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Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council

Appropriate Assessment Determination

under
Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended,
for the

Loughrea Local Area Plan 2024-2030

In order to comply with the requirements of Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether or not a plan or project would affect the integrity of any European site(s), this Appropriate Assessment determination is being made by Galway County Council relating to the potential for the Loughrea Local Area Plan 2024-2030 that is being adopted¹ to have effects on the integrity of European sites.

In carrying out this Appropriate Assessment (AA), the Council is taking into account the matters specified under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), including the following²:

- The Natura Impact Report prepared for the Draft Plan;
- The Screening for AA Report prepared for the Proposed Material Alterations;
- Written submissions made during the Plan preparation process; and
- Ongoing advice on AA from the Council's agents.

As part of the AA, it was identified that the Plan may, if unmitigated, have significant effects on 4 (no.) European sites. Plan elements that could present sources with pathways for potential significant effects to European sites are:

- The Plan's provisions, including those relating to land use zoning, strategies for planning and development, town centre and economic development, sustainable communities, transport and connectivity, local heritage, infrastructure, energy and utilities, which introduce sources for potential effects through construction phase such as habitat loss, light pollution, disturbance effects and hydrological interactions through surface hydrological connectivity and/or shared groundwater sources;
- Loading pressures from the operational phase of developments - these sources could result in habitat loss/fragmentation, light pollution, disturbance effects and interactions with water quality (surface and/or groundwater); and
- Increases in visitor numbers to ecologically sensitive areas during the operational phase of developments which have potential to introduce sources for significant effects, such as recreational and tourism developments.

The undersigned, having carefully considered the information referred to above agrees with and adopts the reasoning and conclusions presented and determines that:

- Implementation of the Plan would have had the potential to result in effects to the integrity of European sites, if unmitigated.
- The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and conservation objectives of the European sites have been addressed by the

¹ Incorporating: the Draft Plan; all and any alterations; and all and any further modifications considered by the AA process.

² A consolidated Natura Impact Report has also been made available, integrating relevant elements of these matters into one document.

inclusion of mitigation measures into the Plan that will, in addition to the measures already in force through the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, prioritise the avoidance of effects in the first place and reliably mitigate effects where these cannot be avoided. In addition, any lower-level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Plan will themselves be subject to AA when further details of design and location are known.

- In-combination effects from interactions with other plans and projects have been considered in this assessment and the mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Plan – these measures are robust and will ensure there will be no effects on the integrity of European sites as a result of the implementation of the Plan either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects.
- Having incorporated mitigation measures³ and taking into account the measures already in force through the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028⁴, the Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any effect on the integrity of any European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects⁵. This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species, for which these sites have been designated.

Signed: Liam Ward.

Name: LIAM WARD

Date: 15/07/2024

Signatory: Valerie Byrne SR.

Date: 15/07/2024

³ As identified by the following reference numbers in the consolidated Natura Impact Report: LSST 2, LSST 3, LSST 8, LSST 11, LSST 21, LSST 22, LSST 24, LSST 26, LSST 27, LSST 28, LSST 29, LSST 31, LSST 32, LSST 33, LSST 34, LSST 35, LSST 37, LSST 40, LSST 52, LSST 53, LSST 54, LSST 61, LSST 62, LSST 63, LSST 64, LSST 65, LSST 66, LSST 67, LSST 68, LSST 69, LSST 70, LSST 71, LSST 72, LSST 73, LSST 74, LSST 75, LSST 76, LSST 77, LSST 78, LSST 82, LSST 83, DM Standard 2 and DM Standard 3.

⁴ As identified by the following reference numbers in the consolidated Natura Impact Report. Policy Objectives LP 1, AQ 1 - 4, NP 1 - 5, IS 1 and IS 2.

⁵ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.