

**Planning Report in support of the  
Part 10 Planning application to  
An Bord Pleanála for the development of  
Laytown Park  
at  
Ninch, Laytown, Co Meath**



**June 2023**

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## Section 1

## Introduction and Project Background

The East Meath area of County Meath has experienced considerable population and household growth in the past 20 years. This growth has been driven by a number of factors including the attractive coastal location and expansive beach front, the location of the settlements along a commuter rail line, and proximity to Dublin, Drogheda, the M1, and Dublin Airport. The area has developed as a commuter settlement, with population growth taking place in the absence of any significant employment growth. Social and community infrastructure has historically failed to keep pace with the rapid increase in population. In recent years a primary and secondary school campus has been developed in Laytown and a beach management/service building and library is currently under construction in Bettystown.

Meath County Council prepared a Public Realm Plan for Laytown/Bettystown in 2021. The plan has the following vision statement for Laytown: *'Improve the public realm through the reintroduction of a beach front park (subject to future environmental studies) and the relocation and control of commuter parking. Links to improved amenities and regeneration opportunities will help enhance the character of the town.'*

Objective 1 of the Public Realm Plan for Laytown seeks *'the reintroduction of a beach front town park'*

The plan is available to view: [Laytown and Bettystown Public Realm Strategy 2021 | Meath.ie](#)

ORIS funding was obtained in 2021 which is the source of funding for this planning application. BDP and FERS Ltd were retained by Meath County Council to prepare the application in accordance with the objectives of the Public Realm Plan and Meath County Development Plan, 2021-2027.

## Section 2

## Site Description

The application site is accessed from Station road, Laytown and comprises of circa 2.35 ha. Part of the land is occupied by an existing playground and commuter car park. To the north of the site is Laytown village and to the north west is Laytown train station. Laytown strand and the River Nanny estuary are located to the south of the subject site. To the east of the site are residential properties and the coast tavern.

The site slopes away from Station Road to the coast. Existing site levels vary between 3.00m AOD at the Station Road to 2.26m AOD at the coast. The site is partially surrounded by an embankment with levels between 3.45m AOD to 3.80m AOD. A topographical survey for the site is included in Appendix E. of the Flood Risk Assessment.

The site consists of built land/artificial surfaces, grassland habitat and dune habitat. Over 80 different plant species were identified within the survey area, please refer to the ECIA for further detail in this regard.

The design proposals, ECIA, NIS and EIA screening refer to all lands between the station road and the strand. Please note that while these documents include an indicative layout for all lands, only those lands in Meath County Council ownership are included within the red line application boundary. The additional lands are not necessary to the overall scheme. These

documents demonstrate how these lands could be incorporated at some future date, subject to land owner consent, funding availability etc.

### **Section 3** **Development Description**

The proposed development of a Town Park comprises of the following:

1. The creation of formal and informal play spaces.
2. The provision of new pathways and improvement of existing pathways including a new pedestrian road crossing and a boardwalk over the dunes.
3. The creation of an open space for flexible-use (events, gathering, markets, leisure, informal sport games).
4. All associated and ancillary site works associated with the proposed development including landscaping, signage and street furniture.

The application is accompanied by the following documentation:

- Natura Impact Assessment (NIS)
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)
- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report
- Archaeology Report
- Flood Risk Assessment

The design proposals contain significant detail at section 3 and 4 of the materials palette and planting schedule respectively. The materials chosen and planting proposed have been selected which due regard to the coastal location, the need to be durable and support biodiversity.

### **Section 4** **Planning History**

None noted on Planning Register.

### **Section 5** **Planning Policy**

#### **5.1 National, Regional & Local Policy**

Project Ireland 2040, The National Planning Framework (NPF) was adopted on 29/05/2018 (Circular FPS06/2018) and sets the national policy context. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region came into force on 28/06/2019 and sets the regional policy context. The site is located within an urban area governed by the policies and objectives of the Meath County Development Plan (MCDP) 2021-2027.

## 5.2 Meath County Development Plan, 2021-2027

The County Development Plan (CDP) sets out the following vision:

*'To continue to support the creation of socio-economically progressive vibrant, dynamic, and healthy communities throughout the County and ensure that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development that delivers a high -quality living and working environment that meets the needs of all residents, in accordance with National and Regional Guidance.'*

Section 7.7 of the CDP recognises that the *'provision of good quality community facilities in existing and developing areas is a key element in the development of sustainable, healthy communities across the County.'*

The following policies and objectives are considered to be relevant to this application:

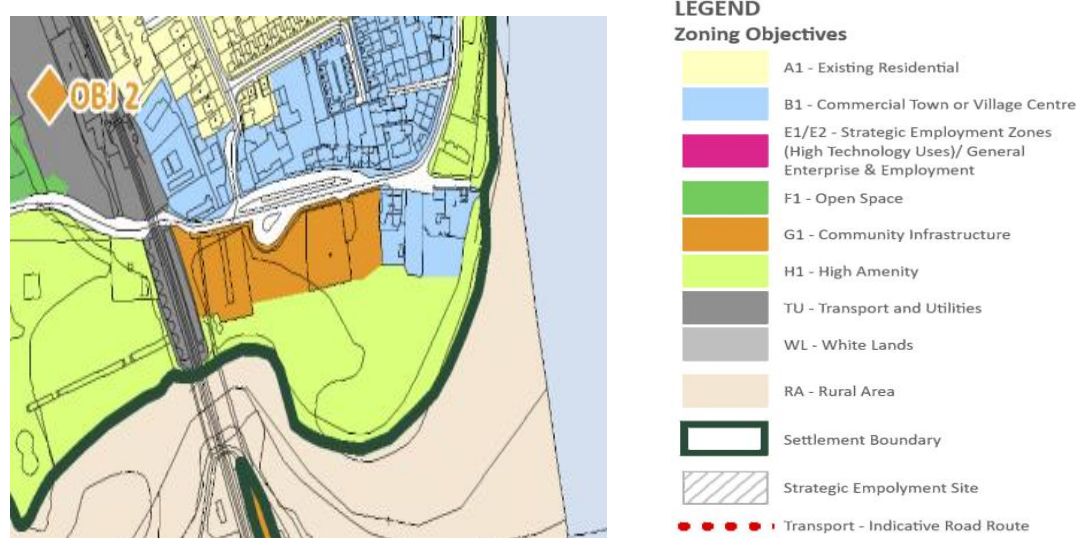
**SOC OBJ 15** *'To ensure public open space is accessible and designed so that passive surveillance is provided.'*

**SOC OBJ 16** *'To provide multifunctional open spaces at locations deemed appropriate providing for both passive and active uses.'*

**SOC POL 39** *'To protect the integrity of Natura 2000 sites during the identification of suitable sites for recreation, in particular in terms of their design and use.'*

**SOC POL 54** *'To promote the provision of public art, including temporary art and sculpture, through such mechanisms, as appropriate.'*

### 5.3.1 Land Use Zoning



Land use zoning map (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)

The site has the following land use zoning objectives:

**H1 High Amenity**



Objective: To protect and improve areas of high amenity

Permitted Uses

Cycleways / Greenways / Trail Development, Land & Water Based Recreational Activities  
Open Space, Cultural Activities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Kiosk, Restaurant, Tea Room, Sensitive re-use of existing structures

**G1 Community Infrastructure**

Objective: To provide for necessary community, social, and educational facilities

Permitted Uses

Allotments, Car Park (incl. Park and Ride), Cemetery/Crematorium, Children Play / Adventure Centre, Childcare Facility, Community Facility / Centre, Cultural Facility, Education, Health Centre, Hospital, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Place of Public Worship, Playing Pitches, Playgrounds, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Utilities.

Open for Consideration Uses

Bring Banks, Funeral Home, Gymnasium, Halting Site / Group Housing, Healthcare Practitioner, Residential / Sheltered Housing, Restaurant / Café, Retirement Home / Residential Institution / Retirement Village, Telecommunication Structures

The proposed development is compliant with the land use zoning objectives as set out above.

**Laytown Bettystown Written Statement Volume 2, CDP**

The strategic vision as set out in vol 2 of the CDP underpins the approach to and guides the future development of East Meath in a sustainable manner, in a way that reflects the existing character and amenities of the area and improves quality of life for the existing and future population. The vision seeks:

*"To support and encourage the consolidation of the East Meath settlements and facilitate greater connectivity between the settlements and support the provision of additional social and community infrastructure and improvements to the urban environment, whilst protecting and promoting the tourism sector and reinforcing the role and function of the redefined town centre in Bettystown"*

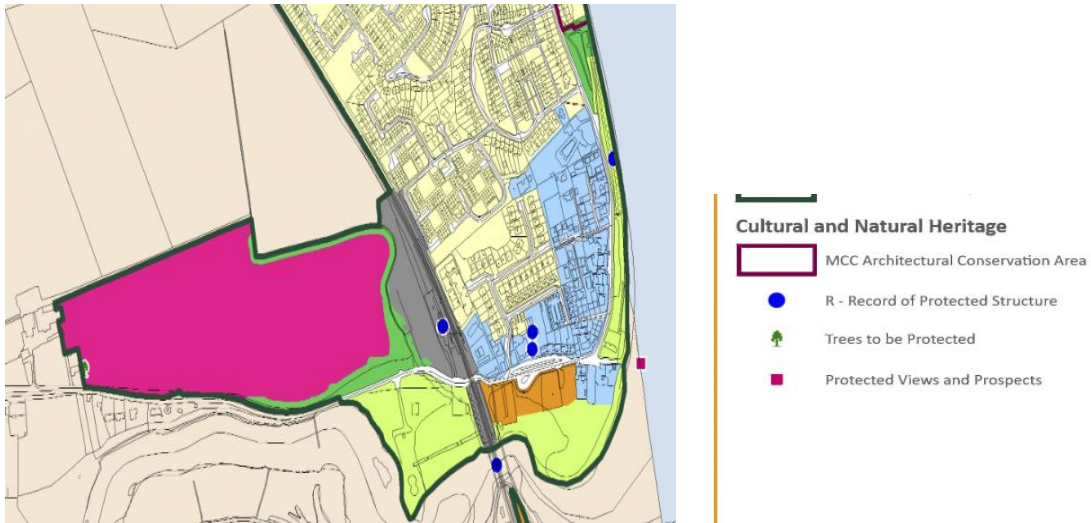
*The following objective from the written statement is considered relevant:*

**BLMD OBJ 10**

*"To implement and ensure compliance with the Public Realm Plan for Bettystown and Laytown which provides for a themed strategy for the provision of street furniture, planting, traffic and parking, lighting, building colours, (local and tourist) signage and surface materials etc. within the town."*

**5.3.2 Cultural Heritage**

The application site is not located within or near an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). There are no protected structures on or adjacent to the application site.



### 5.3.3 Archaeology

Please refer to report which accompanies the application.

### 5.3.4 View & Prospects

A list of the protected views and prospects proximate to the site are detailed below.



*Identified views & Prospects (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)*

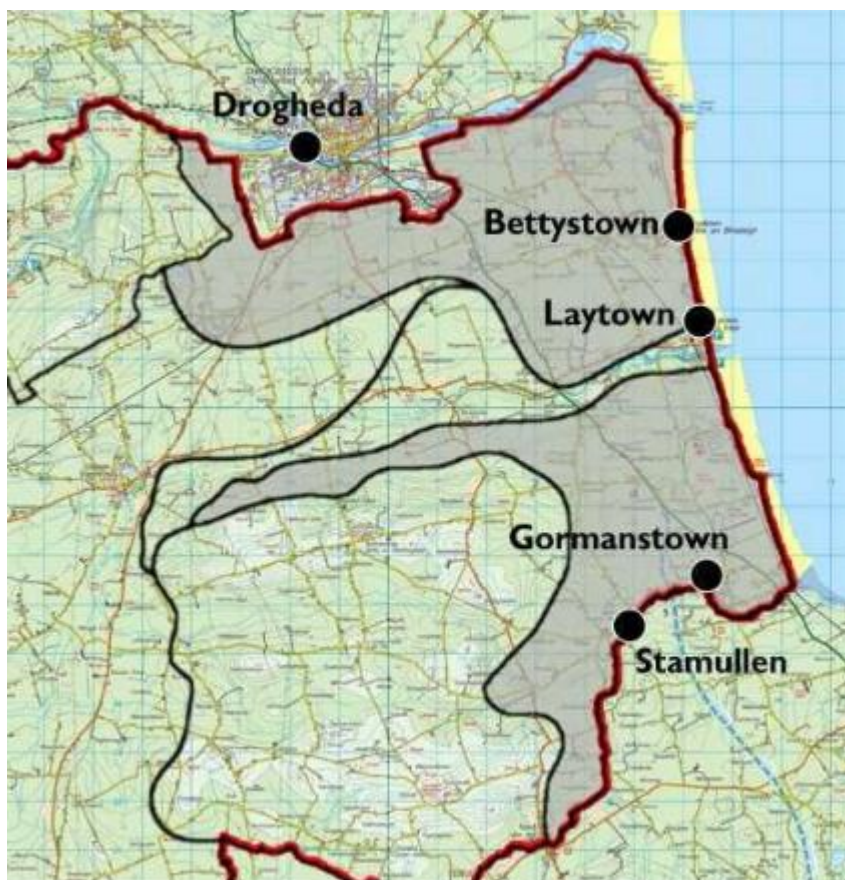
*Description of identified Views & Prospects (Source Meath CDP 2021-2027)*

<b>View Ref. No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Significance</b>
65	Laytown Strand	Distinctive view northwards along the shore from Laytown	Regional
75	Boyne Estuary view from coast road between Mornington and Drogheda (past Grammar School)	Expansive views of the Boyne Estuary with associated long views and open skylines. Prospects towards Beaulieu are included. This view is typical of many such views along this road.	Local

The proposed development will not have an adverse impact on any of these protected views.

**5.3.5 Landscape Character Assessment**

The application site is located within the LCA 7 Coastal Plains in the Meath LCA.



LCA 7 Coastal Plains, (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)

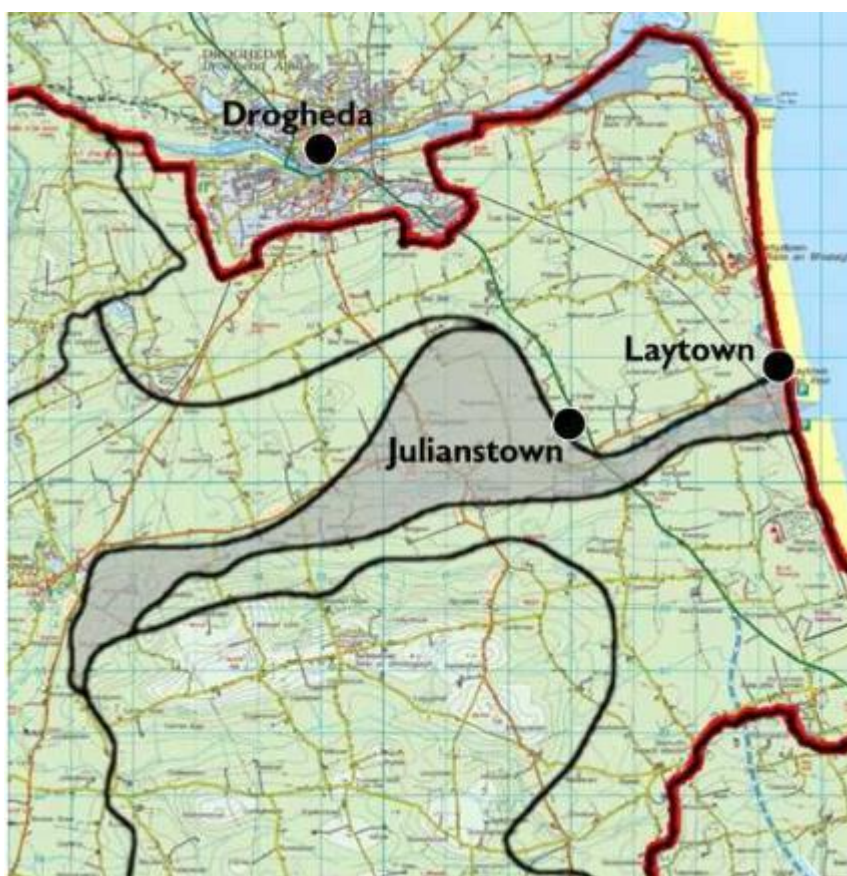


This LCA extends over a large area of east coast lowlands. The landscape characteristics are as follows:

Landscape Value: Moderate  
Landscape Sensitivity: High  
Landscape Importance: Regional

The site abuts LCA 8 Nanny Estuary, the landscape characteristics are as follows:

Landscape Value: Very High  
Landscape Sensitivity: High  
Landscape Importance: Regional



LCA 8 Nanny Estuary (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)

### 5.3.6 Tree Preservation

The CDP has identified series of trees or groupings of trees as being of particular importance or value to an area. As a means of protecting these area of planting, Tree Preservations Orders (TPOs) have been made for a number of sites.

There are no trees within the site or the immediate surrounding areas that are subject to statutory trees preservation orders in the current CDP.

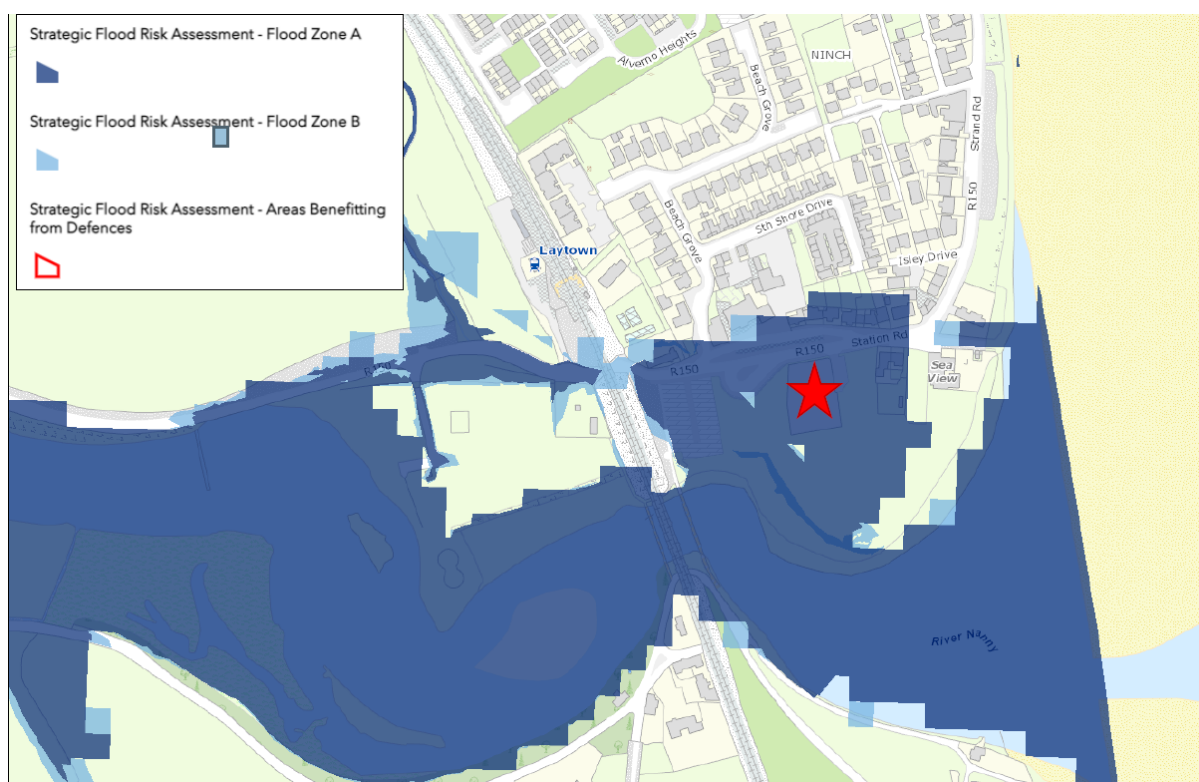
### 5.3.7 Flooding

The CDP states that planning applications will be assessed in accordance with ‘The Planning and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities’. It notes that ‘The Council will ensure that only developments consistent with the overall policy and technical approaches of these Guidelines will be approved and permission may be refused where flood issues have not been, or cannot be, addressed successfully and where the presence of unacceptable residual flood risks to the development, its occupants or users and adjoining property remains.’

The policies in respect of flooding include:

INF POL 18: ‘To have regard to the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoEHLG/OPW, 2009) through the use of the sequential approach and application of the Justification Tests for Development Management and Development Plans, during the period of this Plan.’

INF POL 20: ‘To ensure that a flood risk assessment is carried out for any development proposal, where flood risk may be an issue in accordance with the “Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoECLG/OPW, 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to the potential development.’



Extract of Flood Zone Web Mapping from the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (Source: Meath CDP 2021-2027)

The proposed development site is located in Flood Zone A. This zone defines areas with the highest risk of flooding from rivers (i.e. more than 1% probability or more than 1 in 100) and

the coast (i.e. more than 0.5% probability or more than 1 in 200). The vulnerability of development to flooding depends on the nature of the development, its usage and proposed construction methods. The application proposes open space, community and outdoor recreation uses. The guidelines consider these uses to be water-compatible and a less vulnerable development. Therefore, the development is appropriate in Flood Zone A as per the Justification Test Matrix from the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines.

The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment which concludes as follows:

Due to the water-compatible nature and community infrastructure usage of the development it is expected that flooding on site can be managed with no risk to people and property. The development has been sequentially assessed from the following sources for residual risk:

- Tidal;
  - Fluvial;
  - Pluvial;
  - Ground Water;
  - Infrastructure Flood Failure;
- Fluvial, Tidal and Pluvial flood risks have been identified on or near the site following a review of all publically available flood mapping, development plans for the area of the community infrastructure;
  - The existing sources of information available does not warrant further investigation;
  - It is reasonable to conclude given the low vulnerability categorisation of the development that the residual flood risk is acceptable such that there is no inappropriate risk of flooding arising and no inappropriate flood risk to the development, its users and adjoining properties from the following identified sources.

Therefore, the site is appropriate for development when assessed against the requirements of 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management' as issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in November 2009.

## **Section 6     Access**

The lands are served by two existing car parks which provide commuter parking, parking for the existing playground and beach. It is proposed to retain these for use by the new park. There is some on street parking available on Station Road. Therefore, it is considered that there is sufficient car parking available to cater for the proposed development.

The site is served by existing bus stops used by the TII D1 and D2 routes. Matthews Coach Hire also uses these bus stops. The application proposes a pedestrian crossing which will connect the site to the bus stop on the opposite side of the road. The site is fully connected to Laytown village by existing footpaths. The new pedestrian crossing will further improve pedestrian connections to and from the site.

Cycle parking facilities will be provided as part of the overall development.

3 pedestrian entrances are proposed from the Station Road to the park which are linked to the proposed network of paths within the park.

## Section 7 Site Services

A flexible events area is proposed to the east of the existing commuter car park. It is intended that this area will allow the holding of temporary markets, events etc. In order to facilitate same this area will require connection points to power supply and water mains. A drinking water fountain is proposed for the centre of the park which will require connection to the public water mains.

All surfaces will be permeable, no positive drainage is proposed to be installed on site.

No additional permanent lighting is proposed to be installed. Existing car park lighting will be retained. Bollards and timber pillars with power supply that can accommodate temporary lighting are proposed, please refer to Section 3.12 of the Design Proposals document.

Ducting for potential future CCTV infrastructure will be incorporated into the development.

## Section 8 Environmental Assessments

A stage one and stage two Appropriate Assessment has been prepared by Forest, Environmental Research and Services Ltd. (Fers).

Section 3.5.2 discusses disturbance and states as follows:

*'There should be no works undertaken within the SPA and no major works within the semi-natural habitats occurring to prevent any Direct disturbance impacts through loss of habitat.*

*There is potential for increased disturbance of fauna, in particular the Qualifying Interests of the River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA. During the period January – March (inclusive) 2023, overwintering bird surveys comprising High/rising tide surveys, Low/falling tide surveys and post sunset surveys within the park area were undertaken.*

*The results of these surveys are presented in Table 38. The area associated with the existing and proposed park upgrades is utilised by Qualifying Interests, with Oystercatcher being observed on numerous occasions. Of note, the birds were habituated to human presence and the nature of the proposed park will not significantly change the habitats present. As such, there are no mitigation measures required during operation (indeed, the provision of paths and the discouraging of use of desire lines is likely to positively impact with regard to disturbance). The primary disturbance impact is, therefore, during construction. By means of mitigation, the construction period should be limited to April – September in order to avoid disturbance impacts on overwintering Qualifying Interests.' (emphasis added)*

The NIS concludes as follows:

*'Following the identification of a potential impact(s) upon one or more Natura 2000 sites through an Appropriate Assessment Screening exercise, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the proposed park upgrades at Laytown has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC). The*



information to enable the Competent Authority to perform its statutory function in this regard is presented within this NIS.

*Following an examination, analysis, and evaluation of the relevant information, and applying the precautionary principle, it is the professional opinion of the author of this report that there will be no adverse impact on the integrity of any of relevant Natura 2000 sites, assuming the implementation of all mitigation/preventative measures as outlined. Consequently, there will be no risk of adverse effects on Qualifying Interest habitats or species, nor the attainment of specific conservation objectives, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, for the relevant Natura 2000 sites. The ecological integrity of the Natura 2000 sites concerned (connected with qualifying interests for which the sites have been designated) will not be significantly impacted.'*

An Ecological Impact Assessment, (EclA), has been prepared by Forest, Environmental Research and Services Ltd. (Fers). This assessment notes that the area is already a heavily utilised amenity with a large number of dog walkers present.

#### *3.4.2 Bat Roost Potential Survey*

There were no suitable roosting habitats occurring within the survey area. Although it is likely that some of the commoner species, such as Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat may forage in the vicinity from time to time, the proposed park improvements have no potential to impact on these species.

Section 4.5.1 of the EclA states as follows:

*'The primary impacts during the construction phase will be:*

- Potential disturbance of Qualifying Interests of adjacent SPAs associated with demolition and/or construction;*
- Potential impacts on water quality;*
- Potential impacts associated with the spread within/introduction to site of propagules of Alien Invasive Plant Species; and*
- Potential for habitat loss for breeding birds.*

*The primary impact during operation will be:*

*There are unlikely to be any significant medium or long-term impacts associated with the park upgrades. The area is heavily utilised as an amenity and is immediately adjacent to busy road. The nature of the habitats present will not be appreciably changed, although conditions are likely to improve if, for example, desire lines are discouraged. Species utilising the survey area are habituated to human disturbance and given the location of the site, this is unlikely to change.'*

The EclA concludes that *'the proposed development will not have any significant negative ecological impacts, assuming mitigation measures are implemented, and the proposed development is undertaken in accordance with the Wildlife Act (1976) as Amended.'*

Section 4.5.2 of the EclA states as follows:

##### *4.5.2.1 Mitigation against potential disturbance*

Given the ecological sensitivity of the site and the use of habitats by Qualifying Interests of the adjacent SPA, works should be limited to the period April – September inclusive, avoiding the peak season for overwintering birds (but ensuring not to disturb breeding bird habitat (long grass semi natural grassland areas).’

Mitigation against impacts on water quality

*‘The proposed development is proximate to the Irish Sea, a feature of International ecological significance. There is always potential for contamination/pollution events to occur whenever construction is undertaken in the vicinity of water bodies through accidents, spills, etc. During all construction works, protection of water quality is paramount. Any contractor shall undertake all proposed works in such a manner as to avoid degradation of water quality by pollution and this should be ensured by drawing up and implementing an appropriate Construction Management Plan.’*

Generic measures to be taken should include the following:

- *The Undertaker’s method statement should make specific reference to measures for the protection of water quality;*
- *Undertaker’s plant, equipment etc. shall be free of any mechanical defects, and be well maintained so as to prevent soil or fuel leaks;*
- *Undertaker’s plant, equipment etc. must arrive at the site free from propagules of any Alien Invasive Plant Species;*
- *The Undertaker’s method statement should make specific reference to measures for the protection of water quality, to include measures to ensure no spillage of fuel or cement/lime-based material or any other leakages occur to any drains, etc. for the duration of the works;*
- *All works will be undertaken in accordance with the following best practice guidelines:*

*CIRIA Control of Water Pollution from Construction sites – Guidance for Consultants and Contactors (2001).*

*Eastern Regional Fisheries Board Guidance Notes ‘Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries Habitat during Construction and Development Works at River Sites’ (Eastern Regional Fisheries Board, 2006);*

*NRA Guidelines (2006) NRA Guidelines for the Crossing of Watercourses during the Construction of National Road Schemes. ‘*

Mitigation against habitat loss for breeding birds

*‘The grassland/dune system should be left intact, and when the proposed park works have been undertaken, a Biodiversity and Habitat Management Plan for the survey area should be drawn up and implemented, with management undertaken by Meath Co. Council in accordance with this plan. All works must be undertaken in accordance with the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended).’*

The EclA concludes: *‘although located in a very sensitive ecological location, the nature of the proposed park upgrades will have no significant negative ecological impacts, assuming mitigation measures are implemented, and the proposed works are undertaken in accordance with the Wildlife Act (1976) as Amended. Indeed, the proposed layout will almost certainly enhance the habitats present as regards biodiversity.’*

An Environmental Impact Assessment screening report of the proposed development has been prepared by Forest, Environmental Research and Services Ltd. (Fers). This report concludes, *'having regard to the criteria specified in Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as Amended); the context and character of the site and the receiving environment; the nature, extent, form, and character of the proposed development; this Environmental Impact Assessment Screening concludes that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report of the proposed development is not required.'*

## **Section 9**                      **Conclusion**

The proposed development is consistent with National, Regional and Local planning policies as set out above and gives effect to and facilitates the implementation of planning policy in the Meath County Development Plan. This application is plan led, strongly supported by the Public Realm Plan for Laytown/Bettystown which was subject to extensive public consultation. The proposed development will provide a much-needed amenity for the people of East Meath. The proposed development will ensure that the site which is in public ownership is used effectively into the future for a multiplicity of user groups and it is intended that the park will address the needs of all generations. As the environmental studies which accompany the application demonstrate the introduction of a network of paths and desire lines for users will improve biodiversity which will have a positive impact on the wider area.