

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION STATEMENT

FOR THE LAOIS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

for: Laois County Council

Áras an Chontae
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Section 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for the Laois County Development 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	Submissions made during the Plan preparation/AA process that were relevant to the AA resulted in updates being made to the AA NIR.
(d) any information or advice obtained by the public authority	
(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	Proposed Material Alterations were screened for the need to undertake Stage 2 AA (Stage 2 AA was undertaken on certain alterations).
(f) any other relevant information	

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).

As recommended, this AA Conclusion Statement addresses the above issues.

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 there will be no significant effects to the ecological integrity of any European site from implementation of the Plan. The mitigation measures 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 combined with specialist input from the SEA and AA process facilitated zoning that avoids inappropriate development being permitted in areas of high ecological sensitivity.

Table 2.1 Mitigation relating to AA

Component	Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in:
Biodiversity and flora and fauna	CS 17 Promote higher densities at appropriate locations, owing to position on public transport network where appropriate to do so having regard to Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas (DEHLG, 2009) and ensure that any plan or project associated with the provision of new housing is subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in compliance with the Habitats Directive, and subsequent assessment as required.
	CS 21 Promote higher densities at appropriate locations, owing to position on public transport network where appropriate to do so having regard to Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas (DEHLG, 2009) and ensure that any plan or project associated with the provision of new housing is subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in compliance with the Habitats Directive, and subsequent assessment as required;
	CA ST 1 Protect and enhance the County's floodplains subject to flooding as "green infrastructure" where appropriate and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive;
	RH 4 Provide for sustainable rural housing in the County in accordance with the Sustainable Rural Housing: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2005) , EPA Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment Systems for Single Houses (2009) and ensure that any plan or project associated with the provision of new housing is subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in compliance with the Habitats Directive, and subsequent assessment as required;
	NRPO 4 Prepare an Open Space Plan for the County having regard to the town parks, riverside walks and other amenity spaces and resources and ensure that any plan or project associated with open space planning or tourism is subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in compliance with the Habitats Directive, and subsequent assessment as required
	NRPO 7 Investigate the feasibility of the following specific recreation and leisure projects subject to the Habitats and Birds Directives:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the ongoing development of an athletic track, including provision of dressing rooms and tartan resurface in Portlaoise; Investigate and facilitate where appropriate the provision of strategic greenways throughout the County.
	NRPO 13 Facilitate the development of greenways / blueways along the main waterways through the County – Grand Canal, River Barrow and River Nore and their tributaries subject to the Habitats and Birds Directives and the proper planning and development of the areas
	ABT 2 Support in principle and investigate the feasibility of, subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive, developing and marketing off-road Slieve Bloom Mountain Biking Trail by Coillte, Mountmellick –Portlaoise – Abbeyleix Greenway and Durrow Green Network Cycle Trail in co-operation with relevant stakeholders including Durrow Development Forum.
	ABT 3 Develop on-road cycle trails in the Slieve Blooms along existing lightly-trafficked roads in partnership with cycling clubs, Offaly County Council, Laois Sports Partnership, Laois Partnership Company and the National Trails Office, subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive
	ABT 6 Promote and investigate the feasibility of, subject to compliance with the habitats and Birds Directives, sustainable developing and improving of facilities and infrastructure supporting water based tourism activities, (including shore side interpretive centres and jetties). Development proposals outside settlement centres will be required to demonstrate a need to locate in the area and will be required to ensure that the ecological integrity and water quality of the river or lake, including lakeshore and riparian habitats, is not adversely affected by the development
	TM 15 Where relevant, the Council and those receiving permission for development under the Plan shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate
	CH 2 Take responsibility for the development of a more sustainable tourism industry which minimises adverse impacts on local communities, the built heritage, landscapes, habitats and species; leaving them undiminished as a resource for future generations, while supporting social and economic prosperity
	Support the development and marketing of the Barrow Blueway and facilitate related commercial opportunities in Vicarstown, Portarlinton, Graiguecullen and Portlaoise, subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive
	NH 2 Support the development and marketing of the Erkina River Blueway in association with all relevant stakeholders and facilitate related commercial opportunities in the area, subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive
	NH 3 Promote and facilitate the continued development of the Slieve Bloom Mountains bike trail as a key tourism asset for the County and as part of the tourism offer on the Slieve Bloom Mountains, in conjunction with Offaly County Council.
	In addition, it is the Council policy to (i) promote the further development of walking trails on the mountains, (ii) connect to and develop Clonslee, Camross, Coolrain and Rosenalis as a service hubs for the area and (iii) promote and facilitate links to / from other existing and proposed greenways, blueways and peatways (iv) Support the development of visitor centre facilities in Baunreagh, , subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive
	RL 2 Facilitate the development of agriculture while ensuring that natural waters, wildlife habitats and conservation areas are protected from pollution.
	RL 7 Encourage, subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives, access to forestry including private forestry for amenity and educational purposes including the provision of walking routes, cycling routes, mountain biking routes, mountain trails, nature trails and orienteering;
	RL 14 Support in principle the expansion of the aggregates and concrete products industry which offers opportunity for employment and economic development generally subject to environmental , traffic and planning considerations and ensure that any plan or project associated with extractive industry is subject to Appropriate assessment screening in compliance with the Habitats Directive and subsequent assessment as required , applicants for planning permission shall have regard to the GSI-ICF Quarrying Guidelines;
	TRANS 45 Investigate the feasibility of developing a National Scale Centre for Off-Road Mountain-Biking in the Slieve Bloom Mountains, subject to planning permission & the Habitats' and Birds Directives;

Component	Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in:
	<p>TRANS 47 Continue to audit, maintain and promote walking trails and walking events in the Slieve Blooms, subject to planning permission & the Habitats' and Birds Directives</p> <p>TRANS 48 Designate the following graded on-road cycling trails in the Slieve Blooms; install related signage and improve road surfaces along these trails, as resources allow; produce trail maps and market the trails, subject to the Habitats' and Birds Directives;</p> <p>TRANS 52 Establish a new Woodenbridge Walking Trail linking Durrrow and Ballacolla, subject to the Habitats' Directive</p> <p>BNH 15 Encourage, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries and laneways, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.</p> <p>LCA 17 Maintain the rivers throughout the County whilst ensuring that all works are carried out subject to appropriate environmental assessment in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, in respect of any proposed development likely to have an impact on a designated natural heritage site, site proposed to be designated and any additional sites that may be designated during the period of this Plan</p> <p>LCA 18 Preserve riverside historic features and their landscape settings. Conserve valuable habitats focused on and around river corridors and estuaries including European and national designations</p> <p>LCA 19 Recognise the potential constraints on development created by river flood plains and the value of these flood plains as increasingly rare habitats</p> <p>LCA 24 Conserve valuable habitats including any European and national designations</p> <p>Policy Objectives for Biodiversity and Designated Sites</p> <p>BNH 1 Protect, conserve, and seek to enhance the County's biodiversity and ecological connectivity</p> <p>BNH 2 Conserve and protect habitats and species listed in the Annexes of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) (as amended) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2010 (as amended) and the Flora Protection Orders.</p> <p>BNH 3 Support and co-operate with statutory authorities and others in support of measures taken to manage proposed or designated sites in order to achieve their conservation objectives and maintain the favourable conservation status and conservation value of Sites under National and European legislation and International Agreements and maintain and /develop linkages between them where feasible.</p> <p>BNH 4 Protect and maintain the conservation value of all existing and future Natural Heritage Areas, Nature Reserves, Ramsar Sites, Wildfowl Sanctuaries and Biogenetic Reserves in the County.</p> <p>BNH 5 Projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall not be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)¹. Screening for AAs and AAs undertaken shall take into account invasive species as relevant.</p> <p>BNH 6 Assess, in accordance with the relevant legislation, all proposed developments which are likely to have a significant effect (directly or through indirect or cumulative impact) on designated natural heritage sites, sites proposed for designation and protected species.</p> <p>BNH 7 Protect Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) from developments that would adversely affect their special interests.</p> <p>BNH 8 Recognise and protect the significant geological value of sites in County Laois and safeguard these sites, in consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland and in accordance with the National Heritage Plan and "Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry".</p> <p>BNH 9 Engage with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to ensure Integrated Management Plans are prepared for all Natura sites (or parts thereof) and ensure that plans are fully integrated with the County Development Plan and other plans and programmes, with the intention that such plans are practical, achievable and sustainable and have regard to all relevant ecological, cultural, social and economic considerations and with special regard to local communities.</p> <p>BNH 10 Support the objectives of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 by encouraging the planting of pollinator friendly trees and plants within grass verges along public roads and existing and future greenways, new hedgerows, public parks and public open spaces in towns and villages, including part of mixed use and residential developments</p> <p>BNH 11 Support measures to protect Swift population such as the creation of Swift nest cavities in all new commercial and public buildings (schools/libraries, etc).</p> <p>Development Management Standard for Designated Sites</p> <p>Policy Objectives for Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows</p> <p>BNH 17 Undertake a study within the lifetime of the Plan and for all Local Area Plans to document and map trees and groups of trees that require preservation and prepare Tree Preservation Orders for individual trees, groups of trees or woodland areas where expedient and in the interests of visual amenity, biodiversity and the environment.</p> <p>BNH 18 Protect individual trees, groups of trees and woodland in the interests of landscape conservation (including townscapes) and nature conservation as part of the development management process</p> <p>BNH 19 Protect existing hedgerows, particularly of historical and archaeological importance of townland boundaries, from unnecessary removal in order to preserve the rural character of the countryside and promote biodiversity</p> <p>BNH 20 Ensure that hedgerow removal to facilitate development is kept to an absolute minimum and, where unavoidable, a requirement for mitigation planting will be required comprising a hedge of similar length and species composition to the original, established as close as is practicable to the original and where possible linking in to existing adjacent hedges. Native plants of a local provenance should be used for any such planting</p> <p>BNH 21 Promote and develop urban forests in parkland and street trees in urban settlements to enhance public realm and increase tree canopy coverage and diversity.</p> <p>BNH 22 Ensure that hedgerow and mature tree removal to facilitate development is kept to an absolute minimum and, where unavoidable, a requirement for mitigation planting will be required comprising a hedge of similar length and species composition to the original, established as close as is practicable to the original and where possible linking in to existing adjacent hedges. Native plants of a local provenance should be used for any such planting</p> <p>Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows Development Management Standards</p> <p>Policy Objectives for Waterways and Wetlands</p> <p>BNH 23 Protect waterbodies and watercourses from inappropriate development, to ensure they are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values and to conserve and enhance where possible, the wildlife habitats of the County's rivers and riparian zones, lakes, canals and streams which occur outside of designated areas to provide a network of habitats and biodiversity corridors throughout the County.</p> <p>BNH 24 Promote and develop the Barrow Blueway initiative and work with State Agencies, landowners, local communities and other relevant groups to protect and manage inland waters, river corridors and their floodplains from degradation and damage, and to recognise and promote them as natural assets of the urban and rural environment</p> <p>BNH 25 Facilitate the development of the Grand Canal for cycling, walking and nature study. Investigate the possibility of developing long distance walking routes/Greenway, within the lifetime of the Plan, along the disused Mountmellick Grand Canal Line.</p> <p>BNH 26 Protect riparian corridors by reserving land along their banks for ecological corridors and maintain them free from inappropriate development. Where developments are proposed adjacent to waterways in previously undeveloped areas, the Planning Authority will require a general setback distance of a minimum of 10 metres from the waterways edge, subject to site-specific characteristics and the nature and design of the development. In previously developed areas, for example, within town centres, this general setback distance is likely to be reduced and should be part of any pre-planning consultations with the Council.</p> <p>BNH 27 Require that development along rivers set aside lands for pedestrian routes and cycleways that could link to the broader area and established settlements in the area.</p> <p>BNH 28 Provide for public access to waterways where feasible and appropriate, in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Waterways Ireland and other relevant stakeholders, whilst maintaining them free from inappropriate development, subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, as appropriate.</p> <p>BNH 29 Protect the Nore Pearl Mussel through the measures set out in the Freshwater Pearl Mussel Nore Sub-Basin Management Plan (2009).</p> <p>BNH 30 Protect the migration of fish in the River Barrow Nore SAC from high risk barriers such weirs and bridge sills.</p> <p>Policy Objectives for Peatlands</p> <p>BNH 31 The County Development will continue to support the objectives of the Strategic Framework for the Future use of Peatlands which identifies new potential future land uses and also seek to progress opportunities under Just Transition Fund.</p> <p>BNH 32 Protect the County's designated peatland areas and landscapes and to conserve their ecological, archaeological, cultural, and educational heritage.</p> <p>BNH 33 Work with relevant agencies such as Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Bord na Mona, NPWS, Coillte and adjacent Local Authorities to prepare an integrated afteruse framework and management plans for the peatlands and related infrastructure,</p> <p>BNH 34 Support the preparation of a Sustainable Holistic Management Plan for the future use of the Industrial Peatlands in the County, which recognises the role of peatlands in carbon sequestration.</p> <p>BNH 35 Support the designation of a National Park for the peatlands area in the Midlands in conjunction with adjoining Local Authorities.</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 project to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

Component	Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in:
	<p>BNH 36 Undertake a feasibility study to identify peatways, where appropriate and examine the tourist potential of same such as a peatway link from Portllington to the Grand Canal and River Barrow Greenway.</p> <p>BNH 37 Support relevant agencies to provide for the future sustainable and environmentally sensitive use of large industrial peatlands at Cuil Na Mona.</p> <p>Development Management Standard for Peatlands</p> <p>Light Pollution Policy Objectives</p> <p>ES 49 Ensure that external lighting and lighting schemes are designed so that light spillage is minimised, thereby limiting light pollution into the surrounding environment and protecting the amenities of nearby properties and wildlife, including protected species</p> <p>ES 51 Encourage the maintenance of dark skies in rural areas and limit light pollution in urban and rural areas</p> <p>ES 52 Encourage the maintenance of dark skies in rural areas and limit light pollution in urban and rural areas</p> <p>Policy Objectives for Green Infrastructure</p> <p>BNH 11 Ensure that areas and networks of Green Infrastructure are identified, protected, enhanced, managed and created to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.</p> <p>BNH 12 Develop and implement a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Laois in partnership with key stakeholders and the public which reflects a long-term perspective, including the need to adapt to climate change. Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Laois protects existing Green Infrastructure resources and plans for future Green Infrastructure provision</p> <p>BNH 13 Require all Local Area Plans and Master Plans to protect, enhance, provide and manage Green Infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner. Set targets for the provision of Green Infrastructure elements such as trees and green roofs as part of the preparation of Local Area Plans.</p> <p>BNH 14 Promote a network of paths and cycle tracks to enhance accessibility to the Green Infrastructure network, while ensuring that the design and operation of the routes respect and where possible enhances the ecological potential of each site</p> <p>BNH 15 Encourage, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, the management of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries and laneways, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.</p> <p>BNH 16 To identify and map Green Infrastructure assets and sites of local biodiversity value over the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>SOLAR FARMS</p> <p>The following factors will be used to assess applications for Solar Farm Development within the county:</p> <p>(i) Site Selection: a. Preference for use of brownfield sites/ contaminated land and non productive agricultural land versus productive agricultural lands; b. Proximity to electricity infrastructure</p> <p>(ii) Assessment of Impacts</p> <p>a. Effect of glint and glare; b. Visual impact on heritage and landscape assets, designated sites, views and prospects; c. The extent of additional impacts of solar rays follow the daily movement of the sun; d. Ecology including biodiversity, flora and fauna; e. Cumulative impacts of the proposal with other renewable energy installations in the area; f. Traffic impact on road infrastructure during all phases of development (construction, operation and decommissioning); g. Drainage, surface water runoff, flooding; (iii) As a minimum the following will be required to be submitted in support of a planning application: a. Drawings, including those addressing all drainage matters; b. Landscape/ Biodiversity Plan; c. Construction Environmental Management Plan; and d. Decommissioning / Restoration plan. However, it is advised this to be agreed with the Planning Authority through pre-planning consultation.</p> <p>CM RE 16 Favourable consideration will be given to the re-use, shared use (co-location), refurbishment, repair and repowering of existing renewable energy technology developments in order to prolong the life span of developments such as wind farms and solar farms providing that these do not result in unacceptable impacts on the: 1) Environment; 2) Residential amenity; and 3) Landscape and Visual Amenity. The development would subject to compliance with national, regional and local development plan policy, as well as other relevant environmental criteria.</p> <p>HYDRO ENERGY</p> <p>The following factors will be used to assess applications for new river-based hydroelectricity plans: • the free passage of fish; • any protected structures; • maintenance of biodiversity corridors; • Protected species and any designated nature conservation area such as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and National Heritage Areas; and • Any proposed projects do not conflict with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>DM RL 2 COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS</p> <p>COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS</p> <p>Development proposals in the open countryside should satisfy a high standard of siting and design, while being properly located to ensure their assimilation into their rural setting. The following considerations should be taken into account:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Buildings should be kept simple and should be finished with materials appropriate to a rural setting such as nap plaster, stone and slate; Buildings should reflect the scale and pattern of the rural development in the vicinity; Building height should be restricted to that required for the normal operation of the premises, buildings of excessive height will not be permitted; Buildings should be sited to make use of existing hedgerows and topography to provide natural screening, buildings in open landscapes should be avoided; Access roads and driveways should respect existing site contours; Car parking should be located to the rear of the building and in compliance with the car parking standards in Table 18; Advertising signs should be kept to a minimum; Large advertising signs at the road frontage will be resisted; Hedgerows or stone walls should be used for boundary treatments; Any new building will be required to respect the appearance of and character of the landscape. It will not be acceptable where it is unduly prominent in the landscape, where it results in build-up of development when viewed with existing and/or approved building or where the impact of the ancillary works, including the creation of visibility splays would damage rural character or impact negatively on the environment or which fails to protect Natura Sites, conservation areas, natural heritage or the environment or fails to protect and improve or is injurious to amenities(including visual amenities). <p>A justification as to why the proposed development is to be located in a rural area over a settlement where adequate zoning is in place shall be submitted.</p> <p>DM RL 3 Mining and Aggregates Development Control Standard</p> <p>Applications for new development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated processes, shall</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> identify existing public rights of way and walking routes which may be impacted on or are adjacent to the development site. They shall be kept free from development as a Rights of Way/Walking Route ensure the protection, conservation, preservation and safeguarding of recorded monuments and areas in their vicinity, World Heritage Sites(including Tentative Sites), NHA's, Euro Sites, Nature Reserves, scenic views and prospects archaeological sites and features, natural heritage, natural environment, features of natural beauty or interest and prescribed sites, geological sites and areas of geological/geomorphological or historic interest and areas of high scenic amenity from inappropriate development that might be detrimental to them. minimise adverse effect on the environment and visual and natural amenities to the greatest possible extent must be carried out during all life cycle stages, whether in respect of new quarries or extensions to existing ones and development will be prohibited if the quality of the environment or landscape, particularly sensitive landscape, is adversely affected or there is a reduction of the visual amenity of areas of high amenity. be landscaped either by the retention of existing vegetation or by screening to minimise the detraction from the visual quality of the landscape. Require that development proposals on or in proximity to a quarry site should investigate the nature and extent of the risks associated with the development together with appropriate mitigation. <p>Slieve Blooms</p> <p>In relation to the Slieve Blooms, it is proposed to collaborate with Offaly County Council and relevant stakeholders to develop a masterplan for their protection and sensitive development subject to the Habitats Directive and environmental standards being met.</p> <p>BNHXXX - Protect, conserve, preserve, manage and enhance wetlands(including fens and turloughs) from infilling, fragmentation, degradation and protect and conserve their quality, character and features. Resist development (including land reclamation) which would destroy, fragment and degrade wetlands, coastal wetlands, estuarine marshland and control adjacent development by the use of buffer zones.</p> <p>Castletown</p> <p>Examine the feasibility of developing a new circular riverside walkway upriver from Castletown Weir, while ensuring the protection of the River Barrow And River Nore SAC and the River Nore SPA. The walkway route on the map is indicative and would subject to amendment in order to ensure compliance with Habitats and Birds Directives.</p> <p>RL xx "Laois County Council will implement the objectives and targets at county level of the EU 'A Farm to Fork strategy', published in May 2020. The Council will also implement the targets of the 14 point EU Nature Restoration Plan in the 'EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives'. Agricultural development proposals must demonstrate compliance with the targets and policies of both strategies, with those agricultural installations below the Industrial Emissions Directive thresholds for EPA licencing will be subject to appropriate assessment screening and that assessment of these impacts should follow EPA Guidance published in May 2021 . 1 https://www.epa.ie/publications/licensing--permitting/industrial/ied/Assessment-of-Impact-of--Ammonia-and-Nitrogen-on-Natura-sites-from-Intensive-Agericulture-Installations.pdf</p>

Component	Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in:
Water	<p>ABT 6 Promote and investigate the feasibility of, subject to compliance with the habitats and Birds Directives, sustainable developing and improving of facilities and infrastructure supporting water based tourism activities, (including shore side interpretive centres and jetties). Development proposals outside settlement centres will be required to demonstrate a need to locate in the area and will be required to ensure that the ecological integrity and water quality of the river or lake, including lakeshore and riparian habitats, is not adversely affected by the development</p> <p>WS 3 Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and roll-out Drinking Water Safety Plans across all water schemes to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchments and to ensure that good water quality is sustained in all public water supplies.</p> <p>WS 21 Continue to draw up and implement annual programmes for the monitoring of water quality in Group Water Schemes in accordance with the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014, as amended and as approved by the EPA.</p> <p>Water Quality Policy Objectives</p> <p>ES 17 Implement the provisions of water pollution abatement measures in accordance with National and EU Directives and other legislative requirements in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate</p> <p>ES 18 Maintain and improve the water quality in rivers and other water courses in the County, including ground waters. The Council will have cognizance of, where relevant, the EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Document No. 20 and 36 which provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>ES 19 Minimise the impact on groundwater of discharges from domestic wastewater treatment systems and other potentially polluting sources. The Council will comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's 'Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses' (2009) and the Environmental Protection Agency's 'Code for Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels'</p> <p>ES 20 Assist and support with the Blue Dots Catchment Programme which been established under the current River Basin Management Plan specifically for the protection and restoration of high ecological status water bodies</p> <p>ES 21 Ensure the protection of all High Status Water Bodies in the County by complying with the requirements of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977, (as amended), the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC), the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009, the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010; which standards and objectives are included in the River Basin Management Plans, and other relevant Regulations.</p> <p>WS 22 Ensure where private wastewater treatment systems are permitted by virtue of their remoteness from Public Wastewater Schemes to serve commercial and business developments, e.g Motorway Service Stations, Tourism and the Hospitality Sector etc, that their performance is monitored and audited so that they are operated in compliance with their wastewater discharge license, in order to protect water quality.</p> <p>Groundwater Protection Policy Objectives</p> <p>ES 23 Ensure, through the implementation of the relevant River Basin Management Plan and their associated Programmes of Measures and any other associated legislation, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground waters throughout the County</p> <p>ES 24 Protect and develop, in a sustainable manner, the existing groundwater sources and aquifers in the County and control development in a manner consistent with the proper management of these resources, in accordance with the County Water Source Protection Zones</p> <p>ES 25 Assist and co-operate with the EPA, LAWPRO and IW in the continued implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive</p> <p>ES 26 Minimise the impact on groundwater of discharges from septic tanks and other potentially polluting sources through compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency's 'Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses' (2009).</p> <p>ES 27 Ensure the protection of groundwater dependant Natura 2000 sites which rely on the continued supply of groundwater resources to secure the key environmental conditions that support the integrity of the site and through the protection of groundwater standards as defined by the National River Basin Management Plan 2018 – 2021 (and any subsequent Plan). Where no detailed Plan for protection of a specific source is available wastewater discharge will not be permitted within a radius of 200 metres of that source</p> <p>ES 28 Ensure that Source Protection Areas are identified for any public and group scheme water supplies or multiple unit housing developments with private water supplies;</p> <p>ES 29 Continue efforts to improve water quality under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977, (as amended) and by implementing the measures outlined under the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) and complying with the requirements of the Surface Water Legislation Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009, the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010; which standards and objectives are included in the River Basin Management Plans, and other relevant Regulations</p> <p>ES 30 Ensure that all industrial development is appropriately located, to seek effluent reduction and 'clean production' where feasible, and require that waste water treatment facilities are adequate, and that effluents are treated and discharged in a satisfactory manner</p> <p>ES 31 New developments which include on-site wastewater treatment in an Extreme Vulnerability Inner Source Protection Area shall be restricted to the following categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A dwelling for a full-time farmer; An existing inhabited dwelling in need of replacement; A second family dwelling on a farm where this is required for management of the farm <p>Permission may be granted in the above instances subject to the following stipulations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> That an alternative site outside the Extreme vulnerability Inner Protection Area is not available The existing water quality of the source is not subject to any significant nitrate and /or microbiological contamination The existing water quality of the groundwater source is in compliance with the environmental objectives set out in relevant River Basin District Management Plan. <p>ES 32 Control intensive agriculture development e.g. intensive pig unit productions in order to minimise their impact on soil and ground water quality. Developments involving intensive pig units shall be required to show compliance with the following requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The developer shall demonstrate that all lands available are suitable for landspreading of manures and have satisfactory Nutrient Management Plans for such lands Satisfactory arrangements for storage, management and spreading of slurries are provided. <p>ES 33 Encourage the use of catchment-sensitive farming practices, in order to meet Water Framework Directive targets, European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017, as amended and comply with the relevant River Basin Management Plan.</p> <p>ES 34 Consult as necessary with other competent authorities with responsibility for environmental management</p> <p>ES 35 To work in co-operation with relevant organisations and major stakeholders, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the protection and improvement of the County's water resources</p> <p>ES 36 Ensure that developments that may adversely affect water quality will not proceed unless mitigation measures are employed, such as settlements ponds, interceptors etc</p> <p>ES 37 Promote public awareness of water quality issues and the measures required to protect both surface water and groundwater bodies</p>
Air (Noise)	<p>Noise Pollution Policy Objectives</p> <p>ES 43 Require an assessment of impact of the developments on noise levels, having regard to the provisions of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Acts 1992 and 2003 and the EPA Noise Regulations 1994 when assessing planning applications</p> <p>ES 44 Support the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006</p>

Component	Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in:
	<p>ES 45 Ensure that relevant planning applications comply with the provisions of any Noise Action Plan or noise maps relating to the area.</p> <p>ES 46 Restrict development proposals causing noise pollution in excess of best practice standards</p> <p>ES 47 Regulate and control activities likely to give rise to excessive noise, other than those activities which are regulated by the EPA.</p> <p>ES 48 Ensure new development does not cause an unacceptable increase in noise levels affecting noise sensitive properties. Proposals for new development with the potential to create excessive noise will be required to submit a construction and/or operation management plan to control such emissions.</p> <p>ES 49 Require activities likely to give rise to excessive noise to install noise mitigation measures and monitors. The provision of a noise audit may be required where appropriate</p>
Material Assets (Waste Water)	<p>Public Wastewater Objectives</p> <p>WS14 Support and facilitate social and economic growth in line with National, Regional and Local spatial planning policy and the Core Strategy in Chapter 2 of this plan through the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure 1: Facilitate Growth: Wastewater Growth Programme: - Upgrade to the Portlaoise WWTP – phase 1 as proposed in the Feasibility Study. <p>Roll-out agreed priorities for IWs Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme 2020 to 2024 and subsequent Programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure 2: Network and Treatment Programmes: Roll-out improvements to network in Portlaoise WW Network as identified in the Portlaoise Drainage Area Plan (DAP). Complete DPAs for Portlaoise and Mountmellick Wastewater Networks and complete modeling for improvements to these networks. • Measure 3: Irish Water Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme <p>Under IWs Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme 2020 to 2024 and subsequent programmes agree priorities for delivering upgrades/replacements of WWTPs with insufficient headroom or plants that are non-compliant and damaging to the receiving environment so as to enhance and provide for growth in small towns and villages throughout the County.</p> <p>WS 15 Work in conjunction with Irish Water and with the DHPLG during the lifetime of the plan for the provision, extension and upgrading of waste water collection and treatment systems in the County that have existing facilities to serve existing populations and facilitate sustainable development of those towns, in accordance with the requirements of the Settlement Strategy and associated Core Strategy. In particular</p> <p>A. Wastewater Discharge Authorisation Compliance (EPA Licensed Plants)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Complete upgrade to Portlaoise – phase 1 as proposed in the Feasibility Study; ii. Upgrades to Ballinakill; iii. Ballyroan – Phase 3, 4 and 5; iv. Castletown – Sludge and Storm Tank Programmes; v. Mountmellick – Ortho P and Ammonia Compliance <p>B. Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive Compliance: Complete upgrades to COA WWTPs (plants with <500pe design) under the National Certificate of Authorisation Programme (NCAP) on a priority basis as agreed with the Local Authority.</p> <p>WS 16 Promote use of wetland systems for treatment of waste-water in accordance with Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government guidelines "Integrated Constructed Wetlands –Guidance Document for Farmyard Soiled Water and Domestic Wastewater Applications" [2010].</p> <p>WS 17 Deliver Energy efficient Capital Programmes where appropriate and as follows</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Borris-in-Ossory – Install Fine Bubble Diffused Aeration <p>WS 18 Work in accordance with IW/LA MoU and Protocol on an agreed programme with LA planning to take in charge private housing estates Wastewater Infrastructure and transfer assets to IW.</p> <p>Rural Water and Wastewater Policy Objectives</p> <p>WS 19 Work in conjunction with the NFGWSs and with the support and funding of the DHPLG by way of the Rural Water Multi-Annual Programme 2019 to 2021 and subsequent programmes to - through various measures - improve the quality, reliability and efficiency of water services for rural dwellers where Irish Water services are not available and thereby sustain and enhance the social, economic and future prosperity of the rural water sector.</p> <p>WS 20 Support, monitor, advise and administer Group Water Schemes on behalf of the DHPLG in conjunction with the NFGWSs by implementation of Source Protection Works, Water Treatment Improvements, Amalgamation/Rationalisation of schemes and administering of Capital Replacement Costs</p> <p>WS 21 Continue to draw up and implement annual programmes for the monitoring of water quality in Group Water Schemes in accordance with the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014, as amended and as approved by the EPA.</p> <p>WS 22 Embed water conservation at the heart of water policy through prioritising resource management, abstraction control, source protection, tackling leakage and encouraging behavioural change.</p> <p>WS 23 Promoting water conservation and water resource management reflected in investment for leak detection and repair, network improvements, cost effective metering and awareness campaigns among the GWS.</p> <p>WS 24 Ensuring that rural water services investment decisions are aligned with the broad strategic aims of Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework and Improve the resilience of rural water supplies by supporting the implementation of the following measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) New Group Water Schemes and extensions b) Transition of Group Water and Group Sewerage schemes to the Public (Irish Water) Water Sector c) Community Connections (Water & Wastewater) Networks d) Innovation and Research. <p>WS 25 Ensure that the scheme relating to private wells is administered effectively and that improvements to sources and/or treatment works are carried out in accordance with IW and EPA standards</p> <p>WS 26 Work in conjunction with stakeholders through various measures to improve the quality, reliability and efficiency of water services for consumers of Small Private Supplies where Irish Water services are not available and thereby sustain and enhance the social, economic and future prosperity of the rural water sector.</p> <p>WS 27 Support, monitor, advise and raise awareness among owner/operators of SPSs of their duties as water suppliers under the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014 as amended to ensure that a safe and dependable water supply is available to those persons who avail of the service (Customers/service users/children etc).</p> <p>WS 28 Collaborate with stakeholders including LA Water and Environmental Services staff, the HSE, LEO staff, Laois Chamber, representatives from the educational, tourist, childcare and hospitality sectors to raise awareness among their members of the duties of the Owners/Operators in relation to the provision of clean and wholesome drinking water</p> <p>WS 29 Maintain and update its register of SPSs and will focus their enforcement powers on those schemes that are non-compliant with the Drinking Water Regulations by carrying out Audits on these schemes and by further enforcement measures if improvements are not implemented. Where the option exists to connect to a public water supply, the water supplier will be encouraged to make an application to IW for a connection.</p>
Tourism	<p>TM 15 Where relevant, the Council and those receiving permission for development under the Plan shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.</p> <p>TM 16 It is a Policy Objective to ensure the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.</p> <p>DM TM 1 A comprehensive justification of the need for the development by its nature and space requirements to be located outside towns and villages, for example, golf courses, swimming, angling, sailing/boating, pier/marina development, water sports, equestrian and pony trekking routes, adventure/interpretative centres and associated ancillary uses, tourist related leisure facilities including walking and cycling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact upon the scenic value, heritage value and the environmental, ecological or conservation quality of primary tourism asset(s) and its their general environment. • Evidence that potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes have been considered and mitigation measures proposed. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals. <p>TI 1</p>

Component	Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in:
	<p>Encourage and promote tourism related facilities and accommodation within existing settlements and in rural areas where there is a clear and demonstrated need and benefits to the local community and where the development is compatible with the policies set out for the protection of the environment.</p> <p>ABT 1 Support the development of the amenities and recreational potential of the River Barrow, in co-operation with the National Parks and Wildlife Services, Irish Water, adjoining Councils and other relevant authorities.</p> <p>ABT 2 Support in principle and investigate the feasibility of, subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive, developing and marketing off-road Slieve Bloom Mountain Biking Trail by Coillte, Mountmellick –Portlaoise – Abbeyleix Greenway and Durrow Green Network Cycle Trail in co-operation with relevant stakeholders including Durrow Development Forum.</p> <p>ABT 3 Develop on-road cycle trails in the Slieve Blooms along existing lightly-trafficked roads in partnership with cycling clubs, Offaly County Council, Laois Sports Partnership, Laois Partnership Company and the National Trails Office, subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive.</p> <p>ABT 6 Promote and investigate the feasibility of, subject to compliance with the habitats and Birds Directives, sustainable developing and improving of facilities and infrastructure supporting water based tourism activities, (including shore side interpretive centres and jetties). Development proposals outside settlement centres will be required to demonstrate a need to locate in the area and will be required to ensure that the ecological integrity and water quality of the river or lake, including lakeshore and riparian habitats, is not adversely affected by the development.</p>
Agriculture	<p>RL 1 Maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.</p> <p>RL 2 Facilitate the development of agriculture while ensuring that natural waters, wildlife habitats and conservation areas are protected from pollution.</p> <p>RL 3 Work with the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly and other relevant stakeholders in identifying areas of high value agricultural land in the County to address the need for sustainable food supplies.</p>
Forestry	<p>RL 6 Support in principle the appropriate expansion of the forestry sector and related manufacturing activities subject to environmental, traffic and planning considerations; support an increase in the broadleaf component of any planting programme to a minimum of 33%.</p> <p>RL 7 Encourage, subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives, access to forestry including private forestry for amenity and educational purposes including the provision of walking routes, cycling routes, mountain biking routes, mountain trails, nature trails and orienteering.</p>
Peatlands	<p>LCA 23 Recognise the importance of peatlands for ecology, history, culture and for alternative energy production.</p> <p>LCA 24 Conserve valuable habitats including any European and national designations.</p> <p>LCA 25 Support the identification of projects that have the potential to achieve commercial value such as industrial developments, renewable energy, tourism developments etc. while at the same time promoting high environmental standards and supporting Biodiversity objectives.</p> <p>LCA 26 Support the restoration of peatlands on suitable sites.</p> <p>LCA 27 Recognise that intact boglands are critical natural resources for ecological and environmental reasons and recognise that cutaway and cut-over boglands represent degraded landscapes and/or brownfield sites and thus are potentially robust to absorb a variety of appropriate developments.</p> <p>CA LU 3 Support restoration of peat bogs when turf cutting has ceased and take into account relevant recommendations from the National Peatlands Strategy when implementing the Plan.</p> <p>CM LU 2 Ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological, climate regulation, archaeological, cultural and educational significance.</p> <p>DM BNH 6 In the consideration of development on or adjacent to peatland areas, the following guiding principles should apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the potential contribution of peatlands to climate change mitigation and adaptation including renewable energy production; • Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027: Draft Stage Chapter 13 Development Management Standards 402 • Consideration of habitats and species of environmental significance; • Consideration of the potential contribution of peatlands to an existing or proposed greenway / blueway / peatway network; • Consideration of the ecosystem services and tourism potential provided by peatlands; • Development of peatlands shall ensure that there are no negative impacts on water quality and hydrology; • Consideration of peatland stability; • Achieving of a carbon emissions balance; and • Incorporation of fire mitigation measures such as fire breaks or ensuring access points and routes are suitable for travel by emergency services
Climate	<p>CA 1 Support and facilitate European and national objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the following documents, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Action Plan (2019 and any subsequent versions); • National Mitigation Plan (2017 and any subsequent versions); • National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions); • Any Regional Decarbonisation Plan prepared on foot of commitments included in the emerging Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region; • Relevant provisions of any Sectoral Adaptation Plans prepared to comply the requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, including those seeking to contribute towards the National Transition Objective, to pursue, and achieve, the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the end of the year 2050; and • Laois Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024. <p>CM ST 1 Support construction of green routes/cycleways/pedestrian routes throughout the County.</p> <p>CM ST 2 To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements which are well served by public transport.</p> <p>CM ST 3 To promote higher residential development densities in settlement centres along public transport corridors, that are not located in areas sensitive to flooding, or will increase temperatures of urban areas.</p> <p>CM ST 4 Strengthen public transport linkages and promote their use.</p> <p>CM ST 5 Support localisation of jobs/shops/services to minimise the need for most common travel patterns.</p> <p>CM ST 6 Support the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electrical vehicles both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards and best practice.</p> <p>CM ST 7 Promote and support the provision of Park-and-Ride facilities which improve public transport accessibility without exacerbating road congestion, or which cause increased car travel distances, at appropriate locations within the County.</p> <p>CM ST 8 Deliver, in conjunction with the NTA and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport a Public Transportation Hub in Portlaoise to accommodate national, commuter, regional and local bus services.</p> <p>CA ST 1 Protect and enhance the County's floodplains subject to flooding as "green infrastructure" where appropriate and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.</p>

Component	Recommendations integrated into the Plan, included in:
	<p>CA ST 4 Ensure that applications for new critical infrastructure demonstrate resilience to new climatic conditions.</p> <p>CA BE 3 Encourage the use of Green Roof technology particularly on apartment, commercial, leisure and educational buildings.</p> <p>CA BE 8 Support efforts to maximise water conservation – i.e rainwater harvesting, etc.</p> <p>CA BE 10 Plant drought-resistant plants/ trees in public amenity areas to provide shade and increase green infrastructure linkages.</p> <p>CM BE 1 Achieve more compact growth by promoting the development of infill and brownfield/ regeneration sites and the redevelopment of underutilised land within and close to the existing built up footprint of existing settlements in preference to edge of centre locations.</p> <p>CM BE 4 Promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the County.</p> <p>CM LU 2 Ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological, climate regulation, archaeological, cultural and educational significance.</p> <p>CM LU 3 Support the fulfilment of the vision of carbon neutrality in the agriculture, forest and land use sector through better sustainable agricultural, land management and resource efficiency.</p> <p>CA LU 2 Encourage afforestation (where environmentally appropriate) to enhance interception and infiltration of precipitation within river basin catchments.</p> <p>CA LU 3 Support restoration of peat bogs when turf cutting has ceased and take into account relevant recommendations from the National Peatlands Strategy when implementing the Plan.</p> <p>CA LU 4 Support the creation and enhancement of ecological linkages and buffer zones from development.</p> <p>CA LU 5 Support the creation and protection of ecological resilient and varied landscapes to help support a wide range of species.</p> <p>CA LU 6 Increase the climate resilience of the built environment through natural greening infrastructure in new developments, such as the use of natural features (e.g. street trees, green roofs, rain gardens etc) and other materials such as permeable paving.</p> <p>CM RE 2 Promote and encourage the development of energy from renewable sources such as hydro, bio-energy, wind, solar, geothermal and landfill gas subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria in co-operation with statutory and other energy providers.</p> <p>CM RE 5 Promote and facilitate wind energy development in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Wind Energy Development (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government 2019) and the Appendix 5 Wind Energy Strategy of this Plan, and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.</p> <p>DMRE2</p> <p>Wind Energy Development (Refer to Section 6 and Section 7 of Appendix 5 Wind Energy Strategy for the full suite of Development Management Standards)</p> <p>When assessing planning applications for wind energy developments the council will have regard to</p> <p>a) The wind energy development guidelines for planning authorities;</p> <p>b) The wind energy strategy designations map for Laois showing areas (a) Area open for consideration and (b) Areas not deemed suitable</p> <p>In addition to the above, the following considerations will also be taken into account</p> <p>(i) Impact on visual amenity;</p> <p>(ii) Impact on residential amenities;</p> <p>(iii) Scale and layout of the project and the cumulative effects due to other projects and the extent to which the impacts are visible across the local landscape;</p> <p>(iv) Visual impact of the proposal on the protected views and aspects;</p> <p>(v) Impact on nature conservation, ecology, soil, hydrology;</p> <p>(vi) Impact on ground conditions and geology;</p> <p>(vii) Impact on the road network;</p> <p>Impact on human health in relation to noise disturbance (including consistency with the WHO 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region, showdown flicker and air quality;</p> <p>Other considerations may be taken into account depending on the site and on a case by case basis.</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 detailed above; and
2. Planning - including social and economic - effects that also were considered by the Council.

3.1 Alternatives for an Ecosystem Services Approach to the Plan

Although many natural capital² and ecosystem³ service issues have been taken into account over previous Plan periods, the importance of these in fulfilling environmental obligations has increasingly emerged. An Ecosystems Services Approach would provide a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way

Alternative A: A Plan that takes an Ecosystems Services Approach; or

Principles that would be integrated throughout the Plan, in a coordinated and comprehensive manner, would include:

- Consideration of natural systems - by using knowledge of interactions in nature and how ecosystems function
- Taking into account of the services that ecosystems provide - including those that underpin social and economic well-being, such as flood and climate regulation or recreation, culture and quality of life
- Involving people - those who benefit from the ecosystem services and those managing them need to be involved in decisions that affect them.

This would mean that there would be:

- An increased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of positive effects occurring with regard to natural capital and ecosystem service issues, such as the management of air quality, noise pollution, light pollution, pollination, flood risk, water bodies and river basins and natural resources supporting energy production and recreation; and
- A decreased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of adverse effects on natural capital and ecosystem services.

Alternative B: A Plan that does not take an Ecosystems Services Approach.

As has been the case over previous plan periods, many natural capital and ecosystem service issues would be integrated into individual Plan Policy Objectives and into decision making at lower tiers of plan preparation and development management. However, this approach would be less coordinated and comprehensive than would be the case under an Ecosystems Services Approach.

This would mean that there would be:

- A decreased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of positive effects occurring with regard to natural capital and ecosystem service issues; and

² Renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals)

³ Ecosystems are multifunctional communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. Ecosystems provide a series of services for human well-being (ecosystem services) either directly or indirectly contributing towards human wellbeing

- An increased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of adverse effects on natural capital and ecosystem services.

Selected Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.

3.2 Alternatives for Population Allocations

Following allocation of most of the County's projected new population across the County's settlements, taking into account the requirements of higher-level planning objectives, a decision was required as to whether to provide for an unallocated extent of growth – either to the Key Town Graiguecullen (Carlow) or the Self-Sustaining Growth Town of Portarlinton.

- **Alternative A:** Provide additional extent of growth to Graiguecullen (Carlow); or
- **Alternative B:** Provide additional extent of growth to Portarlinton.

Based on the planning interactions provided for the alternatives it can be identified that:

- There would be more control over water services infrastructure in Portarlinton than would be the case with Graiguecullen (Carlow) – this means that there would be greater certainty that development could take place in Portarlinton and that environmental protection and management would be contributed towards.
- Graiguecullen is connected by virtue of the train lines to Dublin/Waterford from Carlow, it is not as connected as Portarlinton. Sustainable accessibility is more of an attractive feature in Portarlinton.
- Portarlinton has experienced rapid population growth with high levels of commuter focused residential expansion without the equivalent increase in jobs and services. However, Portarlinton is located on the main line railway line Dublin-Galway and Dublin-Cork/Limerick and since 2016 has experienced investment in services including a new secondary school and a new library and ongoing investment in Community and leisure centres. On an economic front, since 2016, a number of new business have been established in Portarlinton with Portarlinton Enterprise Centre expanding their offering to allow for more remote working practices on site. Derryounce Walks and Trails also has been developed since 2016 which has improved the amenities in Portarlinton.
- While Portarlinton may have low resident to worker ratio at 0.43 (CSO, 2016) it has developed since 2016 which would suggest that the catch up required has already started. For the reason of good connectivity, the offering of a variety of economic opportunities such as large tracts of zoned land for industrial purposes to remote working, it was considered that Portarlinton should be allowed to grow appropriate to the scale of the town with a focus on compact growth and emphasis on developing economic and social opportunities.

Selected Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.

3.3 Alternatives for Rural Areas

Alternative A: Provide 3 Rural Housing Designations for the County as set out in the County Development Plan 2017-2023:

- Areas under Strong Urban Influence
- Stronger Rural Areas
- Structurally Weak Areas.

Alternative A would restrict development in rural areas that are under strong urban influence would positively impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The restrictions would help to both reduce levels of greenfield development in areas

immediately surrounding existing centres and encourage brownfield development within existing centres - to a lesser degree than would be the case under Alternative B, as this approach would be based on older requirements, guidance and data.

Rural development would be directed towards appropriate rural areas and urban development would be directed towards established settlements. This alternative would help to prevent low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components – to a lesser degree than would be the case under Alternative B, as this approach would be based on older requirements, guidance and data.

Alternative B: Provide 2 Rural Housing Designations as follows (also integrating mapping of Areas of Sensitivity - Natura 2000 Network), based on most up to date requirements, guidance and data:

- Areas under Strong Urban Influence
- Structurally Weak Areas

Alternative B would restrict development in rural areas that are under strong urban influence would positively impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The restrictions would help to both reduce levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and encourage brownfield development within existing centres – to a greater degree than would be the case under Alternative A.

Rural development would be directed towards appropriate rural areas and urban development would be directed towards established settlements. This alternative would help to prevent low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components – to a greater degree than would be the case under Alternative A.

Alternative C: Do not provide for Rural Housing Designations and assess all applications on their merit.

Alternative C, by not providing for Rural Housing Designations at Plan level and instead assessing all applications on their merit, would provide a less coherent and coordinated approach that would adversely impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The absence of restrictions would be more likely to result in increased levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and less demand for brownfield development within existing centres.

Urban generated development would be more likely to occur under this alternative within rural areas outside of established settlements. This alternative would result in lower density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

Selected Tier 4 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.

Note:

The Selected Tier 4 Alternative for the Draft Plan was Alternative B. However, the Members adopted a Plan that provides for Alternative A. This does not benefit the protection and management of the environment as well as Alternative B does.

3.4 Alternatives for Densities

- **Alternative A:** Application of a single standard density across all settlements.

The application of a singular low net residential density across the County would have the potential to push new development towards more environmentally sensitive lands that are less

well-serviced and less well-connected, resulting in unnecessary potentially significant adverse effects on all environmental components.

The application of a singular high net residential density could result in a potential misalignment between the supply of zoned land to meet the projected demand for new housing. This could result in a misalignment between new development and essential services provision with associated potential for adverse effects on environmental components.

- **Alternative B:** Application of different densities at different locations, as appropriate; higher densities where sustainable transport mode opportunities are available and lower densities where constraints are presented by, for example, wastewater and water infrastructure constraints, cultural heritage designations or the local road network.

Higher densities would be provided where sustainable transport mode opportunities are available and lower densities would be provided where constraints are presented by, for example, wastewater and water infrastructure constraints, cultural heritage designations or the local road network. This approach would contribute towards national and regional strategic outcomes including the efficient use of land, compact growth and the transition towards a low carbon and more climate resilient society.

Alternative B would help to ensure compact, sustainable development within and adjacent to the existing built-up footprint and would conflict with the protection and management of environmental components the least. Alignment between new development and essential services provision would be most likely under Alternative B.

Selected Alternative for the Plan: Alternative B.

3.5 Alternatives for Land Use Zoning

Available alternatives for land use zoning at relevant settlements and the associated environmental assessment are summarised on Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Land Use Zoning Alternatives and Summary Assessment

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Summary Assessment
Portlaoise	"New Residential" Zoning: A. To south of proposed indicative northern bypass	Development of lands to the south of the proposed indicative northern bypass would provide high levels of accessibility to the regional and national road network. However, these are greenfield lands and by not consolidating land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from other infrastructural investment in the town. By failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Higher levels of premature development and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects would be likely to occur.
	or B. Infill throughout the town	By consolidating land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid premature development, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing greenfield development would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
<p>Note: The Selected Alternative for Portlaoise in the Draft Plan was Alternative B "Infill throughout the town". However, the Members adopted a Plan that provides a mix between Alternative B "Infill throughout the town" and a less compact approach to zoning. This does not benefit the protection and management of the environment as well as Alternative B "Infill throughout the town" does.</p>		
Abbeyleix (Alternative Set 1)	Site south of the School on Ballyroan Road A. Zone New Residential	The zoning of this site south of the school on the Ballyroan Road as Community/ Educational/ Institutional would allow for needed educational related facilities, collocated beside the existing school. Such facilities are necessary in making settlements more desirable places to

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Summary Assessment
	or B. Zone Community/Educational/Institutional	live – so that they maintain and improve services to existing and future communities. Attracting new populations into the County’s settlements will reduce demand for development in areas that are less well serviced and connected – that type of development would be unsustainable and would have higher environmental impacts. The development of educational related facilities would present potential local impacts; residual impacts would be mitigated by the measures integrated into the Plan.
Abbeyleix (Alternative Set 2)	"Town Centre" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Rathdowney	"New Residential" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Mountmellick	"New Residential" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
<p>Note: The Selected Alternative for Mountmellick in the Draft Plan was Alternative B "More Compact". However, the Members adopted a Plan that provides a mix between Alternative A "Less Compact" and Alternative B "More Compact". This does not benefit the protection and management of the environment as well as Alternative B "More Compact" does.</p>		
Mountrath (Alternative Set 1)	"New Residential" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Summary Assessment
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Mountrath (Alternative Set 2)	Addition of "Open Space Amenity" Zoning along rivers and streams A. Add to existing	The additional "Open Space Amenity" Zoning would help to improve protection of future residential and employment populations (and their and the town's built assets) from flood risk, further contribute towards the protection of this amenity asset from visually intrusive developments and further contribute towards the protection of ecological connectivity and the quality of surface waters. The absence of a green buffer would make adverse impacts upon the aforementioned sensitivities more likely.
Stradbally	"Enterprise and Employment" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Borris in Ossory	"General Business" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Ballyinan	"New Residential" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Summary Assessment
<p>Note: The Selected Alternative for Ballylynan in the Draft Plan was Alternative B "More Compact". However, the Members adopted a Plan that is closer to Alternative A "Less Compact". This does not benefit the protection and management of the environment as well as Alternative B "More Compact" does.</p>		
Durrow (Alternative Set 1)	"New Residential" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Durrow (Alternative Set 2)	Zoning around WWTP: A. Town Centre or B. Open Space	A buffer of Open Space around the WWTP would help to avoid any conflicts between new residential development and the WWTP development – such as those which could arise from emissions or impacts on residential amenity.
Durrow (Alternative Set 3)	Zoning of Graveyard: A. Town Centre	This is an existing graveyard and Town Centre uses on this site would not be in the interests of the sustainable development of the town. Zoning as Community, Educational and Institutional would be commensurate with the existing use and could allow for future small-scale developments.
	or B. Community, Educational and Institutional	
Ballcolla	"Town Centre" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Ballybrittas	"Industrial" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Ballyroan	"New Residential" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Summary Assessment
	or B. More compact	<p>zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.</p> <p>By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.</p>
Clough	Various Zoning Objectives: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Cullahill	A. More compact, with public Open Space in the centre of the Village	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
	or B. Less compact, with Town Centre in the centre of the Village	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
Emo	A. More compact, with Open Space in area surrounding demesne	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
	or B. Less compact, with Community/ Educational/ Institutional Zoning in area surrounding demesne	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
Killeshin	"Town Centre" Zoning: A. Less compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Summary Assessment
		likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
	or B. More compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components. Selection of lands for zoning throughout the County took into account: whether water services infrastructure was already provided for or, if not, whether it could be more easily provided for; access to transport infrastructure; and proximity to the existing development envelope and town centre.
Timahoe	Zoning of Round Tower Site: A. Village Centre or B. Tourism or Leisure	This is an existing cultural heritage asset in the town that includes built heritage. Providing for potential future tourism uses at this site could contribute towards the future sustainable development of the town and associated environmental protection and management.

Section 4 AA Determination



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

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Port Laoise
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Appropriate Assessment Determination

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

Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

In order to comply with the requirements of Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether or not a plan or project would adversely affect the integrity of any European site(s), this Appropriate Assessment determination is being made by Laois County Council relating to the potential for the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 that is being adopted to have effects on the integrity of European sites.

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

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

As part of the AA, it was identified that the Plan may, if unmitigated, have significant effects on 38 (no.) European sites. Factors that could potentially affect the integrity of European sites include:

- Provisions for sectors such as transport, urbanisation including residential and economic development, streetscape works, community facilities, utilities, natural resource, climate action, tourism and recreation development that introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions and disturbance effects; and
- Loading pressures from the operational phase of developments – these sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation.

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

- Implementation of the Plan would have had the potential to result in effects to the integrity of European sites, if unmitigated.
- The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and conservation objectives of the European sites have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures that will 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 measures, the Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any effect on the integrity of European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects¹. This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species, for which these sites have been designated.

Signed: 
Name: JOHN MULHOLLAND
Date: 26/1/2022

Tá Fáilte Romhat
Gnó a Dhéanamh
as Gaeilge

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.

