



Strategic Environmental Assessment (Screening)

**Draft Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012 –
2018**

**Determination on the need for Strategic Environmental
Assessment of the Draft Claremorris Local Area Plan in
accordance with the Planning and Development (Strategic
Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended)**

**Prepared by
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Mayo County Council is in the process of reviewing the Claremorris Local Area Plan 2006 with the intention of preparing a new Local Area Plan for Claremorris, in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2011.

This screening document has been prepared pursuant to Article 14A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 S.I. 436 of 2004. The purpose of which is to determine whether the proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2016 would likely to have significant effects on the environment taking into consideration the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 S.I. No. 436 of 2004.

The SEA regulations require that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is carried out for local area plans where the population of the area is 5,000 or more. The Census of Population 2006 shows that the population for Claremorris is 2595¹ persons; therefore an SEA is not mandatory.

However, under the SEA Regulations, it is mandatory to undertake a screening process to determine whether or not the proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018 would likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 S.I. No. 436 of 2004.

This report is a screening report to determine whether the proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan would likely have significant effects on the environment, taking into account relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the planning and development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 S.I. No. 436 of 2004.

The purpose of this report is to outline to the Environmental Authorities:

1. the current status quo;
2. details of the proposed Plan;
3. an initial assessment of the proposed Plan taking into consideration Schedule 2A of the regulations;
4. to invite the Environmental Authorities to make a submission/observation in relation to whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effect on the Environment.

Following receipt of submissions/observations from the environmental authorities the planning authority will make a final determination as to whether or not the proposed variation would likely to have significant effects on the environment.

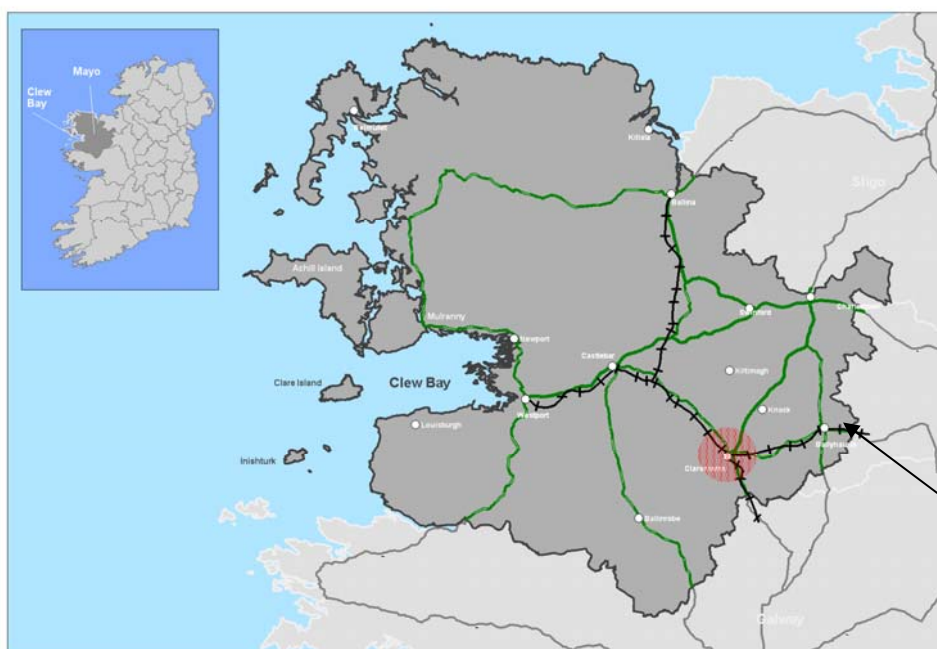
¹ Census of Population 2006, www.CSO.ie

2. CLAREMORRIS IN CONTEXT; OUTLINE OF THE CLAREMORRIS LOCAL AREA PLAN 2006 AND THE PURPOSE OF THE CLAREMORRIS LOCAL AREA PLAN 2012-2018

2.1 Claremorris in Context

Claremorris is situated in the undulating plains of Southeast Mayo. It is located 28 km Southeast of Castlebar and 61 km North of Galway City. It is strategically located within the county and the West Region, at the junction of two major National Routes, the N17 (Sligo/Galway) and N60 (Castlebar/Roscommon for Athlone and Dublin). It has direct rail links to Dublin and potential future rail links along the Western Rail Corridor and is 26 km from Ireland West Airport Knock. Two important regional Routes, the R331 from Ballinrobe and the R320 from Kiltimagh also terminate in the town.

Fig 1: Location of Claremorris



CLAREMORRIS

Claremorris is classified as a 'Key Town' in the Mayo County Settlement Strategy which provides for the promotion and development of Key Towns for targeted population growth, building on its exiting strength and scale of development. Claremorris is the fourth largest town in Mayo with a population of 2595 persons in the Census of population 2006.

2.2 The Current Local Area Plan

The Claremorris Local Area Plan 2006² was adopted by Mayo County Council on the 13th February 2006. The LAP consists of a written statement and maps which set out the future development of the Town.

The Current LAP area consists of 757Ha of land zoned for particular uses. The LAP sets out a number of policies and objectives for the development of the town and zones lands for a number

² The Claremorris Local Area Plan 2006 is available to view online at <http://www.mayococo.ie/en/Planning/DevelopmentPlansLocalAreaPlansandStrategies/PlansforOtherTownsandVillages/Claremorris/>

of land uses. The following table gives a breakdown of the land use categories and the total area of land in hectares for each category.

Table 1: Claremorris Land Use Categories and Area

Land Use Category	Hectares
Residential (R1)	218
Residential (R2)	54
Town Centre / Commercial	31
Industry	31
Industry / Commercial	46
General Development	43
Recreation / Amenity	59
Community Facilities	27
Agriculture / Rural	215
Utility	11
Remaining Land Not Zoned (e.g. Roads, etc)	22
Local Area Plan Total	757

There is currently 272 Ha of lands zoned for residential development in Claremorris of which 132Ha are not developed. If all lands were developed with the current zoning densities this would yield an additional 6200 persons for the Town. The current zoning and locations of all lands zoned are shown on the following map.

2.3 The Purpose Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012 - 2018

The purpose of the proposed Claremorris Area Plan will be to provide a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town through the provision of policies and objectives. The LAP will be operated for a six year period from 2012 to 2018, unless amended. The LAP will aim to meet the needs of the Town and its population by maximising the best use of its resources, promoting its economic and social development whilst preserving the best of its natural and build environment. The LAP will consist of a written statement and maps which give a graphical representation of the proposals of the plan, which will include land use zoning.

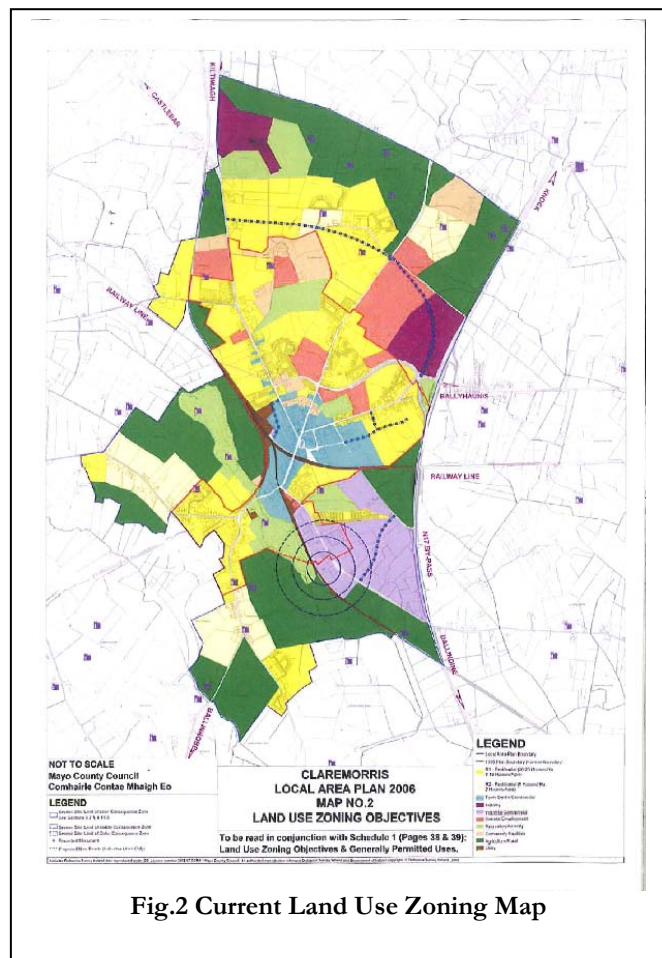


Fig.2 Current Land Use Zoning Map

3. DETERMINATION WHETHER THE PROPOSED CLAREMORRIS LOCAL AREA PLAN 2012-2018 IS LIKELY TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT.

3.1 Introduction

The criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment is set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004. Article 5(c) of the aforementioned regulations defines plan as “‘Plan’ for the purpose of Schedule 2A means, where the context requires, a development plan, a variation of a development plan, a local area plan (or an amendment thereto), regional planning guidelines or a planning scheme.” The assessment has been carried out in the order in which the criteria has been laid out in Schedule 2A.

3.2 The Characteristics of the Proposed LAP having regard, in particular, to:

3.2.1 The degree to which the proposed LAP sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources

The purpose of the proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018 is to provide a development framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town through the provision of policies and objectives. The LAP will aim to co-ordinate the reasonable needs and aspirations of the population of Claremorris by maximising the best use of its resources and promoting its economic and social development whilst preserving the Towns’ natural and built environment. The LAP consists of a written statement and maps which give a graphical representation of the proposals of the plan which would include land use zoning maps. The LAP will provide a detailed methodology for determining planning applications and will establish a basis for co-ordinating development through prescribed development standards, policies and objectives while protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.

The Current Claremorris Local Area Plan 2006 boundary covers an area of 757Ha. It is proposed to change the boundary of the Town and to examine the lands zoned within the town with the view of consolidating development, by developing a phasing programme for the release of lands based on a sequential approach. It is envisaged that the initial phasing of lands will satisfy the projected needs for the Town during the lifetime of the LAP, in accordance with population projections based on the national figures contained in the West Regional Planning Guidelines. Additional phasing of lands will only become available if a percentage, yet to be determined, of the previous phasing is completed and that there is an established need to release further phases of land for development. The initial phasing of lands will also meet the existing capacity of infrastructure for the Town and future phases will only become available if the capacity is available.

Due to the above development approach for the Town, it is anticipated that the proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018 is not likely to have significant effects on the environment.

3.2.2 The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy.

The proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018 will be informed by the hierarchy of national policy (National Spatial Strategy), regional (Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region) and local plans (Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014).

It is not anticipated that the plan will have a significant environmental effect of any other plans and it will only influence projects at a lower level such as master plans or any future development within the plan area.

3.2.3 The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.

The Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018 will be made in accordance with Sections 18-20 of the Planning and development Act 2000-2011. The LAP will be consistent with the objectives of the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014, which itself was subject to SEA. The LAP will ensure that all development in Claremorris will be carried out in a sustainable manner that is sympathetic to the existing character of the Town. The LAP will be consistent with environmental provisions of other plans, legislation and guidance documents. The policies and objectives of the LAP will aim to conserve and protect the key environmental features of the town through:

- the consolidation and integration of existing development, to prevent urban sprawl and to ensure that future growth and development take place in an orderly, rational and sustainable manner
- the encouragement of the use of more sustainable modes of transport within the town and improve pedestrian permeability through out the Town.
- the encouragement that all future development contributes to a high quality landscape environment for the Town
- the encouragement of sustainability through environmentally responsible architectural design by use of green building products and sustainable energy by use of for example solar, wind and rain harvesting.
- the creation of links between different areas of the town
- promoting environmental enhancement
- ensuring the adequate and rational zoning of lands to accommodate future growth and development
- facilitating the growth of Claremorris as an 'Eco-Town'

It is anticipated that the Plan will have no predicted significant effects on the environment assuming adequate infrastructure is in place to support the further development of the Town.

3.2.4 Environmental problems relevant to the plan

The initial analysis and appraisal of the key environmental issues for Claremorris are highlighted as follows:

Natural Heritage

The main area of concern within the Town Boundary is the areas around Clare Lough and Mayfield Lough. Under the current land use zoning these areas is zoned for recreation and amenity. It is proposed to examine this zoning objective to determine if it provides sufficient protection of these Loughs and to either rezone to a more protective objective or to strengthen the policies and objectives of the LAP to conservation value of these Loughs. There will be sufficient development standard incorporated into the proposed plan to ensure that adjoining land uses do not impact on the conservation value of these sites.

There are 3 Natura 2000 sites located within 10km of the Claremorris Town Boundary

- Carrowkeel Turlough SAC 4.6km from Town boundary
- Moy Complex SAC 6.6km from Town boundary
- Kilglassan / Caheravoostia Turlough SAC 9.2km from Town boundary

The only potential environmental impact that the LAP may have on the conservation of these sites relates to Sewerage Treatment for the Town. This aspect was examined when Mayo County

Council was granted a discharge license for the Claremorris Sewerage Treatment Plan and the environmental assessments concluded that there was no environmental impact from the Waste Water Treatment Plant in Claremorris.

The LAP 21 monuments listed on the Record of Monuments and Places and 11 building listed as protected structures. Policies and objectives of the proposed LAP will comply with National Legislation for the protection of such sites.

It is therefore anticipated that the proposed Local Area Plan for Claremorris will have no significant effects on the environment.

Flooding

Any lands currently zoned close to areas of historic flooding will be examined. A Flood Risk Assessment of Claremorris will be carried out as part of the LAP process and any areas identified as liable to flooding will be assessed in terms of the Flood Risk to these areas and will identify mitigation measures to ensure that any new development will not exacerbate the existing problems and prevent the recurrence of flooding.

Surface Water Quality

The aim of Mayo County Council is to have water quality within all the County as 'good status' by 2015. A monitoring programme is underway of all lake and river catchments in the County and Mayo County Council is working with the GSI in the preparation of Groundwater Protection Schemes. The proposed LAP will comply with all requirements of these plans when they become available and will detail development standards in accordance with the provisions set out in the Mayo County Development Plan for the protection of both surface and ground water sources.

Waste Water Disposal

The existing Claremorris Waste Water Sewerage network and treatment plant was upgraded and commissioned in 2000. The treatment plant has a design capacity population equivalent of 5333 PE. The population of Claremorris according to the 2006 Census is 2595 persons. The treatment plant is at near capacity at present but this includes the provision of 447 housing units that have been granted planning permission in the Town that have not yet commenced. Therefore there is adequate provision to meet the population requirements for the town over the Plan period (see zoning below). Mayo County Council will monitor the situation in relation to waste water collection and treatment for Claremorris and where the council considers existing infrastructure is inadequate to service the needs of any future development, such development may be considered premature. It is not anticipated that the capacity of the Waste Water treatment for Claremorris will be exceeded over the lifespan of the Plan and therefore have no significant effects on the environment.

Land Use Zoning

Residential:

Under the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2010 the Mayo County Development Plan was varied to incorporate a Core Strategy. The purpose of the Core Strategy is to provide a transparent evidence-based rationale for the amount of land proposed to be zoned for residential and allied mixed use zoning in the County. Using the population projections from the Regional Planning Guidelines the population for Claremorris for the plan period to 2018 is 3608 persons which equates to a requirement to provide for an additional 408 households. Sufficient residential zoned land will be provided to accommodate population growth over the plan period but flexibility will be required to consider that portions of such lands may not be released for development.

Therefore residential development demand over the Plan period will be to provide for an additional 408 Households. The Regional Planning Guidelines require that local authorities have regard to existing building stock numbers within their functional areas and to have regard to

vacancy rates in the preparation of Local Area Plans. Therefore, existing vacancy levels, unfinished estates and permitted but not yet commenced housing development have been taken into consideration in calculating levels of residential land for Claremorris.

In Claremorris, there is an estimated 200 vacant housing units; 231 housing units that have started and not yet complete or have not commenced construction; and 206 housing units that have currently planning permission but have not commenced development. Therefore the potential housing stock for Claremorris is 637 housing units and only 408 housing units are required for the plan period to 2018.

It is calculated that out of the 272Ha of lands zoned for residential development 132Ha is currently not developed. Taking the potential stock of housing it is estimated that 32 Ha of the undeveloped residentially zoned land will be required to meet the housing demand for Claremorris. Therefore 100Ha of residential lands are zoned in excess.

The following options are been considered for the proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan.

- **Phasing of Development**
Whereby the release of land for residential development will be carried out in a phased manner over a prolonged period when an appropriate percentage of the lands zoned for residential development have been completed. This percentage will be between 70% and 90% and dependent on the particular lands.
- **Re-zoning**
Will be considered on lands that the current use no longer applies or if the land use is not compatible with the area.
- **Discontinuing of the Zoning Objective**
Whereby the residential zoning is removed from the surplus lands

In all cases the lands zoned for residential development will such to meet the requirements of the Town and additional lands will only be considered if the demand for additional housing units can be adequately established and the required infrastructure is in place.

Retail:

Claremorris has largely retained its retail development within the town centre core which the exception of one large supermarket development and this has been located within 400m from the town centre-the distance recommended in the retail planning guidelines. The zoning for this particular development was 'General Development' which facilitated this supermarket development. It is proposed to re-examining the 'General Development' zoning objective and to determine if the land use is considered appropriate for its location.

The main retail function of the town is still within the town core, but it has become obvious from a land use survey that there is an increase in the vacant commercial premises in the town. The LAP will try to address this by examining the extent of the Town centre zoning provision with view to addressing this issue.

The zoning provisions of the proposed Plan will consolidate and integrate existing development; prevent urban sprawl and ensure that future growth and development takes place in an orderly, rational and sustainable manner. Therefore it is anticipated that the zoning provision for the proposed plan will have no significant effects on the environment.

3.2.5 The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)

Issues relating to European Legislation on the environment are provided for in the hierarchy of plans and guidelines that the proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018 must be consistent with, such as the National Spatial Strategy, regional Planning Guidelines; Flood Risk Assessment and the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014. Therefore the proposed LAP will be guided and informed by the relevant European Legislation on the environment.

3.3 Characteristics of the Effects and of the Area Likely to be Affected, having regard, in particular, to

3.3.1 The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects

The lands which will be the subject of the proposed LAP are currently zoned under the current Claremorris Local Area Plan. It is not proposed to increase the Town boundary for the proposed LAP, but to review and revise, if appropriate the existing zoning. The lifetime of the proposed LAP will be 6 years from the date of adoption and will be renewed every six years, unless amended. Implementing the Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018 will have an impact on the entire plan area, but this will happen on phased basis over the lifetime of the LAP. It is intended that the LAP will consolidate and integrate existing development; prevent urban sprawl and ensure that future growth and development takes place in an orderly, rational and sustainable manner. It is acknowledged that habitats and species may be lost as a direct result of development, but this will be limited with the implementation of the plans policies, objectives and development control standards. It is anticipated that the LAP will have no negative effects on the environment and will have a positive contribution to the Town, whilst protecting its natural and built environment.

3.3.2 The cumulative nature of the effects

It is considered that the implementation of the proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018 will not experience any unacceptable cumulative environmental effects as a result of the policies, objectives and development standards of the LAP. The LAP will zone land uses consistent with the sustainable development of the Town and will include policies for the protection of the natural and built environment.

3.3.3 The transboundary nature of effects

Claremorris is located centrally in Mayo under the jurisdiction of Mayo County Council. The LAP will be consistent with the policies and objectives of the Mayo County Development Plan, therefore no significant transboundary effects have been identified.

3.3.4 The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents.)

There is one site within the Town boundary that is subject to the European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations, 2000; S.I.476 of 2000. This is the Calor Gas Teo complex on the Ballindine road. In terms of risk to human health, the dangerous substance of principle concern is Liquefied Petroleum Gas, which is a liquefied flammable gas. Potential accident scenarios with off-site effects identified in relation to the LAP, involve bulk storage and transfer to/from road tankers that can give rise to explosion over pressure effects and thermal hazards. The Health and Safety Authority, pursuant to the above regulations and following consideration of the risks arising from the site, have submitted advice with a view to the provision of appropriate separation distances between the site and various types of land use. This advice will be included in the LAP in the form of policies; objectives and development standards so that the risk to human health will be at a minimum.

3.3.5 The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

The total area of the current Claremorris LAP is 757Ha. It is not proposed to increase the boundary of the Town for the proposed LAP. Claremorris had a population of 2595 persons in 2006. The estimated population in Claremorris for 2010 is 2955 persons. The estimated population for the period of the plan is 3608 persons. Therefore the estimated population increase from 2010 to 2018 is 653 persons. The estimated household requirement for the period

of the Plan (using a figure of 2.4 persons per household and adding a 50% headroom) equates to 408 household.

Therefore residential development demand over the Plan period will be to provide for an additional 408 Households. The Regional Planning Guidelines require that local authorities have regard to existing building stock numbers within their functional areas and to have regard to vacancy rates in the preparation of Local Area Plans. Therefore, existing vacancy levels, unfinished estates and permitted but not yet commenced housing development have been taken into consideration in calculating levels of residential land for Claremorris.

In Claremorris, there is an estimated 200 vacant housing units; 231 housing units that have started and not yet complete or have not commenced construction; and 206 housing units that have currently planning permission but have not commenced development. Therefore the potential housing stock for Claremorris is 637 housing units and only 408 housing units are required for the plan period to 2018.

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3.3.6 The values and vulnerability of the area likely to be effected due to:

a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

The main area of concern within the Town Boundary is the areas around Clare Lough and Mayfield Lough. Under the current land use zoning these areas is zoned for recreation and amenity. It is proposed to examine this zoning objective to determine if it provides sufficient protection of these Loughs and to either rezone to a more protective objective or to strengthen the policies and objectives of the LAP to conservation value of these Loughs. There will be sufficient development standard incorporated into the proposed plan to ensure that adjoining land uses do not impact on the conservation value of these sites.

There are 3 Natura 2000 sites located within 10km of the Claremorris Town Boundary

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The only potential environmental impact that the LAP may have on the conservation of these sites relates to Sewerage Treatment for the Town. This aspect was examined when Mayo County Council was granted a discharge license for the Claremorris Sewerage Treatment Plan and the environmental assessments concluded that there was no environmental impact from the Waste Water Treatment Plant in Claremorris.

The LAP area has 21 monuments listed on the Record of Monuments and Places and 11 building listed as protected structures. Policies and objectives of the proposed LAP will comply with National Legislation for the protection of such sites.

Policies and objectives to protect the area's natural and built heritage will be included in the Plan.

b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values

The policies and objectives to be contained within the proposed LAP will seek to reduce the overall impact of future development on the existing habitats and species, and the value of environmentally sensitive locations will not likely be adversely impacted upon.

c) intensive land use

Whilst the proposed LAP will not reduce the area of lands zoned within Claremorris, it will review the existing land uses with the view of reducing the amount of lands zoned for intensive uses particularly in relation to residential development. Therefore it is not considered that future development resulting from zoning would intensify land uses to such a degree that it would adversely impact on the existing natural and built heritage of Claremorris. In addition, the proposed plan provides policies; objectives and development standards that would seek to reduce any potential negative impacts of intensive land use within the town.

3.3.7 The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

Claremorris is located in Area L: South East Mayo Plains in the landscape appraisal for Co. Mayo. This area is a mosaic of high quality pasture with distinct paddocks divided by rock walls and well-maintained hedgerows. There are occasional pockets of transitional pasture and woodland scrub throughout the gently rolling drumlins. There are no landscape designations in or close to the Town of national; European or international status, but the policies, objectives and development control standards of the proposed plan will protect in limit the intrusion of development on the landscape character of the area.

4. INITIAL SCREENING DECISION

Having regard to Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, the planning authority to date considers that the proposed Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018 would not likely to have significant effects on the environment. However the planning authority invites the Environmental Authorities to make a submission/variation on the proposed LAP in order for the planning authority to make a final decision on whether or not the proposed LAP would likely to have significant effects on the environment taking into account relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 S.I. No. 436 of 2004 and any submissions or observations received in response to this notice attached and to this document.