

# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

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FOR THE

## PROPOSED VARIATION No. 1

TO THE

## ATHY TOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2012-2018

**for: Kildare County Council**

Áras Chill Dara  
Devoy Park  
Naas  
County Kildare



**by: CAAS Ltd.**

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**JULY 2016**

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# Section 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

## 1.1 Introduction

Kildare County Council has prepared Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018 under Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

As the Council has not determined that the Proposed Variation would be likely to have significant environmental effects, the Proposed Variation has to be screened for the need to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Screening is the process for deciding whether a particular plan - or variation to a plan -, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the requirement for SEA to be undertaken on Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018.

The Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018 was subject to full SEA and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA). These processes, throughout which the environmental authorities were consulted, facilitated the mitigation of potential environmental effects and the AA identified that the Plan would not affect the integrity of any European Sites (except as provided for by the Habitats Directive).

## 1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment Legislative Requirements

SEA is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme, or variation to a plan or programme, before a decision is made to adopt it. The SEA Directive<sup>1</sup> requires, inter alia, that SEA is undertaken for certain plans, programmes or variations to these.

Under 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. 201 of 2011)<sup>2</sup>, Kildare County Council is required to determine whether the Proposed Variation needs to be subject to SEA. Screening is the process for determining whether a particular plan - or variation to a plan -, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA<sup>3</sup>.

Such a determination is required to take account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A '*Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment*' of the SEA Regulations, as amended, and submissions or observations from relevant environmental authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27th June 2001, on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment

<sup>2</sup> Both sets of Regulations are collectively referred to as 'the Regulations' in this report.

<sup>3</sup> It is noted that the SEA Directive requires that SEA is undertaken where Stage 2 AA is being undertaken however the AA screening process undertaken on the Proposed Variation has found that Stage 2 AA is not necessary (see Section 2.2).

### 1.3 Reasons for the Proposed Variation

The reasons for the Proposed Variation are:

1. To provide clarity in relation to the specific intentions of Kildare County Council in relation to a Distributor Road for Athy.
2. To ensure consistency with the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 which the Council is also planning to vary<sup>4</sup>.

### 1.4 Consultations

As part of the screening process, environmental authorities<sup>5</sup> were notified that a submission or observation in relation to whether or not implementation of the Proposed Variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment may be made to the Council (a period of 3 weeks was allowed for the reply). In order to help facilitate the environmental authorities' response to this notice an earlier version of this SEA Screening Report accompanied the notice.

One submission was made (by the Environmental Protection Agency) in response to this notice which is detailed and responded to at Table 1.1 below.

**Table 1.1 Response to EPA SEA Screening Submissions**

Submission Text	Response
<p>SEA Determination</p> <p>We note your position with regard to the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Proposed Variation No. 1 (the Variation) to the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018 (the Plan). There is merit in including in an Appendix, some supporting background information on the selection of the preferred distributor route and related re-alignment considerations, in the context of further supporting the determination of no likely significant effects. It is also worth describing whether the route selection process for the distributor road, has taken into account the requirements of the EIA and Habitats Directives.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>An Executive Summary of the Athy Distributor Road Route Selection Report has been included at Appendix I.</p>
<p>Future Amendments to the Draft Plan</p> <p>Kildare County Council should determine whether or not any future proposed Variations would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. This assessment should take account of the SEA Regulations Schedule 2A Criteria (S.I. No. 436 of 2004).</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Environmental Authorities</p> <p>Under the SEA Regulations (S.I. No. 436 of 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011, notice should be given to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Minister for the Environment, Community &amp; Local Government</li> <li>• Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food, and the Minister for Communications Energy and Natural Resources, where it appears to the planning authority that the plan or programme, or modification of the plan or programme, might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment</li> <li>• where it appears to the competent authority that the plan or programme, or amendment to a plan or programme, might have significant effects in relation to the architectural heritage or to nature conservation, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs, and</li> <li>• any adjoining planning authority whose area is continuous to the area of a planning authority which prepared a draft plan, proposed variation or local area plan.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted – notice has already been provided to these authorities.</p>
<p>A copy of your decision regarding the determination should be made available for public inspection at your offices, local authority website and should also be notified to any Environmental Authorities already consulted.</p> <p>Should you have any queries or require further information in relation to the above please contact the undersigned. I would also be grateful if an acknowledgement of receipt of this submission could be sent electronically to the following address: sea@epa.ie.</p>	<p>Noted, the SEA Screening Report and associated Determination is being placed on public display with the Proposed Variation. Environmental authorities already consulted will be notified.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Proposed Variation No. 4 to the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 is also being subjected to SEA Screening and the findings of that screening have informed this SEA Screening for Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018

<sup>5</sup> The following authorities are being notified: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government; Environmental Protection Agency; Meath County Council; Offaly County Council; Laois County Council; Carlow County Council; Wicklow County Council; South Dublin County Council; and Fingal County Council.

## Section 2 SEA Screening

### 2.1 Introduction

The section examines whether each part of the Proposed Variation would be likely to have significant environmental effects (and thus would warrant the undertaking of Strategic Environmental Assessment).

This examination takes account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A '*Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment*' of the SEA Regulations, as amended, (see Section 2.4) and has been updated to take account of a submission made by an environmental authority during the SEA screening consultation process.

### 2.2 Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening is being undertaken on the Proposed Variation. AA is an impact assessment process concerning *Natura 2000*, or *European*, sites - these sites have been designated or proposed for designation by virtue of their ecological importance.

The Habitats Directive<sup>6</sup> requires, inter alia, that variations to plans undergo an AA process to establish the likely or potential effects arising from implementation of the Variation. If the effects are deemed to be *significant, potentially significant or uncertain* then the Variation must undergo Stage 2 AA.

The AA screening process undertaken on the Proposed Variation has found that Stage 2 AA is not necessary.

### 2.3 SEA Screening Analysis

Table 2.1 examines whether each part of the Proposed Variation would be likely to have significant environmental effects (and thus would warrant the undertaking of Strategic Environmental Assessment) and is supplemented by Table 2.2 which provides details on the potential environmental effects (if unmitigated), mitigating measures from the Plan.

The examination takes account relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A '*Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment*' of the SEA Regulations, as amended, (see Section 2.4) and has been updated to take account of a submission made by an environmental authority during the SEA screening consultation process.

The full range of environmental effects<sup>7</sup>, including cumulative effects are considered by this assessment.

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<sup>6</sup> Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

<sup>7</sup> These include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects

**Table 2.1 SEA Screening**

No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
1	Chapter 1 Introduction and Strategic Context	1.6 Appropriate Assessment	<b>Text</b> - In particular, provisions for transport infrastructure (i.e. The Southern and Northern Distributor Roads ) and a marina have the potential to significantly impact on the SAC	In particular, provisions for transport infrastructure and a marina have the potential to significantly impact on the SAC	SEA is not required.	This text provides context to Plan provisions/commentary and does not comprise Plan provisions. This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
2	Chapter 2 Core Strategy	2.5 Assessment of Future Growth Needs	<b>Text</b> - Ensure accessibility to the proposed new road infrastructure such as the Northern Distributor Route	Ensure accessibility to the proposed new road infrastructure	SEA is not required.	This text provides context to Plan provisions/commentary and does not comprise Plan provisions. This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
3	Chapter 2 Core Strategy	Map 2.1 Core Strategy	<b>Map</b> - Map 2.1 Core Strategy	Map Change 1 Remove Northern Distributor Road Study Area alignment and text from legend. 2. Change alignment of Athy Distributor Road to reflect emerging preferred route option 3. Amend legend on map from Southern Distributor Road to Indicative Alignment of Athy Distributor Road 4. Remove alignment of Distributor Road that curves towards the train station 5. Remove bridge crossings associated with town centre streets.	SEA is not required.	<p>Following a feasibility study and public consultation a preferred route option for the Athy Distributor Road has emerged. The New Town Centre Street and Northern Distributor Road are being removed from the Plan to provide clarity in relation to the specific intentions of Kildare County Council in relation to a Distributor Road for Athy. Some proposed town centre streets will be retained where deemed appropriate to open up backland areas in the southern town centre area for future development. No canal or river crossings are proposed. The selected route option was identified through the constraints and route selection studies as having a higher preference in terms of environment, economy and safety.</p> <p>The changes referred to by this amendment relate to the removal of provisions that were previously identified as having the potential result in significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated. The SEA and AA processes undertaken alongside the preparation of current Plan have ensured that such effects would be mitigated by various provisions integrated into the Plan, including those referenced on Table 2.2. The removal of potential adverse effects, if unmitigated, would not result in likely significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The provisions of the current Plan – including those relating to land use and transportation e.g. various provisions relating to rail, walking and cycling, buses – were identified by the SEA of the current Plan as, inter alia, contributing towards sustainable mobility and associated effects (including reducing emissions to air such as noise and greenhouse gas emissions).</p> <p>The 'Athy Distributor Road Route Selection Report' identifies that the construction of the Distributor Road to the south of Athy town centre would significantly reduce traffic flows on the N78 through the town. This would result in associated benefits, reducing emissions to air such as noise and greenhouse gas emissions. The Route Selection Report also identifies that if the Northern Distributor Road was also constructed (in addition to the preferred Distributor Road to the South of Athy), there would be an additional reduction in traffic flows on the</p>

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No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
						<p>N78 through the town, however the level of the additional reduction in traffic volumes would not justify the construction of a distributor road to the north. Consequently the removal of the Northern Distributor Road would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects, including effects relating to sustainable mobility (and associated interactions with noise and greenhouse gas emissions). An Executive Summary to the Athy Distributor Road Route Selection Report is provided at Appendix I.</p> <p>The insertion of the word "indicative" ahead of this legend entry clarifies the status of the Plan objective and any applications for development arising, which, as is the case with applications for development arising from all Plan objectives, would need to be further defined and detailed at project level, informed by a variety of planning and environmental requirements.</p> <p>The changes referred to by this amendment are not likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.</p>
4	Chapter 3 Economic Strategy	3.5 Factors influencing Future Economic Development II Infrastructure	<b>Text</b> - the Southern Distributor Road in Athy has been identified as a key infrastructural priority and its delivery is viewed as being essential for the future economic expansion of the town as well as the significant improvement of the accessibility and attractiveness of the town centre. The Northern Distributor Road is identified in this Plan as a longer term objective in order to further improve accessibility and economic development of the town	The Athy Distributor Road has been identified as a key infrastructural priority and its delivery is viewed as being essential for the future economic expansion of the town as well as the significant improvement of the accessibility and attractiveness of the town centre.	SEA is not required.	This text provides context to Plan provisions/commentary and does not comprise Plan provisions. This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
5	Chapter 3 Economic Strategy	Table 3.4: Location and Availability of Employment Land in Athy	<b>Text</b> - Along Southern Distributor Rd	Along Athy Distributor Rd	SEA is not required.	This text provides context to Plan provisions/commentary and does not comprise Plan provisions. This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.

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No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
6	Chapter 5 Town Centre	5.6 Movement, Access and the public realm	<b>Text</b> - This Plan also seeks to encourage the full or part pedestrianisation of parts of the town centre such as Emily Square during the plan period and the development of a pedestrian crossing over the River Barrow to the North of Cromaboo Bridge	This Plan also seeks to examine the feasibility of the full or part pedestrianisation of parts of the town centre such as Emily Square and to examine the feasibility of constructing a pedestrian crossing over the River Barrow as appropriate to link schools, parks, playing fields and residential areas on both sides of the river.	SEA is not required.	The current Plan – which has been subject to full SEA and Stage 2 AA – “seeks to encourage” pedestrianisation of parts of the town centre and the development of a pedestrian crossing over the River Barrow. Any development arising from the Plan would be required to be subject to compliance with environmental legislation and the various provisions that have been integrated into the Plan contributing towards environmental protection and management.  This change proposes to, inter alia, replace “seeks to encourage” with “seeks to examine the feasibility of”. This change would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
7	Chapter 5 Town Centre	5.6 Movement, Access and the public realm	<b>Text</b> - it is the policy of the Council: RP1: To provide pedestrian links from the nearby schools on the east and west of the River Barrow to recreational facilities and residential areas through the development of safe pedestrian routes and a pedestrian footbridge over the River Barrow	RP1: To examine the feasibility of providing a pedestrian / cycle crossing over the River Barrow as appropriate to link schools, parks, playing fields and residential areas on both sides of the river.	SEA is not required.	The policy of the current Plan – which has been subject to full SEA and Stage 2 AA – is “to provide” pedestrian links including a pedestrian footbridge over the River Barrow. Any development arising from this policy would be required to be subject to compliance with environmental legislation and the various provisions that have been integrated into the Plan contributing towards environmental protection and management.  This change proposes to, inter alia, replace “to provide” with “to examine the feasibility of providing”. This change would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
8	Chapter 5 Town Centre	5.7 Town Centre Objectives	<b>Text</b> - it is an objective of the Council: TC05 To construct a pedestrian crossing over the River Barrow as appropriate to link schools, parks, playing fields and residential areas on both sides of the river.	TC05: To examine the feasibility of constructing a pedestrian / cycle crossing over the River Barrow as appropriate to link schools, parks, playing fields and residential areas on both sides of the river.	SEA is not required.	The policy of the current Plan – which has been subject to full SEA and Stage 2 AA – is “to construct a pedestrian crossing over the River Barrow”. Any development arising from this policy would be required to be subject to compliance with environmental legislation and the various provisions that have been integrated into the Plan contributing towards environmental protection and management.  This change proposes to, inter alia, replace “to construct” with “to examine the feasibility of constructing”. This change would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
9	Chapter 5 Town Centre	Map Ref 5.1	<b>Map</b> - 5.1 Town Centre and Associated Zoning	amend map 1. remove alignment of to the train station 2. change legend to "indicative new roads objectives".	SEA is not required.	Following a feasibility study and public consultation a preferred route option for the Athy Distributor Road has emerged. The New Town Centre Street and Northern Distributor Road are being removed from the Plan to provide clarity in relation to the specific intentions of Kildare County Council in relation to a Distributor Road for Athy. Some proposed town centre streets will be retained where deemed appropriate to open up backland areas in the southern town centre area for future development. No canal or river crossings are proposed. The selected route option was identified through the constraints and route selection studies as having a higher preference in terms of environment, economy and safety.  The removal of the alignment to the train station was previously assessed as being part of the Southern Distributor Road as having the potential to result in significant adverse environmental effects, if



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No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
						<p>unmitigated. The SEA and AA processes undertaken alongside the preparation of current Plan have ensured that such effects would be mitigated by various provisions integrated into the Plan, including those referenced on Table 2.2. The removal of potential adverse effects, if unmitigated, for this part of the alignment would not result in likely significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The provisions of the current Plan – including those relating to land use and transportation e.g. various provisions relating to rail, walking and cycling, buses – were identified by the SEA of the current Plan as, inter alia, contributing towards sustainable mobility and associated effects (including reducing emissions to air such as noise and greenhouse gas emissions).</p> <p>The insertion of the word “indicative” ahead of this legend entry clarifies the status of the Plan objective and any applications for development arising, which, as is the case with applications for development arising from all Plan objectives, would need to be further defined and detailed at project level, informed by a variety of planning and environmental requirements.</p> <p>The changes referred to by this amendment are not likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.</p>
10	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.4.3 Walking and Cycling	<b>Text</b> - The development of the Southern and Northern Distributor Roads and the New Town Centre Street will provide major opportunities to develop pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in the town centre. This may provide the opportunity to develop a one-way system which would offer the potential to reallocate road space to footpaths and dedicated cyclist facilities.	This Plan seeks to promote pedestrian and cycle priority in parts of the town centre, such as the area in the vicinity of Emily Square, during the plan period and to examine the feasibility of constructing a pedestrian crossing over the River Barrow as appropriate to link schools, parks, playing fields and residential areas on both side of the River.	SEA is not required.	This text provides context to Plan provisions/commentary and does not comprise Plan provisions. This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
11	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.5.1 Southern Distributor Road	<b>Text</b> - 3 paragraphs describing the Southern Distributor Road Route	Delete the last paragraph referring to AA	SEA is not required.	This text provides context to Plan provisions/commentary and does not comprise Plan provisions. This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
12	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.5.2 Northern Distributor Road (NDR)	<b>Text</b> - 4 paragraphs of text relating to the Northern Distributor Road	Delete section 7.5.2 Northern Distributor Road (NDR)	SEA is not required.	Following a feasibility study and public consultation a preferred route option for the Athy Distributor Road has emerged. The New Town Centre Street and Northern Distributor Road are being removed from the Plan to provide clarity in relation to the specific intentions of Kildare County Council in relation to a Distributor Road for Athy. Some proposed town centre streets will be retained where deemed appropriate to open up backland areas in the southern town centre area for future development. No canal or river crossings are

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No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
						<p>proposed. The selected route option was identified through the constraints and route selection studies as having a higher preference in terms of environment, economy and safety.</p> <p>The changes referred to by this amendment relate to the removal of the Northern Distributor Road that was previously identified as having the potential result in significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated. The SEA and AA processes undertaken alongside the preparation of current Plan have ensured that such effects would be mitigated by various provisions integrated into the Plan, including those referenced on Table 2.2. The removal of potential adverse effects, if unmitigated, would not result in likely significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The provisions of the current Plan – including those relating to land use and transportation e.g. various provisions relating to rail, walking and cycling, buses – were identified by the SEA of the current Plan as, inter alia, contributing towards sustainable mobility and associated effects (including reducing emissions to air such as noise and greenhouse gas emissions).</p> <p>The 'Athy Distributor Road Route Selection Report' identifies that the construction of the Distributor Road to the south of Athy town centre would significantly reduce traffic flows on the N78 through the town. This would result in associated benefits, reducing emissions to air such as noise and greenhouse gas emissions. The Route Selection Report also identifies that if the Northern Distributor Road was also constructed (in addition to the preferred Distributer Road to the South of Athy), there would be an additional reduction in traffic flows on the N78 through the town, however the level of the additional reduction in traffic volumes would not justify the construction of a distributor road to the north. Consequently the removal of the Northern Distributor Road would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects, including effects relating to sustainable mobility (and associated interactions with noise and greenhouse gas emissions). An Executive Summary to the Athy Distributor Road Route Selection Report is provided at Appendix I.</p> <p>The changes referred to by this amendment are not likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.</p>

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No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
13	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.5.3 New Town Centre Street	<b>Text</b> - 5 paragraphs of text relating New Town Centre Street	7.5.3 New Town Centre Streets A number of new town centre streets are proposed to provide access to "opportunity sites" in the southern town centre area. Indicative routes are shown from St. Michael's Terrace to Emily Square; from the River Barrow to the Grand Canal (via Dominican site); and from the Grand Canal to Upper William Street (via Tegral site). While the delivery of these streets is unlikely to be achieved in the short to medium term, the Council will seek to preserve the indicative routes free from development to protect the viability of these routes and to promote the coordinated development of these backland areas in the longer term.	SEA is not required.	<p>Following a feasibility study and public consultation a preferred route option for the Athy Distributor Road has emerged. The New Town Centre Street and Northern Distributor Road are being removed from the Plan to provide clarity in relation to the specific intentions of Kildare County Council in relation to a Distributor Road for Athy. Some proposed town centre streets will be retained where deemed appropriate to open up backland areas in the southern town centre area for future development. No canal or river crossings are proposed. The selected route option was identified through the constraints and route selection studies as having a higher preference in terms of environment, economy and safety.</p> <p>The changes referred to by this amendment relate to the removal of the New Town Centre Street that was previously identified as having the potential result in significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated. The SEA and AA processes undertaken alongside the preparation of current Plan have ensured that such effects would be mitigated by various provisions integrated into the Plan, including those referenced on Table 2.2. The removal of potential adverse effects, if unmitigated, would not result in likely significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The provisions of the current Plan – including those relating to land use and transportation e.g. various provisions relating to rail, walking and cycling, buses – were identified by the SEA of the current Plan as, inter alia, contributing towards sustainable mobility and associated effects (including reducing emissions to air such as noise and greenhouse gas emissions).</p> <p>This amendment provides for the retention of proposed town centre streets which would open up backland areas in the southern town centre area for future development, thereby ensuring that the Plan retains this contribution towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility and maximise the sustainable reuse of brownfield lands.</p> <p>The changes referred to by this amendment are not likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.</p>
14	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.5.4 Distributor / relief Roads	<b>Text</b> – Policy DR3: To continue the development of proposed distributor / relief roads namely the Northern and Southern roads	<b>Policy</b> DR3 To continue the development of the proposed distributor road namely the Athy Distributor Road	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 12.
15	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.7.2 Sustainable Travel	<b>Text</b> - Objective ST05 To investigate the pedestrianisation of certain town centre routes once the New Town Centre Street is constructed	<b>Objective</b> ST05 To examine the feasibility of the pedestrianisation of certain town centre routes.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.

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No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
16	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.7.2 Sustainable Travel	<b>Text</b> - Objective ST06 To construct a pedestrian bridge over the River Barrow as appropriate to link schools, parks, playing fields and residential areas on both sides of the river, thereby providing safer routes to school. This bridge will be constructed to the specifications of all statutory bodies.	<b>Objective</b> ST06 To examine the feasibility of a pedestrian bridge over the River Barrow as appropriate to link schools, parks, playing fields and residential areas on both sides of the river, thereby providing safer routes to school. Any bridge would have to be constructed to the specifications of all statutory bodies.	SEA is not required.	The objective of the current Plan – which has been subject to full SEA and Stage 2 AA – is “to construct” a pedestrian bridge over the River Barrow. Any development arising from this policy would be required to be subject to compliance with environmental legislation and the various provisions that have been integrated into the Plan contributing towards environmental protection and management.  This change proposes to, inter alia, replace “to construct” with “to examine the feasibility of”. This change would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
17	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.7.3 Roads Programme	<b>Text</b> - Policy RP1: To construct a Southern distributor road including a proposed link from this route to the town centre via the train station and to preserve these routes free from development. This is a priority objective of this plan. (Refer to Land Use Zoning Map 16.1)	<b>Policy</b> RP1: To construct the Athy distributor road and to preserve this route free from development. This is a priority objective of this plan. (Refer to Land Use Zoning Map 16.1)	SEA is not required.	This amendment changes a title from ‘Southern Distributor Road’ to ‘Athy Distributor Road’ (see also SEA Screening Determination Explanation under Amendment 12). This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.  It also removes reference to the proposed link to the train station - this amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects (see explanation under Amendment No. 13).
18	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.7.3 Roads Programme	<b>Text</b> - Policy RP2: To support the construction of a Northern Distributor Road and until such time as construction commences to preserve the route free from development	delete	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 12.
19	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.7.3 Roads Programme	<b>Text</b> - Policy RP3: That following completion of the Detailed Design and Appropriate Assessment for the Northern Distributor Road (NDR), the proposed land take, indicated on map No 16.1 be amended to coincide with the proposed land take for the NDR.	delete	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 12.
20	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.7.3 Roads Programme	<b>Text</b> - Policy RP4: To support the construction of the New Town Centre Street and to co-operate with Kildare County Council in acquiring land to facilitate its construction. The design of the proposed New Town Centre Street and bridge crossing shall have regard to the potential impact on Emily Square and adjoining lands.	<b>Policy</b> RP4: To support the construction of new town centre streets and acquire land to facilitate construction.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.

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No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
21	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.7.3 Roads Programme	<b>Text</b> - Policy RP15: To prepare the preliminary design of the Northern Distributor Road within 21 months from the day of the adoption of this Plan.	delete	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 12.
22	Chapter 11 Recreation and Amenity	11.5 Parks and Open Spaces	<b>Text</b> - The provision of a new footbridge across the Barrow at this point will further increase accessibility to these services. (reference is to the North of the town)	Text Change - The feasibility of providing a new footbridge across the River Barrow at this point to increase accessibility to services will be examined.	SEA is not required.	This text provides context to Plan provisions/commentary and does not comprise Plan provisions. This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
23	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.5.4 Regularise Traffic	<b>Text</b> - The Proposed Southern Distributor Road will remove significant levels of the through traffic from the town centre.	<b>Text</b> - The Proposed Athy Distributor Road will remove significant levels of the through traffic from the town centre.	SEA is not required.	This amendment changes a title from 'Southern Distributor Road' to 'Athy Distributor Road' (see also SEA Screening Determination Explanation under Amendment 12). This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
24	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.5.5 Formalise Entrances and Approaches to the Town Centre	<b>Text</b> - The Western Approach - Create a new approach to the town at the Tegral Site at the junction of the proposed New Town Street (Inner Relief Street) and the Kilkenny Road. A key building should signify this important entrance to the town.	Text - The Western Approach Create a new approach to the town at the Tegral Site at the junction of the proposed new street and the Kilkenny Road. A key building should signify this important entrance to the town.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
25	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	Figure 14.1 Western Approach	<b>Map</b> - Figure 14.1 Western Approach	Amend 14.1 to omit Canal Bridge.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
26	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.5.5 Formalise Entrances and Approaches to the Town Centre	<b>Text</b> - The Eastern Approach - Transform Leinster Street at the Junction with Church Road into a boulevard and create a new public space with a key building at the junction of the proposed New Town Street and Leinster Street.	Text - Create a new public space with a key building at the junction of the proposed new street and Leinster Street.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
27	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	Figure 14.3 Urban Design Framework	<b>Map</b> - Figure 14.3 Urban Design Framework	Amend to omit bridges / crossings of Canal and River	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
28	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.7.1 Town Core Study Area Design Objectives	<b>Text</b> - In order to increase permeability and to provide relief to the traffic congestion experienced through the town, it is proposed to development a new town street to the south of Leinster Street. This	Text - It is proposed to develop a new street to the south of Leinster Street. This street provides an opportunity to maximise the potential of extensive backland opportunity sites to the south of	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.

SEA Screening Report for Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018

No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
			street provides an opportunity to maximise the potential of extensive backland opportunity sites to the south of Leinster Street.	Leinster Street.		
29	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.7.1 Town Core Study Area Design Objectives	<b>Text</b> - It is proposed that the New Town Street will link to Emily Square.	Text - It is proposed that the New Street will link to Emily Square.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
30	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.7.1 Town Core Study Area Design Objectives	<b>Text</b> - Development along the New Town Street should complement and add to the existing town core providing a successful urban centre with a concentration and variety of uses.	Text - Development along the New Street should complement and add to the existing town core providing a successful urban centre with a concentration and variety of uses.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
31	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.6.1 Town Core Character Area	<b>Text</b> - In order to overcome the barrier of the river and increase permeability within the town centre it is proposed that a new vehicular bridge will link Emily Square to the access road at the Dominican Church and the backlands to the south of Duke Street.	Omit following text from this section only "In order to overcome the barrier of the river and increase permeability within the town centre it is proposed that a new vehicular bridge will link Emily Square to the access road at the Dominican Church and the backlands to the south of Duke Street."	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
32	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.6.1 Town Core Character Area	<b>Map</b> - Figure 14.6 Town Core Character Area	Amend Figure 14.6 to omit proposed bridge crossing.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
33	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	Figure 14.7 The Abbey Character Area	<b>Map</b> - Figure 14.7 The Abbey Character Area	Amend Figure 14.7 to omit proposed bridge crossing.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
34	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.6.3 Dominican Lands Character Area	<b>Text</b> - Design Objectives - In order to increase permeability and to provide relief to the traffic congestion through the town, it is proposed to link the existing access road to the Dominican church with the new vehicular bridge. An opportunity therefore exists to transform this access road into a bustling urban street within the town core by improving the quality of the public realm, in particular	delete this paragraph	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.

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No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
			the existing connections and linkages to Duke Street and Emily Square.			
35	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	Table 14.3 Key Design Guidelines	<b>Text in Table 14.3</b> - Overcome the natural barrier to the River Barrow by providing new connections between the character area and Emily Square	Delete bullet point from Table 14.3.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
36	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	Figure 14.8 The Dominican Lands Character Area	<b>Map</b> - Figure 14.8 The Dominican Lands Character Area	Amend map to omit bridge crossings.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
37	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	14.6.4 Edmund Rice Square Character Area	<b>Text</b> - Design Objectives - It is proposed to provide a new pedestrian bridge linking the park and residential area with the schools to the east of the river.	Amend as follows: Text - Design Objectives - It is proposed to investigate the feasibility of constructing a new pedestrian bridge linking the park and residential area with the schools to the east of the river.	SEA is not required.	The objective of the current Plan – which has been subject to full SEA and Stage 2 AA – is “to provide a new pedestrian bridge” over the River Barrow. Any development arising from this policy would be required to be subject to compliance with environmental legislation and the various provisions that have been integrated into the Plan contributing towards environmental protection and management.  This change proposes to, inter alia, replace “to provide a new pedestrian bridge” with “to examine the feasibility of constructing a new pedestrian bridge”. This change would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
38	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	Figure 14.9 Edmund Rice Square Character Area	<b>Map</b> - Figure 14.9 Edmund Rice Character Area	Amend map to omit bridge crossings.	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
39	Chapter 14 Urban Design and Opportunity Areas	Table 14.4 Key Design Guidelines	<b>Text</b> • overcome the natural barrier of the River Barrow by providing new connections between the character area and Emily Square.	Delete this bullet point from Table 14.4		See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
40	Chapter 16 Land use Zoning	Ref H2 Industrial and Warehousing	<b>Text</b> - reference as follows: Lands located to the north and south of the Southern Distributor Road	Lands located to the north and south of the Athy Distributor Road	SEA is not required.	This amendment changes a title from ‘Southern Distributor Road’ to ‘Athy Distributor Road’ (see also SEA Screening Determination Explanation under Amendment 12). This amendment would not be likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects.
41	Chapter 16 Land use Zoning	Map 16.1 Land Use Zoning Map	<b>Map</b> 16.1 Land Use Zoning Map	Map Change 1 Remove Northern Distributor Road Study Area alignment and text from legend. 2. Change alignment of Athy Distributor Road to reflect emerging preferred route option 3. Amend legend on map from	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 3.

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No.	Chapter of Plan	Section of Plan	Existing Plan Content	Proposed Amendment	SEA Screening Determination	SEA Screening Determination Explanation
				"New Roads Objectives" to "Indicative new Road Objective" 4. Remove from the map the alignment of Distributor Road that curves towards the train station 5. remove bridge crossings associated with town centre streets		
42	Chapter 13 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	Table 13.1	<b>Text</b> - VP2 Views of the River Barrow upstream and downstream from the proposed New Town Street bridge	Delete VP2	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
43	Chapter 13 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	Map 13.1	<b>Map</b> - Map 13.1	Amend map by removing the following text from the table on the map "VP2 Views of the River Barrow upstream and downstream from the proposed New Town Street bridge" 2. amend the views and prospect symbol from the map 13.1 at the location of the town centre street	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 13.
44	Chapter 11 Recreation and Amenity	Section 11.4 Amenity	<b>Text</b> - Policy A7: To facilitate, where practicable, the provision of cycle-ways or walkways along the extent of the canal, in co-operation with landowners, Waterways Ireland and government departments. Any proposed cycling or walking routes along the Grand Canal and River Barrow will be subject to a feasibility study and Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.	A7: To facilitate, where practicable, the provision of cycle-ways or walkways along the extent of the canal, in co-operation with landowners, Waterways Ireland and government departments. Any proposed cycling or walking routes along / across the Grand Canal and River Barrow will be subject to a feasibility study and Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.	SEA is not required.	This change extends the requirement to undertake a 'feasibility study' to any proposed walking or cycling routes 'across' as well as along the Grand Canal and River Barrow. Note that the requirement to undertake Appropriate Assessment of these projects is already provided for under Policy NH6 of the current Plan.
45	Chapter 7 Movement and Transport	7.7.1 General Movement and Transport objectives	<b>Text</b> - Objective - GO1: To implement the recommendations of the Athy Traffic Management Plan, including the environmental and traffic management improvements	Delete Objective	SEA is not required.	See SEA screening determination explanation under Amendment No. 3.



**Table 2.2 Summary of current Plan potential environmental effects, if unmitigated, and associated mitigation measures**

<b>Environmental Components</b>	<b>Likely Significant Effect, if unmitigated</b>	<b>Mitigation Measure Reference(s) from the Plan, including</b>
Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna	Loss of biodiversity with regard to Natura 2000 Sites and habitats and species listed under Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive	Policies: CS 14, GT 15, NH 1, NH 2, NH 6, and NH 7 and NH9. Objective NHO 7.
	Loss of biodiversity with regard to ecological connectivity and stepping stones	Policies: CS 13, NH 12 and NH 21. Objective NHO 8.
Population and Human Health	Spatially concentrated deterioration in human health arising from exposure to incompatible land uses	Policies: MA1, N 1, N 2 and WM 5. Objective ENO 4. See also measures which have been included under Water Services (Waste Water) and Water Services (Drinking Water).
Soil	Failure to maximise the sustainable reuse of brownfield lands	Policies: CS 8, EDP6, HP6, UR 1 and UR 2.
Water	Adverse impacts upon the status of surface and ground water bodies	Policies: WQ 1, WQ2, WQ 4 and WQ6. Objective: WDO4. Also see measures in this section under Water Services (Waste Water).
	Flooding	Policies: HP28, SW1, SW3 and LU4. Objectives: WDO13 and WDO14.
Material Assets	Inadequate waste water treatment for new populations	Policies WW3, WW4, WW5 and WS1. Objectives: WDO2, WDO3 and WDO8.
	Inadequate drinking water supply for new populations & Reduction in water quality which would present a potential danger to human health	Policies: WS1, WS2, WS3, WS4, WS6, WS10, WS12 and WQ7. Objective: WDO5.
Air and Climatic Factors	Increases in travel related greenhouse gas emissions and increases in car dependency	Policies: TM 3, WC 1, WC 4 and WC 7.
Cultural Heritage	Effects on archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, including Zones of Archaeological Potential	Policies: CS 12, AH1, AH 3, AH 4 and AH 6.
	Effects on architectural heritage including entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas	Policies: CS 12, PS 1, PS 7 and ACA1. Objective AHO1.
Landscape	Visual impacts	Policies: TE 5, VP 1 and VP 2.

## 2.4 Schedule 2A

### 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***

Following a feasibility study and public consultation a preferred route option for the Athy Distributor Road has emerged.

The reasons for the Proposed Variation are:

- To provide clarity in relation to the specific intentions of Kildare County Council in relation to a Distributor Road for Athy; and
- To ensure consistency with the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 which the Council is also planning to vary<sup>8</sup>.

The New Town Centre Street and Northern Distributor Road are being removed from the Plan. Some proposed town centre streets will be retained where deemed appropriate to open up backland areas in the southern town centre area for future development. No canal or river crossings are proposed. The selected route option was identified through the constraints and route selection studies as having a higher preference in terms of environment, economy and safety.

Taking the above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3 into account, arising from the degree to which the Plan and associated Proposed Variation sets a framework for projects and other activities, the Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

#### **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***

One of the reasons for the Proposed Variation is to ensure consistency with the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 which the Council is also planning to vary.

Proposed Variation No. 4 to the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 is also being subjected to SEA Screening and the findings of that screening have informed this SEA Screening for Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018.

The findings of the SEA Screening of Proposed Variation No. 4 to the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 is that Proposed Variation No. 4 would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects and consequently SEA is not required.

Taking the above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3 into account, arising from the degree to which the Plan and Proposed Variation influence other plans, the Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

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<sup>8</sup> Proposed Variation No. 4 to the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 is also being subjected to SEA Screening and the findings of that screening have informed this SEA Screening for Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018

**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 Athy Town Development Plan - to which the Proposed Variation relates - has undergone SEA. This process integrated environmental considerations into the Plan and found that the Plan contributes to environmental protection and management and sustainable development.

Taking the above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3 into account, arising from the relevance of the Plan and Proposed Variation for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development, the Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

**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.

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 its amelioration.

Taking the above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3 into account, arising from environmental problems relevant to the Plan and Proposed Variation, the Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

**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 Plan relates to the land use sector and has undergone SEA. This process integrated considerations with regard to EU and national legislation on the environment into the Plan, including those relating to the waste management and the Water Framework Directive.

Taking the above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3 into account, arising from the relevance of the Plan and Proposed Variation for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment, the Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

**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 Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects (see responses under Schedule 2A Part 1 above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3).

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

The Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects (see responses under Schedule 2A Part 1 above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3).

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

The Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects (see responses under Schedule 2A Part 1 above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3).

**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)**

The Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects (see responses under Schedule 2A Part 1 above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3).

**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 Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects (see responses under Schedule 2A Part 1 above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3).

**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;**

The Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects (see responses under Schedule 2A Part 1 above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3).

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

The Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects (see responses under Schedule 2A Part 1 above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3).

**c) intensive land-use.**

The Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects (see responses under Schedule 2A Part 1 above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3).

**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**

The Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects (see responses under Schedule 2A Part 1 above and the examination of the various parts of the Proposed Variation provided under Section 2.3).

## **Section 3 Conclusion**

Screening is the process for deciding whether a particular plan - or variation to a plan -, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA. The purpose of the report is to evaluate the requirement for SEA to be undertaken on Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018.

The SEA screening process that has been undertaken and documented in this report has found that the Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

An earlier, draft version of this SEA Screening Report has been updated to take account of a submission made by an environmental authority during the SEA screening consultation process.

This report is accompanied by an SEA Screening Determination.

# **Appendix I: Athy Distributor Road Route Selection Report Executive Summary**

## **0. Executive Summary**

### **0.1 Introduction**

The town of Athy is located in south Co. Kildare, adjacent to the Co. Laois border. The town of Athy is situated on the N78 National Secondary Road (Kilkenny Road) and is intersected by the R428 (Stradbally Road), the R417 (Monasterevin / Carlow Road) and the R418 (Kilcullen / Castledermot Road) regional roads.

The River Barrow, Grand Canal and Dublin to Waterford railway traverse Athy in a north/south direction, all providing a linear constraints restricting development of Athy.

The single crossings of these constraints require the majority of traffic to travel through Athy town centre. Existing alternative routes crossing these constraints are available only on the local road network 4km north and 6km south of Athy. The N78 Main Street has a 6m wide carriageway, narrowing locally to 5m in places, with generally narrow footpaths and no provision for cyclists. Traffic volumes reach 15400 vehicles per day at the single crossing of the River Barrow, which is a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC). This concentration of traffic results in journey times in excess of 50% above freeflow conditions, resulting in traffic taking long diversions along poor quality local rural roads to utilise the next available river crossing. Road safety is a particular concern with a total of 80 accidents in the Athy area in the period 2005-2012, resulting in 116 casualties. Of these a high proportion are pedestrian related.

### **0.2 Scheme Background**

The focus of traffic onto the narrow N78 Main Street through the town centre has been the subject of a number of proposals to relieve traffic congestion since the mid 1970's. These various proposals are all reflected in the current Athy Town Development Plan and Kildare County Development Plan. The need to address urban congestion is an objective of all Regional and National planning policy. Recognising the constrained economic environment and the potential for the cumulative impacts, if unmitigated, of multiple crossings of the River Barrow cSAC, Roughan & O'Donovan – AECOM Alliance were appointed in 2015 to undertake studies with an objective to identify a cost effective solution that would provide the necessary relief to congestion on the main street, whilst obviating the need for more than one new crossing of the River Barrow cSAC.

### **0.3 Traffic Studies**

Extensive traffic surveys were undertaken to inform the development of a robust local area traffic model of the town and its connections into Transport Infrastructure Ireland's (TII) National Traffic Model. This demonstrated that while the N78 carries a proportion of through traffic, a large proportion of the traffic in Athy is associated with local movements into and around the town. The model provided a tool with which to test the traffic and economic benefits of potential solutions.

### **0.4 Constraints Study and Route Options**

A Constraints Study of the full extents of the Athy Town Development Plan was undertaken to inform the development of numerous potentially feasible route options. These options included all of the previous proposals contained in the development plans, with the exception of the Inner Relief Street. The Inner Relief Street was rejected by An Bord Pleanála in 2004 on the basis that *"...it is considered that the*

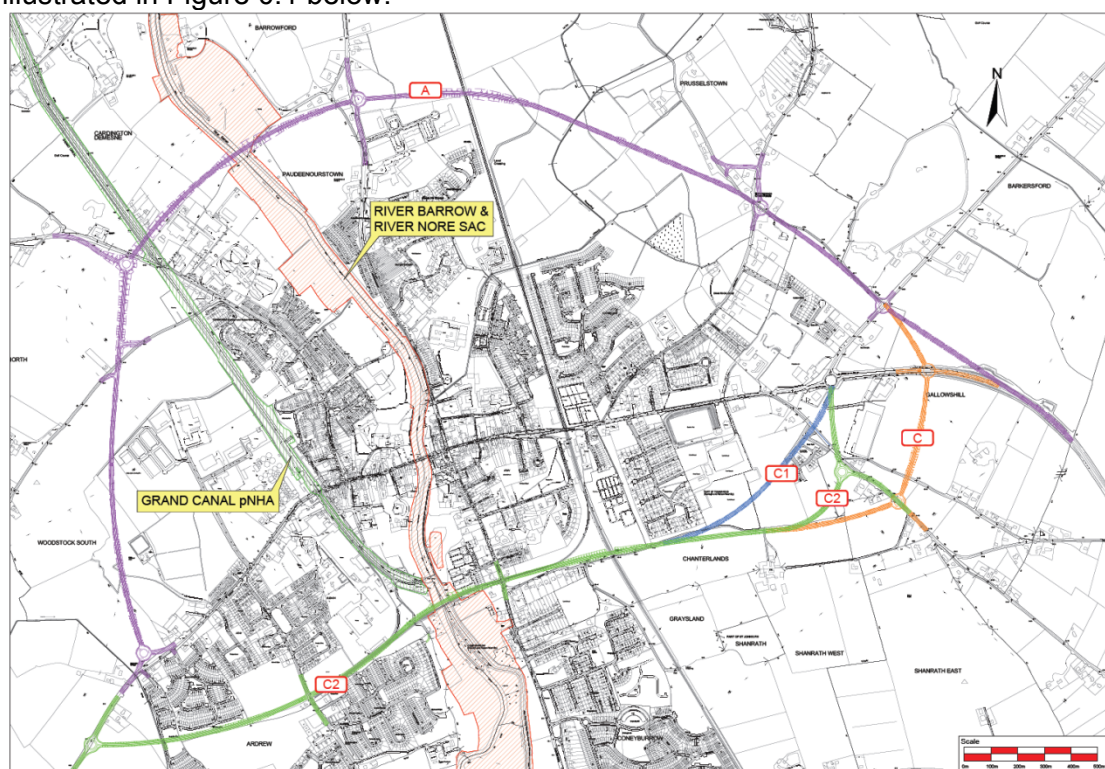
proposed inner relief route would fail both as a street and a relief road because it would continue to bring traffic, including heavy commercial vehicles through the town centre” and was therefore excluded as being unable to meet the required objective. In addition the do-nothing and a do-minimum option were assessed, but it was found that without the provision of a new crossing of the river it is not possible to address the congestion and associated safety issues inherent in the existing road network.

## 0.5 Stage 1 Route Selection

The potentially feasible route options were assessed by applying the two stage route selection processes set out in the TII Project Management Guidelines. At the first stage all options were compared under the headings of Engineering, Economy and Environment. Unsurprisingly the options that emerged as performing best were those that followed, or were variations of the Southern Distributor Road and Northern Distributor Road contained in the Development Plans, as had emerged from previous studies. A public consultation exercise was undertaken in November 2015 at which the findings of the Stage 1 assessment were presented and public input was sought to inform the Stage 2 route selection studies. Strong objection was made to the line of the Southern Distributor Road as contained in the Development Plans, due to its impact on the Rugby and GAA grounds. In response a further variation of this option was developed to reduce this impact.

## 0.6 Stage 2 Route Selection

The four route options that were taken forward to the Stage 2 assessment are illustrated in Figure 0.1 below.



**Figure 0.1 – Stage 2 Route Options**

In accordance with the TII Project Management Guidelines, preliminary horizontal and vertical alignments, junction configurations and estimation of earthworks and bridge requirements were undertaken for each of these options to fully inform more detailed comparative assessments under the Department Transport, Tourism and Sport’s Common Appraisal Framework. The results of these assessments under the five headings are summarised in Table 0.1 below.



	Option A	Option C	Option C1	Option C2
Economy	Least Preferred	Intermediate	Preferred	Preferred
Safety	Intermediate	Intermediate	Preferred	Preferred
Environment	Least Preferred	Intermediate	Intermediate	Preferred
Integration	Intermediate	Preferred	Preferred	Preferred
Accessibility & Social Inclusion	Intermediate	Preferred	Preferred	Preferred
<b>Overall Ranking</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Table 0.1 – Project Appraisal Matrix Summary**

From this assessment, it is recommended that Route Option C2 is taken forward as the Preferred Route for the Athy Distributor Road.

## 0.7 Assessment of Implementing Multiple Routes

An assessment has been carried out to determine if Route C2 were constructed, what the benefit of the provision of a Route A would bring in terms of additional traffic reduction on the N78 through Athy town centre. Traffic modelling of this scenario demonstrated that the addition of a northern distributor would increase the traffic reduction on the N78 through the centre of Athy from 48% to 54%.

This additional 6% reduction in traffic indicates that the construction of Route A in addition to Route C2 would provide additional benefits to Athy, however the cost of construction and potential for cumulative environmental impacts, if unmitigated, could not be justified by the additional benefits. The addition of a northern distributor road is not considered justified in the medium term, but may be considered a long term objective to connect the regional roads north of the town to the N78 and thereby fully eliminate the need for HGV's to use the existing N78 through the town centre.

## 0.8 Emerging Preferred Route Public Consultation

A further Public Consultation was held in February 2016 to present the Emerging Preferred Route and seek public input to inform its further development. Of the 49 submissions received, 34 were in favour of the proposal, a number highlighting the urgent need to progress the distributor road to alleviate the town centre. Particular concerns of those most directly affected by the proposals were noted for careful attention in the design stage.

## 0.9 Conclusion

The route selection undertaken has determined that the preferred route option is Route C2. It is recommended that detailed topographic surveys and geotechnical investigations should be undertaken to inform the further development of the design of this preferred route, sufficient to inform a full Environmental Impact Assessment.