

Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2022-2028

DRAFT Natura Impact Report

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Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
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Purpose

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Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment
CDP	County Development Plan
CEMP	Construction Environment Management Plan
CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
DoEHLG	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
EC	European Community
EclA	Ecological Impact Assessment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FRA	Flood Risk Assessment
FRS	Flood Relief Scheme

GCDP	Galway County Development Plan
GSI	Geological Survey of Ireland
GWB	Groundwater Body
IROPI	Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest
LAP	Local Area Plan
NBDC	National Biodiversity Data Centre
NIR	Natura Impact Report
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
NPF	National Planning Framework
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OPW	Office of Public Works
OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
PE	Population Equivalent
QI	Qualifying Interest
Ramsar	The intergovernmental Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SPA	Special Protection Area
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant
ZOI	Zone of Influence

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

JBA Consulting Ireland Ltd. has been commissioned by Galway County Council to undertake a Natura Impact Report (NIR) in relation to the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan (LAP) 2021 – 2027.

The Ballinasloe LAP sets out the land-use plan and strategy for the development of Ballinasloe over the period of 2021-2027 and will replace the previous LAP (2015-2021) when adopted.

This NIR documents the Appropriate Assessment process and results in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).

1.2 Legislative Context

The Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) aims to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest across Europe. The requirements of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive have been transposed into Irish legislation by means of the Habitats Regulations, 1997 (S.I. No. 94 of 1997) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011).

Under the Directive, a network of sites of nature conservation importance have been identified by each Member State as containing specified habitats or species requiring to be maintained or returned to favourable conservation status. In Ireland the network consists of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and also candidate sites, which together form the *Natura 2000* network.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that, in relation to European designated sites (i.e. SACs and SPAs that form the *Natura 2000* network), "*any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives*".

A competent authority (e.g. Local Authority) can only agree to a plan or project after having determined that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.

The competent authority is Galway County Council.

1.3 Appropriate Assessment Process

Guidance on the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process was produced by the European Commission in 2002, which was subsequently developed into guidance specifically for Ireland by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG 2009 rev 2010) These guidance documents identify a staged approach to conducting an AA, as shown in Figure 1-1.



Figure 1-1: The Appropriate Assessment Process

1.3.1 Stage 1 - Screening for AA

The initial, screening stage of the Appropriate Assessment is to determine:

- whether the proposed plan or project is directly connected with, or necessary for, the management of the European designated site for nature conservation
- if it is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the European designated site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects

For those sites where potential adverse impacts are identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, further assessment is necessary to determine if the proposals will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a European designated site, taking into account the sites conservation objectives (i.e. the process proceeds to Stage 2).

1.3.2 Stage 2 - AA

This stage requires a more in-depth evaluation of the plan or project, and the potential direct and indirect impacts arising from it on the integrity and the interest features of the European designated site(s), alone and in-combination with other plans and projects, taking into account the site's structure, function and conservation objectives. Where required, mitigation or avoidance measures will be suggested.

The competent authority can only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site(s) concerned. If this cannot be determined, and where mitigation cannot be achieved, then alternative solutions will need to be considered (i.e. the process proceeds to Stage 3).

1.3.3 Stage 3 - Alternative Solutions

Where adverse impacts on the integrity of European sites are identified, and mitigation cannot be satisfactorily implemented, alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan or project that avoid adverse impacts need to be considered. If none can be found, the process proceeds to Stage 4.

1.3.4 Stage 4 - IROPI

Where adverse impacts of a plan or project on the integrity of European sites are identified and no alternative solutions exist, the plan will only be allowed to progress if 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' can be demonstrated. In this case compensatory measures will be required.

The process only proceeds through each of the four stages for certain plans or projects. For example, for a plan or project, not connected with management of a site, but where no likely significant impacts are identified, the process stops at stage 1. Throughout the process, the precautionary principle must be applied, so that any uncertainties do not result in adverse impacts on a site.

1.3.5 Recent judgements of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and how they are used in this assessment

The CJEU issued a ruling on the consideration of avoidance and reduction measures as a result of the case known as *People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta* (Case C-323/17). This judgement stated that measures intended to reduce or avoid effects on a European site should only be considered within the framework of an AA, and it is not permissible to take into account such measures at the screening stage. In practice, this means that any activities that are not integral to the project (i.e. the project could conceivably take place without them) and have the effect of avoiding or reducing an impact on a European site, cannot be considered at the screening stage.

The CJEU ruling in the case of *Grace & Sweetman* [2018] (C-164/17) clarified the difference between avoidance and reduction (mitigation) measures and compensation. Measures intended to compensate for the negative effects of a project cannot be taken into account in the assessment of the implications of a project, and instead are considered under Article 6(4). This means that any project where an effect on the integrity of a European site remains and can only be offset by compensation, would need to proceed under Article 6(4), demonstrating "imperative reasons of overriding public interest".

The judgements referred to as the Dutch Nitrogen cases [2018] (C-293/17 and C-294/17) have important implications for projects that could potentially impact on sites that are exceeding critical thresholds for input of damaging ammonia (but could also reasonably apply where other nutrients are impacting European sites). The judgements state that the use of thresholds to exclude project impacts is acceptable in principle, and that strategic plans can be used as mitigation but only with consideration of the certainty (or otherwise) of the outcomes of those strategic plans. It clarifies that where the status of a habitat type is already unfavourable the possibility of authorising activities which increase the problem is necessarily limited.

The CJEU ruling in the case of *Holohan v An Bord Pleanala* (C-462/17) also clarified the importance in AA of taking into account habitat types and species outside the boundary of the European site, where implications of the impacts on those habitat and species may impact the conservation objectives of the European site. In this assessment functionally linked and supporting habitat for species outside of European site boundaries are assessed where they could potentially impact the conservation objectives of any screened in European sites.

1.4 Methodology

This NIR has been prepared having regard to the Birds and Habitats Directives, the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-15 as amended and relevant jurisprudence of the EU and Irish courts. The following documents have also used to provide guidance during the assessment:

- DoEHLG (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Revised 2010.
- European Commission (2000) Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.
- European Commission (et al. 2002) Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.
- EC (2013) Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission.
- Fossitt, J. (2000). A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.
- Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland - Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal, Second Ed. (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, (CIEEM 2018)
- (DTA 2021) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, UK by Tyldesley, D. and Chapman, C. (accessed online only with login requirements)

1.5 Desktop Survey

A desktop survey was conducted of available published and unpublished information, along with a review of data available on the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) web-based databases, in order to identify key habitats and species (including legally protected and species of conservation concern) that may be present within ecologically relevant distances from the scheme as explained below. The data sources below were consulted for the desktop study:

- NPWS website (www.npws.ie), (<https://www.npws.ie/>), where site synopses, Natura 2000 data forms and conservation objectives were obtained along with Annex I habitat distribution data and status reports.
- (NPWS 2019a) The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 1: Summary Overview. Unpublished NPWS report.
- (NPWS 2019b) The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report.
- (NPWS 2019c). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 3: Species Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA 2021) maps website (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>)
- Geological Survey Ireland Spatial Resources (GSI 2021) maps website (dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/)

1.5.1 Limitations and Constraints

The screening assessment necessarily relies on some assumptions and it was inevitably subject to some limitations. These do not affect the conclusion, but the following points are recorded in order to ensure the basis of the assessment is clear:

- The LAP is a higher-level plan. Therefore, this assessment cannot include any detailed assessment of any projects that may arise as a result of implementation of this Plan. Where broad level assessments are required to determine the potential for cumulative or in-combination impacts, the precautionary principle is used.
- Much of the implementation and monitoring of the plan is dependent on collaboration with stakeholders and a range of agencies. The implementation of the Plan will also depend on the economic climate, political support, council funding and availability of funding from other sources. It is not possible to predict with certainty where these can be relied upon or where unpredictable changes will occur. However, the assumption is made that in all instances

legislation will be followed and further AA will occur where needed by the Competent Authority.

- Any changes to the Plan will require re-assessment by a suitably qualified Ecologist to determine if further screening and assessment will be required. In all instances of this assessment, the precautionary principle is used.

2 Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2021-2027

2.1 Background

The Ballinasloe LAP sets out the overall development strategy and planning policy objectives for the town for coming years. It also seeks to provide for the medium-term planning and development benefit for Ballinasloe as a Key Town identified in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and which is also reflected in the County Development Plan. The Core Strategy, Settlement Hierarchy and Housing Need and Demand Assessment outlined in Chapter 2 of the Galway County Development Plan (GCDP) sets out the growth agenda for the town of Ballinasloe.

The LAP supports economic growth, education service and community related development in line with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. The plan's policy objectives, and development management guidelines and standards have also been informed by best practice, national planning guidance and the GCDP, where appropriate. The Local Transport Plan sets out a clear strategy for sustainable development that is closely aligned with sustainable transportation.

2.2 Profile of Ballinasloe

Ballinasloe is located approximately 60km east of Galway City, just 30km south-west of the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone (Figure 2-1). The town is strategically located on the M6 motorway network with immediate access from the northern edge of the town to the Galway-Dublin Rail Line. Ballinasloe has been designated as a Key Town in the RSES along with the historic designation of County Town status. Cognisance is attributed to the strategic location of Ballinasloe and the importance of cross boundary collaboration with adjoining Local Authorities and other relevant stakeholders as necessary. These include, for example, Roscommon and Westmeath County Councils.

The town also benefits from key energy and telecommunications infrastructure which are considered key for the location of industrial and technological companies, for example. Ballinasloe is connected to An Bord Gáis gas pipeline network, to ENet and BT fibre network. The town has an important sub-regional role in delivering retail provision, employment and community facilities in particular education and healthcare. An important part of the town's social events calendar is the annual October Horse Fair which contributes significantly to the local economy. Distinct natural amenities, particularly the River Suck also have important economic benefits for the town. The town provides higher order important services such as Portiuncula Hospital. The town is well serviced with educational facilities, however there will be a requirement for extra school place provision at both primary and post primary levels should population increases materialise. Proximity to Athlone and Galway City for third level facilities is also a major advantage.

In terms of population trends, according to the most recent 2016 Central Statistics Office CSO figures, the total population of Ballinasloe was recorded as 6,662 persons, which represents a slight increase on the 2011 recorded population of 6,659.

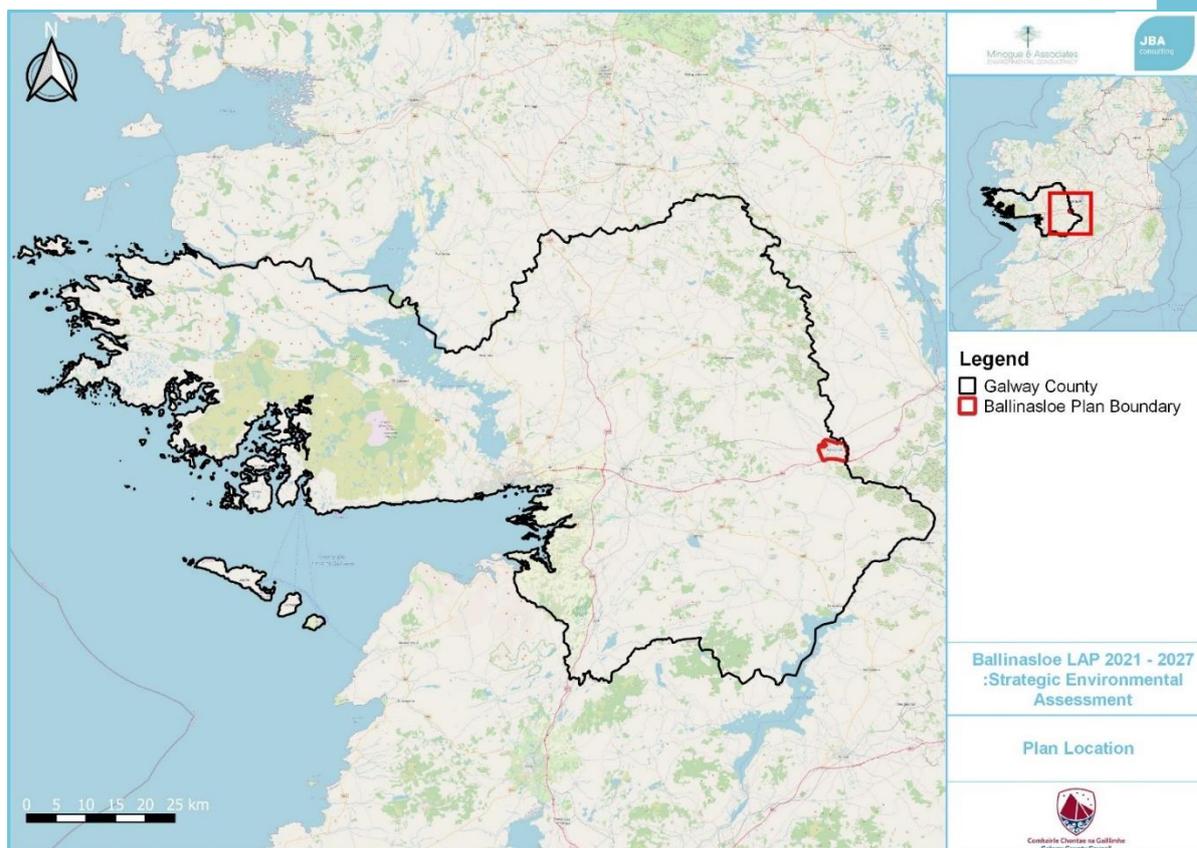


Figure 2-1 Location of Ballinasloe and the Plan Boundary

2.3 Strategic Vision

The LAP will continue the vital role as economic driver in east County Galway. The town will fulfil its role as identified in the RSES to provide sustainable compact growth with access to good local services and critical infrastructure.

This can be achieved through the following aims:

- Secure the delivery of compact growth with critical mass in a consolidated plan area;
- Promote the reuse of existing buildings along with a sustainable level of densities as appropriate depending on the character of the receiving environment and access to services and key infrastructure such as sustainable means of mobility;
- Support investment in regeneration and other town centre improvement works to maintain Ballinasloe as an attractive place to live work and visit;
- Focus on the town's historical role as a major employment centre in east Galway by supporting economic potential and investment in appropriately zoned locations;
- Provide future residential and employment development in Ballinasloe with supporting services and infrastructure as appropriate including retail, community and amenity areas;
- Encourage the promotion of sustainable mobility including walking and cycling in accordance with the aspirations of the Local Transport Plan and support the continued provision of investment in public transport;
- Recognises the town's potential as an attractive place for people and locals to enjoy by promoting local amenities such as the Fair Green and the Marina;
- Maintain the quality of Ballinasloe's environmental assets such as the River Suck along with the town's historic remnants such as Protected Structures and two Architectural Conservation Areas in line with national guidance.

3 Existing Environment

This section summarises the relevant existing environment within the Plan boundaries and its surroundings. All relevant baseline data is information on the conditions necessary for the maintenance of European sites.

3.1.1 Surface waterbodies

The River Suck flows through the town of Ballinasloe within the Plan boundary and is the main tributary of the River Shannon. The river is prone to flooding and a weir is located upstream of the bridge in Ballinasloe.

The Derrymullan Stream, the Cuillean Stream and the Ahascragh River discharge into the Suck just north/upstream of the town, and Ballinure/Cloonasoragh River discharges south/downstream of Ballinasloe.

The River Suck and much of its floodplain is protected under the River Suck Callows SPA. The River Suck discharges into the River Shannon approximately 12km downstream, which is further protected under the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA. The River Suck Catchment is shown in relation to other European Sites within 15km in Figure 3-1.

Under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Status of the River Suck (2013 - 2018) has been assigned a "Moderate" (EPA 2021). All rivers mentioned above discharging into the Suck have been assigned a status of "Good", except for the Cuillean Stream which also received a "Moderate" status.

3.1.2 Groundwater bodies

Ballinasloe town (and the plan boundary) is located in a highly Karstic region composed of limestone bedrock, however, there are no recorded karstic features (e.g. swallow holes) within the Plan boundary.

The Plan boundary mostly lies on the Suck South Groundwater Body (GWB) (IE_SH_G_225) and is surrounded by the Aghrim GWB (IE_SH_G_019) (GSI 2021). Under the WFD Status 2013 - 2018, these two groundwater bodies within the Plan boundary have been assigned a "Good" status (EPA 2021). The location of these groundwater bodies in relation to the plan boundary is shown in Figure 3-1.

The Plan area mostly lies on an aquifer that is composed of "Regionally Important Aquifer- Karstified (conduit)", and partially composed of "Locally Important Aquifer" (GSI 2021).

3.1.3 Wastewater

Ballinasloe town is serviced by a Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) with a Population Equivalent (PE) of 13,500. As Ballinasloe currently has a population of 6,662 (2016 census), so there is sufficient capacity at the treatment plant for the population size. The EPA's Urban Status Inspection labelled this plant with a 'Pass' rating and indicated that the discharge will not have a significant impact on any European Sites.

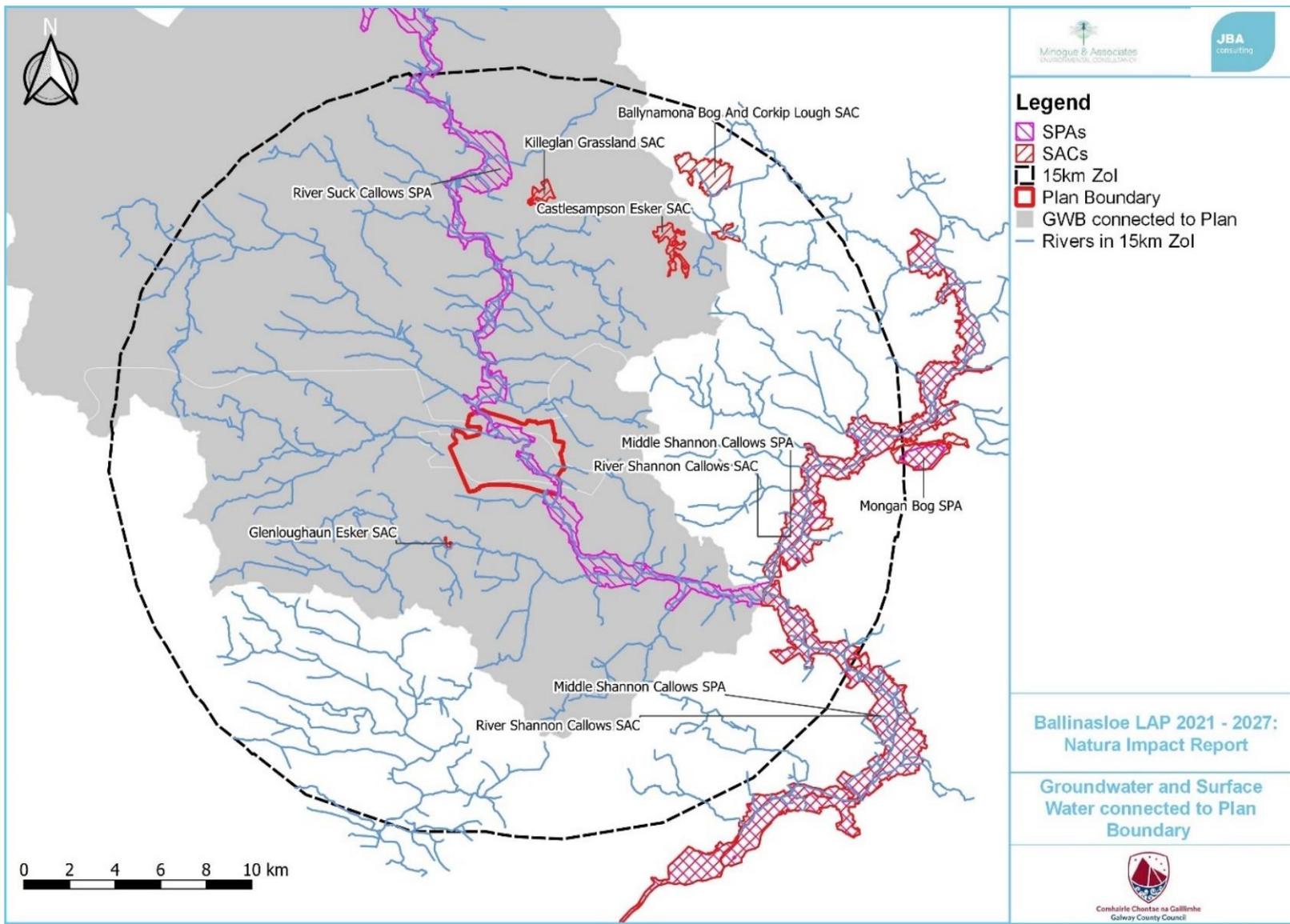


Figure 3-1 Surface water and Ground water bodies connected to Plan boundary

4 European Sites, Pathways and Potential Impacts

4.1.1 Zone of Influence

The Zone of Influence (Zoi) within which potential impacts from any proposed project or plan must be considered for significance depends on a variety of factors. This includes the nature, location and extent of the proposed works, the ecological receptors present within the European sites within the area and the potential for in-combination impacts (DoEHLG 2009). The DoEHLG (2009) guidance identifies that Screening for AA of a plan or project should consider the following European sites:

- Any European sites within or adjacent to the plan or project area.
- Any European sites within the likely Zoi of the plan or project. This is dependent on the nature and scale of the plan, with 15km generally recommended for plans, but potentially much less for projects.
- Any European sites that are more than 15km from the plan or project area, but may potentially be impacted upon, for example, through a hydrological connection.

When determining the Zoi for this Plan, the nature and scale of the proposed policies and objectives are considered in relation to the conservation objectives of the European sites that may be connected to the Plan. For an impact to occur, a Source (potential impacts from the Plan), Pathway (e.g. surface water, groundwater, land or air connectivity) and Receptor (Qualifying Interests (QIs) of the European sites) must be present.

4.2 European sites in Zoi

There is one European Site located within the Plan area, and a further nine SACs and SPAs within 15km of the plan area. These European Sites include:

- River Suck Callows SPA
- Glenloughaun Esker SAC
- Killeglan Grassland SAC
- Castlesampson Esker SAC
- Middle Shannon Callows SPA
- River Shannon Callows SAC
- Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC
- Pilgrims Road Esker SAC
- Mongan Bog SPA
- Mongan Bog SAC

These Ten European Sites are shown in Figure 4-1 in relation to the Plan Boundary, and are further described below in Table 4-1 with their Qualifying Interests and distances from the Plan Boundary.

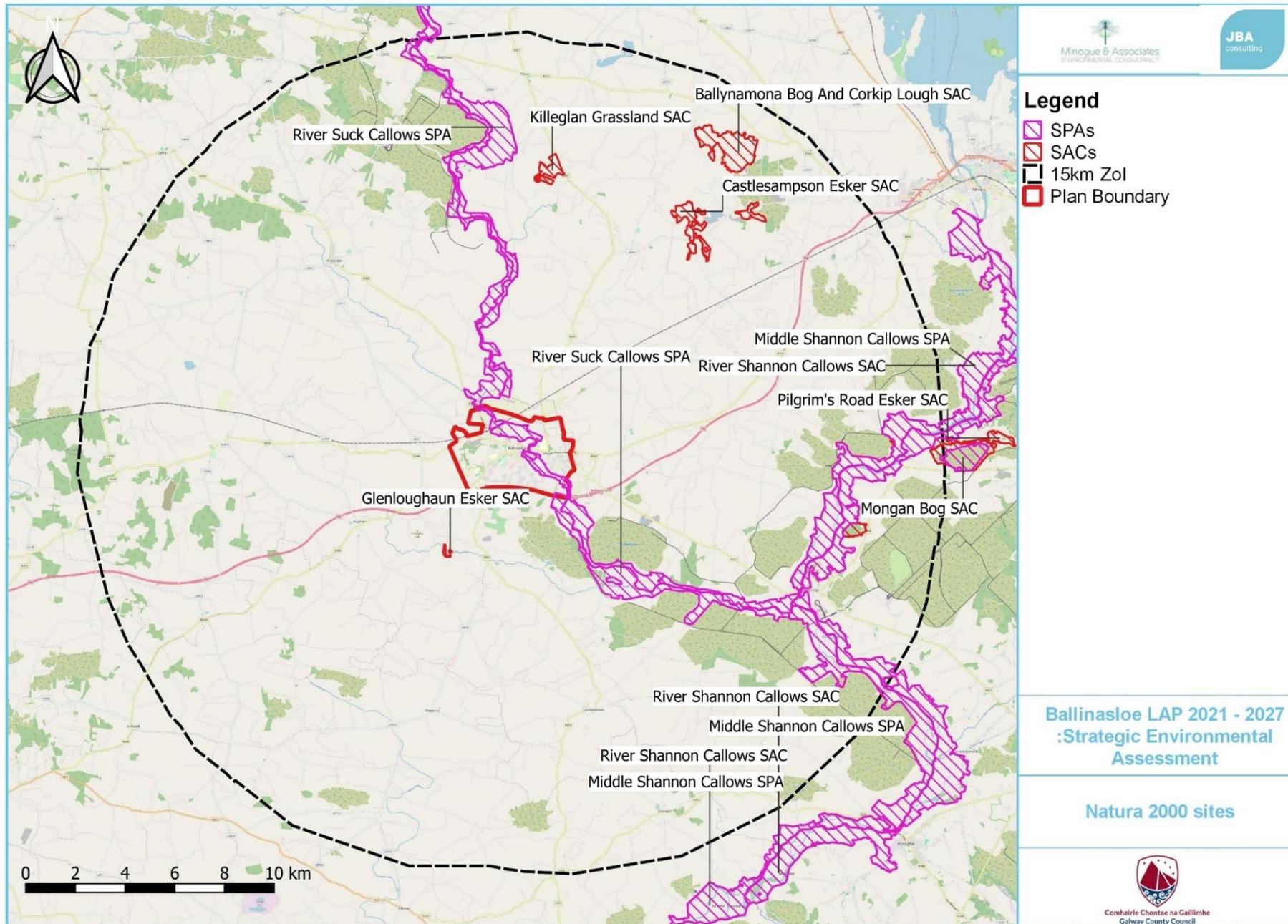


Figure 4-1 European Sites within 15km of the Plan Boundary

Table 4-1 European Sites within 15km of the Plan Area

Site Code	Sites within 15km of Plan area	Distance from Plan	Qualifying Interests	Brief description of site
004097	River Suck Callows SPA	0m (adjacent)	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	The River Suck flows through the town of Ballinasloe and drains into the River Shannon approximately 12km downstream from the Plan boundary. Approximately 70km of the River Suck is designated as a SPA including wetland areas that flood during the winter, which attracts wintering and migratory bird species.
002213	Glenloughaun Esker SAC	2.2km	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	Situated approximately 5 km south-west of Ballinasloe, this small site comprises of an esker ridge with dry, mostly unimproved, orchid-rich calcareous grassland. A feature of the site is the unusual mixture of calcicole and calcifuge species. Leaching of the base-rich substrate of the esker is likely to have given rise to soil conditions suitable for colonisation by calcifuge plants. Of particular note is Green-winged orchid.
002214	Killeglan Grassland SAC	9.3km	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	Killeglan grassland is situated in County Roscommon, approximately 9.5 km north of Ballinasloe. The SAC is defined by dry calcareous grassland on a shallow rendzina type soil formation between outcropping limestone boulders and the shattered limestone formations. Overall, the site is of outstanding quality and provides an excellent example of the Annex I priority habitat orchid-rich calcareous grasslands. Of particular note is a good population of Green-winged Orchid.
001625	Castlesampson Esker SAC	8km	Turloughs [3180] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	The Castlesampson Esker site is of high conservation for the proximity and juxtaposition of esker, raised bog and turlough. The site is quarried, and gravel pits occur within the site, although the esker ridge itself is largely intact and fairly undisturbed. The turlough's pattern of flooding is also unusual, appearing to come mostly from a few swallow holes in the south.
004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	9.5km	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) [A122]	The Middle Shannon Callows SPA is located approximately 9.5km away from the Plan boundary, and is hydrologically linked via the River Suck approximately 12km downstream.

Site Code	Sites within 15km of Plan area	Distance from Plan	Qualifying Interests	Brief description of site
			<p>Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>	<p>This is a large site extending for 50km from Athlone to Portumna. In winter the site is internationally important for the total numbers of birds (regularly exceeding 20,000 birds), in particular for Whooper Swan but also in summer this site supports important populations of breeding waders. The site held 40% of the Irish population of Corncrake but it should be noted that since the designation of this site, Corncrakes are now regionally extinct from the Shannon Callows.</p>
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	9.5km	<p>Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</p>	<p>The River Shannon Callows is a long and diverse site which consists of seasonally flooded, semi-natural, lowland wet grassland, as well as other important habitats such as esker ridges, bogs, wet meadows and Limestone pavements. It is approximately 50km long stretching along the River Shannon and associated habitats from Athlone to Portumna.</p>
002339	Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC	12km	<p>Turloughs [3180] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Bog woodland [91D0]</p>	<p>Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough is situated approximately 9km west of Athlone, in Co. Roscommon. The site comprises a relatively small portion of what was once a large bog complex, and includes areas of high bog and cutover bog, and also the turlough, Corkip Lough. Active raised bog, bog woodland and turlough are listed as Conservation Interests, but also present is a rich calcareous grassland add to the diversity of the site.</p>
001776	Pilgrims Road Esker SAC	14.5km	<p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</p>	<p>Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC is a narrow esker ridge extending 2km east from Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly. The site is adjacent to the River Shannon Callows and Mongan raised bog SAC/SPA. The site is protected for its orchid-rich calcareous grassland, include a large population of the rare Green-winged Orchid.</p>
004017	Mongan Bog SPA	14.5km	<p>Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser</i></p>	<p>Mongan Bog is a raised bog that occasionally used a wintering</p>

Site Code	Sites within 15km of Plan area	Distance from Plan	Qualifying Interests	Brief description of site
			<i>albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]	roost and foraging area for Greenland White-fronted Goose, although they no longer use the site in recent years. Mongan Bog is also a Ramsar Convention Site, a Nature Reserve and Biogenetic Reserve.
000580	Mongan Bog SAC	14.5km	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> [7150]	Mongan Bog is a largely intact, raised bog located east of the monastic site of Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, and 12km south of Athlone. Mongan Bog is of high conservation importance as it is a good example of a raised bog site which contains examples of the Annex I habitats active raised bog, degraded raised bog and depressions on peat substrates (<i>Rhynchosporion</i>). The ongoing intensive research on aspects of bog ecology at the site reinforces its international importance.

4.3 Potential Impacts to European Sites from the LAP

Development for housing, business, infrastructure, services and recreation/tourism promoted as part of the Ballinasloe LAP can potentially have adverse impacts on the habitats and species for which European sites are designated.

These impacts can be direct, such as habitat loss, fragmentation or degradation, or indirect such as disturbance or pollution from construction, transportation etc. They can include long-term effects associated with the operational phase of proposed developments or general population growth, and short-term effects arising from construction phases.

This chapter identifies the potential impacts and their pathways to European sites within and adjacent to Ballinasloe which may arise as a result of the Draft of the Ballinasloe LAP. It then goes on to identify the types of impact/pathway to which the qualifying features present upon the European sites are particularly sensitive.

As outlined in the EC guidance on the assessment of plans and projects affecting European sites (EC, 2002), impacts that could potentially occur through the implementation of the proposed Plan are as follows in Table 4-2 below:

Table 4-2: Potential Hazards to European sites

Potential Hazard	Description
Habitat loss	This is a loss of habitat within the designated boundaries of a European site – it is expected that there would be no direct loss to development as a result of implementation of the LAP
Habitat fragmentation	This is where activities result in the separation of available habitats or split extensive areas of suitable habitat. Most likely to affect species.
Changes in physical regime	These are changes to physical process that will alter the present characteristics of the European site e.g. fluvial and geomorphological processes, erosion processes, deposition.
Physical damage	This includes recreational pressures such as trampling and erosion, and where sites are close to urban areas, other damaging activities may occur such as rubbish tipping, vandalism, arson, and predation, particularly by cats.
Habitat/community simplification	Changes to environmental conditions, due to human activities, which result in a reduction and fragmentation of habitats that will reduce biodiversity.
Disturbance (noise, visual)	Activities which result in disturbance, causing sensitive birds and mammals to deviate from their normal, preferred behaviour, such as construction, recreational, traffic.
Competition from invasive non-native species	Activities may cause the introduction or spread of invasive non-native animals and plants, which could result in changes to community composition and even to the complete loss of native communities.
Changes in water levels or tables	Activities that may affect surface and groundwater levels, such as land drainage and abstraction, may have adverse impacts on water dependant habitats and species.
Changes in water quality	Activities that may impact upon water quality, such as accidental pollution spills, run-off from urban areas, nutrient enrichment from agriculture, and discharge from sewage works, may adversely affect wetland habitats and species.
Changes to surface water flooding	Activities that may result in a reduction or increase in the frequency and extent of surface water flooding, which may affect riverine and floodplain habitats
Turbidity and siltation	Increases in turbidity within water environments can impact upon aquatic plants, fish and wildfowl due to sedimentation and reduction in penetrable light.
Pollution	Activities that may lead to the release of pollutants to the air such as oxides of nitrogen, oxides of sulphur or ammonia, or pollutants deposited on the ground through acidification or terrestrial eutrophication via soil (deposition of nitrogen).

4.3.1 Qualifying Interests and Sensitivity to Hazards

Table 4-3 shows the qualifying features of the European sites within Zol of the Ballinasloe Plan area and identifies the hazards to which they are most sensitive.

It must be noted that during the assessment of the potential impacts of the LAP on a European site, all of the potential hazards will be considered.

Table 4-3: Sensitivity of Qualifying Features to Potential Hazards

European site	Qualifying Interest	Habitat loss	Habitat fragmentation	Changes in physical regime	Physical damage	Habitat/community simplification	Disturbance (noise/ visual)	Competition from invasive non-native species	Changes in water levels or table	Changes in water quality	Changes to surface water flooding	Turbidity and siltation	Pollution
River Suck Callows SPA	Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Greenland White-fronted Goose	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Wetland and Waterbirds	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Glenloughan Esker SAC	Orchid-rich calcareous grasslands.	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓		✓
Killeglan Grassland SAC	Orchid-rich calcareous grasslands	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓		✓
Castlesampson Esker SAC	Orchid-rich calcareous grasslands,	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓		✓
	Turloughs	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Middle Shannon Callows SPA	Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Corncrake, Black-tailed Godwit, Black-headed Gull	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
River Shannon Callows SAC	Molinia meadows, Lowland hay meadows, Limestone pavement,	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓		✓
	Alluvial forests,	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

European site	Qualifying Interest	Habitat loss	Habitat fragmentation	Changes in physical regime	Physical damage	Habitat/community simplification	Disturbance (noise/ visual)	Competition from invasive non-native species	Changes in water levels or table	Changes in water quality	Changes to surface water flooding	Turbidity and siltation	Pollution
	Otter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC	Active raised bog, Degraded bogs, Depressions in peat (<i>Rhynchosporion</i>), Bog Woodland	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turlough,	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pilgrims Road Esker SAC	Orchid-rich calcareous grasslands.	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓		✓
Mongan Bog SPA	Greenland White-fronted Goose	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mongan Bog SAC	Active Raised bogs, Degraded bogs, Depressions in peat (<i>Rhynchosporion</i>)	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.4 An initial scoping of European sites within 15km of the proposed works

Ten European sites are located within 15km of the Plan boundary. No further sites are hydrologically linked up to 20km.

Some of these European Sites can be further screened out based on pathways from the plan. In Table 4-4 below, these sites are further screened for pathways including surface water, groundwater, and air pathways, as well as disturbance to species if applicable. European sites are screened-in if they determined to be within at least one pathway in the Zol.

Table 4-4: European Sites Pre-Screening based on ZI and potential pathways.

Site Code	European Sites within 15km of Plan area	Distance from Plan	Surface water pathway	Groundwater pathway	Air Pathway	Disturbance pathway	Pathway?
004097	River Suck Callows SPA	0m (adjacent)	Yes- River Suck flows through plan area	Yes - likely pathway via Karstic groundwater body (GWB) IE_SH_G_225 and SH_G_019	Yes	Yes- SPA protected for Annex I species Greenland White-fronted Goose and Whooper Swan which may occur within Plan boundary	Yes
002213	Glenloughaun Esker SAC	2.2km	No- on separate upstream tributary of the River Suck	No- Plan area in same GWB IE_SH_G_225. However, QI not reliant on groundwater	Unlikely pathway due to distance	N/A (no species QI)	No
002214	Killeglan Grassland SAC	9.3km	No- no hydrological connection	No- Plan area in same GWB IE_SH_G_225. However, QI not reliant on groundwater	Unlikely pathway due to distance	N/A (no species QI)	No
001625	Castlesampson Esker SAC	8km	No- no hydrological connection	No- connected to complex Karstic GWB IE_SH_G_225 but located upstream from Plan	Unlikely pathway due to distance	N/A (no species QI)	No
004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	9.5km	Yes- The River Suck, which flows through the Plan area, discharges into the River Shannon approx. 12km downstream	No- Plan not connected to GWB (but hydrologically linked via River Suck)	Unlikely pathway due to distance	Yes- SPA protected for Annex I species Greenland White-fronted Goose and Whooper Swan which may occur within Plan boundary	Yes
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	9.5km	Yes- The River Suck, which flows through the Plan area, discharges in to the River Shannon approx. 12km downstream	No- Plan not connected to GWB	Unlikely pathway due to distance	Yes- site protected for Otter (Annex II) which is likely present in Plan area. Note: Corncrake (Annex I species) now Extinct from Shannon Callows (Birdwatch Ireland n.d.).	Yes
002339	Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC	12km	No- no hydrological connection	No- Plan not connected to GWB	Unlikely pathway due to distance	N/A (no species QI)	No

Site Code	European Sites within 15km of Plan area	Distance from Plan	Surface water pathway	Groundwater pathway	Air Pathway	Disturbance pathway	Pathway?
001776	Pilgrims Road Esker SAC	14.5km	No- no hydrological connection	No- Plan not connected to GWB	Unlikely pathway due to distance	N/A (no species QI)	No
004017	Mongan Bog SPA	14.5km	No- no hydrological connection	No- Plan not connected to GWB	Unlikely pathway due to distance	Unlikely- Mongan Bog was used as a feeding/roosting site by the River Suck population of Greenland White-fronted Goose, but is no longer used by this species (NPWS 2014a)	No
000580	Mongan Bog SAC	14.5km	No- no hydrological connection	No Plan not connected to GWB	Unlikely pathway due to distance	N/A (no species QI)	No

4.5 Summary of Pre-Screening

Due to lack of pathways based on preliminary screening on Sites within the Zol of 15km, the following European Sites will not be further assessed for potential impacts:

- Glenloughaun Esker SAC
- Killeglan Grassland SAC
- Castlesampson Esker SAC
- Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC
- Pilgrims Road Esker SAC
- Mongan Bog SAC
- Mongan Bog SPA

The three European sites that were identified which have pathway-receptors for potential likely significant effects arising from the implementation of the Plan are:

- River Suck Callows SPA
- Middle Shannon Callows SPA
- River Shannon Callows SAC

4.6 Potential Impacts from the Plan

4.6.1 Introduction

The LAP has the potential to cause a number of direct and indirect effects on European sites via one or more pathways. Such potential effects include long-term effects associated with the operational phase of proposed developments or general population growth, and short-term effects arising from the development construction phases. The main potential effects are described below.

4.6.2 Urbanisation

Urbanisation is a broad term that can act as a pathway to produce a number of often disparate impacts to European sites. The population of Ballinasloe from the 2016 census was 6,662, an increase of 0.05% from 2011 which was 6659. However, Chapter of the Galway County Development Plan (GCDP) provides for an increase in population in Ballinasloe of 1,999 over the plan period of 2022 – 2028. Impacts from increases population will lead to increases in impacts from development. Impacts from increase urbanisation may include:

- Habitat loss should the development occur within the boundaries of a European site. Loss of supporting habitats, grazing and roosting areas used by wetland birds that are not within the boundaries of the designated site but that provide important functional habitat linkages, can also be a significant impact.
- Physical damage, for example from trampling and erosion, and also activities such as fly-tipping, littering, vandalism, arson, and predation, particularly by cats.
- Habitat fragmentation, whereby new development results in the separation of available habitats or splits extensive areas of suitable habitat. It is most likely to impact upon species.
- Disturbance (noise and visual) associated with both the construction phase (e.g. from plant movements, machinery) and also the operational phase (e.g. from users of the development undertaking activities such as walking or water sports which generate disturbance). This typically affects sensitive species such as birds and mammals causing them to deviate from their normal preferred behaviour.
- Air pollution from increased traffic both during the construction and operational phases.
- Increased Recreational impacts

The River Suck Callows SPA, which lies within the Plan area, is likely to be impacted by urbanisation. Although it is unlikely there will be any direct habitat loss, as there is no Zoning for development within the boundary of the SPA, there may be fragmentation and degradation due to increased development, and temporary impacts such as release of pollutants during construction. Bird species of the SPA could directly be impacted through loss or changes to habitat, notably wetlands and floodplains that are an important resource to wintering and migratory birds. Birds that are special interests of the SPA may also be vulnerable to predation associated with the influx of domestic cats and other large predators found in urban areas

Additionally, Otters, a QI of the Shannon Callows SAC, may be impacted by increased urbanisation through loss of riparian habitat and decrease in water quality and increase in disturbance.

4.6.3 Recreational Impacts

Increased recreational pressures from urban populations, including dog walking, jogging, cycling, horse riding, motorbike scrambling, boating and other water-based recreational activities are likely to result from new housing developments and population increases.

Improved access to the countryside and increased tourism will also attract more visitors to the area as well as residents. This can lead to significant pressures on sensitive habitats resulting in damage and disturbance to the species they support. Typical impacts of tourism and recreation include:

- Physical damage, for example from trampling and erosion
- Disturbance to species, such as ground-nesting birds and wintering wildfowl, from walking, cycling and water sports, resulting in increased mortality and nesting success, and displacement
- Air pollution and disturbance from traffic
- Disturbance from dogs and damage from dog excrement.

In addition, where sites are close to urban areas and new developments, recreational pressures can be exacerbated by other damaging activities such as rubbish tipping, vandalism, arson, and predation, particularly by cats.

Many European sites will be vulnerable to some degree of impact as a result of recreational pressure, although the effects of recreational impacts are complex and very much dependent on the specific conditions and interest features at each site. For example, some bird species are more sensitive to disturbance associated with walkers or dogs than others; some habitats will be more sensitive to trampling than others; and some sites will be more accessible than others.

Most recreational activities with the potential to affect European sites are 'casual' and pursued opportunistically (e.g. walking, walking dogs, riding) which makes it difficult to quantify or predict the impacts of these activities on European sites and harder to control or manage. It also means it is difficult to explore in detail all potential impacts of recreational pressures at the strategic level. However, it is possible for plans and strategies to influence recreational use of European sites through the planning process, for example by increasing the amount of green/open space and leisure/recreational facilities required within or near developments if potentially vulnerable European sites are located nearby.

As the River Suck Callows SPA is located within the Plan area it is likely to be impacted by recreational activities, including motor cruising facilitated by the newly built 25-berth Marina at Slí na hAbhainn, and continued works on making the River Suck navigable to the River Shannon. Other activities such as coarse fishing/angling, shooting and hunting are popular sports and activities on or near the River Suck.

However, overall the River Suck is largely inaccessible to the public within Ballinasloe and the Plan area, except by boat and there are few small walkways and access points, including the Marina. The majority of the SPA in and adjacent to the Plan area is primarily zoned for agricultural purposes and is likely not used by walkers, cyclists, or horse riders.

The screening assessment will consider the potential for recreational pressures on a European site by taking into consideration the vulnerability of their interest features to such pressures, the accessibility of the site to the public, the likely attractiveness of the site and its habitats/species to visitors, and the proximity of the site to sites allocated for development.

4.6.4 Transport and related infrastructure

To enhance the local economy of Ballinasloe and to promote residential, commercial and recreational development, transport and its related infrastructure will likely increase. New or additional transport infrastructure to support expanding development can have impacts, during construction and operation, on European Sites, and can act as a pathway to produce a number of often disparate impacts to European sites. This can include:

- Habitat loss should any infrastructure development occur within the boundaries of a European site. Loss of supporting habitats, damaging or changing feeding and roosting located used by wetland birds that are not within the boundaries of the designated site but that provide important functional habitat linkages, can also be a significant impact.
- Habitat fragmentation, whereby new development results in the separation of available habitats or splits extensive areas of suitable habitat. It is most likely to impact upon species.
- Disturbance (noise and visual) associated with both the construction phase (e.g. from plant movements, machinery) and also the operational phase (e.g. increased traffic). This typically affects sensitive species such as birds and mammals causing them to deviate from their normal preferred behaviour.
- Air pollution from increased traffic both during the construction and operational phases.

Currently, within the plan area, there are two roads crossing the River Suck (including the River Suck Callows SPA) and the M6 Motorway crosses the River Suck at the southern edge of the Plan boundary. Additionally, there may be in-combination effects from projects outside the plan such as the Galway to Athlone (linking to Dublin) Cycleway, although this is still in pre-planning design phase.

4.6.5 Hydrological Impacts

New development and population increase can result in hydrological effects to existing watercourses and groundwater resources. Such effects can include changes to surface and ground water flows, quality and levels; this can have subsequent effects on habitats and supported species. The main types of potential hydrological effects are as follows:

- *Water abstraction* – new developments would increase the demand for water resulting in increased levels of water abstraction and subsequently affect surface and/or ground water flow, quality and levels. Any such effects would be more extreme during the summer as water demand will peak at this time. The assessment of potential effects of increased water demand will consider how the public water supply system operates and how it is regulated with other water-resource consents.
- *Water discharges* – new developments could result in an increase in discharges to water via foul and surface water/storm water drainage (flood risk). This could also occur during construction phases (e.g. oil spillage or other pollution incidents from construction plant and machinery) but would be short-term and of reduced significance. Discharges can also occur during the operational phase of works through the increased use of waterways by motor powered boats and oil from a higher number of cars using roads close to the watercourse network. Such discharges can impact on surface water and ground water quality, quantity and flows. The water quality effects of the plan are likely to be either controlled by existing consent regimes (which must undergo AA) or have diffuse ‘in-combination’ effects that are difficult to quantify and therefore any assessment must focus on the development of suitable mitigating policy that will minimise the impacts of development on water quality.

The screening assessment will consider the potential for impacts on a European site due to changes in water levels and/or quality by taking into consideration the vulnerability of their interest features to such impacts, and the pathways i.e. the hydrological connectivity between the site and the areas proposed for development.

In line with the recent *People over Wind & Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta* Case C-323/1, policy or proposal-level protective and mitigation measures relating to water abstraction and/or water discharges will only be considered at the AA stage (NIR).

A large proportion of the activities which exploit water resources, such as agriculture, flood defence, recreation, power generation, fisheries or nature conservation, will not be directly controlled or influenced by options/policies contained within the Local Plan. Furthermore, specific consenting regimes, independent of the Local Plan, tend to regulate water supply and exploitation in relation to

water-resource sensitive European sites. However, development promoted or supported by the Local Plan will likely increase demand for water.

Additionally, flooding of the River Suck is an ongoing issue in Ballinasloe town and environs, which can lead to increased pollution impacts through surface water pathways, as floodwaters may cause discharge from sewage networks, slurry tanks, and petroleum tanks into the surrounding environment. A Flood Relief Scheme is being planned for Ballinasloe and this may have cumulative impacts on the European Sites.

4.6.6 Air Quality Effects

New developments and an increase in population have the potential to result in increased use of the road network by vehicles, which could have adverse effects on air quality. This could have subsequent effects on habitats sensitive to air quality changes and higher deposits of nitrogen dioxide, particulates and sulphur dioxide (diesel trains) such as on bogs and peatlands. For example, there is the potential for effects on the health of *Sphagnum* (which is critical to the ability of the degraded raised bog to re-establish actively growing peat within the site). However, any European Sites that has QI's sensitive to air pollution (e.g. Mongan Bog SAC) is at a distance in which there will be no likely effects.

Additionally, Air Quality Index for the area is overall good. Note the nearest air quality station is Station 70, Athlone Civic Centre (<https://airquality.ie/station/EPA-70>).

It should be noted that the likelihood of this effect is greatly reduced as the distance increases between the deposit area (typically the road network) and the European site. Pollutant levels can be expected to fall substantially at a distance less than 50m from the source and can be expected to fall to background levels at a distance of more than 200m. Smithers (et al. 2016) report that, in relation to NO_x and NO₂ associated with vehicle emissions, levels are greatest within the first 50-100m from the road, but may be discernible at greater distances. However, heavy metals from vehicle emissions decline rapidly within the first 5-10m and may not be discernible beyond 50m from the roadside.

Only one European Site, the River Suck Callows SPA, is located within 200m of the Plan area, and the QIs of this site are not threatened by air pollution.

5 Cumulative and/or in-combination Impacts

As part of the Screening for an AA, in addition to considering the proposed Plan itself, other relevant Projects and Plans in the region that may induce cumulative impacts must also be considered. As such, the list below contains Plans and Projects that are relevant to Ballinasloe LAP and that may interact to cause cumulative and/or in-combination effects to European sites and QIs.

5.1.1 Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 (draft)

Galway County Development Plan (GCDP) (2022 - 2028) is currently being prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000, having recently gone through a public consultation process. The LAP for Ballinasloe will be amended following the adoption of the draft report.

The plan sets out the overall strategy for planning and sustainable development for the county. The development plan is currently in draft form. Chapter 10 of the plan outlines the aims of the Galway County Council to protect and enhance the natural heritage and biodiversity of designated and non-designated ecological sites and sets out the policies and objectives for this. The Ballinasloe LAP complements the implementation of the current Galway County Development Plan.

The NIR is being produced to assess potential impacts to European Sites as a result of the plan (CAAS 2021a). Actions that may arise from the Galway CDP will be considered at a project level where appropriate, which will ensure that any cumulative or in-combination impacts are addressed. However, due to the high-level nature of this Plan, it is not possible to determine with confidence the likely impacts or mitigation measures required yet in detail.

Therefore, cumulative or in-combination impacts may arise as a result of projects that may occur as a result of this Plan and will be subject to AA which will assess these in detail and provide suitable mitigation measures where appropriate. Mitigation measures that may be required are discussed in Section 8.

5.1.2 Roscommon County Development Plan 2021-2027 (draft)

The boundary of the Plan area in Ballinasloe forms a border with Co. Roscommon. Much of the border between Roscommon and Galway is formed by the River Suck. The River Suck Callows SPA borders both counties. Roscommon County Development Plan 2021-2027 is currently being prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000, having recently gone through a third stage of public consultation on material alterations.

The plan sets out the overall strategy for planning and sustainable development for the county. The development plan is currently in draft form. A NIR is being produced to assess potential impacts to European Sites as a result of the plan (CAAS 2021b). Actions that may arise from the Roscommon CDP will be considered at a project level where appropriate, which will ensure that any cumulative or in-combination impacts are addressed. However, due to the high-level nature of this Plan, it is not possible to determine with confidence the likely impacts or mitigation measures required yet in detail.

Therefore, cumulative or in-combination impacts may arise as a result of projects that may occur as a result of this Plan and will be subject to AA which will assess these in detail and provide suitable mitigation measures where appropriate. Mitigation measures that may be required are discussed in Section 8.

5.1.3 Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 (draft)

There is a hydrological link via the River Suck to the River Shannon, which is shared by Galway and Offaly. Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 is currently being prepared and will be adopted in October 2021, in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000, having recently gone through a third stage of public consultation on material alterations.

The plan sets out the overall strategy for planning and sustainable development for the county. The development plan is currently in draft form. A NIR has been produced to assess potential impacts to European Sites as a result of the plan (CAAS 2020). Actions that may arise from the Offaly CDP will be considered at a project level where appropriate, which will ensure that any cumulative or in-combination impacts are addressed. However, due to the high-level nature of this Plan, it is not possible to determine with confidence the likely impacts or mitigation measures required yet in detail.

Therefore, cumulative or in-combination impacts may arise as a result of projects that may occur as a result of this Plan and will be subject to AA which will assess these in detail and provide suitable mitigation measures where appropriate. Mitigation measures that may be required are discussed in Section 8.

5.1.4 National Planning Framework - Project Ireland 2040

National Planning Framework - Project Ireland 2040 is the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all of its people. Alongside the development of physical infrastructure, Project Ireland 2040 supports business and communities across all of Ireland in realising their potential. The National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework combine to form Project Ireland 2040. Development of infrastructure may have localised adverse impacts. Actions that may arise as a result of Project Ireland 2040 will be considered at a project level, which will ensure that any cumulative or in-combination impacts are addressed. Due to the high-level nature of this Plan, it is not possible to determine with confidence the likely impacts or mitigation measures required yet in detail.

Therefore, cumulative or in-combination impacts may arise as a result of projects that may occur as a result of Project Ireland 2040. Any projects that may arise as a result of this plan will have a project level AA which will assess these in detail and provide suitable mitigation measures where appropriate.

5.1.4.1 River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021

The River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) (DoH LGH 2018) for Ireland 2018-2021 sets out the actions that Ireland will take to improve water quality and achieve 'good' ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) by 2021 (DoH P LG, 2018a).

The plans described the classification results and identified measures that can be introduced in order to safeguard waters and meet the environmental objectives of the WFD:

- Prevent deterioration of water body status
- Restore good status to water bodies
- Achieve protected areas objectives
- Reduce chemical pollution of water bodies

These objectives support the policies in the LAP. However, any projects that may arise as a result of this plan will have a project level AA which will assess these in detail and provide suitable mitigation measures where appropriate.

5.1.4.2 Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 - 2020

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan 2018 - 2020 (DoC CAE 2018) is in direct response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provides a whole-of-government approach to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Plan identifies four strategic priorities to guide implementation: 1) Awareness: raise public awareness of the SDGs; 2) Participation: provide stakeholders opportunities to engage and contribute to follow-up and review processes, and further develop national implementation of the Goals; 3) Support: encourage and support efforts of communities and organisations to contribute towards meeting the SDGs, and foster public participation; and 4) Policy alignment: develop alignment of national policy with the SDGs and identify opportunities for policy coherence. Actions that may arise as a result of this Plan will likely not result in cumulative and/or in-combination impacts.

5.1.5 Regional Spatial Economic Strategy 2020 - 2032

The Regional Spatial Economic Strategy 2020 - 2032 (RSES) is divided into four regions which cover all of the Republic of Ireland. Ballinasloe and Galway County is within the Northern and Western Region. The RSES provides a roadmap for regional development, with the aim of creating healthy places and promoting sustainable communities. The RSES Growth Framework provides a clear sustainable strategy for compact growth and delivering those key elements known to inform business location choices. It identifies a pathway through the inclusion of a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Galway. This RSES provides a high-level development framework for the Northern and Western Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and objectives of Government. Development of infrastructure required for these changes may

have localised adverse impacts, however; overall impacts that may arise as a result of the Programmes are likely to be positive in nature. Actions that may arise as a result of the Programmes, must be assessed further at a project level. Due to the high-level nature of these Programmes, it is not possible to determine with confidence the likely impacts or mitigation measures required yet in detail.

5.1.6 Galway to Athlone Cycleway

This project has been paused for a number of years but was restarted in 2020. This is part of a wider project of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway, being developed by Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport.

The planning and detailed design is currently being carried out with the aim to apply to An Bord Pleanála's consideration in approximately three years. Five route options are being proposed, with several options including Ballinasloe.

It is assumed that a full Natura Impact Statement will be prepared on the final route option, however, it is not possible to determine the likely impacts or mitigation measures required yet in detail.

5.1.7 Wastewater Treatment

Ballinasloe town is serviced by a WWTP with a Population Equivalent (PE) of 13,500. As Ballinasloe currently has a population of the 2016 census was 6,662, there is a capacity at the treatment plant for this population size. The EPA's Urban Status Inspection labelled this plant with a 'Pass' rating.

An AA Screening for the Ballinasloe Agglomeration was undertaken by Irish Water in relation to the Waste Water Certificate of Authorisation: D0032-01 process and it was determined that that the discharge from the wastewater treatment plant or in-combination with other sources (diffuse agricultural runoff) will not have a significant impact on the River Suck Callows SPA or downstream receiving European Sites (Irish Water 2014).

5.1.8 Shannon Tourism Masterplan 2020-2030

Ballinasloe LAP aims to promote the use of the River Suck for water-based tourism under Policy objective BKT 19 Water-based Tourism. This will be subject to the relevant Planning and Environmental legislation, including the Habitats Directive. This will be carried out with regard to 'Shannon Tourism Masterplan 2020-2030' which involves waterways and waterside tourism potential and to enhance the water-based tourism product along the Shannon Navigation System. This masterplan has been subject to an AA, and it was determined that this masterplan shall not adversely affect habitats and species of European Sites, assuming that the mitigation measures detailed in the report are fully implemented (SLR 2020).

5.1.9 Ballinasloe Flood Relief Scheme (OPW)

Significant flooding occurred in Ballinasloe from the River Suck, Deerpark River and other local water bodies in November 2009 and during winter 2015/2016. A Flood Relief Scheme (FRS) has been commissioned which is currently in preliminary design phases. An Environmental Constraints report has outlined that an AA Screening and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be required to assess the impacts of the FRS on the European Site (Ryan Hanley 2021).

As no AA has been carried out on this project yet, there may be cumulative adverse impacts from the project and the plan on European Sites, but these are currently uncertain.

6 Screening Assessment

This section considers the development policies of the Ballinasloe LAP and identifies whether or not they are likely to have significant effects on European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans.

Section 4.4 identified that the following European Sites within a 15km radius have a pathway with the plan boundary:

- River Suck Callows SPA
- Middle Shannon Callows SPA
- River Shannon Callows SAC

6.1 Introduction

Assessment of the potential impacts of Ballinasloe LAP aims, objectives, strategies and policies is required under regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011).

This section aims to identify whether the proposed Plan aims, objectives, strategies and policies are likely to have a significant effect, either alone, or in-combination with other projects and plans, on the European Sites within the Zol.

The 'screening' process addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive:

- Is the plan or programme directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site; and
- Will the plan or programme, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a European site in view of its conservation objectives.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant or uncertain, then the plan or programme that is under assessment is subject to a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, reported in the form of a NIR.

The aims, objectives, strategies and policies of Ballinasloe LAP are not directly connected to the management of any European Sites; however, they could have potential to cause significant effects on European Sites.

6.2 Screening methodology

In accordance with DEHLG guidance, the key to determining if an AA is required for a Plan, is in the assessment of whether the plan and its policies and objectives are likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

For this process, the screening of this plan has been broken down into 4 steps.

1. Description of the programme (Section 2);
2. Screening of European sites within the Zol of the plan dependent on the presence of potential pathways and nature of the qualifying interests.
3. Assessing the measures to identify potential impacts. Determining the significance of these potential impacts and the requirement for follow up assessments.
4. Screening Statement with conclusions. This is presented in Section 6.4

6.2.1 The Precautionary Principle

If there is uncertainty, and it is not possible, based on the information available, to confidently determine no likely significant effects on a site then the precautionary principle will be applied, and the plan will be subject to an AA.

6.2.2 Mitigation, Avoidance and Protective Measures

Following the *People over Wind & Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta* Case C-323/17, the assessment does not consider protective, avoidance or mitigation measures for stage 1 Screening. These measures are carried forward and considered as part of the stage 2 AA.

6.3 Development Policies

The development policies have initially been screened following the methodology set out in DTA Publications Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook (DTA 2021). Each policy is allocated one or more screening categories, shown in Table 6-1 below. The results of the initial screening are shown in Table 6-2. Where a number of categories to screen out a policy are applicable, the most relevant categories are listed in the table. The screening outcome includes any relevant in-combination assessment outcomes.

Table 6-1: Screening categories for the development policies (adapted from DTA, 2021)

Screening Category	Description	Screening Outcome
A	General statement of policy/ general aspiration.	Out
B	Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals.	Out
C	Proposal referred to but not proposed by the plan.	Out
D	Environmental Protection / site safeguarding policy.	Out
E	Policies or proposals that steer change in such a way as to protect European sites from adverse effects.	Out
F	Policy that cannot lead to development or other change.	Out
G	Policy or proposal that could not have any conceivable effect on a European site.	Out
H	Policy or proposal, the actual or theoretical effects of which cannot undermine the conservation objectives (either alone or in combination with other aspects of this or other plans or projects).	Out
I	Policy or proposal with a likely significant effect on a site alone.	In
J	Policy or proposal with an effect on a site but not likely to be significant alone, so need to check for likely significant effects in combination.	Dependant on in-combination test
K	Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination.	Screened out after in-combination test
L	Policy or proposal likely to have a significant effect in combination.	Screened in after in-combination test.

Table 6-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
BKT 1 Consistency with the Core Strategy		
Ensure that the developments permitted within the plan area are consistent with the zoned land allocations in the Core Strategy and associated provisions in the current Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028.	A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 2 Service Led Development		
Development shall only be permitted where there is satisfactory water and wastewater provision to service same, either existing or to be provided in tandem with the development.	A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 3 Environmental Assessment		
To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications in the plan area to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report that accompany this LAP. There shall be a requirement of Ecological Impact Assessment as appropriate in plan area.	B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals D - General plan-wide environmental protection/ site safeguarding/ threshold polices K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 4 Proliferation of Individual Uses		
Protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre by ensuring that it remains the primary retail, commercial and mixed-use centre in the town and prohibit a proliferation of any individual use that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, does not contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre.	A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 5 Collaboration		
It is a Policy Objective of Galway County Council to engage with adjoining local authorities and collaborate with relevant stakeholders in relation to strategic planning and sustainable development of adjoining areas and the town of Ballinasloe.	A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 6 Residential Development Phasing		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>Support the development of lands designated as Residential (Phase 1) within the lifetime of the Plan, subject to normal planning, access and servicing requirements, and reserve the lands designated as Residential (Phase 2) for the longer-term growth needs of Ballinasloe. Residential (Phase 2) lands are generally not developable for housing within the lifetime of this Plan, with the exception of the following developments, which may be considered by the Planning Authority, subject to a suitable evidence based case being made for the proposal:</p> <p>a) Single house developments for local family members on family-owned land, subject to a 7-year occupancy clause.</p> <p>b) Non-residential developments that are appropriate to the site context, residential amenities, the existing pattern of development in the area and the policy objectives in the Plan.</p> <p>c) Where it is apparent that Residential (Phase 1) lands cannot or will not be developed for residential purposes within the plan period, residential development may be considered in limited cases in a phased manner on suitable Residential (Phase 2) lands, in exceptional circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development on Residential (Phase 2) lands will normally only be considered where 50% of the lands in Residential (Phase 1) are committed to development. • Residential developments on Residential (Phase 2) lands will be subject to compliance with the Core Strategy, the principles of proper planning and sustainable development, connectivity, including infrastructure and public footpath and lighting to the town centre, the sequential approach, avoidance of leap-frog developments, and subject to meeting normal planning, environmental, access and servicing requirements. Developments will only be permitted where a substantiated evidence-based case has been made to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority and the development will not prejudice the future use of the lands for the longer-term growth needs of each settlement. 	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
<p>BKT 7 Residential Infill Development</p>		
<p>Within the town centre, small scale limited infill housing development will be considered on appropriate sites. These infill sites shall have regard to the existing character of the street, respecting the existing building line, scale, proportions, layout, heights and materials of surrounding developments. A proposed site must have a safe means of access and egress and comply with development management standards for new dwellings.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 8 Sequential Development</p>		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>Endeavour to promote the orderly and phased development of residential development in accordance with the principles of the sequential approach as set out in the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns & Villages) Guidelines 2009 (or as updated). This shall include a presumption in favour of the sequential development of suitably serviced Residential (Phase 1) lands emanating outwards from the town core and/or sequential extensions to the existing residential fabric of suitably serviced Residential (Phase 1) lands within the LAP boundary, subject to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and the current County Development Plan.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
<p>BKT 9 Town Centre</p>		
<p>1. It is a Policy Objective of Galway County Council that Ballinasloe Town Centre will remain the primary focus for the location of new retail and commercial development. The Planning Authority will ensure that the location of future retail development is consistent with the key policy principles and order of priority as set out in the Guidelines for Planning Authorities Retail Planning 2012 (and any updated/superseded document) and will require Retail Impact Assessments, including details of the sequential approach and Design Statements for retail developments in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines.</p> <p>2. This plan will also promote the development of commercial and complementary mixed uses, on suitable lands that can provide focal point for the provision of services to the town and opportunities for commercial enterprises, retail developments and employment creation.</p> <p>3. The plan will protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre by ensuring that it remains the primary retail, commercial and mixed-use centre of Ballinasloe and prohibit a proliferation of any individual use or other uses, which in the opinion of the Planning Authority do not contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 10 Town Centre Management</p>		
<p>Subject to appropriate resources, the Council in collaboration with local stakeholders shall prepare town centre management plans for Ballinasloe as necessary.</p> <p>The Management Plans will consider some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Public realm improvement works; b) Upgrade of public lighting; c) Connectivity between the town centre and the wider fringes of the towns; d) Shop front design/improvement of the town centre; 	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>e) Upgrade and improvement of street furniture; f) Provision of appropriate quality soft landscaping and planting as well as functional public spaces; g) Car parking management; h) Consideration of reuse of backlands within the town centre for civic space/other uses.</p>		
BKT 11 Saint Brigid's Campus		
<p>It will be a Policy Objective of the Council to promote the regeneration and reuse of the existing Saint Brigid's Campus through appropriate measures such as master planning in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. Various funding streams and support will be sought to secure adequate investment in this historic campus.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the county could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	IN
BKT 12 Community Facilities		
<p>Promote the sustainable development of community facilities on suitable lands with a high level of access to the local community, including educational, community, civic, public, institutional, recreational, cultural and other complementary uses as appropriate.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the county could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	IN
BKT 13 Business and Enterprise		
<p>To facilitate the expansion of business and enterprise uses in the plan area of Ballinasloe where appropriate and to facilitate the provision of further employment opportunities in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the county could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant</p>	IN

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
	effect in-combination	
BKT 14 Business and Technology		
Support the development of Ballinasloe Key Town as the driver of employment development in east County Galway, utilising its existing assets such as access to established employment sites, its strategic location with sustainable public transport and access to a highly educated and skilled workforce.	A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 15 Industrial		
Promote the sustainable development of industrial and industrial related uses, including manufacturing, processing of materials, warehousing and distribution on suitable lands with adequate services and facilities and a high level of access to the major road networks and public transport facilities. Adequate perimeter treatment and/or screening will be required to ensure high quality interfaces with public spaces and any adjoining residential areas or other sensitive land uses as appropriate.	This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the county could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality. I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination	IN
BKT 16 Open Space, Recreation and Amenity		
Promote the sustainable management, use and/or development, as appropriate, of open space/recreation and amenity lands. This will include: a) Development of open spaces and recreational activities, in accordance with best practice and on suitable lands with adequate access to the local community and retain existing open space and recreational facilities, unless it can be clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of Galway County Council that these uses are no longer required by the community; b) Appropriate management and use of any flood risk areas within the OS zone to avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate, the risk and potential impact of flooding; c) Appropriate management and use of any areas of high biodiversity value.	Any open areas close to the River Suck, including areas designated for flood risk could be used as suitable wintering grounds for Q1 birds of the screened-in European Sites. I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination	IN
BKT 17 Tourism		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>a) It is a policy objective of the Council to encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism potential of Ballinasloe in a manner that respects, builds on, protects and enhances the cultural, built and natural heritage and local amenities of the town.</p> <p>b) Provide where feasible and support the provision of tourism infrastructure and services including, walking cycling and water-based infrastructure and short-term guest accommodation facilities in appropriate locations in Ballinasloe.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
<p>BKT 18 Tourism Development</p>		
<p>Encourage and facilitate the sustainable development of the tourism potential of Ballinasloe and its environs in a manner that respects, builds on, protects and enhances the cultural, built and natural heritage of the town and the local amenities within the plan area including natural heritage and biodiversity.</p> <p>Key projects and initiatives that will be supported in this plan shall:</p> <p>a) Facilitate the sustainable development of East Galway as a cultural and tourist destination while simultaneously safeguarding its integrity. Promote active collaboration between all stakeholders both in County Galway and adjoining counties and region.</p> <p>b) Collaborate with relevant tourism agencies in the enhancement and increased economic value of Ballinasloe's town twinning linkages and to create a broader tourist offer within the concept of the 'Fair Towns'.</p> <p>c) Ensure that in particular that all such developments shall meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive and shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 of the Directive and any other sites that maybe considered as stepping stones in support of European sites.</p>	<p>Development in riparian zones could have alone or in-combination effects on riparian habitats, on the water quality of the River Suck/Shannon and on QIs of the SPA and SAC.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
<p>BKT 19 Water-Based Tourism</p>		
<p>The Council will support, subject to meeting the requirements of relevant Irish Planning and European environmental legislation including the Habitats Directive, the development of the necessary infrastructure and amenities to support water-based tourism within the plan area.</p> <p>The Council shall:</p> <p>a) Collaborate with Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, other Local Authorities and other relevant agencies in the implementation of the 'Shannon Tourism Masterplan' which involves waterways and waterside tourism potential and to enhance water based tourism product along the Shannon Navigation System including Ballinasloe in order to make the town a more attractive inland water tourism destination. Galway County Council will</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased pressure on the River Suck and River Shannon. This could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>have cognisance of the SEA and AA mitigation measures including in the Shannon Tourism Masterplan as appropriate.</p> <p>b) Continue to promote and enhance the public marina at Slí na hAbhainn as a sustainable marina resource including ancillary facilities and services as appropriate.</p> <p>c) There shall be a requirement for Ecological Impact Assessment as appropriate.</p>		
BKT 20 Agriculture		
<p>There will be a general presumption against residential development on Agricultural (A) zoned lands, located within the plan boundary except for single house developments for family members on family-owned lands (see Policy Objectives RH1 and RH2 of the County Development Plan.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	Out
BKT 21 Public Utilities		
<p>a) Facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential public utility infrastructure, together with the necessary ancillary facilities and uses, as appropriate.</p> <p>b) Development proposals in the vicinity of public utilities infrastructure will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	Out
BKT 22 Water Supply		
<p>It is a policy objective of the Council to secure the delivery of a water treatment plant upgrade within the lifetime of the plan, subject to appropriate resources in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased pressure on River Suck and local aquifers. This could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	IN
BKT 23 High Quality, Contextually Sensitive Design		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>Ensure that new developments are responsive to their site context and in keeping with the character, amenity, heritage, environment and landscape of the area. New development proposals will be required to complement the existing character of the area in terms of scale, height, massing, building line, urban grain and definition and through high quality design proposals for buildings/structures/shop fronts, the use of high quality, appropriate materials and the provision of appropriate signage, lighting, landscaping proposals and other such details.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 24 Universal Access</p>		
<p>Ensure that housing developments, community facilities, public spaces, public roads, public footpaths and transport services give due consideration to the needs of disabled or mobility impaired people and the requirements of the Disability Act 2005, the Council’s Disability Action Plan 2007-2015 (and any updates to this document), the Traffic Management Guidelines 2003, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) and National Disability Authority (NDA) advice notes titled Access: Improving the Accessibility to Historic Buildings and Places 2011 (and any subsequent reviews/updates to these documents).</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 25 Architectural Heritage</p>		
<p>Ensure the protection and conservation of the architectural heritage in the plan area, in particular by implementing the relevant legislative provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in relation to architectural heritage and policy guidance contained within the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2004/2011 and the published DAHG & NDA advice series titled Access: Improving the Accessibility of Historic Buildings and Places 2011 (or any superseding document).</p> <p>Policy Objective AH 2 – Protected Structures (Refer to the Current Galway County Development Plan) Ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of structures included in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, together with the integrity of their character and setting.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 26 Architectural Conservation Areas</p>		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>Protect, conserve and enhance the essential character of the Ballinasloe Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) through the appropriate management and control of the design, location and layout of new development, respecting surviving historic plots and street patterns, alterations or extensions to existing structures, and/or modifications to the character or setting of the Architectural Conservation Areas. The identification of areas of special interest within the plan boundary may be considered during the lifetime of the plan.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 27 Social and Affordable Housing</p>		
<p>Require that a minimum of 20% of all new eligible residential sites are set aside for the development of new social and affordable housing units, unless addressed through suitable alternative arrangements by agreement with the Planning Authority, in accordance with the Galway County Council Housing Strategy and Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and any subsequent amendments to the Part V provision to reflect Government policy.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 28 Housing for Older Persons and People with Special Needs</p>		
<p>Facilitate, as appropriate, development for housing for older persons, people with disabilities and people with special needs in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 29 Traveller Accommodation</p>		
<p>Support the provision of adequate accommodation facilities for the Traveller Community in accordance with the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 for County Galway (or any updated/superseding document).</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
<p>BKT 30 Other Residential Development</p>		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>There shall be a general presumption in favour of the development of nursing/care homes and retirement accommodation/facilities and community/day care centres on residential zoned lands, community facility zoned lands or adjacent to the established town centre or as suitable re-use for protected structures or other buildings (e.g. institutional or educational buildings) that would have limited re-development potential given their size and architectural character, subject to normal planning, environmental, access and servicing requirements.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
BKT 31 Local Transport Plan		
<p>Support the implementation of the Local Transport Plan as set out in Section 3 in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development. Galway County Council will apply the mitigation measure in the SEA and AA of the above Local Transport Plan.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
BKT 32 Transportation Infrastructure		
<p>Facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential transportation infrastructure. This shall include the reservation of lands to facilitate public roads, footpaths, cycle ways, bus stops and landscaping together with any necessary associated works, as appropriate.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality. I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
BKT 33 Pedestrian and Cycle Network		
<p>a) Encourage and support the development of a series of cycle and pedestrian routes in the Ballinasloe area and in accordance with the Galway to Dublin Cycle Route and the Townspark Relief Road where feasible and in a sensitive manner, incorporating the streams, rivers, woods, and canal. Indirect impacts on built heritage, natural heritage and designated conservation areas arising from such recreational activities should be duly considered and addressed as part of any proposal. b) Ensure that in particular that all such developments shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and any other sites that maybe considered in support of European sites.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality. I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
BKT 34 Public Transport & Integrated Transportation Location		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>Promote Ballinasloe as an integrated transportation location, which supports the provision of improved and enhanced public transport services and facilities, including rail, bus services, the Rural Transport Programme, park and ride/park and stride facilities and all associated ancillary requirements in consultation with the relevant transport providers and with the NTA.</p> <p>a) In consultation with the relevant agencies, investigate the potential of developing a Public Transport Node/Hub in the town, or other suitable location/s, to provide a facility for transferring between one transport service to another.</p> <p>b) Seek to enhance access along the Sarsfield Road to the Railway Station, upgrade connectivity with existing parking facilities to the northeast of the railway station/Sarsfield Road to the proposed location for the public transportation hub/node including any ancillary park and ride facilities, as appropriate.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased pollution from This potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
<p>BKT 35 Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) and Road Safety Audits (RSA)</p>		
<p>Require all significant development proposals to be accompanied by a Road Safety Audit and Traffic & Transport Assessment carried out by suitably competent consultants, which are assessed in association with their cumulative impact with neighbouring developments on the road network, in accordance with the requirements contained within the TII's Traffic & Transport Assessment Guidelines (PE-PDV-02045) 2014 (including any updated/superseding document) and 'Road Safety Audit' (GE-STY-01024) December 2017.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 36 Preservation of Routes, Road Upgrades and Infrastructure Provision</p>		
<p>Prohibit development on lands which are reserved for proposed road/street corridors and associated buffers and where development would affect a route, line, level or layout of any proposed new roadway or any junction required between a proposed and existing road.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 37 Reservation of Access Points</p>		
<p>Reserve access points for future development and the development of backlands that may be identified for reservation by the Planning Authority during the plan period, to ensure adequate vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access to backlands, in order to facilitate efficient development of these lands and to ensure connectivity and accessibility to lands with limited road frontage.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 38 Road Junction Improvements</p>		
<p>Continue to carry out road junction improvements at the following locations: a) River Street and Main Street (adjacent to the Bank of Ireland);</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct</p>	<p>IN</p>

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
b) Harris Road and R446/Dunlo Street; c) Dunlo Street and R446/Dunlo Hill; d) Complete Works on Relief Road and proposed Link Road at Dunlo. The provision of the above listed road junction improvements shall be in compliance with the EU Habitats Directive and The Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) (as updated).	and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality. I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination	
BKT 39 Ballinasloe Relief Road		
To support the delivery of the Ballinasloe Relief Road	This objective could lead to increased development of infrastructure. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality. I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination	IN
BKT 40 Climate Change		
To implement, through this Local Area Plan Policy Objectives that support and encourage sustainable compact growth and settlement patterns, integrate land use and transportation, and maximise opportunities through development location, form, layout and design to secure climate resilience and reduce carbon dioxide and greenhouse emissions.	A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 41 European Sites		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>Protect European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 Network (including Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) in accordance with the requirements in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Liability Directive, the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011) (and any subsequent amendments or updated legislation) and having due regard to the guidance in the Appropriate Assessment Guidelines 2010 (and any subsequent or updated guidance). A plan or project (e.g. proposed development) within the plan area will only be authorised after the competent authority (Galway County Council) has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, including a Screening for Appropriate Assessment, and Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); <p>or</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; <p>or</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000. 	<p>D - General plan-wide environmental protection/ site safeguarding/ threshold polices</p> <p>E - Policies or proposals which steer change in such as way as to protect European sites from adverse effects</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 42 Constrained Land Use</p>		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>To facilitate the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk within zoning plan areas. This zoning limits new development, while recognising that existing development uses within these zones may require small scale development, as outlined below, over the life of the Local Area Plan, which would contribute towards the compact and sustainable urban development of the town. The underlying zoning or the existing permitted uses are deemed to be acceptable in principle for minor developments to existing buildings (such as small extensions to houses, most changes of use of existing buildings), which are unlikely to raise significant flooding issues, provided they do not obstruct important flow paths, introduce a significant additional number of people into flood risk areas or entail the storage of hazardous substances.</p> <p>Since such applications concern existing buildings or developed areas, the sequential approach cannot be used to locate them in lower-risk areas and the Justification Test will not apply. Development proposals within this zone shall be accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment, carried out in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines and Circular PL 2/2014 (or as updated), which shall assess the risks of flooding associated with the proposed development.</p> <p>Proposals shall only be considered where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that they would not have adverse impacts or impede access to a watercourse, floodplain or flood protection and management facilities, or increase the risk of flooding to other locations. The nature and design of structural and non-structural flood risk management measures required for development in such areas will also be required to be demonstrated, to ensure that flood hazard and risk will not be increased. Measures proposed shall follow best practice in the management of health and safety for users and residents of the development.</p> <p>Specifications for developments in flood vulnerable areas set out in this plan shall be complied with as appropriate. (Please refer also to Policy Objective BKT 41).</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
<p>BKT 43 Flood Risk Management Guidelines</p>		
<p>It is the policy objective of Galway County Council to support, in co-operation with the OPW, the implementation of the EU Flood Risk Directive (2007/60/EC), the Flood Risk Regulations (SI No. 122 of 2010) and the DEHLG/OPW publication The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009) (and any updated/superseding legislation or policy guidance) and Department Circular PL2/2014 or any updated / superseding version.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 44 Flood Risk Management and Assessment</p>		
<p>It is a Policy Objective of the Council to comply with the requirements of the</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration</p>	<p>Out</p>

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>DoEHLG/OPW The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities and its accompanying Technical Appendices Document 2009 (including any updated/superseding documents). This will include the following:</p> <p>(a) Avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate in accordance with the Guidelines;</p> <p>(b) Development proposals in areas where there is an identified or potential risk of flooding or that could give rise to a risk of flooding elsewhere will be required to carry out a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment, and justification test where appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 (or any superseding document); Any flood risk assessment should include an assessment of the potential impacts of climate change, such as an increase in the extent or probability of flooding, and any associated measures necessary to address these impacts;</p> <p>(c) Development that would be subject to an inappropriate risk of flooding or that would cause or exacerbate such a risk at other locations shall not normally be permitted; (d) Galway County Council shall work with other bodies and organisations, as appropriate, to help protect critical infrastructure, including water and wastewater, within the County, from risk of flooding.</p>	<p>B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	
BKT 45 Connections to the Public Sewer and Public Water Mains		
<p>Where public wastewater services are available, new development proposals shall be required to connect to same.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	Out
BKT 46 Principles of Flood Risk Management Guidelines		
<p>The Council shall implement the key principles of flood risk management set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines as follows:</p> <p>(a) Avoid development that will be at risk of flooding or that will increase the flooding risk elsewhere, where possible;</p> <p>(b) Substitute less vulnerable uses, where avoidance is not possible; and</p> <p>(c) Mitigate and manage the risk, where avoidance and substitution are not possible.</p> <p>Development should only be permitted in areas at risk of flooding when there are no alternative, reasonable sites available in areas at lower risk that also meet the objectives of proper planning and sustainable development. Vulnerable development in areas which have the highest flood risk should be avoided and/or only considered in exceptional circumstances (through a prescribed Justification Test) if adequate land or sites are not available in</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	Out

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
areas which have lower flood risk.		
BKT 47 Flood Relief Schemes		
<p>The Council shall support and co-operate with the Office of Public Works (OPW) in the delivery of the forthcoming Flood Relief Scheme for Ballinasloe. Appropriate measures to accommodate the delivery of the Flood Risk Scheme should be facilitated where possible, in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased infrastructure in the riparian zone of the River Suck. This could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	IN
BKT 48 Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs)		
<p>Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the existing surface water drainage system in Ballinasloe. Ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in all new developments. Surface water runoff from development sites will be limited to pre-development levels and planning applications for new developments will be required to provide details of surface water drainage and sustainable drainage systems proposals.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased infrastructure. This could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	IN
BKT 49 Protection of Waterbodies and Watercourses		
<p>Protect water bodies and watercourses within the County from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains. This will include protection buffers in riverine, wetland and coastal areas as appropriate.</p>	<p>D - General plan-wide environmental protection/ site safeguarding/ threshold polices E - Policies or proposals which steer change in such as way as to protect European sites from adverse effects</p>	Out
BKT 50 Flood Risk Assessment for Planning Applications and CFRAMS		

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
<p>Protect Flood Zone A and Flood Zone B from inappropriate development and direct developments/land uses into the appropriate Flood Zone in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009 (or any superseding document) and the guidance contained in Development Management Standard 69. Site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required for all planning applications in areas at elevated risk of flooding, even for developments appropriate to the particular flood zone. The detail of these site-specific FRAs will depend on the level of risk and scale of development. A detailed site specific FRA should quantify the risks, the effects of selected mitigation and the management of any residual risks. The Council shall have regard to the results of any CFRAM Studies in the assessment of planning applications. Where a development/land use is proposed that is inappropriate within the Flood Zone, then the development proposal will need to be accompanied by a Development Management Justification Test in addition to the site-specific Flood Risk Assessment. In Flood Zone C, where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1%, Flood Zone C), site-specific Flood Risk Assessment may be required and the developer should satisfy themselves that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 51 FRA and Climate Change</p>		
<p>Flood Risk Assessments in Ballinasloe shall provide information on the implications of climate change with regard to flood risk in relevant locations. The 2009 OPW Draft Guidance on Assessment of Potential Future Scenarios for Flood Risk Management (or any superseding document) shall be consulted with to this effect.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 52 FRA and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)</p>		
<p>Flood risk may constitute a significant environmental effect of a development proposal that in certain circumstances may trigger a sub-threshold EIA. FRA should therefore be an integral part of any EIA undertaken for projects within Ballinasloe.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination D General plan-wide environmental protection/ site safeguarding/ threshold polices E Policies or proposals which steer change in such as way as to protect European sites from adverse effects</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>BKT 53 Inland Fisheries</p>		
<p>It is the Council policy objective to consult, where necessary, with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies in the construction of flood alleviation measures in Ballinasloe.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either</p>	<p>Out</p>

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
	alone or in combination D - General plan-wide environmental protection/ site safeguarding/ threshold polices E - Policies or proposals which steer change in such as way as to protect European sites from adverse effects	
BKT 54 Flood Vulnerable Zones		
It is Council policy objective to ensure that applications pertaining to existing developments in flood vulnerable zones provide details of structural and non-structural risk management measures to include, but not be limited to specifications of the following - floor levels, internal layout, flood resilient construction, flood resistant construction, emergency response planning, access and egress during flood events.	This objective could lead to increased development in riparian zones and the River Suck Floodplain. This could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality. I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination	IN
BKT 55 Flood Risk Management		
Ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.	A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 56 Waste Prevention, Reduction and Recycling		
Promote the prevention, reduction and recycling of waste in new developments, new development proposals shall be required to submit proposals demonstrating how this is to be achieved and shall seek to ensure on-site provision for waste storage and segregation (bio-waste/dry recyclables/residual waste) pending collection at all new domestic and non-domestic premises.	A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 57 Telecommunications & Broadband		
To facilitate the sustainable delivery of a high capacity and high-quality ICT infrastructure within the plan area, including telephony and broadband services, to the requirements of the relevant service providers and in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.	This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality. I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a	IN

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
	site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination	
BKT 58 Open Access Fibre Ducting		
Facilitate and promote the installation of underground shared telecommunications physical infrastructure, where practicable, in line with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications documents including 'Recommendations for Open Access Fibre Ducting and Interior Cabling for New Residential Buildings 'Making Homes Fibre Ready', 2011, Support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan and the National Digital Strategy for Ireland 2013, 'Doing more with Digital – Phase 1 Digital Engagement' and Galway County Digital strategy 2020-2023 (including any updated/superseding documents).	This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality. I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination	IN
BKT 59 Trees, Parkland/Woodland and Hedgerows		
a) Protect important trees, tree clusters and hedgerows in the plan area and ensure that development proposals take cognisance of significant trees/tree stands. Ensure that all planting schemes use suitable native variety of trees. b) Seek to retain natural boundaries, including stone walls, hedgerows and tree boundaries, wherever possible and replace with a boundary type similar to the existing boundary where removal is unavoidable. Discourage the felling of mature trees where possible. All works to be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Forestry Act, 1946 (as amended). c) Carry out a tree survey on important tree stands within the plan area by suitably qualified personnel.	D - General plan-wide environmental protection/ site safeguarding/ threshold polices E - Policies or proposals which steer change in such as way as to protect European sites from adverse effects	Out
BKT 60 Development Management Standards and Guidelines		
Ensure that the general development management standards and guidelines set out in the current Galway County Development Plan, or any subsequent variation or review shall apply as appropriate in the plan area. In addition, any specific development management guidelines set out in Section 3 of this Local Area Plan shall also be applied, as appropriate, to development proposals in the plan area.	A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination	Out
BKT 61 Opportunity Sites		
To encourage and support the appropriate and sustainable development or redevelopment where appropriate of lands identified as development opportunity sites within the land use zoning map.	This objective could lead to increased development. Any development within the plan area could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of	IN

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
	<p>species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	
<p>BKT 62 Park</p> <p>To carry out a feasibility study exploring the options for the development of a public park in Ballinasloe. Any proposal would be subject to a detailed planning and environmental assessment that accords with proper planning and sustainable development.</p> <p>Where appropriate recreational considerations and access to blue and greens space should be underpinned by the Green Space Principles¹⁴ including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance urban greening through planting strategies that mitigate noise and air pollution and maximise local biodiversity gain and facilitate sustainable drainage (e.g. deciduous wooded and wildflower meadow areas). • A networked approach: emphasising green infrastructure networks (rather than isolated parks) can provide new opportunities for connecting existing and new green spaces and creating linkages between urban and rural areas. Examples include greenways and linear parks, local greenways or cycleways that link to regional and national greenways and de-culverting watercourses to provide new blue corridors. • Well managed and maintained, creating a high-quality environment: poorly managed spaces or vandalism lead to negative perceptions among potential users. • Multifunctional uses: examples include spaces that encourage active mobility, physical activity and sports, relaxation and tranquillity, and opportunities for social exchange (e.g. that incorporate community gardens or encourage parkruns). • Create multisensory restorative environments that help mitigate the psychological stresses of modern living through the provision of “restive places for rejuvenation”. 	<p>This objective could lead to increased recreational impacts if developed in sensitive areas, even if the development is outside European site boundary. This could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	<p>IN</p>
<p>BKT 63 Bathing Area</p> <p>To carry out a feasibility study exploring the options for the establishment of a bathing area along the River Suck. Any proposal would be subject to a detailed environmental assessment that accords with appropriate guidance.</p>	<p>This objective could lead to increased recreational impacts if developed in sensitive areas, This objective could lead to increased development and increased impacts from recreation in riparian zone of the River Suck, even if the development is outside</p>	<p>IN</p>

Policy No. and summary	Screening category	Screening Outcome
	<p>European site boundary. This could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the European Sites network through fragmentation or loss of habitats, disturbance or fragmentation of species, or changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity, and air quality.</p> <p>I - Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone L - Policy or proposal which might be likely to have significant effect in-combination</p>	
DM Guideline Minimum Finished Floor Levels (FFL's)		
<p>The Planning Authority shall</p> <p>a) Require that site specific flood risk assessments be carried out to establish minimum ground floor levels(s) for new developments in areas of potential flood risk in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) & Circular PL2/2014 (as updated/superseded). The appropriate level to meet this standard should be determined using the best available information at the time.</p> <p>b) Ensure that all manholes will be raised to a minimum level of 38.2 OD in the lower floodplain (below the Dublin Road Bridge) and 39.2 OD in the middle floodplain (above the Dublin Road Bridge). Sewers will be sealed to ensure that flood water doesn't gain access and overload the public waste water treatment plant at Pollboy.</p> <p>c) All details to be agreed in writing with the area engineer and submitted as part of a planning application.</p>	<p>A – General statement policy / general aspiration B - Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals K - Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination</p>	<p>Out</p>

6.4 Screening Statement and Conclusions

The majority of development policies within the Ballinasloe LAP Draft have been screened out alone and in combination with other plans or projects. The exception to this are listed below, due to the level of development, nature of the policy and site allocations proposed:

- BKT 6 Residential Development Phasing
- BKT 8 Sequential Development
- BKT 11 Saint Brigid's Campus
- BKT 12 Community Facilities
- BKT 13 Business and Enterprise
- BKT 15 Industrial
- BKT 16 Open Space, Recreation and Amenity
- BKT 17 Tourism
- BKT 18 Tourism Development
- BKT 19 Water-Based Tourism
- BKT 22 Water Supply
- BKT 29 Traveller Accommodation
- BKT 32 Transportation Infrastructure
- BKT 33 Pedestrian and Cycle Network
- BKT 34 Public Transport & Integrated Transportation Location
- BKT 38 Road Junction Improvements
- BKT 39 Ballinasloe Relief Road
- BKT 42 Constrained Land Use
- BKT 47 Flood Relief Schemes
- BKT 48 Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs)
- BKT 54 Flood Vulnerable Zones
- BKT 57 Telecommunications & Broadband
- BKT 58 Open Access Fibre Ducting
- BKT 61 Opportunity Sites
- BKT 62 Park
- BKT 63 Bathing Area

The most likely effects of the potential site allocations within the plan on European sites are related to pressures from new development, including recreational impacts, atmospheric pollution, water abstraction/discharge, increased water pollution and flood risk management pressures.

7 Natura Impact Report

This NIR aims to determine whether the proposed Plan would result in significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any European site with respect to the site's structure, function, and/ or conservation objectives. It also aims to provide supporting information for the competent authority to carry out an AA of the proposed Plan.

The AA Screening identified that the LAP could potentially have significant adverse effects on the following sites:

- River Suck Callows SPA
- Middle Shannon Callows SPA
- River Shannon Callows SAC

This section details the AA of the potential effects of the LAP document on the integrity of the identified European sites.

7.1 Description of Screened-in Sites

The Ballinasloe LAP Draft could potentially have significant adverse effects alone on the Screened-in European Sites which are further described in this section.

7.1.1 River Suck Callows SPA [004097]

The River Suck flows through the town of Ballinasloe and drains into the River Shannon approximately 12km downstream from the Plan boundary. Approximately 70km of the River Suck is designated as a SPA including wetland areas that flood during the winter, which attracts wintering and migratory bird species (NPWS 2014b). Whooper Swan and Greenland White-fronted Goose are both migratory birds that arrive in autumn and overwinter in Ireland, and use flooded grasslands as foraging and roosting. Wigeon, Golden Plover and Lapwing are primarily also migratory birds that overwinter in Ireland in large flocks, but may also breed here during the summer months in smaller numbers.

7.1.1.1 Qualifying Interests

The site is a SPA selected for the following species listed on Annex I / II of the EU Habitats Directive (numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 code):

- Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) [A038]
- Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050]
- Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140]
- Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142]
- Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) [A395]
- Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

7.1.1.2 Conservation Objectives

The conservation objective of all the bird species at River Suck Callows SPA is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA. To acknowledge the importance of wetland habitat for these Annex I bird species, a secondary objective is included to 'maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat at River Suck Callows SPA as a resource for the regularly-occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it' (NPWS 2021a).

There is currently only generic conservation objectives for this SPA (NPWS 2021a), therefore the following list of attributes and targets in Table 7-1 is taken from River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (NPWS 2012a), the closest SPA with comparable QIs.

Table 7-1 Conservation objectives for Qualifying Interests of River Suck Callow SPA

Qualifying Interest	Attributes	Measure	Target
Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]	Population trend Distribution	Percentage change Number, range, timing and intensity of areas used by waterbirds	Long term population trend stable or increasing No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by species of special interest, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation
Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Habitat area	Hectares	The permanent area occupied by the wetland habitat should be stable and not significantly less than the area of (unknown) hectares, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

7.1.1.3 Site Vulnerabilities

This site is designated for wintering birds which are mobile throughout and outside the SPA boundary and are vulnerable to agricultural pressures including increased fertilisation of grassland, grazing from animals and silage/hay making. These birds are also threatened by human activity on the River Suck including angling and boats. Wigeon may also be hunted.

The negative impacts and activities with high effect on the SPA site (NPWS 2020) are listed in Table 7-2

Table 7-2 Threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the Middle Shannon Callows SPA

Code	Threats and pressures	Rank	Source
A04	Grazing	outside	High
F03.01	Hunting	inside	Low
A03	Mowing / cutting of grassland	inside	Medium
A08	Fertilisation	outside	High
A04	Grazing	inside	Medium
G01.01	Nautical sports	inside	Medium
F02.03	Leisure fishing	inside	Low
A08	Fertilisation	inside	Medium
B	Sylviculture, forestry	outside	Low
E01.03	Dispersed habitation	outside	Medium

7.1.2 Middle Shannon Callows SPA [004096]

The Middle Shannon Callows SPA is located approximately 9.5km away from the Plan boundary, and is hydrologically linked via the River Suck approximately 12km downstream (NPWS 2012b)

This is a large site extending for 50km from Athlone to Portumna. In winter the site is internationally important for large number of wetland birds (regularly exceeding 20,000 birds), in particular for Whooper Swan, but also in summer this site supports important populations of breeding waders.

Whooper Swans arrive in autumn and overwinter in Ireland, and primarily use flooded grasslands and wetland as foraging and roosting grounds. Wigeon, Golden Plover, Black-tailed Godwit and Lapwing are primarily also migratory birds that overwinter in Ireland in large flocks but may also breed here during the summer months in smaller numbers. Black-headed gull is present year-round in Ireland. Corncrake is a summer migratory bird that breeds in Ireland during the summer in hay meadows. The

site held 40% of the Irish population of Corncrake but since the designation of this site, Corncrakes are now regionally extinct from the Shannon Callows (Birdwatch Ireland n.d.).

7.1.2.1 Qualifying Interests

The site is a SPA selected for the following species listed on Annex I / II of the EU Habitats Directive (numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 code):

- Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) [A038]
- Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050]
- Corncrake (*Crex crex*) [A122]
- Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140]
- Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142]
- Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156]
- Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179]
- Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

7.1.2.2 Conservation Objectives

The conservation objective of all the bird species at Middle Shannon Callows SPA is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA (NPWS 2021b). To acknowledge the importance of wetland habitat for these Annex I bird species, a secondary objective is included to 'maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat at River Suck Callows SPA as a resource for the regularly-occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it'.

There is currently only generic conservation objectives for this SPA (NPWS 2021b), therefore the following list of attributes and targets in Table 7-3 is taken from River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (NPWS 2012a), the closest SPA with comparable QIs.

Table 7-3 Conservation objectives for Qualifying Interests of Middle Shannon Callow SPA

Qualifying Interest	Attributes	Measure	Target
Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038]	Population trend	Percentage change	Long term population trend stable or increasing
Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) [A122] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]			
Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Distribution	Number, range, timing and intensity of areas used by waterbirds	No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by species of special interest, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation
	Habitat area	Hectares	The permanent area occupied by the wetland habitat should be stable and not significantly less than the area of (unknown) hectares, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

7.1.2.3 Site Vulnerabilities

This site is designated for wintering birds which are mobile throughout and outside the SPA boundary. The birds of this site are vulnerable to increased intensive agricultural pressures including increased fertilisation of grassland, grazing from animals and silage/hay making, but also some birds are vulnerable to abandonment of agriculture. These birds are also threatened by human activity on the River Shannon including angling and boating. These birds are also under pressed from increased development.

The negative impacts and activities with high effect on the SPA site (NPWS 2010) are listed in Table 7-4.

Table 7-4 Threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the Middle Shannon Callows SPA

Code	Threats and pressures	Rank	Source
A04.03	Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing	inside	Low
E01	Urbanised areas, human habitation	outside	High
G01.01	Nautical sports	inside	High
F03.01	Hunting	inside	Low
G01.02	Walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles	inside	Medium
D01.05	Bridge, viaduct	inside	High
A08	Fertilisation	outside	Medium
A04	Grazing	inside	High
A08	Fertilisation	inside	Low
F02.03	Leisure fishing	inside	Medium
D01.01	Paths, tracks, cycling tracks	inside	Low

7.1.3 River Shannon Callows SAC [000216]

The River Shannon Callows is a long and diverse site which consists of seasonally flooded, semi-natural, lowland wet grassland, as well as other important habitats such as esker ridges, bogs, wet meadows and limestone pavements. It is approximately 50km long stretching along the River Shannon and associated habitats from Athlone to Portumna (NPWS 2013).

7.1.3.1 Qualifying Interests

The site is a SAC selected for the following habitats and species listed on Annex I / II of the EU Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

- *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) [6410]
- Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*) [6510]
- Alkaline fens [7230]
- Limestone pavements [8240]
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*) [91E0]
- Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355]

7.1.3.2 Conservation Objectives

The conservation objectives for River Shannon Callows SAC are to maintain or restore favourable conservation condition of the QIs (Annex I Habitats, Annex II or IV species) of the site. It should be noted that this SAC has generic conservation objectives (NPWS 2016) and therefore similar conservation objectives have been taken from Lough Corrib SAC [000297] (NPWS 2017) and Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC [000020] (NPWS 2014c). The attributes and targets of the QIs are listed below in Table 7-5.

Table 7-5 Conservation objectives for Qualifying Interests of River Shannon Callows SAC

Qualifying Interest	Attributes	Measure	Target
<i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)	Habitat area	Hectares	Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes
	Habitat distribution	Occurrence	No decline, subject to natural processes
	Vegetation structure: broadleaf herb: grass ratio	Percentage	Broadleaf herb component of vegetation between 40 and 90%

Qualifying Interest	Attributes	Measure	Target
[6410]	Vegetation structure: sward height	Percentage	30-70% of sward between 10 and 80cm high
	Vegetation composition: typical species	Number	At least 7 positive indicator species present, including 1 "high quality" species
	Vegetation composition: notable species	Number	No decline, subject to natural processes
	Vegetation composition: negative indicator species	Percentage	Negative indicator species collectively not more than 20% cover, with cover by an individual species less than 10%. Non-native invasive species, absent or under control
	Vegetation composition: negative indicator moss species	Percentage	Bog mosses (<i>Sphagnum</i> spp.) not more than 10% cover; hair mosses (<i>Polytrichum</i> spp.) not more than 25% cover
	Vegetation structure: woody species and Bracken (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>)	Percentage	Cover of woody species and bracken not more than 5% cover
	Physical structure: bare ground	Percentage	Not more than 10% bare ground
Lowland Hay Meadows	Habitat area	Hectares	Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes
	Distribution	Occurrence	No decline, subject to natural processes.
	Vegetation composition: typical species	Number at a representative number of monitoring stops	At least seven positive indicator species present including one "high quality" species as listed in O'Neill et al. (2013)
	Vegetation composition: negative indicator species	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Negative indicator species collectively not more than 20% cover, with cover by an individual species not more than 10%
	Vegetation composition: non-native species	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of non-native species not more than 1%
	Vegetation composition: woody species and bracken	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of woody species and Bracken (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>) not more than 5%
	Vegetation structure: broadleaf herb: grass ratio	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Broadleaf herb component of vegetation between 40 and 90%
	Vegetation structure: sward height	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	At least 50% of sward between 10cm and 50cm tall
	Vegetation structure: litter	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Litter cover not more than 25%
	Physical structure: bare soil	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	No more than 5% bare soils
	Physical structure: disturbance	Square metres	Area showing signs of serious grazing or other disturbance less than 20m ²
	Habitat area	Hectares	Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes

Qualifying Interest	Attributes	Measure	Target
	Habitat distribution	Occurrence	No decline, subject to natural processes
Alkaline fens [7230]	Ecosystem function: soil nutrients	Soil pH and appropriate nutrient levels at a representative number of monitoring stops	Maintain soil pH and nutrient status within natural ranges
	Ecosystem function: peat formation	Percentage cover of peat-forming vegetation and water table levels	Maintain active peat formation, where appropriate
	Ecosystem function: hydrology - groundwater levels	Water levels (centimetres); duration of levels; hydraulic gradients	Maintain, or where necessary restore, appropriate natural hydrological regimes necessary to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat
	Ecosystem function: hydrology - surface water flow	Drain density and form	Maintain, or where necessary restore, as close as possible to natural or semi-natural drainage conditions
	Ecosystem function: water quality	Water chemistry measures	Maintain appropriate water quality, particularly pH and nutrient levels, to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat
	Community diversity	Abundance of variety of vegetation communities	Maintain variety of vegetation communities, subject to natural processes
	Vegetation composition: brown mosses	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Maintain adequate cover of typical brown moss species
	Vegetation composition: typical vascular plants	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Maintain adequate cover of typical vascular plant species
	Vegetation composition: native negative indicator species	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of native negative indicator species at insignificant levels
	Vegetation composition: non-native species	Percentage cover at, and in local vicinity of, a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of non-native species less than 1%
	Vegetation composition: native trees and shrubs	Percentage cover in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of scattered native trees and shrubs less than 10%
	Vegetation composition: Soft Rush and Common Reed cover	Percentage cover in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops Total cover of Soft Rush (<i>Juncus effusus</i>) and Common Reed (<i>Phragmites australis</i>) less than 10%	Total cover of Soft Rush (<i>Juncus effusus</i>) and Common Reed (<i>Phragmites australis</i>) less than 10%
	Vegetation structure: litter	Percentage cover in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops	Total cover of litter not more than 25%

Qualifying Interest	Attributes	Measure	Target
	Physical structure: disturbed bare ground	Percentage cover at, and in local vicinity of, a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of disturbed bare ground not more than 10%
	Physical structure: tufa formations	Percentage cover in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops	Disturbed proportion of vegetation cover where tufa is present is less than 1%
	Indicators of local distinctiveness	Occurrence and population size	No decline in distribution or population sizes of rare, threatened or scarce species associated with the habitat; maintain features of local distinctiveness, subject to natural processes
	Habitat area	Hectares	Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes
	Distribution	Occurrence	No decline, subject to natural processes.
Limestone pavements [8240]	Vegetation composition: typical species	Number at a representative number of monitoring stops	At least seven positive indicator species present
	Vegetation composition: bryophyte layer	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Bryophyte cover at least 50% on wooded pavement
	Vegetation composition: negative indicator species	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Collective cover of negative indicator species on exposed pavement not more than 1%
	Vegetation composition: non-native species	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of non-native species not more than 1% on exposed pavement; on wooded pavement not more than 10% with no regeneration
	Vegetation composition: scrub	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Scrub cover no more than 25% of exposed pavement
	Vegetation composition: racken cover	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Bracken (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>) cover no more than 10% on exposed pavement
	Vegetation structure: woodland canopy	Percentage at a representative number of monitoring stops	Canopy cover on wooded pavement at least 30%
	Vegetation structure: dead wood	Occurrence in a representative number of monitoring stops	Sufficient quantity of dead wood on wooded pavement to provide habitat for saproxylic organisms
	Physical structure: disturbance	Occurrence in a representative number of monitoring stops	No evidence of grazing pressure on wooded pavement
	Indicators of local distinctiveness	Occurrence	Indicators of local distinctiveness are maintained
	Habitat area	Hectares	Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes

Qualifying Interest	Attributes	Measure	Target
	Habitat distribution	Occurrence	No decline
	Woodland size	Hectares	Area stable or increasing. Where topographically possible, "large" woods at least 25ha in size and "small" woods at least 3ha in size
Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]	Woodland structure: cover and height	Percentage and metres	Diverse structure with a relatively closed canopy containing mature trees; subcanopy layer with semi- mature trees and shrubs; and well-developed herb layer
	Woodland structure: community diversity and extent	Hectares	Maintain diversity and extent of community types
	Woodland structure: natural regeneration	Seedling: sapling: pole ratio	Seedlings, saplings and pole age-classes occur in adequate proportions to ensure survival of woodland canopy
	Hydrological regime: flooding depth/height of water table	Metres	Appropriate hydrological regime necessary for maintenance of alluvial vegetation
	Woodland structure: dead wood	m ³ per hectare; number per hectare	At least 30m ³ /ha of fallen timber greater than 10cm diameter; 30 snags/ha; both categories should include stems greater than 40cm diameter (greater than 20cm diameter in the case of alder)
	Woodland structure: veteran trees	Number per hectare	No decline
	Woodland structure: indicators of local distinctiveness	Occurrence	No decline
	Vegetation composition: native tree cover	Percentage	No decline. Native tree cover not less than 95%
	Vegetation composition: typical species	Occurrence	A variety of typical native species present, depending on woodland type, including Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>), willows (<i>Salix spp</i>) and, locally, Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) and Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) and Birch (<i>Betula pubescens</i>)
	Vegetation composition: negative indicator species	Occurrence	Negative indicator species, particularly non-native invasive species, absent or under control
	Distribution	Percentage positive survey sites	No significant decline
	Extent of terrestrial habitat	Hectares	No significant decline. (note no area defined)
	Extent of marine habitat	Hectares	No significant decline. (note no area defined)
Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	Extent of freshwater (river) habitat	Kilometres	No significant decline. (note no area defined)
	Extent of freshwater (lake/lagoon) habitat	Hectares	No significant decline. (note no area defined)
	Couching sites and holts	Number	No significant decline
	Fish biomass available	Kilograms	No significant decline
	Barriers to connectivity	Number	No significant increase.

7.1.3.3 Site Vulnerabilities

The negative impacts and activities with high effect on the SAC site (NPWS 2014d) are listed in Table 7-6

Table 7-6 Threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the River Shannon Callows SAC

Code	Threats and pressures	Rank	Source
G01	Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities	Low	inside
J02.11	Siltation rate changes, dumping, depositing of dredged deposits	Medium	inside
J02.05.02	Modifying structures of inland water courses	Medium	inside
F03.01	Hunting	Low	both
A04.01	Intensive grazing	Medium	inside
C01.03.02	Mechanical removal of peat	Low	inside
J02.01	Landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general	Low	inside
A03.03	Abandonment / lack of mowing	High	inside
G05.01	Trampling, overuse,	Low	inside
B02.02	Forestry clearance	Medium	inside
D01.01	Paths, tracks, cycling tracks	Low	inside
K03.04	Predation	Medium	both
A04.03	Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing	High	inside
A07	Use of biocides, hormones and chemicals	High	inside
A04.02.05	Non intensive mixed animal grazing	Low	inside
A10.01	Removal of hedges and copses or scrub	Low	inside
J02.05	Modification of hydrographic functioning, general	Low	inside
J02.04.01	Flooding	High	inside
A08	Fertilisation	Medium	inside
B06	Grazing in forests/ woodland	Low	inside

7.2 Potential significant effects on Screened-in European Sites

As outlined in Section 4.6, the potential impacts that could occur through the implementation of the Plan are;

- Loss/ reduction of habitat area
- Disturbance to key species
- Habitat or species population fragmentation
- Reduction in species density
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value, such as changes in water quality and quantity.

7.2.1 Loss or reduction of habitat area

Direct habitat loss is caused where there is complete removal of a habitat type. Loss of habitat can also occur through the deterioration of habitat quality and therefore a loss of the function of that habitat. This can be due to factors such as land-take requirements, physical alterations and introduction of invasive non-native species as a result of development or works necessary to promote sustainable or any type of development. The outcomes of the objectives, aims, strategies and policies of the Plan, such as development leading to population increase, reduction in vacancy of existing buildings and the support of the economic growth of Ballinasloe could potentially cause these impacts.

There is potential that the European sites screened into this assessment may be adversely affected in this manner through the implementation of the proposed Plan.

Indirect habitat loss may also occur through disruption of hydrological links to a designated site that supports surface or ground water dependent habitats such as peatland and wetland habitats e.g. implementation of SuDs and diversion of water flows that may occur due to new housing or retail development.

The implementation of environmental mitigation measures for development and growth, although primarily beneficial in the provision of refuges for species and the protection and restoration of habitats including bog and wetland habitats, may result in changes of land use within the LAP area. If measures are inappropriately implemented, habitat loss or degradation of habitat quality may occur.

As the objectives of the proposed Plan are set at a high level, loss or reduction of habitat area of the European sites screened into this assessment cannot be ruled out at this stage. Therefore, the significance of potential habitat loss will be assessed at project level and will be dependent on the final locations and detailed design of the proposed objectives.

Mitigation measures are detailed in Section 8 to ensure the potential for habitat loss will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site due to the implementation of the proposed Plan.

7.2.2 Disturbance to key species

Key species are those species listed within the annexes of the Habitats Directive for which European sites are designated. Disturbance to species supported by a European site may result due to physical disturbance of a habitat that may result in direct mortalities or displacement of the species. Sources of disturbance may also take the form of increased noise, visual presence of people, vibration and increased illumination of areas through increased or expanded development without mitigation measures in place. Increased disturbance levels within the sensitivity threshold of a species may cause the displacement or flight of a species from their respective habitat.

In relation to the proposed Plan, activities that may potentially disturb key species are those that will result in physical disturbance due to works being carried out, such as the implementation of the policies and/or objectives of the plan including increased tourism, population growth or development in general. These objectives may pose sources of disturbance during construction of works and their operation. The works may also cause disturbance to the resting and/ or breeding places and foraging areas of these key species.

The objectives of the proposed Plan have the potential to cause disturbance impacts to key species of the Natura sites screened into this assessment. However, as these objectives are set at a high level, the significance of disturbance to key species will be assessed at project level and will be dependent

on the final locations and detailed design of the proposed objectives. As an example, disturbance to wintering waterbirds for the River Suck SPA, including Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Wigeon, Lapwing, and Golden Plover, may be caused by an increase in development and recreation, (such as from policies BKT 6 Residential Development Phasing or BKT 17 Tourism) on or near the River Suck, as well as of other species of nearby sites including Otter, a QI of the River Shannon Callows SAC, and other birds of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA.

Mitigation measures are detailed in Section 8 to ensure that disturbance to key species will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site due to the implementation of the proposed Plan.

7.2.3 Fragmentation

Habitat and species population fragmentation occurs when the connectivity between habitats and species is restricted or lost and impedes the natural movement of a species. This can result in singular habitat units being formed and isolated species communities. Fragmentation can arise as a result of barriers to migratory movements where important corridors exist, e.g. riparian corridors. The inappropriate installation of measures that may act as a barrier to free movement of a species and/ or physically separate a habitat, will result in fragmentation.

The implementation of the policies and/or objectives of the plan including increased tourism, population growth or development in general may pose sources of disturbance during construction of works and their operation that can lead to fragmentation. They may result in the installation of structures that may impede movement of a species. An increase in development, can lead to fragmentation of habitat for the birds of the River Suck, which birds may use as foraging and roosting areas, potentially impacting the success and population numbers of these species, resulting in a decrease in species density in the European site in the long term.

As the objectives of the proposed Plan are not specific regarding location of implementation, fragmentation of the European sites screened into this assessment cannot be ruled out. Also, the significance of potential fragmentation will be required to be assessed at project level and will be dependent on the final locations and detailed design of the resulting projects that arise from this Plan.

Mitigation measures are detailed in Section 8 to ensure that fragmentation will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site due to the implementation of the proposed Plan.

7.2.4 Reduction in species density

Reduction in the density of species may arise due to the factors discussed above; habitat loss or degradation, disturbance and fragmentation. As outlined above, the objectives of the proposed Plan have the potential to cause these impacts. The implementation of the objectives for rural development could also result in development in rural areas where species are sensitive to human activity.

The success of migratory birds' species that gather in large density in the SPA relies on migration numbers from outside of Ireland, although some species also breed in Ireland in small numbers (e.g. Wigeon, Lapwing) and therefore maintaining their population numbers relies on protecting these birds and their foraging grounds around the River Suck during the winter. Impacts from recreation, agriculture, infrastructure and development may cause fragmentation or direct habitat loss may result in reduction of species density.

As this is a high-level plan and the objectives, policies, strategies and aims of the proposed Plan are not specific regarding location of implementation, reduction in species density of the European sites screened into this assessment cannot be ruled out. Therefore, the significance of potential reduction of species density will be assessed at project level and will be dependent on the final locations and detailed design of the proposed objectives.

Mitigation measures are detailed in Section 8 to ensure that reduction in species density will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site due to the implementation of the proposed Plan.

7.2.5 Changes in key indicators of conservation value

The key indicators of conservation value for the European sites likely to be affected by the implementation of the proposed Plan include surface water and groundwater quality and quantity. Water bodies are one of the key pathways for impact and are easily affected by impacts themselves. Any

deterioration in water quality could potentially result in adverse impacts, either directly or indirectly, to habitats such as 'Alluvial Forests' for the River Shannon Callows SAC, or 'Wetlands used by waterbirds' of the River Suck SPA, and species such as Migratory and Wintering Birds of the screened-in SPAs or Otter of the River Shannon SAC. Maintaining the hydrological regime, e.g. recharge, flow rates and direction, of these habitats is also very important for the function and structure of the habitats and the species that they support.

The outcomes of the objectives, aims, strategies and policies of the Plan, such as development leading to population increase, reduction in vacancy of existing buildings and the support of the growth of the town could potentially cause impacts to water quality and quantity. These pressures would mainly arise from the activity of both land-based and in-stream works, where there is the potential for discharge of silt laden runoff and pollutants such as hydrocarbons into the River Suck and River Shannon. Hydrological alterations may also occur through the potential diversion of flows and implementation of SuDs and natural flood risk management measures that are used for sustainable development and growth. Therefore, all projects that arise as a result of the objectives, aims and strategies of this Plan must be appropriately assessed for their suitability at a given location.

As the objectives of the proposed Plan are not specific regarding location of implementation, changes in key indicators of conservation value of the European sites screened into this assessment cannot be ruled out. Therefore, the significance of potential changes in key indicators will be assessed at project level and will be dependent on the final locations and detailed design of the proposed objectives.

Mitigation measures are detailed in Section 8 to ensure that changes in key indicators of conservation value will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site due to the implementation of the proposed Plan.

7.3 Impact Evaluation

Table 7-7 below evaluates the screened in European sites and the potential impacts as discussed in Section 7.2 in relation to the potentially adverse impacts that may arise from the Plan, from the screened-in Policy Objectives identified in Table 6-2. Where potentially significant adverse impacts are identified, avoidance and mitigation measures are proposed to offset these impacts.

Table 7-7 Impact Evaluation Table

Qualifying Interest	Potential Source of Impact	Impact on Attribute and Target Prior to Mitigation / Avoidance	Avoidance / Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
River Suck Callows SPA				
Whooper Swan [A038] Wigeon [A050] Golden Plover [A140] Lapwing [A142] Greenland White-fronted Goose [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Habitat loss Habitat fragmentation Changes in physical regime Physical damage Habitat/community simplification Disturbance (noise, visual) Changes in water levels or tables Changes in water quality Changes to surface water flooding Turbidity and siltation Pollution	All five bird species could be present within the plan area, particularly in the River Suck and its floodplain and riparian margins. The target conservation objectives for these QIs include: - Long term population trend stable or increasing - No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas - The permanent area occupied by the wetland habitat should be stable and not significantly less The Screened-in Policies and Objectives (Table 6-2) of this Plan could cause a decrease in the range and intensity of use of these birds and their associated habitat in River Suck SPA. These birds could be adversely impacted through loss or reduction of habitat area, disturbance, fragmentation, reduction in species density, and through changes in key indicators of conservation value. For example, the policy BKT 19 Water Tourism, with the aim to increase tourism along the River Suck and River Shannon, could impact the bird species of the River Suck Callows SPA through increased disturbance.	In-built into the Plan is embedded mitigation to protect the European Sites (BKT 41 European Sites). This requires that any plan or project derived from the Plan Policies and Objectives will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); This objective is further described in Section 8. A number of policies, including BKT 18, BKT 19 and BKT 33 relating to tourism and pedestrian and cycle networks also contain embedded mitigation by stating that all such developments shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and any other sites that maybe considered in support of European sites. In addition to the above, in relation to Project Implementation promoted by the Plan, further mitigation measures are outlined in Section 8.	No adverse impact anticipated
Middle Shannon Callows SPA				
Whooper Swan [A038] Wigeon [A050] Corncrake [A122] Golden Plover [A140] Lapwing [A142] Black-tailed Godwit [A156] Black-headed Gull [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Habitat fragmentation Changes in physical regime Physical damage Disturbance (noise, visual) Changes in water levels or tables Changes in water quality	Some of the Qualifying Interests bird species could be present within the plan area, as these birds may move between different foraging and resting locations. Note the Corncrake is now extinct from the Shannon Callows. The target conservation objective for these QIs include: - Long term population trend stable or increasing - No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas - The permanent area occupied by the wetland habitat should be stable and not significantly less The Screened-in Policies and Objectives (Table 6-2) of this Plan could cause a decrease in the range and	In-built into the Plan is embedded mitigation to protect the European Sites (BKT 41 European Sites). This requires that any plan or project derived from the Plan Policies and Objectives will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); This objective is further described in Section 8 A number of policies, including BKT 18,	No adverse impact anticipated

Qualifying Interest	Potential Source of Impact	Impact on Attribute and Target Prior to Mitigation / Avoidance	Avoidance / Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
	Changes to surface water flooding Turbidity and siltation Pollution	intensity of use of these birds and their associated habitat in River Shannon, located approximately 12km downstream from Ballinasloe, These birds could be adversely impacted through loss or reduction of habitat area, disturbance, fragmentation, reduction in species density, and through changes in key indicators of conservation value.	BKT 19 and BKT 33 relating to tourism and pedestrian and cycle networks also contain embedded mitigation by stating that all such developments shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and any other sites that maybe considered in support of European sites. In addition to the above, in relation to Project Implementation promoted by the Plan, further mitigation measures are outlined in Section 8.	
River Shannon Callows SAC				
Alluvial forests [91E0]	Changes in water levels or tables Changes in water quality Changes to surface water flooding Turbidity and siltation Pollution	This habitat occurs the riparian zone of River Shannon and is hydrologically linked via the River Suck. The target conservation objectives for this QI include: - No reduction in Habitat Area, Distribution, Woodland Size or Structure. - To retain appropriate hydrological regime. - No decline in composition of tree cover and richness, and no invasive species. The Screened-in Policies and Objectives (Table 6-2) of this Plan could cause adverse impacts to target conservation objectives of Alluvial Forests primarily through indirect impacts through surface water pathways, which could cause loss or reduction of habitat area, reduction in species density, and through changes in key indicators of conservation value.	In-built into the Plan is embedded mitigation to protect the European Sites (BKT 41 European Sites). This requires that any plan or project derived from the Plan Policies and Objectives will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); This objective is further described in Section 8. A number of policies, including BKT 18, BKT 19 and BKT 33 relating to tourism and pedestrian and cycle networks also contain embedded mitigation by stating that all such developments shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and any other sites that maybe considered in support of European sites.	No adverse impact anticipated
Otter [1355]	Habitat loss Habitat fragmentation Changes in physical regime Physical damage Habitat/community simplification Disturbance (noise, visual) Changes in water	Otter is a mobile species and likely to occur in the Plan Boundary, which is hydrologically linked to the SAC (River Shannon) via the River Suck. The target conservation objectives for this QI include: no significant decline in distribution, habitat, resting sites, and fish availability, and no increase in barriers to connectivity. The Screened-in Policies and Objectives (Table 6-2) of this Plan could cause adverse impacts to Otter's target conservation objectives, through loss or reduction of habitat area, disturbance, fragmentation, reduction in species density, and through changes in key indicators of	In addition to the above, in relation to Project Implementation promoted by the Plan, further mitigation measures are outlined in Section 8.	

Qualifying Interest	Potential Source of Impact	Impact on Attribute and Target Prior to Mitigation / Avoidance	Avoidance / Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
	levels or tables Changes in water quality Changes to surface water flooding Turbidity and siltation Pollution	conservation value.		
<i>Molinia</i> meadows [6410] Lowland hay meadows [6510] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240]	No source of impacts from Plan anticipated as there is no pathway to QIs	No impacts from Plan anticipated as there is no pathway to QIs	N/A	

8 Mitigation Measures

Ballinasloe LAP will not in itself, cause any adverse impacts to the overall integrity of the European sites within the Zol of the Plan. However, projects that arise as a result of the Plan may have adverse effects.

Projects stemming from the LAP will apply a range of standard processes and measures that will mitigate potential environmental impacts. While the applicability of processes and particular measures will be dependent on the nature and scale of each project, examples of typical processes and measures that will be implemented, where applicable, at the different stages of project implementation are set out in the below sections.

Built into the plan is embedded mitigation to protect the European Sites is Policy **BKT 41 European Sites**: Protect European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 Network (including SPAs and SACs) in accordance with the requirements in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Liability Directive, the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011) (and any subsequent amendments or updated legislation) and having due regard to the guidance in the AA Guidelines 2010 (and any subsequent or updated guidance). A plan or project (e.g., any proposed development) within the plan area will only be authorised after the competent authority (Galway County Council) has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, including a Screening for AA, and AA where necessary, that:

1. The plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects);
2. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species), but there are no alternative solutions, and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000;
3. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species), but there are no alternative solutions, and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

Some policy objectives of the Plan will increase the levels of environmental protection afforded to European sites and their conservation objectives. These policies include:

- BKT 49 Protection of Waterbodies and Watercourses
- BKT 52 FRA and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
- BKT 53 Inland Fisheries (consultation with relevant agencies)
- BKT 59 Trees, Parkland/Woodland and Hedgerows

Additionally, some policy objectives that are likely to have an impact on European Sites contain embedded mitigation by stating that all such developments shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and any other sites that maybe considered in support of European sites. These policies include:

- BKT 18 Tourism Development (Ensure that all such developments shall meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive and shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article

10 of the Directive and any other sites that maybe considered as steppingstones in support of European sites.)

- BKT 19 Water-Based Tourism (subject to meeting the requirements of relevant Irish Planning and European environmental legislation including the Habitats Directive, the development of the necessary infrastructure and amenities to support water-based tourism within the plan area)
- BKT 33 Pedestrian and Cycle Network (ensure that in particular that all such developments shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and any other sites that maybe considered in support of European sites.)

8.1 Implementation routes for physical works

Measures or projects arising from the objectives, aims, strategies or policies of the LAP requiring physical works may either require planning consent or confirmation, or will be an exempted development.

Works that will require planning consent or confirmation, will be carried out by either a private developer or the Local Authority. Works may progress to construction stage as one of the following:

- Project led by private developer in line with the aims, policies, objectives or strategies of the Plan.
- Project led by the Local Authority under the Planning and Development Regulations.
- Project led by the Local Authority under the Strategic Infrastructure Act.

Project level assessments that may be required for all types of project include:

- Environmental Impact Assessment: For a project above the thresholds specified under Article 24 of the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 1989 as amended or a project likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria specified for under Article 27 of the same EIA Regulations 1989 as amended.
- Appropriate Assessment: All projects will be screened for Appropriate Assessment and, where there is a potential for a significant effect on a European (Natura 2000) site, an Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken in accordance the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

Exempted developments include those of limited scale and scope, that may fall under the category of flood mitigation works or housing protection schemes. Exempted developments may be carried out by Local Authorities under funding by the OPW, will be exempted in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and will comply with all relevant environmental legislation. This could require the undertaking of an EIA or AA screening for physical works. Local Authorities must supply written confirmation of legislative compliance under condition of funding.

8.2 Project Mitigation: Consenting Process

The consenting process for the progression of measures, actions or projects supported, guided or recommended within the Plan involving physical works, will require the applicable environmental assessments. Also, the consenting authorities may set out specific environmental conditions as part of the project approval.

8.3 Project Mitigation: Pre-Construction / Detailed Design

For the detailed design of projects that may arise as a result of the Plan, where options are available, the design should use a hierarchy to mitigation measures along the following principles:

- Avoidance: avoid creating the potential impact where feasible.
- Mitigation: minimise the potential impact through mitigating measures
- Enhancement: Enhance the environment to better than pre-project conditions, where reasonably possible

The progression of any projects that may arise as a result of the Plan, through the detailed design phase can entail a series of surveys to inform the design, where the scale of surveys would be proportionate to the complexity and potential impacts of the project. These can include:

- engineering structure surveys,
- topographical surveys,
- habitat and species surveys¹
- ornithological surveys,
- bat surveys,
- fish surveys,
- water quality surveys,
- archaeological surveys,
- landscape and visual assessments,
- land valuation surveys and
- other surveys as deemed necessary to prepare a project.

Where necessary, Wildlife Derogation Licences will be sought from the National Park and Wildlife Service Wildlife Licence Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The scope of any necessary Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) will contain a WFD assessment if relevant, which will include a hydro-morphological assessment, to more clearly consider and support the WFD objectives. This WFD assessment will inform the project level AA regarding likely significant effects and adverse impacts on the site integrity of European sites in respect of their conservation objectives and if necessary, appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented at project level to ensure adverse effects will not occur.

Where a full EIS is not required for a project (i.e., has been screened out), an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) should be considered to demonstrate how a project accords with relevant planning policy and legislation where an EIA is not required. The findings of an EclA can help competent authorities understand ecological issues when determining applications for consent. Unlike EIA, EclA on its own is not a statutory requirement but can be a valuable evaluation process where habitats, species and ecosystems may be impacted from a development/project.

8.4 Project Mitigation: Construction Stage

For large and complex projects and sites, where environmental management may entail multiple aspects, a project specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) may be developed. This will form a framework for all environmental management processes, mitigation measures and monitoring and will include other environmental requirements such as invasive no-native species management measures, if applicable.²

A designated environmental officer and project ecologist will be appointed, as appropriate for the project. Biosecurity measures may be required and should be considered depending on the location and conditions on-site.

1 In the context of ecological mitigation, the habitat and species surveys are conducted as required to assess the various aspects for the project, such as ecological surveys for:

- protected or notable habitats and species, including Annex 1 habitats, Annex II and Annex IV species,
- species protected under the Wildlife Acts,
- species protected under the Flora Protection Order,
- the resting and breeding places of relevant species and,
- invasive species, both plant and animal.

2 There are a range standard type mitigation measures consisting of good construction practices and good planning of works, that are used within construction projects such as for example: Refuelling of plant and vehicles away from watercourses, Installation of wheel-wash and plant washing facilities, working in-channel or on specific works only within environmental windows e.g. in-stream works in Salmonid channels from May to September.

8.5 Project Monitoring

The Plan, with its associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and plan-level AA, sets out a series of monitoring requirements, in connection with the SEA objectives and the predicted effects of the Plan. For measures involving physical works, the project-level EIA and AA, where conducted, will set out the specific monitoring required for each measure.

8.6 Summary and Conclusion

A number of policy objectives have been developed as a result of the Plan that are designed to promote the sustainable development and growth of Ballinasloe. This NIR has determined the potential impacts that may occur through the implementation of the Plan and has assessed each one of these potential impacts with the level of detail that is available at this high level. General mitigation measures have been provided in this NIR, however, where actions may occur in the implementation of these measures, project level assessment of works will be required.

Mitigation measures that are provided in the NIR will be implemented throughout the entire extent of the execution of projects that may stem from the Plan. This includes mitigation measures to be implemented at the consenting process stage, pre-construction, construction and monitoring for any projects that may arise as a result of the Plan.

Providing the recommended mitigation measures are implemented, it can be concluded that this Plan will not adversely impact on the European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans, projects or policies.

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