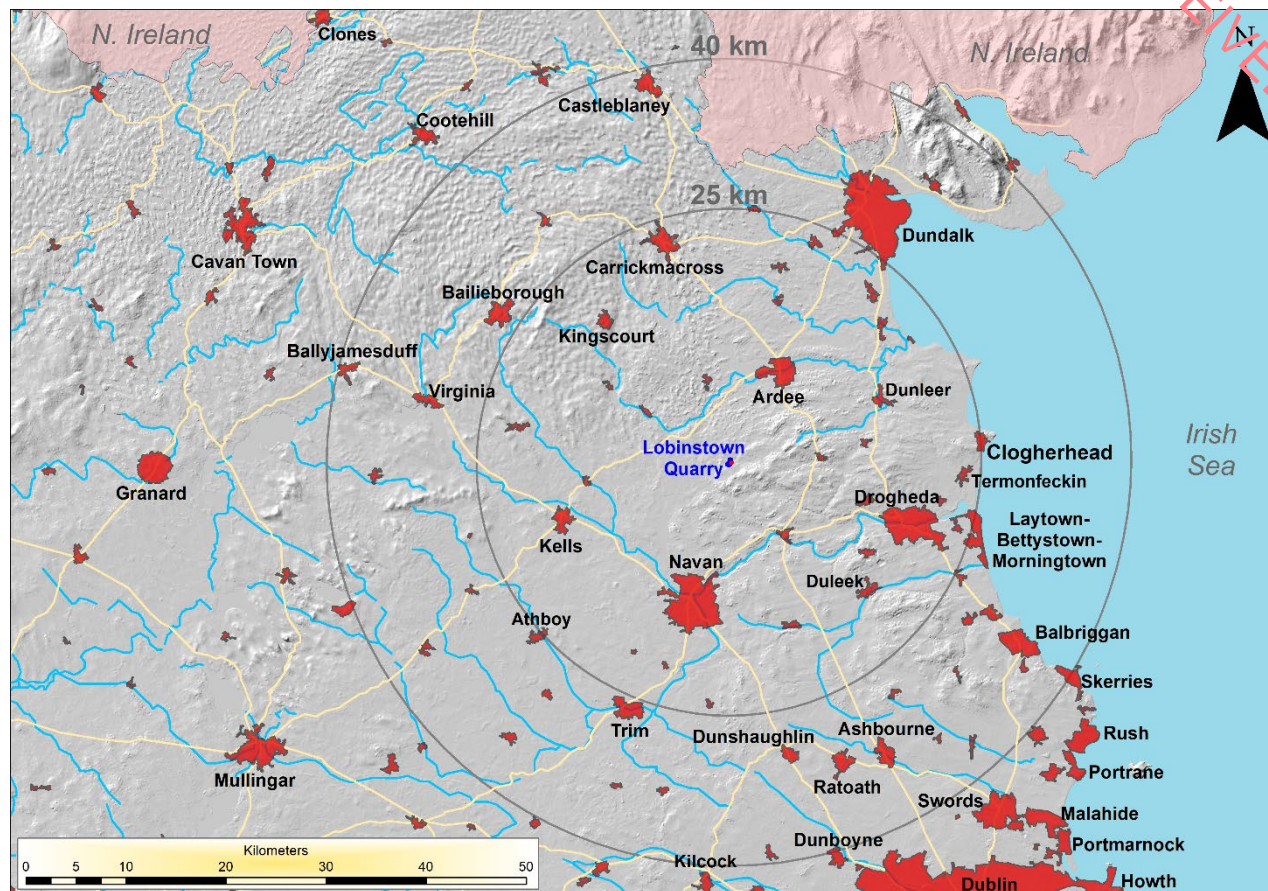
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## 1.6 FIGURES

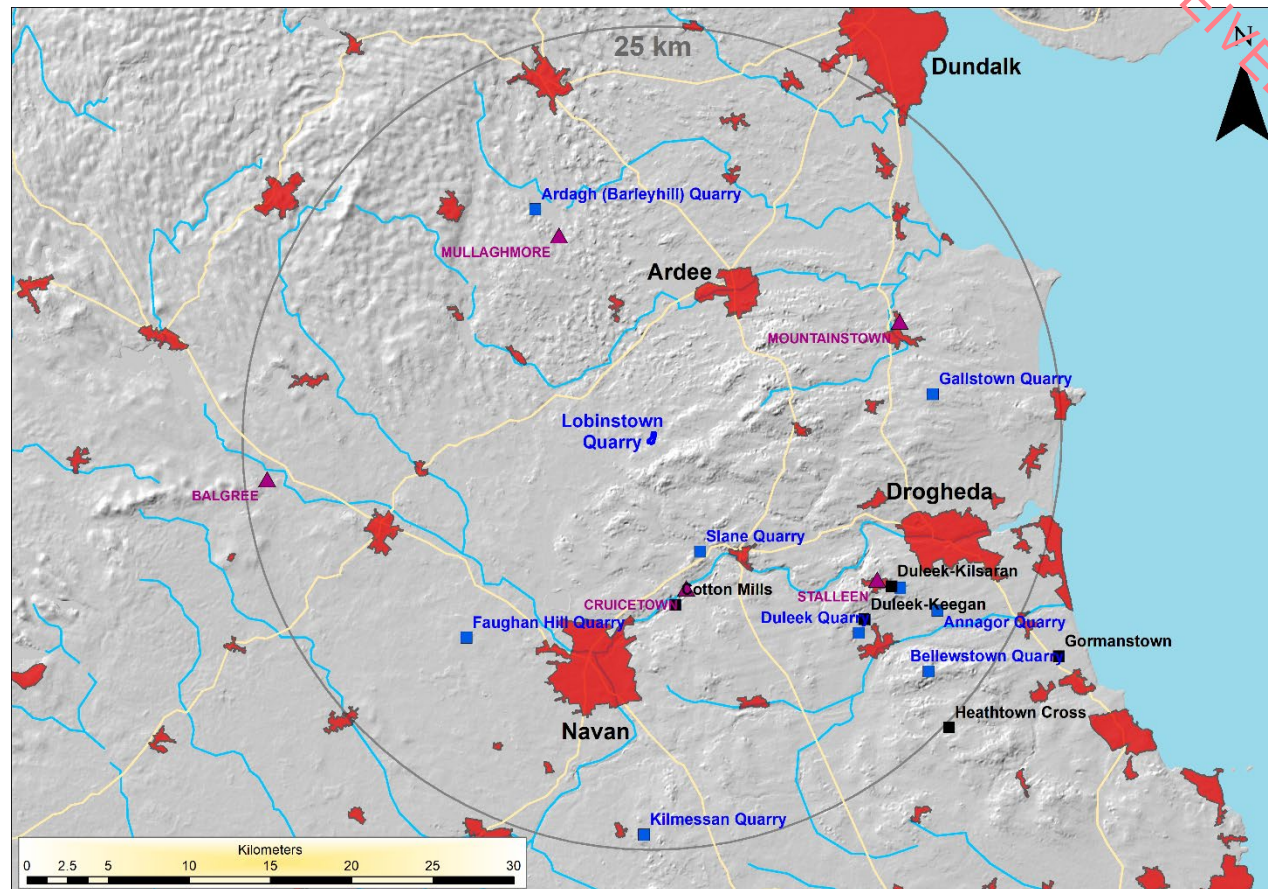
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**Figure 1.2 Map of 25 km and 40 km radius markets around Lobinstown Quarry**

Hill-shaded relief map of Lobinstown Quarry and surrounding area showing 25 km and 40 km radius markets around quarry. Major towns and national road network and parts of regional network are also shown. Rendered in ArcGIS 10.3.1 using hill-shaded relief map derived from EU-DEM data as a basemap with data from the GSI.



**Figure 1.3 Map of quarries and sand & gravel pits around Lobinstown Quarry**

Hill-shaded relief map of Lobinstown Quarry and surrounding area showing 25 km radius market around quarry. Location of active quarries in 2014 (■), sand & gravel pits in 2014 (▲), and other active quarries in 2023 (■). Rendered in ArcGIS 10.3.1 using hill-shaded relief map derived from EU-DEM data as a basemap with data from the GSI.