

Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination

under Regulation No. 4 of the European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025 (SI No. 456 of 2025) for:

Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Cavan County Development Plan, incorporating a Local Area Plan for Cavan Town, 2022-2028

This Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) determination regarding whether or not implementation of Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Cavan County Development Plan, incorporating a Local Area Plan for Cavan Town, 2022-2028 would be likely to have significant effects on the environment is being made under the above Regulations, taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2 of the above Regulations. These criteria are taken into account as follows:

PART 1

1. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to: 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

Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028, incorporating a Local Area Plan for Cavan Town, is being prepared by Cavan County Council. The basis of and the emerging content for the Variation is detailed in the accompanying "Summary of Emerging Content of Proposed Variation No. 1".

The focus of the Variation is to ensure the alignment of the County Development Plan with Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines 'NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines', which were published in response to the Revised National Planning Framework requirements on housing growth. Proposed Variation No. 1 will involve changes to both the written text of the Plan and land use zoning maps (Baillieborough, Ballyconnell, Ballyjamesduff, Belturbet, Cavan Town, Cootehill, Kingscourt, Mullagh and Virginia).

The Proposed Variation will be guided by the First Revision to the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region and the existing Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028.

2. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to: the degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy

The Proposed Variation will be guided by the First Revision to the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region and the existing Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028. The varied County Development Plan will provide the framework for decision-making and consent granting at project level and will guide any lower-tier plans and future proposals for land use developments and activities in County Cavan.

3. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to: the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development

The Proposed Variation will integrate environmental considerations with a view to continuing to promote sustainable development at county and local levels in Cavan.

4. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to: environmental problems relevant to the plan

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

It is intended that, through provisions relating to environmental protection and management, the Proposed Variation will contribute towards ensuring that environmental conditions do not get worse and, where possible, they contribute towards its amelioration.

Environmental challenges within County Cavan include those relating to: accommodating new populations and growth which ensuring the appropriate protection and management of the environment; fluvial flood risk; and achieving at least 'good status' under the European Water Framework Directive as various waterbodies draining and downstream of the county are identified not achieving *good* or *high status* as is the objective of the Water Framework Directive (for example: Lower Lough Macnean and Corglass lake are identified as being of *bad* status; stretches of various rivers, including the Moynalty, Mounnugent, Erne, Dromore, Cavan and Blackwater, are identified as being of *poor* status; and the Crom Castle groundwater body underlying some of the northern border areas within the County is identified as being of *poor* status).

5. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to: 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)

The Proposed Variation relates to the land use and town planning sector. The Proposed Variation will be consistent with EU and national legislation on the environment, including those relating to the waste management and the Water Framework Directive.

PART 2

1. 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 development of the Proposed Variation area will relate to a range of land use developments and activities that would be likely to, if unmitigated, significantly affect all environmental components; this would include positive and negative effects across the county and beyond. Such effects would encompass short term construction effects and longer-term operational effects. Effects could be mitigated by integrating measures relating to environmental protection and management into the Proposed Variation and by adhering to such provisions from the existing Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028.

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

There are two types of potential cumulative effects that would be likely to occur, namely:

- Potential intra-Plan cumulative effects - these would be likely to arise from the interactions between different types of potential environmental effects resulting from the Proposed Variation. Examples of interrelationships between environmental components that help determine such effects include those between: human health and water quality; human health and air quality; human health and flood risk; and ecology and water quality.
- Potential inter-Plan cumulative effects - these would be likely to arise when the effects of the implementation of Variation occur in combination with those of other plans, programmes, etc. such as the Development Plan and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

3. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to: the transboundary nature of the effects

Potential effects, such as those on water will extend beyond the Plan's boundary, however; significant environmental effects on another country are unlikely.

4. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to: the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)

Human health has the potential to be impacted upon by environmental vectors (i.e. environmental components such as air, water or soil through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings). Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise as a result of exposure to these vectors arising from incompatible adjacent land uses for example. There is historic and predictive evidence of fluvial flooding in various locations across the county.

5. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to: the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

The spatial extent of potential effects includes the Plan area and areas downstream. The population most likely to be affected would be the population of the Plan area.

The most recent Census 2022 has recorded a population of 81,704 persons for County Cavan.

6. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to: the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;

Protected sites within and adjacent to the county include those relating to:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) – Corratirrim SAC, Cuilcagh - Anierin Uplands SAC, Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally) SAC, River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, and Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC.
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs) - Lough Oughter SPA, Lough Sheelin SPA, River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA and Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA.
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) – Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough NHA and Slieve Rushen Bog NHA – and various pNHAs.
- Margaritifera Sensitive Areas
- Lough Oughter Ramsar Site.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), and possibly subsequent stages of assessment, will be undertaken on the Proposed Variation. On finalisation of the Screening for AA process, it may be determined that Stage 2 AA must be undertaken alongside the Variation. The SEA Directive (Article 3 para. 2) requires that SEA is carried out for certain plans and programmes that are being subject to Stage 2 AA.

There are many sites of significant archaeological interest in County Cavan, including: Clough Oughter Castle (from the medieval period, situated on an island on the Lough Oughter); and Kilmore Church (from the 6th century). There are hundreds of Recorded Monuments within the County including: round towers; high crosses; burial sites; ringforts; tower houses; fulacht fia; raths; court tombs; portal tombs; wedge tombs; cairns; earthworks; abbeys; and souterrains.

There are hundreds of entries to the Record of Protected Structures within the County. Similar to the general spatial spread of archaeological heritage, clusters of architectural heritage are indicated within and adjacent to the existing built-up footprint of the County's settlements and in rural areas. There are various Architectural Conservation Areas designated within the County, including: Farnham Street ACA (Cavan Town); Bridge Street ACA (Cavan Town); Lurgan Quarter (Virginia) ACA; Lower Market Street, Cootehill ACA; Kingscourt ACA; Mullagh ACA; Redhills ACA; The Diamond (Belturbet) ACA; Bawnboy ACA; The Lawn (Belturbet) ACA; Dowra ACA; Blacklion ACA; Kilnaleck ACA; Mounty Nugent ACA; Bailieborough ACA; and Butlersbridge ACA.

b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, and;

The current Water Framework Directive status of various waterbodies draining and downstream of the County are identified as being of *poor*, or *moderate*, not *good* or *high* as is the objective of the Water Framework Directive, for example: Lower Lough Macnean and Corglass lake are identified as being of *bad* status; stretches the various rivers, including the Moynalty, Mounnugent, Erne, Dromore, Cavan and Blackwater, are identified as being of *poor* status; and the Crom Castle groundwater body underlying some of the northern border areas within the County is identified as being of *poor* status.

Provisions contributing towards the Water Framework Directive's overall objective of good status are provided by the existing County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Proposed Variation will be consistent with these measures.

c) intensive land-use.

The Proposed Variation will provide for the relative intensive land use areas within some of County Cavan's settlements.

7. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to: the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status

Cavan has a diverse landscape, characterised by highlands in the east of the County, Cuilcagh-Anierin uplands in the north-west of the County and drumlin and lakelands throughout.

The County Cavan Landscape Character Assessment has identified five landscape character areas: Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands of West Cavan; The Lakelands; Lake Catchments of South Cavan; Drumlin Belt and Uplands of East Cavan; and Highlands of East Cavan. Cavan Town and Environs is designated within the "Lakelands Landscape Character Area".

County Cavan encompasses many sites and vantage points from which views over areas of great natural beauty, local landmarks, historic landscapes, adjoining Counties may be obtained. There are 17 Scenic Viewing Points and three Scenic Routes designated within County Cavan that offer attractive cross-sectional views and overall impressions of differing landscapes in the County. These Protected Views and Routes are considered when assessing planning applications.

There are 25 designated County Heritage Sites in Cavan - these sites are of important value to the built heritage of the landscape of Cavan.

Other Landscape designations within County Cavan include: six Riverside Amenity Areas and 17 Lakeside Amenity Areas.

With reference to the foregoing information, it is determined that the Proposed Variation may, if unmitigated, result in likely significant environmental effects and that SEA is required to be undertaken on Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028.



Signed on behalf of Cavan County Council

Date: 16th April 2026