

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION STATEMENT

FOR THE LOUGHREA LOCAL AREA PLAN 2024-2030

for: Galway County Council

Áras an Chontae
Prospect Hill
Galway



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Table of Contents

Section 1	Introduction and Background.....	1
1.1	Introduction.....	1
1.2	Legislative Requirements in relation to AA	1
1.3	AA Conclusion Statement	1
Section 2	How the findings of the AA were factored into the Plan	3
Section 3	Consideration of Alternatives	10
3.1	Limitations in Available Alternatives	10
3.2	Type 1: Alternatives Already Considered.....	10
3.3	Type 2: Land Use Zoning Alternatives	10
3.4	Type 3: Alternatives for Transport	11
Section 4	AA Determination.....	13

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Matters taken into account by the AA.....	1
Table 2.1	Measures that will protect European sites and their sustaining resources integrated into the Plan.....	3

Section 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for the Loughrea Local Area Plan. The obligation to undertake AA derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC as transposed into Irish legislation by, inter alia, the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action (such as a plan or programme) or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of any European Site in view of its conservation objectives. This AA Conclusion Statement should be read in conjunction with the Plan and associated documents including the AA Natura Impact Report (NIR).

1.2 Legislative Requirements in relation to AA

In carrying out the AA for the Plan, Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, requires, inter alia, that the Council considers the matters arrayed in the first column on Table 1.1 below. The second column identifies how these issues have been addressed.

Table 1.1 Matters taken into account by the AA

Matter specified by the Regulations	How addressed by AA
(a) the Natura Impact Report	An AA NIR accompanies this AA Conclusion Statement and the Plan.
(b) any supplemental information furnished in relation to any such report	This AA Conclusion Statement accompanies the NIR that provides additional detail on European Sites.
(c) if appropriate, any additional information sought by the authority and furnished by the applicant in relation to a Natura Impact Report	
(d) any information or advice obtained by the public authority	Submissions made during the Plan preparation/AA process were taken into account in the preparation of the final, consolidated AA NIR.
(e) if appropriate, any written submissions or observations made to the public authority in relation to the application for consent for proposed plan or project	
(f) any other relevant information	Proposed Material Alterations were screened for the need to undertake Stage 2 AA (Stage 2 AA was not required for the Alterations).

In addition to the above, the Regulations require that the Council makes available for inspection a determination regarding the outcome of the assessment with respect to whether or not the Plan would adversely affect the integrity of a European site (a copy of this determination is provided at Section 4).

1.3 AA Conclusion Statement

Non-Statutory AA guidance (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009) states that (Section 4.14) it *"is recommended that planning authorities include a clear and discrete AA Conclusion Statement as a distinct section in the written statement of the plan separate to the SEA statement."* This guidance recommends that the following issues are addressed by the AA Conclusion Statement:

- Summary of how the findings of the AA were factored into the Plan (see Section 2);
- Reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered as part of the AA process (see Section 3);
- A declaration that the Plan as adopted will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of European Sites (provided at Section 4); and
- The NIR (the AA NIR is accompanied by this AA Conclusion Statement and has informed the AA Determination – see Section 4).

Furthermore, as stated in the Draft "Development Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2021):

"...There is a similar requirement to publish a determination relating to the AA that may have been undertaken. Under Article 6.3 of the Habitats Directive the determination (often termed an 'AA Conclusion Statement') must state as to whether or not the Draft Plan would adversely affect the integrity of a European site. However as stated in Section 3.5, this determination must have been made prior to the adoption of the Draft Plan."

This AA Conclusion Statement addresses the above issues, including the signed AA Determination included at Section 4.

Section 2 How the findings of the AA were factored into the Plan

The SEA and AA team worked with the Plan-preparation team at the Council in order to integrate requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan.

The Plan was prepared in an iterative manner whereby the Plan and AA documents have informed subsequent versions of the other. The findings of the AA were integrated into the Plan through mitigation measures. These mitigation measures ensure that the Plan will not affect the integrity of the European Sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.¹ The mitigation measures included in the Local Area Plan that most relevant to the protection of European sites are identified in Table 2.1 below.

Furthermore, the detailed Plan preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department for the higher-level County Development Plan, combined with specialist input from the SEA and AA processes, resulted in the integration of mitigation into that Plan that must be complied with in the Plan area. These measures are identified on Table 2.2.

Table 2.1 Measures that will protect European sites and their sustaining resources integrated into the Plan²

Sources and/ or pathways for adverse effects ³	Respective Plan Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
Alignment with County Development Plan	<p>LSST 85 Development Management Standards, Guidelines and Other Provisions Ensure that all of the provisions and general development management standards and guidelines set out in the current Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028, or any subsequent variation or review shall apply as appropriate in the plan area. Provisions from the County Development Plan identified as mitigation in the SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report shall apply regardless of whether the County Development Plan expires and/or is reviewed. In addition, any specific development management guidelines set out within this Local Area Plan shall also be applied, as appropriate, to development proposals in the plan area.</p>
Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	<p>LSST 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.</p> <p>LSST 30 Water-Based Tourism 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. The Council shall: a) Collaborate with Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and other relevant agencies in enhancing water-based tourism for Loughrea town and surrounding region. b) Liaise with local organisations in the promotion of Lough Rea as a tourist attraction enabling the area to thrive off an inland waterway feature. c) Continue to implement the necessary policy objectives in terms of the SEA and AA mitigation measures for the Lough Rea Lake and environs.</p> <p>LSST 39 Green Network and the Landscape Support the development of a network of amenities, open spaces and natural areas that support biodiversity, that incorporate existing landscape features such as local rivers, streams, trees, stone walls and hedgerows, that provide pedestrian and cycling linkages and active and passive recreation opportunities, that help to structure and provide relief from the built environment and that can provide areas for surface water attenuation and flood risk management.</p> <p>LSST 42 Design Statements Require design statements with all large scale or sensitively located development proposals, such as in close proximity to an ACA, protected structure, natural heritage designation, significant public amenity, elevated position or visually vulnerable area, and in the case of any other development proposals where this is considered necessary by the planning authority. Design statements should include a site appraisal examining the location, context, landscape/townscape setting, accessibility, features and characteristics of the development site, which should be used to inform the selection of appropriate development forms and design responses and the incorporation and provision of any important landscape features in the layout and design of the development. Design statements should be succinct documents that include both text and supporting graphics demonstrating how the site context and characteristics and design principles, policies and objectives have been addressed in the design and layout of the development proposal.</p> <p>LSST 65 European Sites Protect European sites, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) that form part of the Natural 2000 Network, in accordance with the requirements in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, the European Communities (Birds and</p>

¹ 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.

² Note that non-material changes to individual Plan provisions referenced in this report may be updated during the finalisation of the Plan, including numbering, formatting and graphic design.

³ The measures generally benefit multiple environmental components i.e., a measure providing for the protection of water could beneficially impact upon the protection of biodiversity, flora and fauna, for example. All of the measures included in this table would benefit the protection of European sites.

Sources and/ or pathways for adverse effects ³	Respective Plan Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>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 updated/superseding 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 and an Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The plan or project will not give rise to adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any European Sites (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); Or 2. The plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites (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 European Sites; Or 3. The plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites (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 European Sites. <p>LSST 66 Trees, Parkland/Woodland and Hedgerows</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 (excluding Ash). 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. <p>LSST 67 Biodiversity & Ecological Networks</p> <p>Support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity within the Plan Area, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, rivers, streams, natural springs, peatlands, wetlands, stonewalls, geological and geomorphological systems, other landscape features and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or steppingstones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Seek to retain and/or incorporate these natural features into developments, in order to avoid ecological fragmentation and maintain ecological corridors and stepping stones. b) Protect and enhance the water quality and ecology of St. Cleran's River and its tributary to the east, and their function as ecological corridors, by maintaining the existing banks and channel and ensuring that new developments are set back at least 10m from the top of the bank of the stream. c) Ensure greater biodiversity through the appropriate planting of native trees, shrubs and hedgerows indigenous to the Loughrea area and of Irish provenance in public and private areas and in new developments. <p>LSST 73 Protection of Waterbodies and Watercourses</p> <p>Protect waterbodies 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 the riverine, wetland and coastal areas as appropriate.</p> <p>To contribute towards protection and improvement of the status of surface and ground waters in accordance with the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>Applications for development under the Plan must demonstrate that the proposal for development would not adversely affect a water body's ability to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive, individually as a result of the proposed development or cumulatively, in combination with other developments.</p> <p>LSST 76 River Basin Management Plan and Protection of Waters</p> <p>Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the National River Basin Management Plan or any other plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of this Local Area Plan. Development shall only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface water, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated wetlands. Galway County Council will contribute towards the protection and, where necessary, the restoration of all water bodies in order to reach good status and will seek to prevent deterioration in the status of all water bodies.</p>
<p>Peatlands, wetlands and surface water courses</p>	<p>LSST 73 Protection of Waterbodies and Watercourses</p> <p>Protect waterbodies 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 the riverine, wetland and coastal areas as appropriate.</p> <p>To contribute towards protection and improvement of the status of surface and ground waters in accordance with the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>Applications for development under the Plan must demonstrate that the proposal for development would not adversely affect a water body's ability to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive, individually as a result of the proposed development or cumulatively, in combination with other developments.</p> <p>LSST 76 River Basin Management Plan and Protection of Waters</p> <p>Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the National River Basin Management Plan or any other plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of this Local Area Plan. Development shall only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface water, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated wetlands. Galway County Council will contribute towards the protection and, where necessary, the restoration of all water bodies in order to reach good status and will seek to prevent deterioration in the status of all water bodies.</p>

Sources and/ or pathways for adverse effects ³	Respective Plan Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
<p>Water services, groundwater and water quality</p>	<p>DM Standard 2: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS): Nature based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas Best Practice Interim Guidance Document.</p> <p>LSST 2 Service - Led Development Development under the plan shall be preceded by sufficient capacity in the public wastewater infrastructure and potable water infrastructure. Potential developers shall make a Pre-Connection Enquiry to Uisce Éireann in order to establish the feasibility of a connection to the public network.</p> <p>LSST 33 Water Supply, Wastewater and Combined Drainage Infrastructure Support Uisce Éireann in the provision and maintenance of adequate wastewater disposal and water supply and the maintenance of existing combined (sewage and surface water) drainage infrastructure, in accordance with EU Directives, to service Loughrea. This will include satisfactory capacity for public wastewater and a satisfactory quantity and quality of water supply, Sustainable Drainage System and approaches and techniques with the plan area shall also be supported. The removal of surface water from combined drainage infrastructure is strongly encouraged in order to free up capacity for future development.</p> <p>LSST 34 Water Supply and Water Conservation Ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with a suitable quantity and quality of drinking water supply, promote water conservation to reduce the overall level of water loss in the public supply and require that new domestic developments provide for water supply metering in accordance with their connection agreement with Uisce Éireann.</p> <p>LSST 35 Connections to the Public Sewer and Public Water Mains Developments shall connect to the public sewer and public water mains, subject to a connection agreement with Uisce Éireann, to protect all waters in the plan area, consolidate the urban structure and control ribbon development along approach roads into Loughrea.</p> <p>LSST 67 Biodiversity & Ecological Networks Support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity within the Plan Area, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, rivers, streams, natural springs, peatlands, wetlands, stonewalls, geological and geomorphological systems, other landscape features and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or steppingstones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to retain and/or incorporate these natural features into developments, in order to avoid ecological fragmentation and maintain ecological corridors and stepping stones. Protect and enhance the water quality and ecology of St. Cleran's River and its tributary to the east, and their function as ecological corridors, by maintaining the existing banks and channel and ensuring that new developments are set back at least 10m from the top of the bank of the stream. Ensure greater biodiversity through the appropriate planting of native trees, shrubs and hedgerows indigenous to the Loughrea area and of Irish provenance in public and private areas and in new developments. <p>LSST 72 Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the existing surface water drainage system in Loughrea. 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. To maximise the capacity of existing collection systems for foul water, the discharge of additional surface water to combined (foul and surface water) sewers is not permitted. Refer also to Section 3.5 of the accompanying SFRA, "Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Surface Water Guidance and Strategy".</p> <p>LSST 73 Protection of Waterbodies and Watercourses Protect waterbodies 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 the riverine, wetland and coastal areas as appropriate. To contribute towards protection and improvement of the status of surface and ground waters in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. Applications for development under the Plan must demonstrate that the proposal for development would not adversely affect a water body's ability to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive, individually as a result of the proposed development or cumulatively, in combination with other developments.</p> <p>LSST 76 River Basin Management Plan and Protection of Waters Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the National River Basin Management Plan or any other plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of this Local Area Plan. Development shall only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface water, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated wetlands. Galway County Council will contribute towards the protection and, where necessary, the restoration of all water bodies in order to reach good status and will seek to prevent deterioration in the status of all water bodies.</p>
<p>Tourism</p>	<p>LSST 26 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of open spaces and recreational activities, in accordance with best practice and on suitable lands with adequate access to the local community; Existing open space, sport and recreational facilities should be retained unless it can be clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of Galway County Council that these uses are surplus to requirements of the local community or are to be replaced by an equivalent or better provision; 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; Support the protection of habitats and species listed in the annexes to and/or covered by the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), and species that are protected under the Wildlife Acts, 1976-2000, and stepping stones or ecological corridors in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive Tourism Encourage and assist the development of the tourist potential within Loughrea in a manner that protects the architectural, archaeological and cultural significance of the town and its environs in a sustainable manner. <p>LSST 28 Tourism Promote and encourage cultural, historical and tourism potential for Loughrea as <i>Self Sustaining Town</i> through Tourism identified lands. <i>Chapter 8 Tourism and Landscape</i> of the GCDP 2022 – 2028 supports the tourism potential of these lands. Any proposals shall have a unique setting of these lands overlooking the Lough Rea Lake and due recognition of same. All development shall occur with environmental consideration and proper planning and sustainable development.</p>

Sources and/ or pathways for adverse effects ³	Respective Plan Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>LSST 29 Tourism Development It will be a Policy Objective of the Council to seek to;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the sustainable development of Loughrea 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. Collaborate with relevant tourism agencies in the enhancement and increased economic value of Loughrea's town to create a broader tourist offer within the concept of the 'Heritage Towns'. 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 may be considered as stepping stones in support of European sites. Support tourism based enterprises at this location (identified on Map 2) with due recognition and respect to surrounding landscape. <p>LSST 30 Water-Based Tourism 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. The Council shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and other relevant agencies in enhancing water-based tourism for Loughrea town and surrounding region. Liaise with local organisations in the promotion of Lough Rea as a tourist attraction enabling the area to thrive off an inland waterway feature. Continue to implement the necessary policy objectives in terms of the SEA and AA mitigation measures for the Lough Rea Lake and environs.
Built environment	<p>LSST 8 Compact Growth It is a Policy Objective of the Council to support the delivery of new homes in Loughrea 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>LSST 11 Town Centre Management Subject to appropriate resources, noting and taking account of the Local Transport Plan, the Council in collaboration with local stakeholders shall prepare town centre management plans for Loughrea. The management plan will consider some or all of the following;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The feasibility of a Town Centre market; Upgrade of public lighting and tidying of wirescapes in the Town Centre; Connectivity of the Town Centre including upgrading of paving, consideration of the feasibility of identified pedestrianised lanes and routes through the Town; Scheme for façade improvement on identified priority streetscapes; Upgrade and improvement of street furniture; A co-ordinated vehicular access arrangement, which shall be in consultation and agreement with the Road Design Section of Galway County Council; Consistent sustained signage design policy within the Town Centre; Provision of appropriate quality landscaping and functional public spaces; Provide footpath and cycling links to the Town Centre; and, Car parking management. <p>LSST 21 Strategic Sites in Loughrea It is a Policy Objective of the Council to establish a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites in Loughrea so that brownfield land re-use can be managed and co-ordinated across multiple stakeholders as part of an active land management process.</p> <p>LSST 24 Active Land Management in Loughrea To promote and facilitate the re-use of underutilized or vacant lands in Loughrea or lands identified for regeneration, through a coordinated approach to active land management between the Council and stakeholders.</p> <p>LSST 26 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of open spaces and recreational activities, in accordance with best practice and on suitable lands with adequate access to the local community; Existing open space, sport and recreational facilities should be retained unless it can be clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of Galway County Council that these uses are surplus to requirements of the local community or are to be replaced by an equivalent or better provision; 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; Support the protection of habitats and species listed in the annexes to and/or covered by the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), and species that are protected under the Wildlife Acts, 1976-2000, and stepping stones or ecological corridors in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive Tourism Encourage and assist the development of the tourist potential within Loughrea in a manner that protects the architectural, archaeological and cultural significance of the town and its environs in a sustainable manner. <p>LSST 36 High Quality, Contextually Sensitive Design Ensure that new developments are responsive to their site context and in keeping with the character, heritage, amenities, 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>LSST 37 Public Spaces and Streets Promote the development of high quality public spaces consisting of streets, squares, parks and amenities connected by a network of pedestrian and cycling routes. Public spaces should have a high standard of design and street furniture that will create a coherent character for the area. This would include appropriately designed and located park benches, bus shelters, bicycle storage facilities, refuse bins, signage, street sculpture, etc. but should avoid the over-proliferation of different elements and/or cluttering of public spaces.</p>

Sources and/ or pathways for adverse effects ³	Respective Plan Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>LSST 39 Green Network and the Landscape Support the development of a network of amenities, open spaces and natural areas that support biodiversity, that incorporate existing landscape features such as local rivers, streams, trees, stone walls and hedgerows, that provide pedestrian and cycling linkages and active and passive recreation opportunities, that help to structure and provide relief from the built environment and that can provide areas for surface water attenuation and flood risk management.</p> <p>LSST 55 Sustainable Transportation Facilitate any Smarter Travel initiatives that will improve sustainable transportation within the Plan Area and facilitate sustainable transportation options including public transportation, rail freight, electric vehicles rentals, car clubs, public bike schemes, cycle parking as appropriate.</p> <p>LSST 56 Pedestrian and Cycle Network Facilitate the improvement of the pedestrian and cycling environment and network so that it is safe and accessible to all, through the provision of the necessary infrastructure. New development shall promote and prioritise walking and cycling, shall be permeable, adequately linked and connected to neighbouring areas, the town centre, recreational, educational, residential and employment destinations and shall adhere to the principles contained within the national policy document Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 - 2020 and the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013), as updated in 2019 and NTA document Permeability: Best Practice Guide.</p>
Invasive species	<p>The management of invasive species' occurrence and risk where required is provided for by adherence to the policies and objectives of the current Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 via policy LSST 85, as outlined below:</p> <p>LSST 85 Development Management Standards, Guidelines and Other Provisions Ensure that all of the provisions and general development management standards and guidelines set out in the current Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028, or any subsequent variation or review shall apply as appropriate in the plan area. Provisions from the County Development Plan identified as mitigation in the SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report shall apply regardless of whether the County Development Plan expires and/or is reviewed. In addition, any specific development management guidelines set out within this Local Area Plan shall also be applied, as appropriate, to development proposals in the plan area.</p> <p>This statement therefore renders any development or project resulting from the implementation of this Plan subject to compliance with invasive species policy objectives IS 1 and IS 2 of the current Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028.</p>
Agriculture	<p>LSST 29 Agriculture There will be a general presumption against residential development on Agricultural zoned lands, located within the plan boundary except for single house developments for family members on farm family owned lands.</p>
Flood Risk Management	<p>DM Standard 2: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS): Nature based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas Best Practice Interim DM Standard 3: Flooding Flood Zones and Appropriate Uses Guidance Document. CDP Integration</p> <p>LSST 26 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of open spaces and recreational activities, in accordance with best practice and on suitable lands with adequate access to the local community; • Existing open space, sport and recreational facilities should be retained unless it can be clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of Galway County Council that these uses are surplus to requirements of the local community or are to be replaced by an equivalent or better provision; • 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; • Support the protection of habitats and species listed in the annexes to and/or covered by the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), and species that are protected under the Wildlife Acts, 1976-2000, and stepping stones or ecological corridors in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive • Tourism • Encourage and assist the development of the tourist potential within Loughrea in a manner that protects the architectural, archaeological and cultural significance of the town and its environs in a sustainable manner. <p>LSST 39 Green Network and the Landscape Support the development of a network of amenities, open spaces and natural areas that support biodiversity, that incorporate existing landscape features such as local rivers, streams, trees, stone walls and hedgerows, that provide pedestrian and cycling linkages and active and passive recreation opportunities, that help to structure and provide relief from the built environment and that can provide areas for surface water attenuation and flood risk management.</p> <p>LSST 68 Constrained Land Use To facilitate the appropriate management and sustainable use of Flood Risk within the zoning plan area. This zoning indicates where the Plan Making Justification Test may need to be applied and as such can limit 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. New development will generally be limited to water-compatible uses in Flood Zone A, and less vulnerable or water compatible uses in Flood Zone B, and a detailed site-specific Flood Risk Assessment will be required in these areas. The underlying zoning or the existing permitted uses may be deemed to be acceptable in principle, 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. 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. 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.</p> <p>LSST 69 Flood Risk Management Guidelines 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>

Sources and/ or pathways for adverse effects ³	Respective Plan Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>LSST 70 Flood Risk Management and Assessment It is a Policy Objective of the Council to comply with the requirements of the 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate in accordance with the Guidelines; 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; 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>LSST 71 Principles of Flood Risk Management Guidelines The Council shall implement the key principles of flood risk management set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Avoid development that will be at risk of flooding or that will increase the flooding risk elsewhere, where possible; (b) Substitute less vulnerable uses, where avoidance is not possible; and, (c) Mitigate and manage the risk, where avoidance and substitution are not possible. <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 areas which have lower flood risk.</p> <p>LSST 72 Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the existing surface water drainage system in Loughrea. 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. To maximise the capacity of existing collection systems for foul water, the discharge of additional surface water to combined (foul and surface water) sewers is not permitted. Refer also to Section 3.5 of the accompanying SFRA, "Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Surface Water Guidance and Strategy".</p> <p>LSST 73 Protection of Waterbodies and Watercourses Protect waterbodies 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 the riverine, wetland and coastal areas as appropriate. To contribute towards protection and improvement of the status of surface and ground waters in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. Applications for development under the Plan must demonstrate that the proposal for development would not adversely affect a water body's ability to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive, individually as a result of the proposed development or cumulatively, in combination with other developments.</p> <p>LSST 74 Flood Risk Assessment for Planning Applications and CFRAMS 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 Standards 2 and 3. 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>LSST 75 Flood Risk Assessment and Climate Change Flood Risk Assessment in Loughrea shall provide information on the implications of climate change with regards to flood risk in relevant locations. The Flood Risk Management – Climate Changes Sectoral Adaptation Plan 2019 shall be consulted with to this effect.</p> <p>LSST 76 River Basin Management Plan and Protection of Waters Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the National River Basin Management Plan or any other plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of this Local Area Plan. Development shall only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface water, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated wetlands. Galway County Council will contribute towards the protection and, where necessary, the restoration of all water bodies in order to reach good status and will seek to prevent deterioration in the status of all water bodies.</p> <p>LSST 77 Flood Risk Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) 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 Loughrea.</p> <p>LSST 78 Flood Vulnerable Zones It is a policy objective of the Council 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.</p> <p>LSST 79 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.</p>

Sources and/ or pathways for adverse effects ³	Respective Plan Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
Light, air & noise pollution	<p>The curtailment of light, air and noise pollution is provided for by adherence to the policies and objectives of the current Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 via policy LSST 85, as outlined below: LSST 85 Development Management Standards, Guidelines and Other Provisions Ensure that all of the provisions and general development management standards and guidelines set out in the current Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028, or any subsequent variation or review shall apply as appropriate in the plan area. Provisions from the County Development Plan identified as mitigation in the SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report shall apply regardless of whether the County Development Plan expires and/or is reviewed. In addition, any specific development management guidelines set out within this Local Area Plan shall also be applied, as appropriate, to development proposals in the plan area. This statement therefore renders any development or project resulting from the implementation of this Plan subject to compliance with light, air and noise pollution policy objectives LP 1, AQ 1 – 4 and NP 1- 5 respectively of the current Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028.</p>
Climate/ Renewable Energy	<p>LSST 54 Transportation Infrastructure 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>LSST 55 Sustainable Transportation Facilitate any Smarter Travel initiatives that will improve sustainable transportation within the Plan Area and facilitate sustainable transportation options including public transportation, rail freight, electric vehicles rentals, car clubs, public bike schemes, cycle parking as appropriate.</p> <p>LSST 63 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. To include for the preparation of a green infrastructure strategy, which includes for an initial inventory of green resources, to ensure the conservation and enhancement of green resources.</p> <p>LSST 64 Climate Change and Local Renewable Energy Sources Promote and encourage development which is resilient to climate change by ensuring that development proposals demonstrate sustainable design principles for new buildings/ services/site including: a) Measures such as green roofs and green walls to reduce internal overheating and the urban heat island effect; b) Ensuring the efficient use of natural resources (including water) and making the most of natural systems both within and around buildings; c) Minimising pollution by reducing surface water runoff through increasing permeable surfaces and use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS); d) Reducing flood risk, damage to property from extreme events residential, public and commercial; e) Reducing risks from temperature extremes and extreme weather events to critical infrastructure such as roads, communication networks, the water/drainage network, and energy supply; f) Promoting and protecting biodiversity and green infrastructure. g) Promotion of water-efficient technologies in new development e.g., rainwater harvesting.</p> <p>LSST 84 Renewable Energy Promote and facilitate the development of renewable sources of energy and associated infrastructure within the LAP area and encourage the integration of micro-renewable energy sources into the design and construction of new developments as appropriate.</p> <p>LSST 75 Flood Risk Assessment and Climate Change Flood Risk Assessment in Loughrea shall provide information on the implications of climate change with regards to flood risk in relevant locations. The Flood Risk Management – Climate Changes Sectoral Adaptation Plan 2019 shall be consulted with to this effect.</p>
Waste Management	<p>LSST 80 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.</p>

Section 3 Consideration of Alternatives

This section summarises the alternatives considered for the Plan during the preparation process. These alternatives have been incorporated into the Plan having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects (including those related to ecology and European sites) which are identified by the SEA (informed by the AA) and are summarised below; and
2. Planning - including social and economic - effects that also were considered by the Council.

3.1 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The Plan is required to be prepared by the existing, already in force, Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which specifies various types of objectives that must be provided for by the Plan.

The alternatives available for the Plan are significantly limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, including those of the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Western and Northern Region and the County Plan. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Plan including on topics such as land use zoning and the sustainable development of settlements.

3.2 Type 1: Alternatives Already Considered

The preparation of the County Development Plan and associated SEA process already considered various different types of alternatives, including those relating to population allocations, which were integrated into that Plan and which set requirements for lower tier planning in the County.

3.3 Type 2: Land Use Zoning Alternatives

Alternative Type 2 (i): "More Consolidated, More Compact"

The more compact, serviced/serviceable land and infrastructure assessment approach under this alternative would allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Plan to the highest degree.

The infrastructure required to be in place to achieve the growth targets is already in place or planned under this alternative.

The development of the Town Centre would be more compact and sustainable under this scenario and would support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of Residential units would be expected on Town Centre lands.

Opportunity sites identified with clear design and proposed uses identified – making successful applications for the sustainable, compact development of the town more likely.

The approach under Alternative Type 2 (i): "More Compact Development" would benefit the protection of various environmental components. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to a significant degree.

Alternative Type 2 (ii): "Less Consolidated, Less Compact"

By not following a more compact, serviced/serviceable land and infrastructure assessment approach, this alternative would not allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Plan to the highest degree.

Additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate sporadic development, more than would be required for Alternative 1 'More Compact Development' and some development may have to be serviced by private waste water treatment systems which would have to be properly maintained.

The development of the Town Centre would be less compact and less sustainable under this scenario and would not optimally support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of Residential units would be less likely to be achieved on Town Centre lands (in comparison with Type 2 (i)).

Opportunity sites are identified but no clear guidance on the design parameters or uses identified – making successful applications for the sustainable, compact development of the town less likely.

An opportunity to mitigate potentially adverse effects arising from land use development to a significant degree would have been missed by the approach under Alternative Type 2 (ii): "Less Compact Development".

Selected Alternative: Type 2 (i): "More Consolidated, More Compact" however, Proposed Material Alteration MA35 (relating to the zoning of land from outside the original Draft Plan Settlement Boundary, to the north of the N65, as "Community Facilities") that was adopted as part of the Plan would introduce elements of Type 2 (ii): "Less Compact Development"

3.4 Type 3: Alternatives for Transport

Type 3 (i) Low Carbon Corridors and Connections

Supporting the use of a low carbon corridors and connections within the Plan boundary (Type 3 (i) Alternative A) would facilitate a greater achievement of sustainable modes of transport more likely. This would be likely to improve the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions/energy objectives. Applications for such development would be more likely to be granted permission. Project level consideration of environmental impacts and mitigation, including those relating to construction, would need to take place in the context of more detail around potential proposals.

Not explicitly supporting the use of a low carbon corridors and connections within the Plan boundary, would make a greater achievement of the sustainable modes of transport less likely. This would be likely to reduce the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions/energy objectives. Applications for such development would be less likely to be granted permission. Project level consideration of environmental impacts and mitigation, including those relating to construction, would need to take place in the context of more detail around potential proposals.

Selected Alternative: Alternative A

Type 3 (ii) How to provide new transport infrastructure

The provision of new transport infrastructure, with all additional environmental mitigation left to be defined until project level (Alternative A) would offer the least certainty for environmental protection and management and would be more likely to result in important individual projects (relating to sustainable mobility and emissions objectives) not getting permission.

Specifying environmental constraints (including those related to habitats and potential impacts such as disturbance from lighting – e.g. minimising river crossings, avoiding sensitive habitats, not increasing barriers to flood waters and sustainable design and construction techniques) at Plan level (Alternative B) would offer the most certainty for environmental protection and management and would be more likely to result in important individual projects (relating to sustainable mobility and emissions/energy objectives) receiving permission.




Selected Alternative: Alternative B

Type 3 (iii) Road Space Capacity

Reallocating road space would have the potential to change behaviours and would influence the profile of users of the urban centre and mode share of transport. Reallocating road space within Loughrea to walking, cycling and public transport to accompany / occur concurrently with the provision of any additional road space capacity that may arise in the future (Type 3 (ii) Alternative A) could take the form of removing traffic from streets, removing lanes of traffic, narrowing carriageways, traffic management measures, or removing on-street parking to provide cycle tracks or widened footpaths. This would benefit efforts to maximise sustainable mobility. This would also facilitate the enhancement of the public realm (including cultural heritage and its context) by contributing towards the replacement of motorised transport modes with more sustainable and non-motorised modes. Project level consideration of environmental impacts and mitigation, including those relating to construction, would need to take place in the context of more detail around proposals. To not accompany the development of additional road space capacity by a corresponding reallocation of road space within Loughrea to walking, cycling and public transport (Type 3 (ii) Alternative B) would not benefit efforts to maximise sustainable mobility.

Selected Alternative: Alternative A

Section 4 AA Determination

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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: 12/07/24

Signatory: Valerie Joyce

Date: 12/07/2024

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.