

Addendum

to the SEA Screening Report

relating to the Draft Variation no. 1 (Strandhill Mini-Plan)

of the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017

Environmental consequences of the Proposed Amendments to the Draft Variation

1 August 2013

1. Introduction

The *Draft Strandhill Mini-Plan / Variation No. 1 of the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017* (CDP) was on public display from 22 January to 5 March 2013 (both dates included).

The Draft Variation was accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report, which described the characteristics and assessed the expected effects of implementing the Variation/Mini-Plan, based on the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations 2004.

The conclusion of the Screening Report was that the implementation of the proposed Variation/Mini-Plan was not likely to have significant effects on the environment and, accordingly, a full SEA (separate from the SEA associated with the CDP) was not required.

Following consultation with prescribed environmental authorities, the Planning Authority issued a Decision indicating that “the proposed Strandhill Mini-Plan is not likely to have significant effects on the environment. Therefore, full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is not required”.

1.1 First Manager’s Report

During the public consultation period, Sligo County Council received 19 submissions on the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan. One submission was received after the closing date.

The First Manager’s Report on submissions and observations relating to the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan summarised all the issues raised in the submissions and gave the Manager’s response to each one, including recommendations as to whether or not the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan should be modified. The First Manager’s Report was submitted to the members of Sligo County Council on 15 April 2013.

1.2 The role of the elected members

Deciding whether to adopt or to propose amendments to the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan is a function reserved for the elected members of Sligo County Council.

On foot of the submissions received, and on review of the content of the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan, the Manager recommended a number of *non-material* (i.e. non-significant) alterations to the draft.

It was the members' role to decide whether other **material** alterations had to be made to the Draft Plan. At this stage, the members were required to consider all of the following:

- the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan;
- the SEA Screening Report and the Appropriate Assessment Report;
- the Manager's recommendations contained in the First Manager's Report.

At the ordinary meeting of 13 May 2013, the members of Sligo County Council considered the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan and the First Manager's Report and resolved to make a number of **material** amendments to the Draft Plan. The Planning Authority considered that some of the proposed amendments, if made, would be material alterations of the Draft CDP. Consequently, a further period of public consultation is necessary.

1.3 Proposed amendments to the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan

The members resolved to propose a total of 18 amendments to the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan. Of these, 13 are based on the Manager's recommendations made in the First Manager's Report. The 5 additional amendments, proposed by the members, conflict with the Manager's recommendations.

There are 15 amendments proposed to the text of the Draft Variation/ Mini-Plan and 3 amendments proposed to the zoning map.

The potential for significant environmental effects of the proposed amendments is assessed in Section 2 of this Addendum.

The amendments recommended by the Manager remain entirely within the scope of the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan, as they are only minor modifications. These 13 amendments would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening Report associated with the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan.

However, two of the additional amendments proposed by the members have been assessed as having the potential to significantly impact on the environment.

1.4 Determination regarding the need for strategic environmental assessment of the proposed amendments

Pursuant to S. 13(6)(aa) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the Planning Authority has determined that both a strategic environmental assessment and an appropriate assessment would be required in respect of the proposed material alterations of the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan. This is due to the fact that two proposed amendments, **A-11 and A-17**, involve a written objective and the corresponding zoning for "community, sports and recreation" of an area included in the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627).

Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations 2004 sets out the following criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment:

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,**
 - the degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,
 - the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,

- environmental problems relevant to the plan,
 - 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).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to
- **the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,**
 - **the cumulative nature of the effects,**
 - the transboundary nature of the effects,
 - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
 - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
 - **the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:**
 - (a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - (b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - (c) intensive land-use,
 - **the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.**

Having regard to the criteria outlined above in **bold type**, it is considered that a significant environmental impact cannot be ruled out in respect of the aforementioned proposed amendments.

2. Assessment of the proposed amendments

Amendments have been proposed to the text of the Draft LAP (narrative, several policies and objectives and also the legend of some maps and illustration) and also to the Zoning and Transport objectives maps.

The proposed amendments to the text of the LAP (all additions, no deletions) are shown in blue type [like this](#).

The sites subject to proposed zoning amendments are indicated by a **black outline** on the Zoning Map, accompanied by the number of the respective amendment.

The text in green under each proposed amendment represents the Planning Authority's assessment of the amendment's potential to change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening Report relating to the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan. The assessment is based on the criteria specified in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations 2004.

2.1 Proposed amendments to the text

A-1 (recommended by the Manager)

Under the heading **Population and housing** (p. 1 of the Draft Mini-Plan), include the following paragraph:

The Core Strategy of the CDP allocated to Strandhill 14.4 ha of greenfield land, which included (in 2012-2013) 4.03 ha of land with existing planning permission for residential development, comprising some 204 potential residential units. This equates to 10.37 ha which have been zoned for residential development in this Mini-Plan. Mixed-use lands are also included in the allocation based on an average of 65% residential development in the mix of uses.

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-2 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.1 Landscape, natural heritage, open space**, modify **objective G** as follows:

Provide for a number of incidental public open spaces whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment, notably: ...

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-3 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.2 Coastal protection**, modify **objective A** as follows:

Prepare an integrated coastal management plan for Strandhill in consultation with relevant agencies and interested parties. This plan should address, inter alia, the existing and potential recreational uses of the area. The coastal management plan will ensure the protection of Natura 2000 sites through the Appropriate Assessment process.

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-4 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.2 Coastal protection**, modify **objective D** as follows:

Maintain and review dune management to include, where necessary, appropriate fencing, boardwalks and public information boards, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DAHG.

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-5 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.4 Mixed-use zones**, modify **objective B** as follows:

Discourage piecemeal, haphazard development and ensure the assembly and consolidated development of lands within the mixed-use zones on the basis of integrated design proposals/masterplans with appropriate pedestrian/cycle/vehicular links. Prospective developers shall have regard to the DECLG's Guidelines for Planning Authorities – Sustainable Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns and Villages) and to the DoT/DECLG Design Manual for Urban roads and Streets (2013).

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-6 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.4 Mixed-use zones**, modify **objective D** as follows:

Encourage the redevelopment of the Promenade 'Corner' on the sea front (MIX 1, Objectives Map) currently comprising shops, dwellings and a public open space, subject to any necessary coastal protection measures whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment at project level.

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-7 (proposed by the Members)

In **Section 44.4 Mixed-use zones**, modify objective G as follows:

Require that any development proposal on village centre site MIX 2 (Council car park) incorporates the following:

- i. a pedestrian civic square, capable of being used for events and local markets;*
- ii. pedestrian and possibly vehicular linkages to the Promenade to the west, behind existing development;*
- iii. the location of any car parking behind the building line.*

In recognition of the scale, and strategic location of the Council car park, the only mixed use development permitted on this site will be the enhancement of the present car parking facility, a community centre and the provision of other recreational facilities.

Terraced buildings up to three storeys shall be permitted, subject to appropriate 'feathering', to integrate with adjoining developments, from the council car park to the existing promenade & in the existing promenade area. The community centre courtyard shall be designed to a high standard in a manner capable of enhancing the streetscape and complementing the existing village. However, any developments within the car park itself shall be restricted to two storeys.

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-8 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.5 Transport, circulation and parking**, modify **objective A** as follows:

Reserve land for a New Airport Road linking the R292 to the existing Airport Road (R277) whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment at project level.

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-9 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.5 Transport, circulation and parking**, modify **objective C** as follows:

Extend the Promenade in a northerly direction and link up with the existing Airport Road as indicated on the Objectives Map, to include for the upgrading of the existing lane from the caravan park to the Airport Road whilst taking full account of the need to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the coast and the need to avoid significant adverse impacts on Natura 2000 Sites and on species protected by law. All necessary coastal protection measures should be incorporated into such a project. This extension should be developed in a similar fashion to the existing Promenade whilst also preserving as much as possible of the seafront area as a public amenity.

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-10 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.6 Community facilities**, modify **objective B** as follows:

Require any development proposed on the greenfield site CF1 (refer to the Objectives Map) to ensure the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment at project level. Any proposed development should provide a range of facilities such as a citizens' advice point, social services, tourist information, skate park and indoor sports. A youth centre and childcare facilities may be provided within the same building or in a separate structure.

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

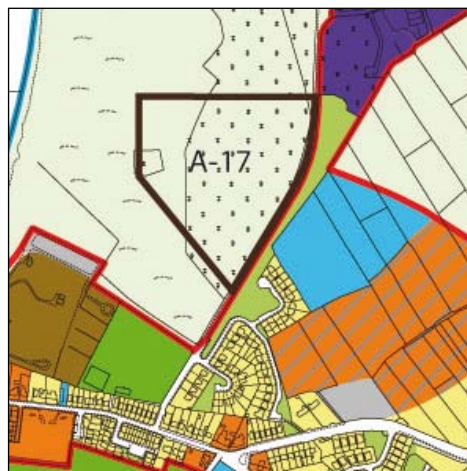
A-11 (linked to A-17) (proposed by the Members)

In **Section 44.6 Community facilities**, insert an additional **objective D** as follows:

D. Land west of Airport Road, including pine plantation

Sligo County Council owns most of the land and the pine plantation to the west of the Airport Road. Within the Southern portion of the afforested area (16.5 acres / 6.7 ha) it is an objective to accommodate sports and recreation, including any ancillary developments such as dressing rooms etc.

Therefore the County Council-owned lands to the west of the Airport Road are zoned for 'Community, Sport & Recreation' to meet this objective and public access will be retained & enabled to continue.



A-17 (linked to A-11) (proposed by the Members)

Change the zoning of the **site marked A-17** on the Proposed Amendments Map from “buffer zone” to “community, sports and recreation”.

[Note: the zoning category would be CF-community facilities, as per the Zoning Matrix included in the CDP]

The additional written objective and corresponding zoning objective represent a material alteration of the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan. The interconnected amendments involve the designation of 6.7 ha of land for “community, sports and recreation” instead of buffer zone. The entire area concerned is located within the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627), a European site (refer to the Map 4 Designations in the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan).

Zoning 6.7 ha of land for “community, sports and recreation” within the SAC could result in the construction of buildings, sports pitches etc., with all the works and disturbance involved, causing irreversible damage to the protected habitat and the species supported by it, thus adversely affecting the integrity of the European site.

Water pollution, drainage and habitat loss would be considered a significant negative effect.

Some potential impacts could be mitigated (water pollution, drainage), **but the permanent loss of habitat cannot be mitigated.**

The potential impact of the “community, sports and recreation” zoning on the site subject to the proposed amendments A-11 and A-17 could, theoretically, be prevented through the rigorous application of relevant County Development Plan provisions contained in **Section 7.1.2 Habitats Directive Assessment (Appropriate Assessment)** (p. 89-90 of the CDP) and the related **European and national designated natural heritage sites objectives** included in the same section.

However, the adoption of the proposed amendments A-11 and A-17 would conflict with the above-mentioned provisions of the CDP and would contravene Section 177.V(c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which specifies the following:

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, or, as appropriate, the Act of 2001, or the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 F276[and save as otherwise provided for in sections 177X, 177Y, 177AB and 177AC], a competent authority shall make a Land use plan or give consent for proposed development only after having determined that the Land use plan or proposed development shall not adversely affect the integrity of a European site.

A-12 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.7 Tourism development**, modify **objective A** as follows:

Promote the development of tourism related-infrastructure and facilities within the village in order to increase visitor numbers and to create more local employment, [subject to Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive](#).

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-13 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.7 Tourism development**, modify **objective B** as follows:

Provide a public parking and picnic area to the north of the caravan park, in conjunction with the new road (See Section 44.5), [subject to Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive and the implementation of a Coastal Management Plan \(Obj. 44.2 A\) and a Management Plan for the Council lands at Killaspugbrone \(Obj. 44.1 B\)](#). This area will be located adjacent to the existing caravan park entrance, from where two-way traffic movements will operate (location marked TRANS 2 on the Objectives Map). In addition, adequate provision will be made for alternative circulation arrangements within the caravan park.

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-14 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.9 Buffer zone**, modify **objective B** as follows:

Require all new and replacement agricultural structures to be designed in such manner that they do not interfere with the character of the landscape, [whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through screening for Appropriate Assessment at project level](#).

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-15 (recommended by the Manager)

In **Section 44.10 Wastewater treatment**, modify **objective A** as follows:

Upgrade the wastewater treatment plant at Killaspugbrone to cater for a population equivalent (PE) of circa 3,000, [whilst ensuring the protection of designated sites through undertaking Appropriate Assessment at project level](#).

This is a minor amendment, which would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

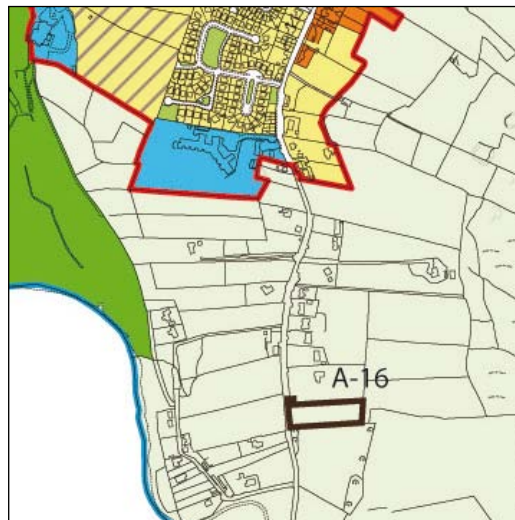
2.2 Proposed amendments to the Zoning Map (except A-17)

A-16 (proposed by the Members)

Change the zoning of the **site marked A-16** on the Proposed Amendments Map from 'buffer zone' to 'residential uses' and indicate on the Zoning Map that only one house is to be accommodated on the site.

This change of zoning objective is a material alteration.

The site in question is located in the buffer zone, to the south of the development limit, at a remove from the village core, at the end of a ribbon development consisting of residential units. The site is on the eastern side of the R292 – a scenic route, on the lower western slopes of Knocknarea, where views of the mountain are protected by the CDP.



Strandhill Mini-Plan is designed to implement the CDP's general policies and objectives, including landscape protection objectives and the policy discouraging ribbon development and urban sprawl. For these reasons, the subject site and surrounding area have been designated as buffer zone.

The adoption of the proposed amendment A-16 would conflict with the above-mentioned provisions of the CDP and may result in a negative visual impact on the scenic landscape at the foot of the Knocknarea Mountain. However, the proposed amendment is unlikely to have any significant effects on the environment and, if adopted, would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

A-18 (proposed by the Members)

Change the zoning of the **site marked A-18** on the Proposed Amendments Map from 'buffer zone' to 'residential uses'.

This change of zoning objective is a material alteration. Development on this greenfield site has the potential to affect soil and biodiversity. However, given the small scale of the site and its location at the end of a residential cul-de-sac backing another residential residential development, it is considered that the proposed amendment A-18 would not have any significant impact on the environment.

This amendment, if adopted, would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.



3. Consultation with environmental authorities

Having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations 2004, on 28 May 2013 the Planning Authority determined that both strategic environmental assessment and appropriate assessment are required in respect of the aforementioned proposed amendments of the Draft Variation/Mini-Plan, Pursuant to S. 13(6)(aa) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The proposed amendments were screened for potential environmental effects.

An **Addendum to the SEA Screening Report** was prepared and circulated to the following environmental authorities on 28 June 2013:

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR)
- The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) and Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG)
- The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF)
- The local authorities adjoining the area under the jurisdiction of Sligo County Council

The **Addendum** concluded that:

The majority of the proposed amendments, if adopted, would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening Report. However, the proposed interconnected amendments A-11 and A-17 have the potential for significant effects on the environment, i.e. on the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627).

The adoption of the proposed amendments A-11 and A-17 would conflict with the *Section 7.1.2 Habitats Directive Assessment (Appropriate Assessment)* and the related *European and national designated natural heritage sites objectives* included in the same section of the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017.

3.1 Response of the EPA

The EPA responded on **15 July** with the following specific comments:

- A. It is noted that the SEA Screening report identifies that Proposed Amendment A-11 and A-17 in particular, as having have potential for likely significant negative effects to Cummeen Strand/Drumcliffe Bay SAC. **Clarification should be given as to whether an option not to proceed with A-11 and A-17 has been considered taking into account the Habitats Directive 'Precautionary Principle'.**
- B. In addition, you are referred in *Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08*, to the following:
"In any case where, following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting a precautionary approach-
 - *an appropriate assessment of the plan must be carried out and*
 - *in any case where a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out"*
- C. It should be ensured that consultation is carried out with the NPWS on the scope of the Appropriate Assessment.

- D. Clarification should also be given whether *Proposed Amendment A-16* is in keeping with the principles of sustainable development and seeking to avoid/discourage ribbon development. The Plan should seek to ensure that the Core Strategy approach, as advocated by the Regional Planning Guidelines, is incorporated as appropriate.

Planning Authority's comments:

- A. It is noted that the decision as to whether to proceed with A-11 and A-17 is a reserved function of the elected members of Sligo County Council. The Executive of the Council can only make a recommendation in this respect. The SEA Screening Report with its present Addendum as well as the Natura Impact Report on the Proposed Amendments have been prepared not only because the legislation so requires, but with the purpose of helping the elected members make an informed decision before adopting the Variation/Mini-Plan with or without amendments.
- B. The reference is noted. An appropriate assessment has been carried out and its outcome is presented in the updated Natura Impact Report that accompanies the Proposed Amendments on public display.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment has already been carried out for the County Development Plan. The present Draft Variation, as prepared by the Planning Section of Sligo County Council, was accompanied by a SEA Screening Report, which found that the CDP, as varied, would not have any significant impacts on the environment.

The Proposed Amendments to the Draft Variation have, indeed potential for significant effects on the environment, i.e. on the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627). The adoption of the proposed amendments A-11 and A-17 would conflict with the **Section 7.1.2 Habitats Directive Assessment (Appropriate Assessment)** and the related **European and national designated natural heritage sites objectives** included in the same section of the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017.

However, the potential impact of the "community, sports and recreation" zoning on the site subject to the proposed amendments A-11 and A-17 could, theoretically, be prevented through the rigorous application of relevant County Development Plan provisions contained in **Section 7.1.2 Habitats Directive Assessment (Appropriate Assessment)** (p. 89-90 of the CDP) and the related **European and national designated natural heritage sites objectives** included in the same section.

Therefore, it is considered that the preparation of an Environmental Report in relation to the Proposed Amendments is not warranted at this stage, as the CDP already includes policies designed to prevent such negative impact on the environment.

- C. Consultation with the NPWS of the DAHG has taken place. Please refer to Section 3.4 below.
- D. The assessment of A-16 under Section 2.2 of this report indicates the following:

Strandhill Mini-Plan is designed to implement the CDP's general policies and objectives, including landscape protection objectives and the policy discouraging ribbon development and urban sprawl. For these reasons, the subject site and surrounding area have been designated as buffer zone.

The adoption of the proposed amendment A-16 would conflict with the above-mentioned provisions of the CDP and may result in a negative visual impact on the scenic landscape at the foot of the Knocknarea Mountain. However, the proposed amendment is unlikely to have any significant effects on the environment and, if adopted, would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening.

It is considered that no further clarification is necessary.

3.2 Response of Leitrim County Council

Leitrim County Council replied on 16 July as follows:

This Authority is happy to rely on your offices to ensure that the proposed Variation would, if adopted, comply with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and in particular with the requirements of the Habitats Directive and Strategic Environmental Requirements.

It is noted by reference to the SEA and Habitat Reports that **certain amendments would, if adopted, give rise to significant environmental impacts and would conflict with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.**

Were such a conflict remain unresolved, this Authority would have serious reservations about the adoption of any such amendments. As you are aware, any decision to proceed with an amendment that would compromise the integrity of the qualifying interests of a Natura 2000 site would raise serious legal issues and may expose the Council to significant costs.

Planning Authority's comments:

The response of Leitrim County Council is noted and agreed.

3.3 Response of the DCENR

The Geological Survey of Ireland, part of the DCENR, replied on **18 July** with an acknowledgement of the County Council's notification of 28 June. The GSI provided information and links to datasets relating to geological heritage sites. The GSI indicated that any complementary data collected by Sligo County Council regarding karst areas should be forwarded to the Department for inclusion in the national datasets.

The GSI did not make any specific reference to the Proposed Amendments of the Draft CDP Variation/Strandhill Mini-Plan.

Planning Authority's comments:

The response of the DCENR/GSI is noted. No geological field data has been collected as part of the environmental or appropriate assessment of the Draft Variation or its proposed amendments.

3.4 Response of the DAHG

The DAHG replied on **23 July** as follows:

- A. In relation to the Addendum to the SEA Screening Report, the conclusion states that '*the proposed interconnected amendments A-11 and A-17 have the potential for significant effects on the environment, i.e. on the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627)*'. In light of this conclusion, proceeding to full SEA for the proposed Amendments may be required. Please consult with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for clarification on this issue.
- B. In relation to the Natura Impact Report, the Department notes the Elected Members proposed amendments A-11 and A-17 to the Draft Strandhill Mini-Plan. The Department has had previous discussions regarding the development of a sports community facility within the Special Area of Conservation at this location. Most of the habitat at this location has been modified (conifer plantation) and does not correspond to Annexed

habitat (Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora). However, the Department recognises that this area is entirely within the Special Area of Conservation. The present habitat has the potential to be fully restored into dune habitat, i.e. Fixed Dunes with Herbaceous Vegetation (Grey Dunes), which is listed as priority habitat in the EU Habitats Directive. It should also be noted, that the present degraded/modified habitat supports the species Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (*Vertigo angustior*), which is a species listed in Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive and is a qualifying feature for the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay Special Area of Conservation Site No. SAC 000627. This area also supports the protect flora species Round-leaved Wintergreen subsp. *maritima* (*Pyrola rotundifolia maritima*), which is a species listed in the Flora Protection Order, 1999 (SI No. 94 of 1999). **The Department notes the conclusion of the Natura Impact Report, i.e. the proposed amendments may result in adverse impacts on the integrity of the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay Special Area of Conservation Site No. SAC 000627, a Natura 2000 site. The Department supports the approach of Sligo County Council in relation to this assessment and believes that this conclusion is in line with the conservation objectives of the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay Special Area of Conservation Site No. SAC 000627.**

Planning Authority's comments:

- A. Noted. Consultation with the EPA has taken place. Please refer to the comments under 3.1.B above.
- B. The detailed response and the Department's support of Sligo County Council's approach are noted and agreed.

4. Conclusion of the assessment

The majority of the proposed amendments, if adopted, would not change the conclusion of the initial SEA Screening Report.

However, the proposed interconnected amendments A-11 and A-17 have the potential for significant effects on the environment, i.e. on the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC (site code 000627).

The adoption of the proposed amendments A-11 and A-17 would conflict with the *Section 7.1.2 Habitats Directive Assessment (Appropriate Assessment)* and the related *European and national designated natural heritage sites objectives* included in the same section of the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017.

Furthermore, the adoption of the Draft CDP Variation/Mini-Plan with the amendments A-11 and A-17 would contravene **Section 177.V(c)** of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which specifies that planning authorities shall make a land use plan only after having determined that the said plan would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site.

It is clear that the environmental authorities that have responded to consultation under the SEA Regulations agree with the conclusion of the SEA and AA reports on the Proposed Amendments.

It is recommended that the proposed amendments A-11 and A-17 should not be adopted as part of the CDP Variation/Strandhill Mini-Plan.