

Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2022-2028

AA Screening for Proposed Material
Alterations

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Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Galway County Council
County Hall,
Prospect Hill,
Galway.

JBA Project Manager

Ross Bryant
Unit 24 Grove Island
Corbally,
Limerick,
Ireland

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This report describes work commissioned by Galway County Council. GCC representative for the contract was Brian Corcoran of the Forward Planning Unit.

Prepared by Hannah Mulcahy BSc MSc

..... Ecologist

Reviewed by Anne Mullen

..... Senior Ecologist

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
EcIA	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 AA Screening in relation to the Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan (LAP) 2021 – 2027.

The Draft 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 AA Screening 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**

The Draft Ballinasloe LAP has already been informed by Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment and a Natura Impact Report (NIR) has been prepared. Mitigation was integrated into the Draft Plan that allowed the Natura Impact Report to conclude that that the Draft Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any significant effects on designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects³.

The Draft Plan and AA Natura Impact Report were placed on public display and submissions were invited. Some of these submissions resulted in Material Alterations being proposed to the Plan.

This AA Screening 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.
- Office of the Planning Regulator (2021) OPR Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (OPR 2021)
- 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 (dcentr.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 and the Material Alterations 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 and Proposed Material Alterations

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.

The existing Draft Plan has already been informed by a Stage 2 AA and a Natura Impact Report has been prepared. Mitigation was integrated into the Draft Plan that allowed the Natura Impact Report to conclude that that the Draft Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any significant effects on designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

The Material Alterations propose changes to the text of the Draft Ballinasloe LAP 2021-2027, and are outlined in detail in the accompanying Proposed Material Alteration document.

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.

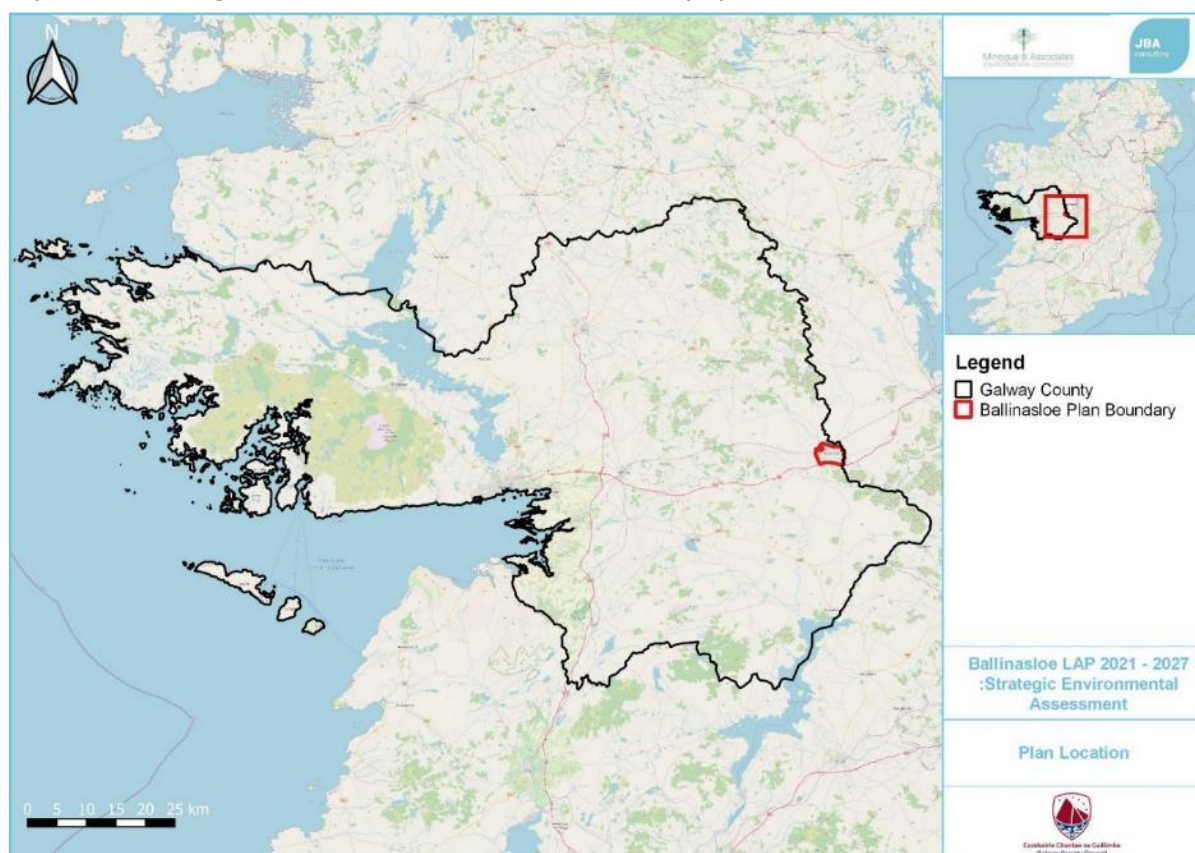


Figure 2-1 Location of Ballinasloe and the Plan Boundary

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 Aughrim 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.

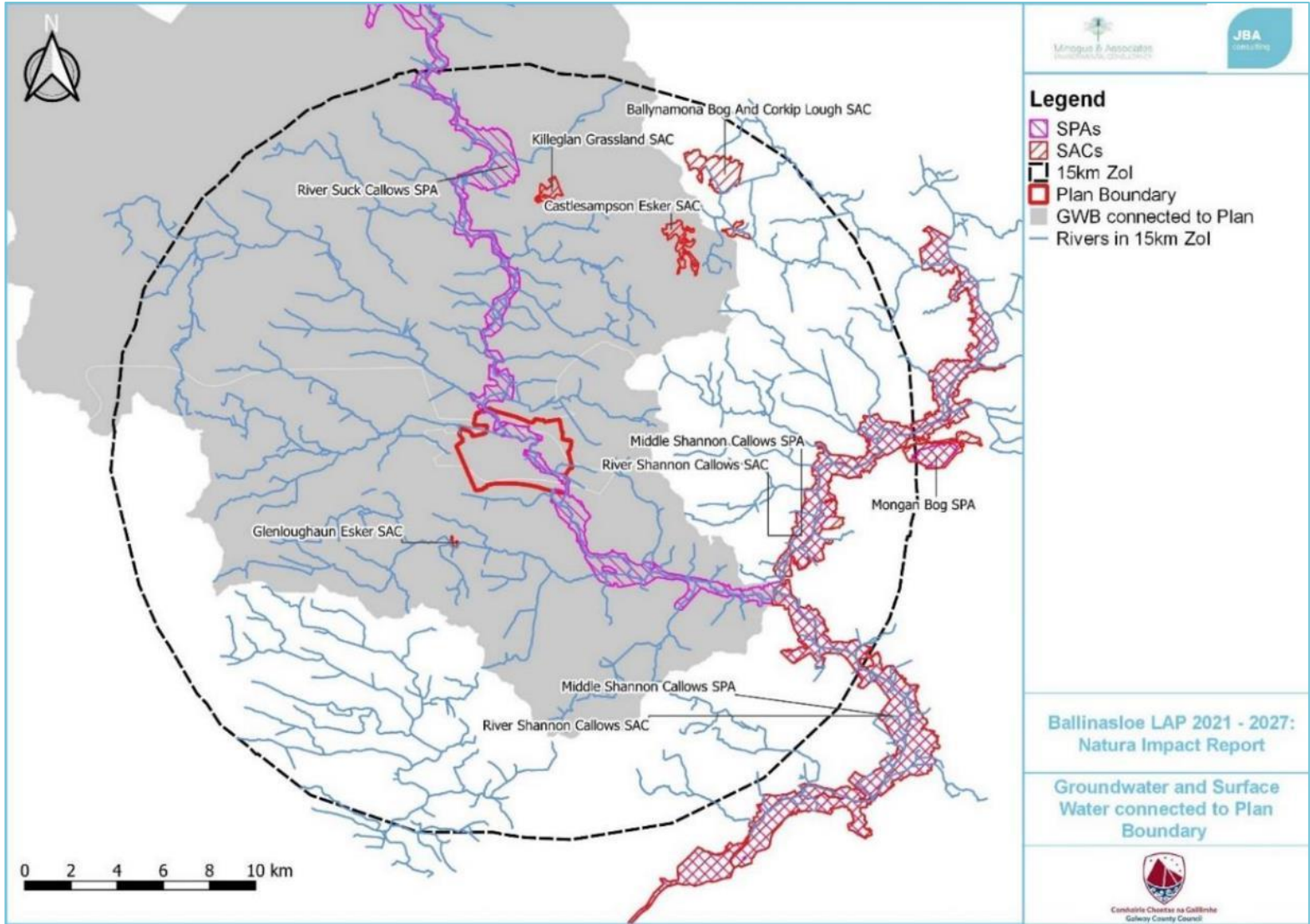


Figure 3-1 Surface water and Ground water bodies connected to Plan boundary

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 **Error! Reference source not found.** with their Qualifying Interests and distances from the Plan Boundary.

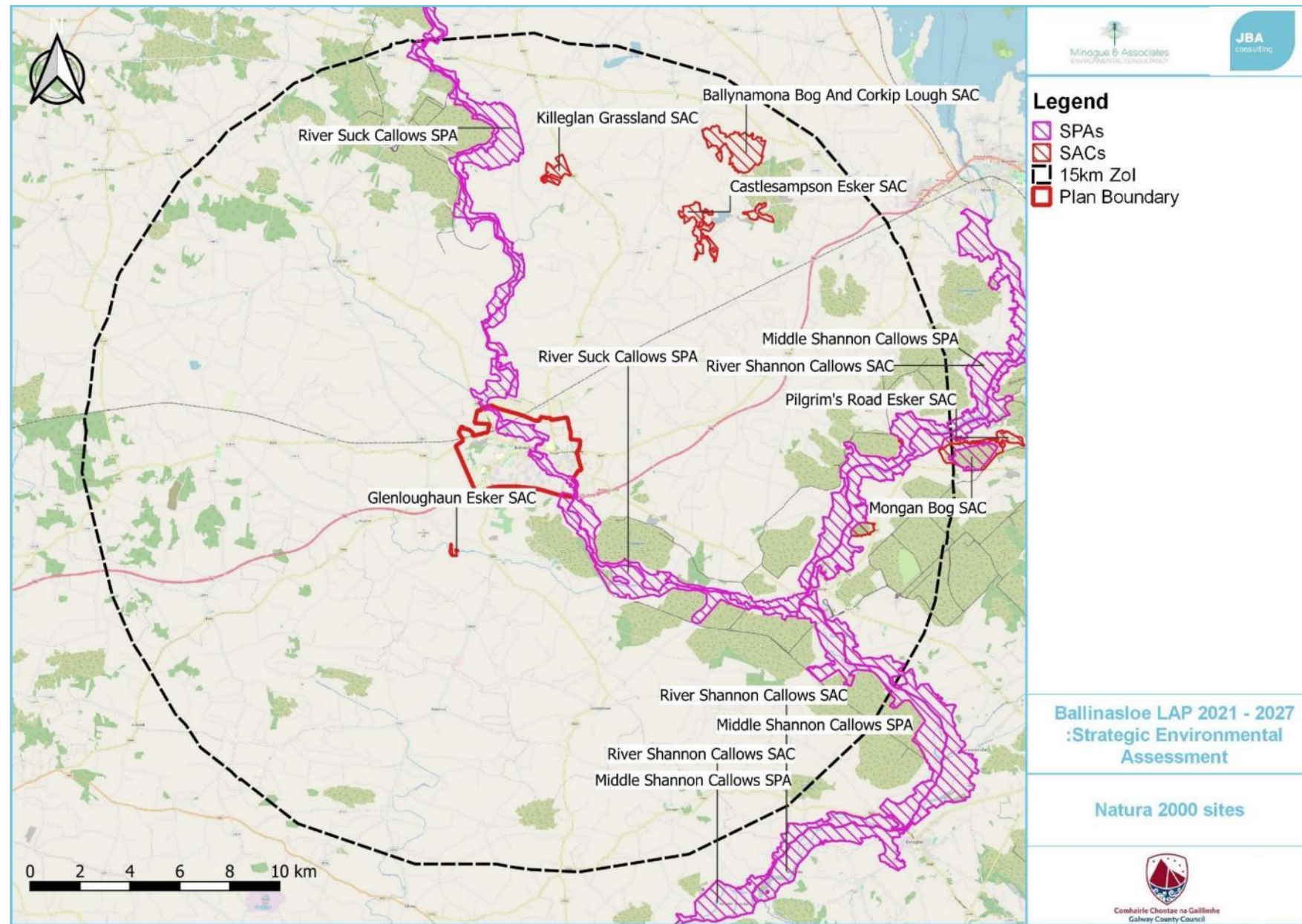


Figure 4-1 European Sites within 15km of the Plan Boundary

Table 4-1: Descriptions of European Site within the Zone of Influence, and the distance from 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.

Table 4-1: Descriptions of European Site within the Zone of Influence, and the distance from the Plan Area

Site Code	Sites within 15km of Plan area	Distance from Plan	Qualifying Interests	Brief description of site
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] 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]	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. 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.
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	9.5km	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</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]	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.
002339	Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC	12km	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]	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.

Table 4-1: Descriptions of European Site within the Zone of Influence, and the distance from the Plan Area

Site Code	Sites within 15km of Plan area	Distance from Plan	Qualifying Interests	Brief description of site
001776	Pilgrims Road Esker SAC	14.5km	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	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.
004017	Mongan Bog SPA	14.5km	Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]	Mongan Bog is a raised bog that occasionally used a wintering 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 **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 4-2 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 ZoI.

Table 4-2: 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
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

Table 4-2: 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?
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

4.4 **Summary of Pre-Screening**

Due to lack of pathways based on preliminary screening on Sites within the ZoI 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

5 Screening Assessment

This section considers Material Alterations to the development policies and written statement 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 4.3 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

5.1 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 Material Alterations to the Draft 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 ZoI.

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.

5.2 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 ZoI 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.

5.2.1 **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.

5.3 **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.

5.4 **Material Alterations to the Draft Plan**

The existing Draft Plan has already been informed by a Stage 2 AA and a Natura Impact Report has been prepared. Mitigation was integrated into the Draft Plan that allowed the Natura Impact Report to conclude that that the Draft Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any significant effects on designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The potential for Proposed Material Alterations to result in effects on designated European sites is examined in this section.

Proposed text deletions are shown in ~~striketrough~~ and proposed new text is highlighted in red.

Any 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 5-1 below. The results of the initial screening are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**. 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 5-1: 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 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA1	<p>Add the following to Section 2.4 as follows:</p> <p>2.4 Infill Development Residential infill sites are located within the existing built-up area of the town. These are 'gap sites' within the plan area that are typically capable of accommodating limited residential units. In general, these sites are serviced and are strategically located within close proximity of the town's local services, such as employment and education facilities. It is considered that these infill residential sites offer a viable and more sustainable alternative to one off rural dwellings</p>	<p>Additional text that provides context but does not likely to have a significant effect on European Sites either alone or in combination</p>	Out
MA2	<p>Include policy objective BKT 64 as follows: BKT 64 Compact Growth It is a Policy Objective of the Council to support the delivery of new homes in Ballinasloe urban area within the existing built up footprint of the settlement, by developing infill, brownfield, opportunity and regeneration sites and prioritizing underutilized land in preference to greenfield sites.</p>	<p>Additional policy objective that provides context but does not in and of itself give rise to increased 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</p>	Out
MA3	<p>Insert Infrastructure Assessment as Appendix A</p>	<p>High level overview of infrastructure assessment but not likely to have a significant effect on European Sites either alone or in combination</p>	Out
MA4	<p>Include policy objective BKT 65 as follows: BKT 65 Social and Community Infrastructure Provision in Ballinasloe Support the provision of social and community facilities and services within Ballinasloe Key Town which meet the current and future needs of its population.</p>	<p>Neutral impacts. Will provide services in the town area reduced need for private vehicles and greenfield development as well as supporting a vibrant community. 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

Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA5	Include policy objective BKT 66 as follows: BKT 66 Provision of Lands for Social and Community Facilities in Ballinasloe Support the provision of lands for social and community facilities within Ballinasloe Key Town and encourage the provision of facilities suitable for all community members.	Should projects arise on lands identified for community and social facilities, these should be addressed through existing Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA6	Include policy objective BKT 67 as follows: BKT 67 Educational Facilities in Ballinasloe Facilitate the provision of primary, secondary, third level, vocational, outreach, research, adult and further educational facilities, lifelong learning facilities and digital capacity for distance learning to meet the needs of Ballinasloe. Multi-use facilities which can accommodate both educational and childcare facilities are to be encouraged.	Should projects arise on lands identified for community and social facilities, these should be addressed through existing Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA7	Amendment to Residential Land Use Matrix Table: Retirement Home Nursing Home/Sheltered Housing/Retirement Home	Minor updates to the text. Therefore, will not result in land-use activities with the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites.	Out

<p>MA8</p>	<p>Amend Regeneration Site 1 St Brigid's Hospital as follows:</p> <p>2.2 Former Saint Brigid's Hospital (Regeneration Site) Saint Brigid's Hospital Campus is located on the east side of Ballinasloe town, on the north side of the R446. The site is designated as an ACA, comprising of one main building located to the south of the site which is characterised by its 'X' form, which is a protected structure. The building was designed by Francis Johnson and it dates from 1832. The main building is two storeys with smaller scale two storey buildings surrounding the site. There is also a detached single-cell chapel in the grounds and later ancillary buildings. The entrance to the site is characterised by the tripartite entrance gateway which abuts the pavement on the southern boundary. The north-western portion of the site is identified as being susceptible to pluvial flooding within Flood Zone B.</p> <p>The site closed completely, and as a result the building has fallen into disrepair. Its historical significance and prominent position on the eastern edge of Ballinasloe Town merit a concerted effort to regenerate this site through investment and collaboration with a range of public and private agencies. The plan therefore seeks to restore the campus to its former state of the art condition and make a cogent contribution to this former County Town. A specific Policy Objective BKT 11 Saint Brigid's Campus has been included below which supports the reuse of the Saint Brigid's campus.</p> <p>Opportunities Potential for the site to avail of significant funding or investment such as the Urban Regeneration Development Fund. Prominent location in the town centre of Ballinasloe Favourable Mixed Use/Commercial land use zoning which offers a good degree of flexibility for future uses Immediate access to existing services and key infrastructure</p> <p>Constraints Protected status of the site and buildings Flooding issues of the site Buildings are in a state of disrepair Legacy issues</p>	<p>This policy is dealt with under BKT 11 Saint Brigid Campus and has been mitigated for in the NIR. Additional text does not change outcome to NIR</p>	<p>Out</p>
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<p>MA9</p>	<p>Amend OPT BKT 1 as follows:</p> <p>Ballinasloe – Opportunity Site The potential exists for better use of underutilized and vacant sites within the town centre area of Ballinasloe to drive the delivery of quality housing, services and employment opportunities in tandem with supporting social infrastructure. In this regard the former Haydens Hotel on Dunlo Street has been identified as an opportunity site for the town. A detailed analysis of the site is included below to guide developers and stimulate interest in this key town centre site. A specific Policy Objective has been included in the LAP BKT 61 Opportunity Sites which seeks 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.</p> <p>Development Strategy</p> <p>OPT – BKT 1 Former Haydens Hotel site, Dunlo Street, Ballinasloe. Brief Description: Area: Approximately 0.2 Hectares Zoning: Town Centre Current Land Use: Vacant Hotel Site</p> <p>Constraints: The site comprises a substantial vacant and derelict block of buildings which would require considerable investment at the outset. The site addresses three separate street frontages which would require a high-quality design</p> <p>Opportunity: This is a brownfield, rectangular shaped site in the centre of Ballinasloe. The former Haydens Hotel building, and adjoining buildings occupy a prominent site on the south-east side of Dunlo Street. This site also abuts Dunlo Hill to the south and Jubilee street to the south east. An opportunity presents itself here for a mixed-use development that could contribute positively to this part of Ballinasloe town. The re-development of this prominent site could encourage additional commercial activity to this part of town. This redevelopment of this site could create much needed additional employment within the town centre which would be welcomed. Given the town centre location of this site, it may facilitate a higher density of development given the established scale of development in the surrounding area and the proximity of the site to local services and social infrastructure.</p>	<p>This opportunity site is subject to the Policy Objective BKT 61 Opportunity Sites has been mitigated for in the NIR.</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p>MA10</p>	<p>Include policy objective BKT 68 as follows: BKT 68 Strategic Sites in Ballinasloe it is a policy objective of the Council to establish a database of strategic brownfield</p>	<p>No direct landuse effects identified for this policy but the collection of data and development briefs is positive to inform strategic planning and development.</p>	<p>OUT</p>

Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
	<p>and infill sites in Ballinasloe so that brownfield land re-use can be managed and coordinated across multiple stakeholders as part of an active land management process. Development Briefs for lands identified in the database will be prepared and reviewed accordingly and where required.</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>	
MA11	<p>Include policy objective BKT 69 as follows: BKT 69 Active Land Management in Ballinasloe To promote and facilitate the re-use of underutilized or vacant lands in Ballinasloe or lands identified for regeneration, through a coordinated approach to active land management between the Council and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Should development proposals arise, this is subject to existing Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.</p>	OUT
MA12	<p>Include key actions within the Local Transport Plan into Section 2.10 Transportation and Movement of the Written Statement. (31 Measures - see Material Alterations Doc)</p>	<p>The 31 measures identified in this table are relatively minor in scale, nature and location and relate to enhancing pedestrian safety, permeability and public realm measures. However, measure 26 Cantilevered Structure across River Suck at Bridge Street would require Flood Risk Assessment, and Section 50 Consent from OPW. In addition as this would comprise works close to the River Suck SPA AA screening and if determined Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment would be required. Should the proposed structure arise, this is subject to existing Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.</p>	OUT

Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA13	<p>Insert Points 32 and 33 to LTP table as per Councillor motion</p> <p>32 Brackernagh Additional Pedestrian Crossing Pedestrian Improvements Short-Medium BKT 21, 28 and 30 To be sited between St. Joseph’s Walkway and Former Quinn’s Shop area.</p> <p>33 Bridge St West Additional pedestrian & cycle bridge Pedestrian Improvements Short-Medium BKT 21, 28 and 30 To be sited at adjacent bridge to west of Bridge St.</p>	<p>Re Measure 33, as an existing bridge exists, flood risk assessment and consent will be required, in addition to Appropriate Assessment requirements. The reuse of existing bridge is preferable to new bridge and delivery of any new bridge very difficult to deliver in line with Section 50 Guidelines. Should the proposed structure arise, this is subject to existing Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.</p>	<p>OUT</p>

<p>MA14</p>	<p>To facilitate the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk within zoning plan areas. This zoning indicates where the Plan Making Justification Test may need to be applied and as such can 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 may be 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. however within Flood Zone A/B development is typically limited to extensions, renovations and change of use. Infill highly vulnerable development and demolition and reconstruction can only take place in Flood Zone C. Less vulnerable development in Flood Zone B will also need to be considered carefully. Significant redevelopment prior to the Flood Relief Scheme being in place will also be limited. These aspects are assessed on a case by case basis under the application of the Plan Making Justification Test and as supported by specific objectives in the written statement.</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 Where the Justification Test is passed there is also a requirement for a detailed Flood Risk Assessment at Development Management stage. The FRA should be 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 40).</p>	<p>This policy is dealt with under of BKT-42 Constrained Land-Use and has been mitigated for in the NIR. Additional text does not change outcome to NIR</p>	<p>OUT</p>
<p>MA15</p>	<p>Updated Land Use Matrix Table - See Material Alterations doc for this table.</p>	<p>The amendments to the matrix consist of Minor updates to the text. Therefore, will not result in land-use activities with the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites.</p>	<p>OUT</p>

Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA16	<p>Amend Policy Objective BKT 5 Collaboration as follows:</p> <p>BKT 5 Collaboration</p> <p>A. 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.</p> <p>B. Galway County Council will collaborate with Roscommon County Council as necessary to deliver an appropriate tourism product to the Suck Valley Way in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development and associated environmental considerations.</p>	<p>The additional text in relation to collaboration is important to ensure cross boundary environmental effects and opportunities are identified and a shared approach to this existing walking trail. The update is a general aspiration of and will not result in land-use activities with the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites.</p>	Out
MA17	<p>Insert amended text to Written Statement and SEA as follows:</p> <p>2.11 Water Supply and Waste Water Treatment</p> <p>Suggested amendment: A treatment plant upgrade with a focus on water quality has recently been carried out. However, there is limited water supply capacity for Ballinasloe and it is envisaged that a Water Treatment Plant upgrade will be completed within the lifetime of the plan, which will cater for the projected growth. In its Annual Environmental Report, Irish Water have confirmed stated that the Ballinasloe Waste Water Treatment Plant had a population equivalent of 8,553 pe in 2020 with headroom of approximately 5,000 pe 4,950 pe.</p> <p>SEA4.10.1 Water and Wastewater</p> <p>.....As a result of this €650,000 investment, over 8,000 people served by the scheme in the Ballinasloe and surrounding area will benefit from a safer and more reliable water supply. A further upgrade at the plant to increase capacity is planned to insure the level of growth projected over the lifetime of the Development Plan can be facilitated. In terms of wastewater capacity is envisaged in the GCDP 2022-2028 that there is adequate capacity (to WWDL ELV capability) to meet the 2028 Draft CDP population targets. Pumping station upgrades in Ballinasloe (Dunloe P.S.) to resolve capacity constraints are under consideration. Upgrade works at Dunloe PS to resolve capacity constraints are planned and will be carried out in the next 1-2 years</p>	<p>Additional text to SEA- not relevant to AA.</p>	Out

<p>MA18</p>	<p>Amend BKT 41 European Sites as follows: BKT 41 European Sites 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 Wildlife Acts 1976-2021 the designated Suck River Callows NHA and the Ballinasloe Esker 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); or 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; or 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>This additional text clarifies and strengthens wildlife protection via inclusion of reference to Wildlife Acts and relevant NHA.</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>	<p>Out</p>
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Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA19	<p>Amend Policy Objective BKT 47 Flood Relief Scheme as follows: BKT 47 Flood Relief Scheme 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. Zoning or development proposals will be assessed to ensure they do not impede or prevent the progression of these relief measures.</p>	<p>This alteration strengthens consideration of flood risk and flood relief scheme measures. This policy is dealt with under of BKT 47 Flood Relief Scheme -Use and has been mitigated for in the NIR. Additional text does not change outcome to NIR</p>	OUT
MA20	<p>Amend BKT 12 Community Facilities as follows: BKT 12 Community Facilities 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. Portiuncula Hospital It is a Policy Objective of the Council to support the future growth and expansion of services at Portiuncula University Hospital in accordance with proper planning and Sustainable Development. Garbally Sports :Pitches It will be a policy objective of the Council to preserve the lands identified at Garbally as playing fields in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.</p>	<p>This policy is dealt with under of BKT 12 Community Facilities and has been mitigated for in the NIR. Additional text does not change outcome to NIR.</p>	OUT
MA21	<p>BKT 39 Ballinasloe Townparks Inner Relief Road It will be a Policy Objective of the Council to To support the delivery of the Ballinasloe Townparks Inner Relief Road To explore options for identification of appropriate uses to compliment and support the lands adjoining the Townparks Inner Relief Road To explore appropriate land uses adjacent to the Townparks Inner Relief Road and River Suck harnessing the potential for recreation/amenity and related activities in association with the River. These concepts will accord with proper planning and sustainable development and environmental considerations</p>	<p>This policy is dealt with under BKT 39 Ballinasloe Relief Road and has been mitigated for in the NIR. Additional text does not change outcome to NIR.</p>	Out

Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA22	Amendment to Section 1.2: The town has an important sub-regional role in delivering retail provision, employment and community facilities in particular education, and healthcare including the provision of a domestic violence refuge.	Minor updates to the text. Therefore, will not result in land-use activities with the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites.	OUT
MA23	Amendment to Section 1.3: Tourism Potential – The Marina and presence of the River Suck along with other sites of interest adjacent to the plan area such as the Kellysgrove bog, Aughrim and Kilconnell Friary are attractive amenities for both local residents and visitors to the area alike	Minor updates to the text. Therefore, will not result in land-use activities with the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites	OUT
MA24	Change in landuse zoning from industrial to community	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA25	Change in landuse zoning to Residential to Industrial	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA26	Zoning Residential Phase 1 to Existing Residential	Minor change subject to adherence to requirements of Core Strategy, The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect..	OUT

Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA27	Zoning Residential Phase 2 to Residential Phase 1	This identified as a greenfield infill development but is also located close to the floodplain. Subject to adhering to core strategy requirements and application of all appropriate mitigation measures in the LAP no significant adverse effects identified. The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect. Provision of a natural buffer such as native species planting would be positive at the norther part of the subject lands is identified in the SEA.	OUT
MA28	Rezoning Business and Enterprise to Commercial/Mixed Use	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA29	Rezone land from Agriculture to Open Space/Recreation and Amenity	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA30	Rezone lands from Community Facilities to Open Space Recreation and Amenity	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA31	Rezone lands from Industrial to Open Space/Recreation and Amenity	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. Any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT

Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA32	2.10 Transportation and Movement – Local Transport Plan The Ballinasloe Local Area Plan will promote a walking and cycling from Derrymullen and surrounding area contiguous to the plan area in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.	Any design of walking/cycling route would require to be underpinned by BKT 41 and other environmental protection measures.	OUT
MA33	2.1 Town Centre and Regeneration Ballinasloe has an important sub-regional role regarding 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. In addition, the Council will endeavour to explore options in support the creation of a bridleway as set out in the County Development Plan. The town centre plays an important role in this historic market town and County Town.	Minor updates to the text. Therefore, will not result in land-use activities with the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites. Any projects that arise from this options will be subject to full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA34	2.1 Town Centre and Regeneration The town has a compact commercial core where high quality shop front design and associated signage will be promoted.	Minor updates to the text. Therefore, will not result in land-use activities with the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites	OUT
MA35	Rezone lands from Residential Phase 1 to Residential Phase 2	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA36	Rezone lands from Residential existing to Residential Phase 1	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT
MA37	Zone lands from outside the plan boundary to R1	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT

Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA38	<p>Ballinasloe – Opportunity Site OPT – BKT 2 Lands South West of Former Haydens Hotel, Dunlo Hill, Ballinasloe Brief Description: Area: Approximately 0.5 Hectares Zoning: Town Centre Current Land Use: Derelict Dwelling Opportunity: This is a brownfield, rectangular shaped site in the centre of Ballinasloe. The site contains a pair of derelict single storey dwellings with an associated curtilage to the south. The buildings abut the pavement and the site is just outside of the ACA. There is also a disused carpark to the rear of the building. The rear of the site is also heavily vegetated with a number of larger trees. The re-development of this site would make a positive contribution to this part of the town, which is located on the R 446</p>	<p>This opportunity site is subject to the Policy Objective BKT 61 Opportunity Sites, which has been mitigated for in the NIR.</p>	OUT
MA39	<p>Ballinasloe – Opportunity Site OPT – BKT 3 Lands located at Society Street, Ballinasloe Brief Description: Area: Approximately 0.06 Hectares Zoning: Town Centre Current Land Use: Derelict Buildings Opportunity: this is a brownfield Town Centre zoned site, located on the south side of Society Street. The site contains a derelict town storey building that is in a dilapidated state. The site is located within the ACA. Its re-development for commercial use could make a positive contribution to this part of Society Street.</p>	<p>This opportunity site is subject to the Policy Objective BKT 61 Opportunity Sites, which has been mitigated for in the NIR.</p>	OUT
MA40	<p>Rezone lands from Residential Phase 1 to Residential Phase 2</p>	<p>The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.</p>	OUT

Table 5-2: Screening table of Ballinasloe LAP policies and objectives

No.	Proposed Material Alteration	AA Screening Category and Consideration	Screening Outcome
MA41	Extend the plan boundary and zone R1	The change in proposed land use can be considered a general policy. However any projects that arise from this change in zoning full implementation of the Policy Objective BKT 41 European Sites in the LAP will apply to protect European sites from adverse effect.	OUT

5.5 Cumulative Effects

The previous section has identified that the material alterations will have no effect at all on the Natura 2000 sites and therefore no in-combination impacts are possible from the material alterations. No detailed in-combination assessment is therefore included. As the proposed material alterations is unlikely to affect the QIs/SCIs or conservation objectives of any European site, there is no potential for other plans or projects to act in combination with it to result in likely significant effects on European sites.

5.6 Screening Statement and Conclusions

The existing Draft Plan has already been informed by a Stage 2 AA and a Natura Impact Report has been prepared. As part of that AA, it was identified that the Plan may, if unmitigated, have significant adverse effects on the following sites:

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

Factors that could potentially affect the integrity of the European sites 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.

Mitigation was integrated into the Draft Plan that allowed the Natura Impact Report to conclude that that the Draft Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any significant effects on designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The Draft Plan and AA Natura Impact Report were placed on public display and submissions were invited. Some of these submissions resulted in Material Alterations being proposed to the Plan.

The 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.

Taking into account the measures that have been already integrated into the Draft Plan that provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development (including those measures to contribute towards the protection of European sites i.e. Policy

Objective BKT 41 European Sites), there is no potential for effects from the draft plan and material alterations on the integrity of any European site to arise as a result of the Proposed Material Alterations.

5.7 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. The 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 is concluded that the Draft Plan, and any Proposed Material Alterations that may be adopted, will not any significant effects on designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

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