



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council



Strategic Environmental Assessment
Statement of the Westport Town and
Environs Local Area Plan 2024 -2030
following Ministerial Direction
Prepared for Mayo County Council under SI 436 of
2004 as amended following Ministerial Direction

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This report has been prepared by Minogue Environmental Consulting Ltd with JBA Ireland with all reasonable skill, care and diligence. Information report herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is prepared for Mayo County Council and we accept no responsibility to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.

1 Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement

1.1 Introduction

A Strategic Environmental Assessment was undertaken on the Westport Local Area Plan (LAP) 2024-2030 in order to comply with the SEA Directive. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Development Plan and is carried out at each stage of the Plan preparation process. The updated SEA Environmental Report with Material Alterations (March 2024) accompanies the Westport LAP 2024-2030 and contains the findings of this assessment. The LAP has also been informed by a Local Transport Plan that was also evaluated under the SEA process and is included in the final SEA ER.

A SEA Statement is the final aspect of the SEA process. The *Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines, Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (DEHLG 2004)* sets out that the purpose of the SEA Statement is to summarise the following:

- How environmental Considerations and the Environmental Report were factored into the Plan;
- How submissions/consultations were taken into account;
- Reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted, in light of other reasonable alternatives considered;
- Monitoring Measures.

1.2 How Environmental Considerations and the Environmental Report were factored into the Plan and how Submissions/Consultations were taken into account

SEA was integrated into the various stages of the plan making process and guided the preparation of development scenarios, strategy, policies and objectives, with the overall aim of achieving the sustainable development of the plan area. The SEA process was carried out having regard to international and national legislation, strategies, plans and guidelines on environmental protection and sustainable development. Submissions received from Environmental Authorities were also taken into account in the drafting of the Westport LAP and Environmental Report. Recommendations from environmental assessments relating to European sites and flood risk also informed the SEA process. The specific steps taken were as follows:

Pre-draft Consultation

Mayo County Council formally consulted with Environmental Authorities during the ‘scoping’ stage of the SEA process. This consultation identified the range of environmental issues and the level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report. Scoping submissions were made by Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government, Geological Survey of Ireland and Department of Agriculture (the latter submitted commentary on the two other LAPs in preparation (Ballina and Castlebar), with no specific comments on Westport).

Table 1: Summary of Scoping Submissions from Environmental Authorities

Main Points	SEA topic
Geological Survey Ireland (GSI)	
GSI recommend using these various data sets (see website for data availability) when conducting the EIAR, SEA, planning and scoping processes. This data can add to the content and robustness of the SEA process. With this in mind please find attached a list of our publicly available datasets that may be useful to the environmental assessment and planning process. We recommend that you review this list and refer to any datasets you consider	Geology Water Geological Heritage Soil Material

Main Points	SEA topic
<p>relevant to your assessment. These datasets are provided in the submission and cover geoheritage, culture and tourism (geo tourism), geological mapping, geotechnical database and geothermal energy, nature resources, geochemistry of soils, surface water, sediments, marine and coastal informar database.</p>	Assets
<p>Development Applications Unit, Dept. Housing, Local Government and Heritage This submission outlines heritage-related observations/recommendations co-ordinated by the DAU under the stated headings.</p>	
<p>Nature Conservation The Dept. make the following observations in its role as a statutory authority with overarching responsibility for nature conservation and the nature directives (i.e., the Birds and Habitats Directives). The observations are not exhaustive but are intended to assist the planning authority in meeting its obligations in relation to nature conservation, European sites, biodiversity and environmental protection in the process of reviewing and preparing the Local Area Plans. Provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government policy on nature conservation • Ecological Assessments • Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) • Appropriate Assessment including screening <p>The Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna section of the SEA should be undertaken by or in conjunction with a suitably qualified ecologist, and in conjunction with preparation of the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) to ensure full integration of biodiversity issues and concerns, particularly in relation to nature conservation sites, rare and protected species, habitats that are rare or of high ecological value, and Article 10 of the Habitats Directive. The EPA’s Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment best practice guidance is of relevance in this regard.</p> <p>The Environmental Report is required to contain environmental protection objectives Water quality environmental objectives need to take into account</p>	<p>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna Water Soil Habitats Directive Assessment</p>

1.2.1 Preparation of Local Area Plan

As part of the Environmental Report, baseline data was provided on the current state of the environment in and adjacent to the plan area of Westport LAP. This was collated through a review of currently available data, as recommended in SEA Guidelines and related to indicators set out in the SEA Directive: biodiversity flora and fauna; population and human health; soil; water; air and climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage and landscape. Recommendations from environmental assessments relating to European sites and flood risk also informed the preparation of the Westport LAP and Environmental Report, these assessments are contained in the *Natura Impact Report (NIR)* and *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)*. The key environmental issues considered included the following:

Table 2: Key Environmental Issues

Indicator	Summary of Issues
Biodiversity Flora and Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding nature and wild places as a national priority to preserve its legacy for future generations • Reducing human induced pressures on the marine environment and terrestrial environment • Developing policies and objectives for the protection and restoration of biodiversity at a regional and local level by Local Authorities • Protection of the Carrowbeg River, an essential ecological asset providing connectivity to the Clew Bay. Otters are frequently recorded at this river as well as many bat roosts in the buildings along the river banks. • Enhancing any semi-natural space and riparian vegetation along the river banks • Considering new schemes such as ‘Creation of Woodland on Public Lands’ for Council-

	<p>owned lands and maintaining and restoring these sites already under Council ownership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining and strengthening hedgerows and treelines • Protecting waterways that are other habitats by implementing a minimum 10m riparian buffer on both banks • Incorporating suitable, native species for greenery in all new developments to complete local environmental conditions • Enhancing ecosystem services and species richness of semi-natural grasslands by target management • Recognising the need for an integrated policy position for the many linkages and dependencies in the environment (<i>National Policy Position for Ireland's Environment</i>, as recommended by the EPA)
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the benefits of a clean environment for health and wellbeing • Ensuring that all residents people have the necessary facilities for ample exercise. • Providing a diversity of housing options to cater to different lifestyles, affordability and lifespan choices. • Mapping and identifying quiet areas in the town to implement measures to protect the quiet amenity of these areas • Recognising the need for an integrated policy position for the many linkages and dependencies in the environment (<i>National Policy Position for Ireland's Environment</i>, as recommended by the EPA)
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the plan area comprises an urban environment. • Reuse of existing buildings and brownfield land development. • Supporting and maintaining carbon storage associated with soil. • Potential soil contamination associated with historic land use activities. • Reducing soil sealing. • Greenfield site pressures and demands. • Promoting integrated land mapping approaches to support decision-making on sustainable land use • Recognising the need for an integrated policy position for the many linkages and dependencies in the environment (<i>National Policy Position for Ireland's Environment</i>, as recommended by the EPA)
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change and reduce our carbon footprint to help achieve the national target of zero emissions by 2050 and a target of 7% per annum between 2021 and 2030. • Flood risk management and appropriate measures. • Restoring and maintaining the Westport River riverbed to improve depth and physical and chemical conditions for aquatic species. • Control/avoid introduction of alien and invasive species. • The inclusion of policies/objectives on the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Green/Blue Infrastructure in new developments and retrofitted into existing developed areas. • Point sources such as combined sewer and treatment plant overflows and wastewater treatment plants.
Air and Climatic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on systematic change for Ireland's target to become a climate neutral and a climate resilient society and economy • Adopting WHO Clean Air Quality Guideline Values within the Clean Air Strategy for specific targets that are to be achieved • Moving away rapidly from extensive use of fossil fuels to the use of clean energy systems • Identifying pollution 'hot spots' in the town to reduce pollution on these emissions • Recognising the need for an integrated policy position for the many linkages and dependencies in the environment (<i>National Policy Position for Ireland's Environment</i>, as recommended by the EPA).
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All developments should be subject to robust site / route selection and appropriate

Assets	<p>environmental assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure design of road upgrades should include the provision of bus/cycle lanes to encourage active and sustainable transport modes. • Pedestrian and cycling facilities should be provided along busy routes to promote a modal shift, also a park and ride facility should be provided to serve the busy routes around the town as well as rural transport scheme which serve the wider hinterlands of Westport. Other suggestions include improving public transport infrastructure, specify maximum standards for parking, new developments produce travel plans, encourage school travel plans, provide shower facilities at public buildings in the town. • MCC should implement waste prevention measures with local and community groups and provide easily accessible public bins and implement an education campaign to highlight food waste management options. • To ensure plan is consistent with the need for proper planning and sustainable development, adequate critical infrastructure should be in place to serve and future development during the lifetime of the plan.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting development that respects the town’s existing landscapes and incorporate the principles of good urban design that facilitates the functioning of successful places. • Protecting key views and vistas. • Enhancing existing landscape features and elements that contribute to local character. • Integrate green and blue infrastructure considerations. • Enhancing the public realm and connectivity around the plan area. • Amenities and services including open space and play areas. • Designing the urban realm to meet the needs of elderly and the vulnerable with adequate street lighting, safe footpaths and ample public seating • Recognising the need for an integrated policy position for the many linkages and dependencies in the environment (<i>National Policy Position for Ireland’s Environment</i>, as recommended by the EPA)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing cultural and linguistic heritage. • Recognition of intangible cultural heritage and practices. • Improve signage around the Great Western Greenway • Maintain Built Heritage to prevent dereliction, especially around the Mall, the Fairgreen, Quay Road and the railway bridge over Altamont Street • Adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

The Environmental Report set out Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEO) and strategic environmental Targets for the Plan (Table 3). These were identified based on a current understanding of the key environmental issues and related to the SEA ER of the Mayo County Development Plan 2022 -2028 SEA ER. Policies, objectives, landuse zonings and opportunity sites were assessed in respect of sustainability and specifically against the SEOs. A matrix was used to rate the impact of the policies and objectives, as having potential positive, indirectly positive, neutral, uncertain, negative, or indirectly negative impacts.

In light of the significant national and regional policy framework including the National Planning Framework, North West Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy and Climate Action the LAP reflected these changes. The SEA processes assessed the policies and landuse zonings against the SEOs and in relation to the findings of the Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

The assessment process highlighted policies with positive environmental effects at strategic scale and also recommended a number of amendments to or new policies to further strengthen the environmental performance of the Development Plan and ensure it is more robust from a strategic perspective.

Where potential uncertain or negative affects arose, they would be balanced by mitigation and monitoring measures including mitigation measures identified through the SEA, AA or SFRA assessment processes.

Mitigation measures incorporated into the Westport LAP 2024-2030 are set out in Chapter 9 of the Environmental Report. They include an integration of SEA, AA and SFRA measures recommended to be integrated into the Plan and relate to key strategy/policies which are new or amended and aim to avoid, reduce, eliminate and/or compensate for potential adverse environmental effects. These also include where relevant, mitigation measures for Material Alterations that were screened in at the material alteration stage of the LAP preparation. These measures in turn inform specific objectives and development management standards of the Plan.

Table 3 Strategic Environmental Objectives and Targets

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target
BFF1 Conserve and enhance biodiversity at all levels	<p>No reduction in length or loss of hedgerows.</p> <p>Operators who conduct mechanical hedge cutting should have achieved the Teagasc proficiency standard MT 1302-Mechanical Hedge Trimming.</p> <p>30% broadleaf/native afforestation.</p> <p>Protection and promotion of non-designated salmonid rivers.</p> <p>No. ecological networks or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity to be lost without remediation as a result of implementation of the MCDP 2021-2027</p> <p>Afford the same level of protection to Margaritifera Sensitive Areas as is afforded to Freshwater Pearl Mussel SAC rivers</p>
BFF2 – Avoid and minimise effects on nationally and internationally rare and threatened species and habitats through sensitive design and consultation, recognising ecological connectivity.	<p>No loss of protected habitats and species during the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>No compromise in the favourable conservation condition of European sites.</p> <p>No compromise or impact on the achievement of the favourable conservation condition objectives (whether maintain or restore) of European sites.</p>
BFF3 – Avoid and minimise habitat fragmentation and seek opportunities to improve habitat connectivity.	<p>Submission of Ecological Impact Assessments for planning applications</p> <p>Number of green and blue infrastructure measures implemented through Part 8 applications.</p> <p>Ensure provision of riparian zones at project/site level.</p>
BFF4 – Ensure careful consideration of non-native invasive and alien species particularly as they relate to watercourses	<p>Prevent the introduction of new invasive or alien species.</p> <p>Control/manage new invasive species.</p> <p>Control/manage/eradicate invasive species throughout the county.</p>
B5 - Promote green and blue infrastructure networks, including riparian zones and wildlife corridors.	<p>Ensure new development is set back from rivers.</p> <p>The recommended width for larger river channels (>10m) is 35m to 60m and for smaller channels (<10m) is 20m or greater. The determined width should be tailored to site specific, river reach or lakeshore characteristics and their associated habitats. It is important that the buffer zone is large enough to protect the ecological integrity of the river (including emergent vegetation), the riparian zone (bank side vegetation including trees) and takes into account the human history of the area.</p>

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target
<p>P1 Protect, enhance and improve people’s quality of life based on high quality residential, community, educational, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns.</p>	<p>Increase in the number of green and blue space in settlements.</p> <p>Improved trends in perceived quality of life related to these matters.</p> <p>Bonds to ensure the completion of developments until taken charge.</p> <p>No significant deterioration in human health as a result of environmental factors.</p>
<p>P2 To protect human health from hazards or nuisances arising from incompatible land uses/developments.</p>	<p>No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors.</p> <p>Number of complaints received from public relating to Noise, Air and Water Emissions.</p>
<p>W1 – Protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystem (quality, level, flow).</p>	<p>To achieve a Q rating of 4 ‘good’ quality status by 2021.</p>
<p>W2– Maintain or improve the quality of surface water and groundwater (including estuarine) to status objectives as set out in the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the River Basin Management Plan and POMS.</p>	<p>Improvement or at least no deterioration in surface water quality by 2021</p>
<p>W3– Reduce the impact of polluting substances to all waters and prevent pollution and contamination of ground water by adhering to aquifer protection plans and to maintain and improve the quality of drinking water supplies.</p>	<p>Improvement or at least no deterioration in surface and groundwaters by 2027 at the latest</p>
<p>W4 - Promote sustainable water use, water conservation and sources of water supply in the plan area and to maintain and improve the quality of drinking water supplies.</p>	<p>Pressure on water and waste water treatment plants.</p>
<p>W5–Protect flood plains and areas of flood risk from development through avoidance, mitigation and adaptation measures.</p>	<p>In accordance with OPW/DOEHLG, all planning applications within designated Flood Risk Zones A and B as identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the plan are required to undertake Flood Risk Assessment.</p> <p>Increase in nature based solutions to flood risk and blue infrastructure measures</p>
<p>SG1 To maximise the sustainable re-use of the existing built environment, derelict, disused and infill sites (brownfield sites), rather than greenfield sites</p>	<p>NPF target of 30% urban development and 20% of rural developing on brownfield lands achieved over lifetime of the plan</p>

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target
SG2 Conserve, protect and avoid loss of diversity and integrity of designated habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites.	No loss of diversity and integrity of designated habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites. Designation of sites as County Geological Sites.
AQ1 Recognise the ecosystems functions of habitats in and around the plan area and promote nature-based solutions to climate change mitigation and adaptation.	Maintain and enhance ecosystems functionality in and around plan area Integrate nature-based solutions through planning applications, public realm plans, greenways and transport projects.
AQ2 Minimise all forms of air pollution and maintain/improve ambient air quality.	Maintain ambient air quality through reduction of private vehicle usage.
AQ3 Minimise emissions of greenhouse gases and contribute to a reduction and avoidance of human-induced global climate change.	Provide for increased use of public transport. Increase number of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes in the plan area. Establish incentives/increase no. of permissions for renewable energy projects.
AQ4 Reduce car dependency within the plan area by way of an integrated approach to sustainable urban transport.	An increase in the percentage of the population travelling to work or school by public transport or non-mechanical means. A decrease in the average distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.
MA1 Avoid and minimise waste generation	Reduction in the quantities of waste sent to landfill.
MA2 Maximise reuse of material resources and use of recycled materials	Increase in the quantities of waste sent for recycling. Increase in the number of bring banks in the plan area. Compliance with the Region Waste Management Plan
Material Assets -energy	
MA3 Minimise energy consumption and encourage use of renewable energy	Increase in renewable energy developments. Adaptive reuse of town centre buildings
Material Assets -Transport	
MA4 Promote sustainable transport patterns and modes	An increase in provision of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes. An increase in population travelling to work and school by public transport or non-motorised transport. A reduction in the distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.
MA5 To maximise the capacity of wastewater collection networks by	Based on current loading it is estimated there is approx. 4,700 ¹p.e. capacity remaining in the plant which means there is sufficient treatment capacity to

¹ Amended following submission from Uisce Eireann

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target
excluding surface water run-off from the sewage network through the use of SUDs and Blue/green Infrastructure.	accommodate the projected increase in population for Westport and to facilitate enterprise
CH1 Conserve, preserve and record architectural and archaeological heritage	No permitted development which involves loss of cultural heritage, including protected structures, archaeological sites, Architectural Conservations Areas and landscape features.
CH2 Avoid and minimise effects on historic environment features through sensitive design and consultation.	Increase in consultation and engagement with statutory bodies. Increase in architectural heritage impact assessments
CH3 Support and enhance both tangible and intangible cultural heritage	Increase in awareness of cultural heritage Increase in use of Irish Language Reverse island population trend
L1 Ensure no significant disruption of historic/cultural landscapes and features through objectives of the County Development Plan	. No significant visual impact from development. Ensure no significant disruption of high landscape values.
L2 Promote and enhance landscape character at county and local scale through sensitive siting and design	Maintain and enhance landscape quality within the plan area by minimising visual impacts through appropriate design, assessment and siting. Number of applications referencing Rural Housing Guidelines Number of applications reflecting native tree /hedgerows and local stone treatments

1.2.2 Draft Development Plan Stage

An Environmental Report (September 2023) detailing the SEA process accompanied the Draft Westport LAP 2024-2030 on public display for a period of 6 weeks from 26th September to 7th November 2023 inclusive. A total of 57 no. valid written submissions were received within the statutory timeframe for public display.

Part 1 of the *Chief Executives (CE) Report on Submissions to the Draft Plan*, includes a summary of submissions received relating to the Draft LAP and Environmental Report along with the CE response. This included submissions received from the EPA, Office of the Planning Regulator, Office of Public Works, and Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government and others.

These were considered through the SEA, AA and SFRA process and commentary provided on same. The SEA ER was updated as appropriate in response to submissions at the draft stage of the LAP.

1.2.3 Proposed Material Alterations to draft Westport LAP Stage

The Elected Members of the Westport/Belmullet Municipal District at their meeting on the 26th January 2024, considered the draft LAP and the CE Report and passed a resolution to accept the Draft LAP and the Chief Executive's report in respect of the Draft LAP, subject to the alterations in the Chief Executive's report and the subsequent alterations proposed by the Elected Members.

The assessment relies on information contained in Environmental Report prepared for the Draft Plan (September 2023). It also takes into account amendments to the SEA Environmental Report and recommendations from environmental assessments relating to European sites and flood risk. As part

of the consultation process, the SEA Screening of Material Alterations accompanied the *Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Westport LAP* on public display.

Section 3 of the *CE'S Report on the Consultation Process of the Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Westport LAP 2024-2030* includes a summary of submissions received relevant to the SEA, AA and SFRA along with the CE response.

The Appropriate Assessment process is reported on separately in the Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement.

The conclusion of the SEA Screening on Proposed Material Alterations was that after taking account of measures which have been already integrated within the Draft Plan, which provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development, it was determined that potential environmental effects arising from a number of the proposed material alterations required full SEA.

The updated SEA ER was prepared and issued for consultation in March 2024. Chapter 8 of the SEA ER evaluates the proposed material alterations that were screened in for full SEA and provide mitigation measures as appropriate.

The SEA process was considered at each stage of the making of the Plan. Having considered the CE'S Report on the Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Westport LAP 2024 2030 and associated environmental reports, the Westport LAP 2024-2030 was adopted by the Members of Mayo County Council.

1.2.4 Ministerial Direction

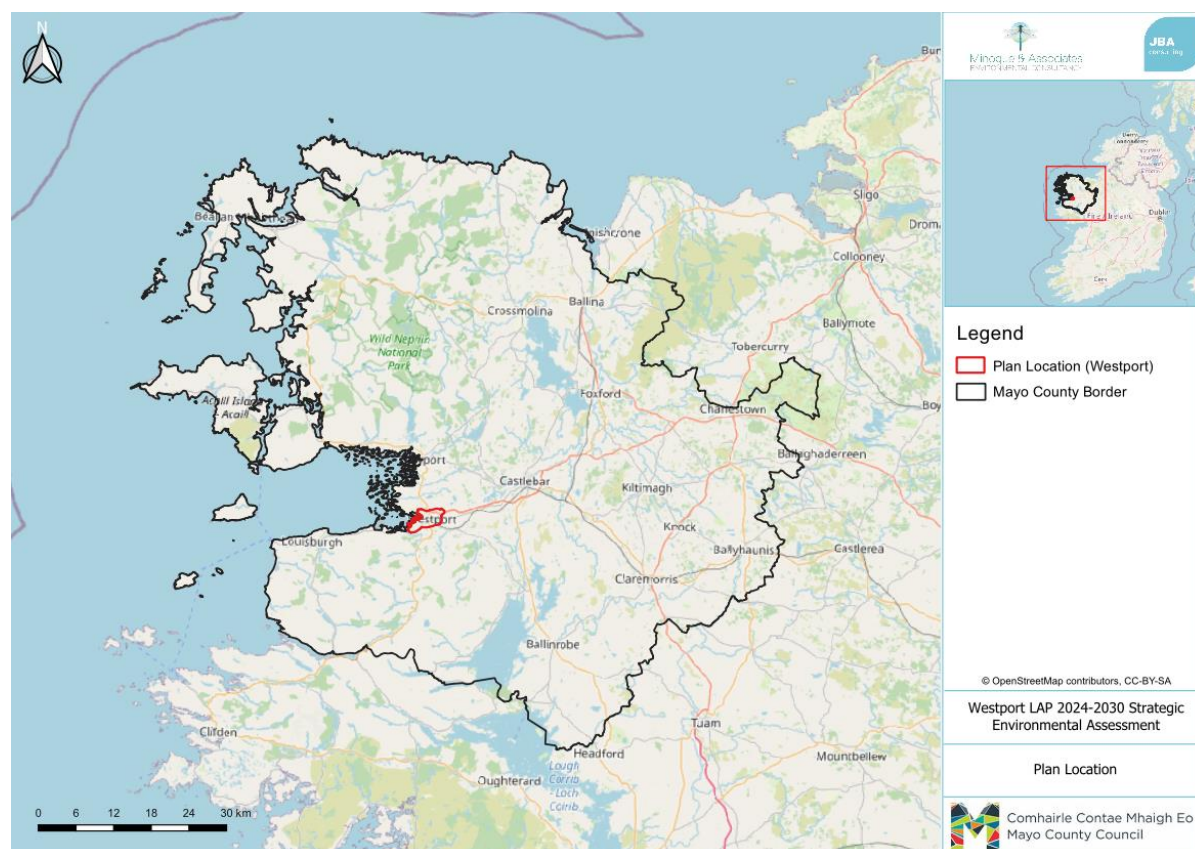
Following the adoption of the LAP, a Ministerial Direction was issued and the following changes were made to the Westport LAP 2024 -2030.

Delete

- (a) Material Alternation MA 2- ie Policy DSP 10
- (b) Material Alteration MA 31 – ie: the amendment to Footnote 2 of the Land Use Zoning Matrix Table.

These have all been previously assessed under the SEA assessment and can be shown in Annex A and Annex B of the final SEA ER. Figure 1.1 shows the final plan boundary in the context of County Mayo.

Figure 1-1 Final Westport LAP boundary and location within County Mayo.



2 Reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted, in light of other reasonable alternatives considered

In the case of the Draft Westport LAP, possible alternatives include different land uses and scales of development were examined and assessed against the SEOS. In considering these alternatives, regard was given to the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 3 – the Strategic Planning Approach) identified for the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028).

This is based on the following:

- Greater consistency with the requirements of the NPF and NW RESS
- This approach identifies areas under pressure from urban generated rural housing and aims to more strategically approach rural housing in line with NPF and NW RESS requirements around compact growth and sustainable communities.
- Developing existing settlements, compact growth, serviced settlements are more robustly planned for under this Scenario.
- Key towns are planned for and will be subject to LAP in line with the RPOs of the NW RESS. The Tier II and III can be planned for in terms of town centre opportunity sites, public realm and permeability enhancements that increase the attractiveness of town and village centre living whilst efficiencies in terms of existing infrastructure area maximised and reduced reliance on private or individual septic tanks and wells.
- Smarter Travel policies, reduction in commuting, increased walking and cycling can fit better within this scenario;
- By a hierarchy of settlements, this approach can identify at settlement level opportunities for enhancing green and blue infrastructure, particularly where towns and villages have been subject to habitat surveys.
- Rural housing trend likely to continue albeit more slowly with this scenario but within a

- stronger policy framework and hierarchy with a more robust criteria-based approach
- This scenario directs development to town and village centres;
- This approach allows for better protection of designated sites and achievement of WFD targets as serviced led development is directed to settlements.
- Reuse of brownfield and infill sites promoted in this scenario. This scenario performs strongest in terms of cultural heritage as it promotes reuse of older and historical buildings and the embodied carbon within these structures. Indirect, positive interactions with PHH and L SEOS under this scenario also.

Ultimately, within this scenario, the Land use zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Northern and Western RSES. Requirements relating to land use zoning provided for by the NPF and RSES have significantly limited the availability of alternatives for the various settlements.

The three alternatives considered are presented below::

- Continuation of Existing LAP land use zonings and policies/objectives (The Do-Nothing Scenario). Continues with the existing LAP in its current context.
- Town centre consolidation: This approach would be to focus explicitly on the densification of the town centre with intensification of land uses and focus on employee intensive sectors.
- Town centre consolidation and designation of future development lands in a tiered structure: Promotion of development lands within the town centre for development and the designation of secondary and edge of centre areas where this type of development is considered appropriate in certain circumstances. It would also promote the development of neighbourhood centres to provide a level of retail services locally.

Following the assessment, the preferred alternative from an environmental strategic perspective is Alternative 3, Town Centre consolidation and designation of future development lands in a tiered structure. This provides the greatest positive environmental effects and is consistent with national and regional planning policy.

3 Monitoring Measures

The monitoring programme comprises the relevant indicators and targets against the data relating to each environmental component. Similarly, monitoring will be carried out frequently to ensure that any changes to the environment can be identified.

It is recommended that data arising from planning applications, particularly in terms of environmental constraints mapping and Environmental Impact Statements be integrated into the GIS and monitoring system. This will assist in assessing cumulative impacts also, in particular ecology and water quality.

Finally, it is recommended that the monitoring report be made available to the public upon its completion. It is recommended that this data be shared with neighbouring local authorities to assist in monitoring cross county effects and ensure consistency of monitoring.

Should new data or the following occur, additional monitoring will be required:

- Pollution events associated with construction;
- Boil notices on drinking water;

- Fish kills;
- Court cases taken by the DEHLG regarding impacts upon archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places; and,
- Complaints received from statutory consultees regarding avoidable impacts resulting from development which is granted permission under the LAP.

In turn the list below is subject to review at each reporting stage to reflect new data. Laois County Council are responsible for the implementation of the SEA Monitoring Programme including:

- Monitoring specific indicators and identifying any significant effects, including cumulative effects;
- Collating the Environmental Reports (such as Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, Natura Impact Reports etc) submitted by developers in the LAP area;
- Reviewing the effectiveness of monitoring/mitigation measures during the lifetime of the LAP; and
- Identifying any cumulative effects.

It is recommended that the monitoring report be made available to the public upon its completion.

Please see Table 5 overleaf for the monitoring measures.

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
Biodiversity Flora and Fauna			
BFF1 Conserve and enhance biodiversity at all levels	<p>No reduction in length or loss of hedgerows.</p> <p>Operators who conduct mechanical hedge cutting should have achieved the Teagasc proficiency standard MT 1302-Mechanical Hedge Trimming.</p> <p>30% broadleaf/native afforestation.</p> <p>Protection and promotion of non-designated salmonid rivers.</p> <p>No. ecological networks or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity to be lost without remediation as a result of implementation of the MCDP 2021-2027</p> <p>Afford the same level of protection to <i>Margaritifera</i> Sensitive Areas as is afforded to Freshwater Pearl Mussel SAC rivers</p>	<p>Percentage of unique habitats and species lost in non-designated sites over the lifetime of the Plan through trending of annual/bi-annual surveys.</p> <p>Percentage of broadleaf/native afforestation.</p> <p>Number of green infrastructure and blue infrastructure measures implemented during Part 8 applications.</p> <p>Number of pollinator friendly planting schemes as part of public realm works.</p> <p>Number of pollinator friendly schemes identified under Tidy Towns</p> <p>Number of Part 8 applications requiring Ecological Clerk of Work</p> <p>Percentage loss of connectivity between areas of local biodiversity importance as a result of implementation of the MCDP as evidenced from a resurvey of CORINE mapping and the Biodiversity Mapping undertaken by MCC for towns and villages where present.</p> <p>Decrease in population of freshwater pearl mussels in <i>Margaritifera</i> sensitive areas and/or habitat and water quality deterioration.</p>	<p>MCC</p> <p>MCC Part 8 planning applications Coillte- Annual NPWS – Annual or as and when surveys completed by NPWS for National Monitoring programmes on a rolling basis and/or surveillance monitoring undertaken for compliance with Article 17 of the Habitats Directive and reported on every 6 years. MCC - Annual OPW - Annual National Biodiversity Data Centre – Annual</p> <p>Ireland River Basin Management Plan –second and third RBMP Cycle</p>
BFF2 – Avoid and minimise effects on nationally and	No loss of protected habitats and species during the lifetime of the	Designation of additional areas due to biodiversity and/or geological value.	

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
<p>internationally rare and threatened species and habitats through sensitive design and consultation, recognising ecological connectivity.</p>	<p>Plan. No compromise in the favourable conservation condition of European sites. No compromise or impact on the achievement of the favourable conservation condition objectives (whether maintain or restore) of European sites.</p>	<p>Percentage of unique habitats and species lost in designated sites through trending of annual surveys. No./percentage of developments in/near Natura 2000 network. Percentage of European sites in the plan area that are at 'Favourable' conservation status. Percentage of Qualifying Interest Features which have achieved their specific objectives of maintain or restore.</p>	
<p>BFF3 – Avoid and minimise habitat fragmentation and seek opportunities to improve habitat connectivity.</p>	<p>Submission of Ecological Impact Assessments for planning applications</p> <p>Number of green and blue infrastructure measures implemented through Part 8 applications.</p> <p>Ensure provision of riparian zones at project/site level.</p>	<p>Number of Ecological Impact Assessments with planning applications.</p> <p>Number of Part 8 applications with green and blue infrastructure measures</p> <p>No. of planning applications with sufficient inclusion of buffer zones where necessary and applicable.</p>	
<p>BFF4 – Ensure careful consideration of non-native invasive and alien species particularly as they relate to watercourses</p>	<p>Prevent the introduction of new invasive or alien species.</p> <p>Control/manage new invasive species.</p> <p>Control/manage/eradicate invasive species throughout the county.</p>	<p>No., type and location of invasive species identified.</p> <p>No. of actions achieved under the Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>Increase/decrease in coverage of invasive species identified.</p> <p>No. of submissions/observations submitted through invasive species Ireland "Alien Watch".</p>	

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
		<p>www.invasivespeciesireland.com/alien-watch</p> <p>The National Biodiversity Data Centre will track success in the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan by measuring increases in the abundance and diversity of pollinators within the Irish landscape as the 81 actions are implemented.</p>	
<p>B5 - Promote green and blue infrastructure networks, including riparian zones and wildlife corridors.</p>	<p>Ensure new development is set back from rivers.</p> <p>The recommended width for larger river channels (>10m) is 35m to 60m and for smaller channels (<10m) is 20m or greater. The determined width should be tailored to site specific, river reach or lakeshore characteristics and their associated habitats. It is important that the buffer zone is large enough to protect the ecological integrity of the river (including emergent vegetation), the riparian zone (bank side vegetation including trees) and takes into account the human history of the area.</p>	<p>No. planning permissions close to water.</p> <p>Number of Part 8 applications with green and blue infrastructure measures</p>	
<p>Population, Human Health</p>			

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
P1 Protect, enhance and improve people's quality of life based on high quality residential, community, educational, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns.	<p>Increase in the number of green and blue space in settlements.</p> <p>Improved trends in perceived quality of life related to these matters.</p> <p>Bonds to ensure the completion of developments until taken charge.</p> <p>No significant deterioration in human health as a result of environmental factors.</p>	<p>No/area of green spaces and amenities available to the public as shown in public realm improvements</p> <p>Improved trends in perceived quality of life related to these matters as gathered through surveys.</p> <p>Employment rates over the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>Completion handover of development to MCC</p> <p>Availability of public transport/ smarter travel initiatives.</p> <p>Occurrence of any decline in human health around the plan area.</p>	<p>MCC – URDF funding and other funding sources</p> <p>CSO – every six years in line with census</p> <p>MCC - Annual</p> <p>Iarnrod Eireann - Annual</p> <p>Bus Eireann – Annual</p>
P2 To protect human health from hazards or nuisances arising from incompatible land uses/developments.	<p>No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors.</p> <p>Number of complaints received from public relating to Noise, Air and Water Emissions.</p>	<p>Any occurrence of spatially concentrated deterioration in human health.</p> <p>Complaints to MCC Environment Section, Health and Safety Authority and EPA</p>	<p>CSO – every six years and as results arise on a yearly basis from the 2016 census</p> <p>Healthwell Database</p> <p>MCC – Annual</p>
Water			
W1 – Protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystem (quality, level, flow).	<p>To achieve a Q rating of 4 'good' quality status by 2021.</p>	<p>Biotic quality rating of river waters at EPA monitoring locations.</p>	<p>EPA – Annual as recorded through the WFD Monitoring Programme</p>
W2– Maintain or improve the quality of surface water and groundwater (including	<p>Improvement or at least no deterioration in surface water quality by 2021</p>	<p>Changes in receiving water quality as identified during water quality monitoring for WFD, National RBMP conducted by MCC and EPA.</p>	<p>MCC</p> <p>EPA</p>

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
<p>estuarine) to status objectives as set out in the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the River Basin Management Plan and POMS.</p>			
<p>W3– Reduce the impact of polluting substances to all waters and prevent pollution and contamination of ground water by adhering to aquifer protection plans and to maintain and improve the quality of drinking water supplies.</p>	<p>Improvement or at least no deterioration in surface and groundwaters by 2027 at the latest</p>	<p>Changes in receiving waters and groundwater quality as identified by water quality monitoring programmes conducted by MCC and EPA.</p>	<p>MCC - Annual EPA – Annual</p>
<p>W4 - Promote sustainable water use, water conservation and sources of water supply in the plan area and to maintain and improve the quality of drinking water supplies.</p>	<p>Pressure on water and waste water treatment plants.</p>	<p>Decrease in no. of water shortage notices issued during drought periods. Decrease in the amount of water consumed per household in the plan area.</p>	<p>MCC/Irish Water</p>
<p>W5–Protect flood plains and areas of flood risk from development through avoidance, mitigation and adaptation measures.</p>	<p>In accordance with OPW/DOEHLG, all planning applications within designated Flood Risk Zones A and B as identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the plan are required to undertake Flood Risk Assessment. Increase in nature based solutions to flood risk and blue infrastructure measures</p>	<p>Level and location of flooding. Number of measures achieved in Goal 3 of Climate Ready Mayo. Number of NBS that form part of public realm, Part 8 applications.</p>	<p>MCC – Records obtained as and when flood events occur OPW –</p>

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
Soil and Geology			
SG1 To maximise the sustainable re-use of the existing built environment, derelict, disused and infill sites (brownfield sites), rather than greenfield sites	NPF target of 30% urban development and 20% of rural developing on brownfield lands achieved over lifetime of the plan	Planning applicationsq	MCC annually
SG2 Conserve, protect and avoid loss of diversity and integrity of designated habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites.	No loss of diversity and integrity of designated habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites. Designation of sites as County Geological Sites.	Percentage of habitats, geological features, species etc. Lost over the lifetime of the Plan through trending of annual/bi-annual surveys. No. of areas designated as County Geological Sites.	GSI MCC
Material Assets			
Air Quality and Climate			
AQ1 Recognise the ecosystems functions of habitats in and around the plan area and promote nature-based solutions to climate change mitigation and adaptation.	Maintain and enhance ecosystems functionality in and around plan area Integrate nature-based solutions through planning applications, public realm plans, greenways and transport projects.	% land mapped for green and blue infrastructure in urban settings and along greenways. Enhancement of ecological networks/linkages through habitat creation/restoration	MCC
AQ2 Minimise all forms of air pollution and maintain/improve ambient air quality.	Maintain ambient air quality through reduction of private vehicle usage.	Air quality indicators.	<CC - Annual EPA - Annual
AQ3 Minimise emissions of greenhouse gases and contribute to a reduction and avoidance of human-induced global climate change.	Provide for increased use of public transport. Increase number of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes in the plan	Use of public transport. Provision of cycle lanes and walking routes. No. of grants given for insulation works;	MCC – Annual CSO – Annual as figures/reports based on 2016 census become

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
	<p>area.</p> <p>Establish incentives/increase no. of permissions for renewable energy projects.</p>	<p>energy efficiency of new buildings – energy rating figures.</p> <p>No. of planning applications for residential houses with low carbon footprint.</p> <p>No. Of wind turbines permitted which may contribute to mitigation of, and adaptation to Climate Change.</p> <p>Location of permitted wind farms and other renewable energy projects as identified in the Co Mayo RES. w</p>	<p>available.</p> <p>MCC and SEAI – increase in BER rating at Small Area for towns identified.</p> <p>Number of Energy Retrofitting grants in County</p> <p>MCC – No and type of planning applications in relation to low carbon residential housing and wind turbines and/or commencement of construction of such on an annual basis. SEAI</p>
AQ4 Reduce car dependency within the plan area by way of an integrated approach to sustainable urban transport.	<p>An increase in the percentage of the population travelling to work or school by public transport or non-mechanical means.</p> <p>A decrease in the average distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.</p>	<p>Percentage population within the plan area travelling to work or school by public transport or non-mechanical means.</p> <p>Average distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.</p>	<p>CSO – every 6 years through census information.</p>
Material Assets – Waste			
MA1 Avoid and minimise waste generation	<p>Reduction in the quantities of waste sent to landfill.</p>	<p>Quantity of household waste sent to landfill.</p>	<p>MCC Environment Section</p>
MA2 Maximise reuse of material resources and use of recycled materials	<p>Increase in the quantities of waste sent for recycling.</p> <p>Increase in the number of bring banks in the plan area.</p>	<p>Quantity of household waste sent to recycling</p> <p>Number of repair/ reuse initiatives over plan lifetime</p>	<p>Connaught Waste Management annual report</p>

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
	Compliance with the Region Waste Management Plan		
Material Assets -energy			
MA3 Minimise energy consumption and encourage use of renewable energy	<p>Increase in renewable energy developments.</p> <p>Adaptive reuse of town centre buildings</p>	<p>No. of renewable energy developments granted planning permission.</p> <p>Establishment of R&D projects (one or more).</p> <p>Meet or exceed County contributions to national renewable energy targets.</p> <p>Meet or exceed County contributions to national energy efficiency/conservation targets.</p> <p>Number of houses increasing BER rating to B3</p>	<p>MCC – new solar farms, windfarms or other renewable energy developments granted.</p> <p>– number of new R&D projects within the Plan area e.g., testing of tidal energy devices.</p> <p>Regional Assembly for the Northern and Western Region</p> <p>Marine Institute</p> <p>SEAO</p>
Material Assets -Transport			
MA4 Promote sustainable transport patterns and modes	<p>An increase in provision of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes.</p> <p>An increase in population travelling to work and school by public transport or non-motorised transport.</p> <p>A reduction in the distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.</p>	<p>No. of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes provided in the plan area.</p> <p>Percentage of the population within the plan area travelling to work or school by public transport or non-mechanical means.</p> <p>Average distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.</p> <p>Number of private cars on road as a percentage of Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT).</p>	<p>MCC</p> <p>CSO – every 6 years through census information.</p> <p>TII</p>
Material Assets – Waste Water			
MA5 To maximise the capacity of	Based on current loading it is	WWTP currently has capacity for the planned	Uisce Éireann -Achievement of Water

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wastewater collection networks by excluding surface water run-off from the sewage network through the use of SUDs and Blue/green Infrastructure.	estimated there is approx. 4,700 ² p.e. capacity remaining in the plant which means there is sufficient treatment capacity to accommodate the projected increase in population for Westport and to facilitate enterprise	population growth for Westport	Services Strategic Plan objectives. MCC – monitoring · 3
Cultural Heritage			
CH1 Conserve, preserve and record architectural and archaeological heritage	No permitted development which involves loss of cultural heritage, including protected structures, archaeological sites, Architectural Conservations Areas and landscape features.	No. of developments permitted during the lifetime of the plan which will result in the loss or partial loss of protected structures or sites of archaeological status. No. of additions to the list of Protected Structures. No. of additions to the list of Architectural Conservation Areas. Development of cultural heritage areas for amenity resources.	MCC - ongoing
CH2 Avoid and minimise effects	Increase in consultation and engagement with statutory	No. of applications which are referred to the Conservation and Heritage Officers.	MCC - ongoing

² Amended following submission from Uisce Eireann

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
on historic environment features through sensitive design and consultation.	bodies. Increase in architectural heritage impact assessments		
CH3 Support and enhance both tangible and intangible cultural heritage	Increase in awareness of cultural heritage	No. planning applications for restoration/re-use of vacant and derelict structures.	MCC – ongoing CSO
	Increase in use of Irish Language	No of Irish Language speakers	
	Reverse island population trend	No of Irish Language Impact assessment Population of Islands	
Landscape			
L1 Ensure no significant disruption of historic/cultural landscapes and features through objectives of the County Development Plan	. No significant visual impact from development.	No. of developments permitted and their impacts on cultural/historic landscapes.	CCC – ongoing Heritage Council - ongoing
	Ensure no significant disruption of high landscape values.	No. of developments located within Scenic Route or no degradation of Coastal Areas	Fáilte Ireland - ongoing
		No. of developments located within a designated scenic view in Co Mayo that disrupt views (based on the LCA).	GSI - ongoing NPWS - ongoing
		Development and application of framework in relation to the application of LCA and their contribution to SEA.	EPA SEA Unit in conjunction with CCC
L2 Promote and enhance landscape character at county and local scale through sensitive siting and design	Maintain and enhance landscape quality within the plan area by minimising visual impacts through appropriate design, assessment and siting.	No. of developments located within a high landscape area that disrupt views No of large-scale developments permitted with Visual Impact Assessment prepared	MCC - ongoing
	Number of applications	Km of additional hedgerow /treelines planted	

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
	referencing Rural Housing Guidelines Number of applications reflecting native tree /hedgerows and local stone treatments		

