

**Strategic Environmental Assessment
Screening Report**

for the

Proposed Variation No.5

of the

**Castlebar & Environs Development Plan
2008-2014**

In accordance with Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Article 13K of the Planning and Development Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations, 2004 (as amended)



Mayo County Council
May 2017

1. Introduction

Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 was adopted on 1st May 2008 and took effect from 29th June 2008. The plan, as adopted, addressed the proper planning and sustainable development of the county and will envisaged to operate for a period of six years from the date it came into force. The plan sets out a strategy and framework for the future development of the county and provides the overall policies and objectives of Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 with regard to the future of the county in addition to more detailed objectives and standards for development control.

The adopted plan underwent a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the SEA Directive (2001/42/EEC) and its transposed legislation Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011, (S.I. No.501 of 2011), amending the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004). The Directive requires Member States of the EU to assess the likely significantly environmental effects of plans and programmes prior to their adoption thus providing for the integration of strategic environmental considerations at an early stage of the decision making process.

The Environmental Report documenting the SEA concluded that, overall, the impact of implementation of many of the policies and objectives of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 would be positive for the environment.

Article 7 (13K) of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004) as amended by the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No.501 of 2011) states *“Where a planning authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan under section 13 of the Act, it shall, before giving notice under section 13(2) of the Act, consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A”*. The criteria against which this is required to be measured and screened is set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.

Under the provisions of Article 13K of the Regulations and following the appropriate consultation period, Mayo County Council is required to determine whether or not implementation of the proposed variation of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations and any submission or observation received from the environmental authorities.

Mayo County Council intends to initiate the procedures under Section 13 of the Planning & Development Acts(as amended) to vary Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 to:

- make provision for housing development on lands zoned as Residential Phase 2 in order to meet housing targets set out in the Core strategy of Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020

- make provision Regional Outdoor Training Facility for outdoor training programmes which is a necessary expansion to the existing Regional Training Facilities offered in Castlebar at Lisnakirka Castlebar by re-zoning land from 'Medium Density Residential Phase 3' to 'Community / Institutional'.
- make provision for social housing on lands at Lisnakirka by changing the phasing of these lands from 'Medium Density Residential Phase 3' to 'Medium Density Residential'.

2. Proposed Variation No.5 of the Castlebar Town & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014

The proposed wording of the Variation No.5 to Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 is:

“To amend the policy in Section 5.6 of Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 - Supply of Housing Land to provide for the development of Phase 2 residential lands and to re-zone certain lands at Lisnakirka from Residential ‘Medium Density Residential Phase 3’ to ‘Community/Institutional’ and from ‘Medium Density Residential Phase 3’ to ‘Medium Density Residential’ lands.

And will consist of:

- the rewording of the housing supply policy to read:

In order to meet the requirement of providing 2184 housing units for the extended period of the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan, the development of residential units on lands zoned Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Residential lands shall be considered as follows:

Phase 1 Residential Land

All land in Phase 1 shall be developed in compliance with their current zoning as indicated on the Map 1, Zoning / Objective Map and/or in compliance with the existing planning permission (where relevant). Revised proposals for appropriate development on these lands may be considered subject to the requirements of this plan

Phase 2 Residential Land

All land in Phase 2 shall be developed in compliance with their current zoning as indicated on the Map 1, Zoning / Objective Map. All residential development proposals will be considered subject to the requirements of this Plan.

Phase 3 Residential Land

Phase 3 residential lands comprises of all serviced residentially zoned land located along the urban fringe. Phase 3 residential lands shall not be considered for development until such time as 70% of the land in Phase 1 and Phase 2 has been fully developed. Single houses may be considered where it has been established that the lands in question are part of the overall family holding and that there are no other lands appropriately zoned within the Plan boundary for the development of a single house for the landowner's immediate family.

- Re-zoning of lands at Lisnakirka from 'Medium Density Residential Phase 3' to 'Community/Institutional' in order to facilitate a Regional Outdoor Training Facility for outdoor training programmes.
- Re-zoning of lands at Lisnakirka from 'Medium Density Residential Phase 3' to 'Medium Density Residential' to facilitate the provision of social housing.

The lands subject of the variation have already been zoned in the development plan and have already been subject to SEA which concluded that no significant environmental effects would be likely as a consequence of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 with reference to the relevant criteria of Schedule 2A of S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (as amended).

While the Proposed Variation would therefore appear to be very positive from the perspective of the environment, it is still necessary to identify any significant effects the proposed variation could have on the environment as a consequence of making the variation.

3. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

In accordance with Article 13K (1), Mayo County Council must consider whether or not the proposed variation as described in Section 2 will be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (as amended).

The following table illustrates how the Proposed Variation No.5 of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 has been assessed to determine whether or not it will be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (as amended).

Table 3.1 Determination of significant effects on the environment as a consequence of the proposed variation in accordance with Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations.

1. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to;
<i>- the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.</i>
The purpose of Variation No.5 to the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014 as proposed is to ensure that sufficient existing zoned land is available to allow Mayo County Council meet the population and housing targets set out in the West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and the Core Strategy of Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020. The variation will also provide for the re-zoning of certain lands at Lisnakirka to allow for social housing and a Regional Outdoor Training Facility.
The Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014 already provides for the development of residential land on a phased basis. The proposed variation will allow for residential development on

Phase 2 residential lands which currently cannot be released for development until at least 70% of Phase. 1 land has been developed. Phase 1 lands alone will not provide sufficient housing units to meet the housing target for Castlebar in 2020, therefore Phase 2 lands must be made available.

Given that the land is already zoned for residential development there are no additional adverse effects (significant, potential or uncertain) arising from Variation No. 5 that were not envisaged and mitigated by the SEA of the development plan. The SEA process for the development plan successfully facilitated the integration of mitigation into the plan in order to contribute towards the protection of the environment.

Positive effects arising from the release of zoned and serviced land (such as a reduced need to develop greenfield sites on the edge of the urban areas) have already been envisaged by the SEA of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment of Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 concluded that the plan sets out a framework for projects and other activities with regard to its location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources in a manner which would be consistent with best environmental practice and without causing significant effects on the environment.

Taking into account the above and the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, the Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

- the degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,

The proposed variation of the plan is envisaged to influence other plans and projects, in that it is a variation to a Statutory Development Plan and the policies and objectives of other development plans (ie Local Area Plans within the plan boundary) must be consistent with those of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2010-2016.

Taking into account the above, arising from the degree to which the plan and Proposed Variation No.5 influence other plans, the Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

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

Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 - to which Proposed Variation No.5 relates – has undergone SEA. This SEA process integrated environmental considerations into the plan and found that the plan contributes to environmental protection and management and sustainable development of the county.

Taking the above into account and having considered the constituent parts of the Proposed Variation No.5 it is considered that Proposed Variation No.5 is relevant for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development, Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

- environmental problems relevant to the plan.

Environmental problems arise where there is a conflict between current environmental conditions and legislative targets.

Through its provisions relating to environmental protection and management, the existing plan contributes towards ensuring that environmental conditions do not get worse and, where possible, it contributes towards their amelioration.

Taking the above into account and having considered the constituent parts of the Proposed Variation No.5 it is considered that Proposed Variation No.5 will contribute to the improvement of environmental problems relevant to the plan area. Therefore Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

- 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).

A number of policies and objectives in Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014 focus on the implementation of EU environmental legislation and the plan was prepared with strict adherence to the SEA and Habitats Directives and as such the plan, as a whole, contains policies, objectives and a framework which promote implementation of EU legislation including those relating to the waste management and the Water Framework Directive.

Proposed Variation No.5 relates to the land use sector which underwent SEA in the development plan process.

Taking the above into account and having considered the constituent parts of the Proposed Variation No.5 it is considered that Proposed Variation No.5 will not affect the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment, therefore Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to;

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.

The SEA undertaken on the development plan, as adopted, outlined the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected by the plan's implementation in terms of probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects.

The constituent parts of the Proposed Variation No.5 are legislative measures to give effect to a sustainable urban form as envisaged by the development plan itself therefore the characteristics of the effects of Proposed Variation No.5 in terms of probability, duration, frequency and reversibility will be the same as the adopted plan and are anticipated to be positive and of lengthy duration. In terms of reversibility and frequency, it is currently difficult to predict, but the effects, due to their positive nature should be regarded as beneficial for the environment therefore Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

- the cumulative nature of the effects.

The proposed variation, because it is not envisaged to contribute to significant adverse effects on the environment, is therefore not anticipated to result in cumulative effects, in combination with other plans and programmes. It is possible that some positive effects as a consequence of the variation will result in positive cumulative effects on the environment due to the likelihood of positive effects on environmental aspects including water, biodiversity flora and fauna, population and the interrelationship between a number of environmental elements.

Taking the above into account it is considered that Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

- the transboundary nature of the effects.

The SEA undertaken on the development plan as adopted, assessed trans-boundary effects on those towns located close to adjoining authorities. The constituent parts of the Proposed Variation No.5 are legislative measures to give effect to a sustainable urban form as envisaged by the development plan itself therefore the characteristics of the trans-boundary nature of the effects of Proposed Variation No.5 will be the same as the adopted plan.

Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

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

The SEA undertaken on the development plan as adopted, assessed risks to the environment and to human health. The constituent parts of the Proposed Variation No.5 are legislative measures to give effect to a sustainable urban form as envisaged by the development plan itself therefore the risks to the environment and to human health will be the same as the adopted plan.

Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

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

Proposed Variation No.5 applies to the areas of land use contained in Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014 therefore the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects of Proposed Variation No.5 will be the same as the development plan, as a result Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,

The plan area is considered to be of considerable value and vulnerable in terms of special natural characteristics and cultural heritage, and these features were considered in the SEA of the development plan as adopted. The constituent parts of the Proposed Variation No.5 are legislative measures to give effect to a sustainable urban form as envisaged by the development plan itself therefore the value and vulnerability of the plan in terms of area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage will remain the same as identified in the SEA of the development plan as adopted.

Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,

The SEA undertaken on the development plan, as adopted, identified that the plan would not result in outlined that environmental quality standards or limit values being exceeded.

The constituent parts of the Proposed Variation No.5 are legislative measures to give effect to a sustainable urban form as envisaged by the development plan itself therefore the proposed variation will not result in environmental quality standards or limit values being exceeded.

Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

(c) intensive land-use,

The SEA undertaken on the development plan, as adopted, identified that the plan would not result in the value and vulnerability of the area being affected by intensive land use.

The constituent parts of the Proposed Variation No.5 are legislative measures to give effect to a sustainable urban form as envisaged by the development plan itself therefore the proposed variation will not result in the value and vulnerability of the area being affected by intensive land use.

Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

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

Proposed Variation No.5 applies only to zoned land in urban areas and therefore will not have any effect on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

Proposed Variation No.5 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

4. Consultation

In accordance with Article 13K (3)(a) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004 (as amended), Mayo County Council gave notice to the prescribed environmental authorities indicating that a submission or observation on whether the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment could be made within a period of not less than three weeks from the date of notice.

During this period, two submissions were received from (a) the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on 12/05/2017 and (b) the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA) on 15/05/2017.

The EPA submission notes the position regarding an SEA determination and refers to the need to link the lands subject of the variation to appropriate critical service infrastructure to support further development and that the Variation should ensure that environmental sensitivities/vulnerabilities are taken into consideration. The submission notes that a commitment should be made to ensure that the relevant CFRAMS will be taken into account, and also that the requirements of the *Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* should also be reflected in the implementation of the Variation.

The submission states that the recommendations, key issues and challenges described within the recently published our latest ‘State of the Environment Report’ - *Ireland’s Environment 2016 – An Assessment (EPA, 2016)* should be taken into account where relevant and appropriate to the Plan area.

The submission concludes with a reminder of the obligation to make the SEA Determination available to the public on the council's website and to notify the Environmental Authorities consulted.

The DAHRRGA submission advises that Appropriate Assessment should be carried out before the SEA process is concluded as the AA Screening will determine whether SEA is required. The submission also reminds the council of its obligations under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 and the Habitats and Birds Directives.

The submission concludes with a reminder of the obligations for the record keeping for the SEA and AA Screening determinations.

5. Conclusion

It is concluded that, with reference to the relevant criteria of Schedule 2A of Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended), no significant environmental effects are likely as a consequence of the Proposed Variation No.5 to Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014.

Appendix 1

Map of Lands to be Re-zoned

