

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION STATEMENT

FOR THE SLIGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2024-2030

for: Sligo County Council

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Section 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for the Sligo 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	
(d) any information or advice obtained by the public authority	Submissions made during the Plan preparation/AA process that were relevant to the AA resulted in updates being made to the AA NIR.
(e) if appropriate, any written submissions or observations made to the public authority in relation to the application for consent for proposed plan or project	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).

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

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

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

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

Table 2.1 outlines measures that have been incorporated into the Plan in order to mitigate against potential significant effects to European sites as identified above. The Plan was prepared in an iterative manner whereby the Plan and AA documents have informed subsequent versions of the other.

Table 2.1 Mitigation Measures to protect European sites¹

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	<p>P-BD-1 Protect, conserve, enhance and sustainably manage the natural heritage, biodiversity, geological heritage, landscape and environment of County Sligo.</p> <p>P-BD-2 Protect and, where possible, enhance the plant and animal species and their habitats that have been identified under EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) as amended, Flora (Protection) Order 2015, the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 as amended, including all statutory instruments made under each act.</p> <p>P-BD-3 Ensure that the ecological impact of all development proposals on habitats and species are appropriately assessed by suitably qualified professionals, in accordance with best practice guidelines, taking full account of the precautionary principle where uncertainty exists.</p> <p>P-BD-4 Minimise adverse impacts of proposed developments on existing habitats (whether designated or not) by including mitigation and/or compensation measures as appropriate. This shall comprise the retention and enhancement of all possible existing habitats, vegetation and breeding sites in the early design stages of the development.</p> <p>P-BD-5 Raise public awareness of the natural heritage and biodiversity of the County and encourage increased public participation in biodiversity conservation by supporting community-led initiatives.</p> <p>P-BD-6 Support the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 and any subsequent revisions.</p> <p>P-BD-7 Require development proposals on sites of 0.5 ha and over to demonstrate a site-specific biodiversity net gain (BNG), indicating how the approach to development will leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. The same approach will be encouraged, although not required, on sites under 0.5 ha. The biodiversity net gain (BNG) shall consist of the enhancement and restoration of existing habitats or by the creation of new areas for wildlife, where the biodiversity value of the site is low or non-existent (e.g. certain brownfield sites).</p> <p>P-BD-8 Where buildings are proposed to be restored or demolished/replaced, the applicants/developers shall check for the presence of protected wildlife species and follow the protocols set out in the Heritage Council's guidelines "Wildlife in Buildings – Linking Our Built and Natural Heritage" (https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Wildlife-in-Buildings-linking-our-built-and-natural-heritage.pdf)</p> <p>O-BD-1 Implement, in partnership with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, relevant stakeholders and the community, the objectives and actions of both the County Sligo Biodiversity Action Plan and the National Biodiversity Action Plan as it relates to the remit and functions of Sligo County Council.</p> <p>O-BD-2 Prepare and support the implementation of a Green Infrastructure Strategy for County Sligo.</p> <p>O-PS-1 Undertake surveys, as appropriate, to establish the location of protected flora and fauna in the Plan area through the County Heritage Plan and the County Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>P-DSNC-1 Protect and maintain the conservation status of all-natural heritage sites designated or proposed for designation in accordance with European and national legislation and agreements. These include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA), Ramsar Sites, Statutory Nature Reserves, as identified by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan. In addition, the Council will identify, maintain and develop non-designated areas of high nature conservation value which serve as linkages or 'stepping stones' between protected sites in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>P-DSNC-2 Promote the maintenance and, as appropriate, achievement of 'favourable conservation status' of habitats and species in association with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).</p>

¹ Note that non-material changes to individual Plan provisions referenced in this report may be updated during the finalisation of the Plan, including numbering, formatting and graphic design.

² The measures generally benefit multiple environmental Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects i.e., a measure providing for the protection of water could beneficially impact upon the protection of biodiversity, flora and fauna, for example. All of the measures included in this table would benefit the protection of European sites.

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>P-DSNC-3 Carry out an appropriate level of assessment for all development plans, land-use plans and projects that the Council authorizes or proposes to undertake or adopt, to determine the potential for these plans or projects to impact on designated sites, proposed designated sites or associated ecological corridors and linkages in accordance with the Habitats Directive. All appropriate assessments shall be in compliance with the provisions of Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).</p> <p>P-DSNC-4 Ensure that all development proposals are subject to the process of Screening for Appropriate Assessment and subsequent stages of Appropriate Assessment, as relevant, carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Service, as appropriate.</p> <p>P-PS-1 Ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact incapable of satisfactory mitigation on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.</p> <p>P-PS-2 Consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (DHLGH) and take account of any licensing requirements when undertaking, approving and authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.</p> <p>P-PS-3 Provide guidance to developers and others in relation to species protected by law and their protection and management in the context of development.</p> <p>P-PS-4 Ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites, and require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professionals to accompany any development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.</p> <p>P-PS-5 Require all new developments to incorporate habitat facilities for wildlife species, including Swifts, in or on buildings or their facades, where appropriate.</p> <p>O-DSNC-1 Identify any areas of high nature conservation value which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, and which have not been previously identified.</p> <p>O-DSNC-2 Undertake appropriate surveys and collect data to provide an evidence-base to assist the Council in meeting its obligations under Article 6 of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) as transposed into Irish Law, subject to available resources.</p> <p>P-NCODS-1 Minimise the impact of new development on habitats of natural value that are key features of the County's ecological network. Developments likely to have an adverse effect on recognised sites of local nature conservation importance will be required to demonstrate the impacts on the ecological value of the site and will not be approved unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the development that outweigh the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site.</p> <p>P-NCODS-2 Ensure that development proposals, where relevant, improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and encourage the retention and management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>P-NCODS-3 Ensure that proposals for development protect and enhance biodiversity, wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate, which ensure that biodiversity is enhanced.</p> <p>P-NCODS-4 Applications for development that is likely to have significant impact on natural habitats or species shall be required to be accompanied by an ecological impact assessment (EclA), to ensure that such proposed development will not affect the integrity and conservation value of important biodiversity sites.</p> <p>P-NCODS-5 Ensure that no ecological networks, or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity, are lost without remediation as a result of implementation of this Plan.</p> <p>P-NCODS-6 Provide guidance for developers and the general public in relation to nature conservation outside designated sites and the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geological heritage in general.</p> <p>P-NCODS-7 Integrate biodiversity considerations into Local Authority plans, programmes and activities where appropriate.</p> <p>O-NCODS-1 Continue the County Habitat Mapping project, thereby generating the necessary information to identify landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna, flora and County Biodiversity Sites, as key features of the county's ecological network.</p> <p>O-NCODS-2 Identify and protect, in co-operation with the relevant statutory agencies and other relevant groups, County Biodiversity Sites which are not otherwise protected by legislation.</p> <p>O-NCODS-3 Ensure that the findings of the County Habitat Mapping project (when completed) are utilised to inform the development management process.</p> <p>P-WHT-1 Protect woodlands, hedgerows and trees from development that would impact adversely upon them. Promote new tree and woodland planting and the enhancement of existing hedgerows by seeking increased coverage, in conjunction with new development using native species of local provenance, where possible.</p>

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>P-WHT-2 Discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development and, where appropriate make use of tree preservation orders to protect important trees and groups of trees which may be at risk or have an important amenity or historic value.</p> <p>P-WHT-3 Require the planting of native broadleaved species, and species of local provenance, in new developments and as part of the Sligo County Council's own landscaping works.</p> <p>P-WTH-4 Encourage the retention of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments in rural areas, and prevent loss and fragmentation where practically possible. If removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, reinstatement of the same type of boundary shall be required.</p> <p>P-WHT-5 Promote awareness and require the retention and protection of hedgerows which mark townland boundaries, in recognition of their historic value and archaeological importance.</p> <p>P-WHT-6 Protect native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual mature trees in line with best practice, and encourage their effective management and retention. Tree surgery rather than felling will be required, where possible, when undertaking, approving or authorising development.</p> <p>P-WHT-7 When undertaking, approving, or authorising development, ensure or require the protection of trees subject of Tree Preservation Orders, as well as Champion and Heritage Trees identified on the Tree Register of Ireland.</p> <p>P-WHT-8 Work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to develop, enhance and explore opportunities to develop woodland sites under the Native Woodland Scheme.</p> <p>P-UH-OS-2 Require developers to retain significant hedgerows, tree groups and wetlands and incorporate these features into residential developments where possible.</p> <p>P-FRM-1 Protect and enhance the County's floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas subject to flooding and ensure that no removal of sand dunes, beach sand or gravel is undertaken. These areas represent a vital green infrastructure, which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defences in the future.</p>
<p>Peatlands, wetlands and surface water courses and groundwater</p>	<p>P-WET-1 Have regard to the County Sligo Wetlands Surveys 2008-2011 and subsequent wetland surveys that may be published during the lifetime of this Plan. Protect surveyed wetland sites that have been rated of A (International), B (National) and C+ (County) importance.</p> <p>P-WET-2 Ensure that an ecological assessment at an appropriate level (including EIA, where appropriate) is undertaken in conjunction with proposals involving drainage, reclamation or infilling of wetland habitats.</p> <p>P-INW-1 Protect rivers, streams and other water courses and their associated Core Riparian Zones (CRZs) from inappropriate development and maintain them in an open state, capable of providing suitable habitats for fauna and flora. Structures (e.g. bridges) crossing fisheries waters shall be clear-span and shall be designed and built in consultation with Inland Fisheries Ireland.</p> <p>P- INW-2 Protect and enhance biodiversity richness by protecting rivers, stream corridors and valleys by reserving land along their banks for ecological corridors, maintaining them free from inappropriate development and discouraging culverting or realignment.</p> <p>P- INW-3 Ensure that all proposed greenfield residential and commercial developments use sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) in accordance with best current practice, ensuring protection of the integrity of wetland sites in the adjoining area, including their hydrological regime.</p> <p>P- INW-4 Ensure that floodplains and wetlands within the Plan area are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection value.</p> <p>P- INW-5 Ensure that proposed developments do not adversely affect groundwater resources and groundwater-dependent habitats and species.</p> <p>O- INW-1 Consult with prescribed bodies prior to undertaking, approving or authorising any works or development that may impact on rivers, streams and watercourses.</p> <p>O- INW-2 Require that runoff from a developed area does not result in deterioration of downstream watercourses or habitats, and that pollution generated by a development is treated within the development area prior to discharge to local watercourses.</p> <p>P-WQ-1 Support the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, National River Basin Management Plan and Blue Dot Catchment Programme, to ensure protection and improvement of all waters in the County.</p> <p>P-WQ-2 Promote compliance with environmental standards and objectives established for surface and groundwater bodies under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Applications for development must demonstrate that such proposed development would not adversely affect the ability of any water body to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive, individually (as a result of the proposed development) or cumulatively (in combination with other developments). Evidence to this effect may include correspondence from Uisce Éireann.</p> <p>P-WQ-3 Protect the quality of estuarine and coastal waters by controlling land-based discharges to these areas.</p>

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>P-WQ-4 Prohibit any development which is likely to lead to the deterioration of the status of any water body (water quality).</p> <p>P-WQ-5 Ensure that all development proposals have regard to the Sligo Groundwater Protection Scheme, in order to protect groundwater resources and groundwater-dependent habitats and species.</p> <p>P-WQ-6 Strictly limit and control new development in or near the catchment areas of water bodies, particularly salmonid rivers and those that are the source of the following drinking water supplies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lough Gill • Lough Easky • Lough Arrow • Gortnaleck and Lyle streamsKilsellagh Source catchment • Riverstown Source Catchment • Lough Talt • GWS source catchments <p>O-WQ-1 Continue to monitor, audit, and review the environmental status with regard to the water quality of rivers, lakes, estuarine and coastal waters.</p> <p>O-WQ-4 Ensure compliance with the relevant objectives and measures that will be set out in the Groundwater Protection Scheme for County Sligo.</p>
Water services and water quality	<p>P-WQ-4 Prohibit any development which is likely to lead to the deterioration of the status of any water body (water quality).</p> <p>P-WQ-6 Strictly limit and control new development in or near the catchment areas of water bodies, particularly salmonid rivers and those that are the source of the following drinking water supplies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lough Gill • Lough Easky • Lough Arrow • Gortnaleck and Lyle streamsKilsellagh Source catchment • Riverstown Source Catchment • Lough Talt • GWS source catchments <p>P-WQ-3 Protect the quality of estuarine and coastal waters by controlling land-based discharges to these areas.</p> <p>O-WQ-1 Continue to monitor, audit, and review the environmental status with regard to the water quality of rivers, lakes, estuarine and coastal waters.</p> <p>O-WQ-2 Protect, maintain, or improve water quality to the status set out in the national RBMP. All discharges to water bodies shall be licensed in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Water pollution) Acts 1977 & 1990.</p> <p>O-WQ-3 Implement the Programme of Measures detailed in the national RBMP.</p> <p>O-WQ-4 Ensure compliance with the relevant objectives and measures that will be set out in the Groundwater Protection Scheme for County Sligo.</p> <p>P-UHOU-1 Ensure that residential development takes place in a manner and at a pace that does not exceed the capacity of water and wastewater treatment infrastructure.</p> <p>P-WS-4 Promote the use of water conservation measures such as rainwater harvesting and grey water use in all new developments, in order to minimise water wastage and as viable alternative to attenuation.</p> <p>P-WS-5 Where connection to a public water supply is not possible, or the existing supply does not have sufficient capacity, the provision of a private water supply will be permitted only where it can be demonstrated that the proposed water supply meets the standards set out in the EU and national legislation and guidance, would not be prejudicial to public health and would not have a significant negative impact on the source or yield of an existing supply.</p> <p>P-WWT-1</p> <p>A. Co-operate with Uisce Éireann in the provision of adequate wastewater infrastructure to support the growth of County Sligo's settlements in accordance with the Core Strategy, and to realize the objectives and policies of the Plan, including projects and programmes identified in Uisce Éireann's Capital Investment Plan and any superseding investment plans in relation to Cliffony, Mullaqmore, Castlebaldwin, Geevagh and Ballintogher</p> <p>B. Pursue the provision of WWTPs in the unserved settlements of Ballygawley and Rathcormac under Measure A8 of the DHLGH Circular L1-22, 'Wastewater Collection and Treatment needs for Villages and Settlements without access to Public Wastewater Services' or any superseding circulars.</p>

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>P-WWT-4 Require all new developments to connect to the public wastewater infrastructure, where available, subject a connection agreement with UÉ. In cases where a settlement is not served by a public wastewater treatment plant, or where no spare capacity exists in the relevant wastewater treatment plants, proposals for single houses using on-site wastewater treatment will be considered subject to appropriate scale, site assessment, design and ground conditions, taking groundwater vulnerability into account and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive. Any such permitted development shall be subject to legally binding maintenance arrangements agreed with the Planning Authority and shall be required to connect to the public wastewater treatment plant when adequate capacity becomes available. However, communal on-site wastewater treatment systems for multiple housing developments (i.e. systems servicing more than one residential unit) will not be permitted.</p> <p>P-WWT-5 All proposals for on-site treatment systems shall be designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's 2021 Code of Practice: Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10) and/or Treatment Systems for Small Communities, business, Leisure Centres and Hotels, (EPA, 1999) as amended, and any guidance documents issued by the County Council.</p> <p>P-SWD-1 Require all new developments, redevelopment of brownfield sites and extensions to existing developments (where appropriate) to provide a separate foul and surface water drainage system and to incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems, where feasible. Such developments shall connect to existing surface water drainage systems (where available) which, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, have adequate capacity to accommodate additional loading.</p> <p>P-SWD-2 Require that planning applications are accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment that addresses run-off quantity, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality. In the case of one-off rural dwellings or extensions to dwellings without access to existing surface water drainage systems, surface water shall be disposed of, in its entirety, within the curtilage of the development by way of suitably-sized soakaways. In all instances the use of nature-based solutions is preferred to engineering solutions. Developers will be required to apply the provisions of 'Nature-Based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas' (water sensitive urban design) Best Practice Interim Guidance Document (DHLGH, 2001) and any subsequent review.</p>
Tourism	<p>P- OR-16 Support the sustainable development of water-based leisure, tourism and related activities in County Sligo, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>SP-S-4 Support the Villages with Special Coastal Tourism Functions – Easky, Mullaghmore, Rosses Point – to achieve their full potential for sustainable tourism development.</p> <p>P-OR-2 Support the provision of a variety of accessible, multifunctional, high-quality open spaces and facilities for active and passive recreation, which meet the needs of residents and visitors to County Sligo, are fit for purpose and are economically and environmentally sustainable.</p> <p>P- OR-15 Preserve and improve access for the public to lakes, beaches, coastal, riverside, upland and other areas that have traditionally been used for outdoor recreation and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive. Where feasible, apply or support the application of universal design principles, as recommended in Building for everyone – a Universal Design Approach (NDA, 2012).</p> <p>P-TOU-1 Promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and other planning considerations. Development that might be detrimental to scenic and heritage assets, in SACs, SPAs, proposed NHAs, designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes and Visually Vulnerable Areas, and along designated Scenic Routes will be strictly controlled. Development proposals shall also demonstrate that they do not conflict with the requirement to safeguard the strategic function, safety and investment in the strategic national road network to date, and are in compliance with the provisions of the Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines 'Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DoECLG, 2012).</p> <p>P-TOU-3 Ensure that all built elements of agri-tourism developments are appropriately designed, satisfactorily integrated into the landscape, conserve natural heritage, protect the environment and do not have a negative impact on the visual/scenic amenity of the countryside, on natural heritage or on the environment.</p> <p>O-TOU-1 Secure the establishment of a flagship visitor attraction in the County, subject to normal development control standards and compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>P-CZT-1 Ensure that tourism facilities in coastal areas (e.g. car parking at WAW Discovery Points) will not be visually intrusive and will not impact on sensitive coastal environments (e.g. sand dune systems), by requiring appropriate siting, layout, design and natural screening, as well as compliance with the Habitats Directive. On beaches, within dunes and in other vulnerable areas, manage and control car parking, vehicular and pedestrian movements in compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive where relevant.</p> <p>P-CZT-2 Promote awareness of the sensitivity of the coastal environment through the provision of heritage appreciation programmes, public information boards and other appropriate means.</p>

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>P-CZT-3 Maintain and develop small piers and harbours along the Sligo Coast, subject to funding and compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>O-WAW-2 At designated locations, provide facilities and access points for controlled water-sports activities, in a manner that avoids conflict with nature conservation and activities such as swimming, sailing, fishing and mariculture.</p> <p>O-WAW-4 Monitor the future development of the County's section of the Wild Atlantic Way touring route to ensure that the scenic and tourism value of this important amenity is maintained. This will be done in co-operation with state agencies, local community groups and other bodies interested in protecting the coastal environment and in improving access and visitor management to the Wild Atlantic Way.</p> <p>P-CW-4 Consider the use of off-road routes, such as disused railway lines and bridle paths, for both walking and cycling to improve access to rural tourist attractions. Where feasible, provide separate trails for walkers and cyclists in the interests of safety and convenience, with appropriate surfaces for each type of user and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>P-CW-5 Provide, improve and extend cycle and pedestrian routes on existing roads, proposed roads, roads being upgraded and green corridors (including river corridors), and make provision for filtered permeability where feasible and practical and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.</p>
Built environment	<p>P-PS-1 Ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact incapable of satisfactory mitigation on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.</p> <p>P-PS-2 Consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (DHLGH) and take account of any licensing requirements when undertaking, approving and authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.</p> <p>P-BD-3 Ensure that the ecological impact of all development proposals on habitats and species are appropriately assessed by suitably qualified professionals, in accordance with best practice guidelines, taking full account of the precautionary principle where uncertainty exists.</p> <p>P-BD-4 Minimise adverse impacts of proposed developments on existing habitats (whether designated or not) by including mitigation and/or compensation measures as appropriate. This shall comprise the retention and enhancement of all possible existing habitats, vegetation and breeding sites in the early design stages of the development.</p> <p>P-PS-4 Ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites, and require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professionals to accompany any development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.</p> <p>P-PS-5 Require all new developments to incorporate habitat facilities for wildlife species, including Swifts, in or on buildings or their facades, where appropriate.</p> <p>P-DSNC-3 Carry out an appropriate level of assessment for all development plans, land-use plans and projects that the Council authorizes or proposes to undertake or adopt, to determine the potential for these plans or projects to impact on designated sites, proposed designated sites or associated ecological corridors and linkages in accordance with the Habitats Directive. All appropriate assessments shall be in compliance with the provisions of Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).</p> <p>P-DSNC-4 Ensure that all development proposals are subject to the process of Screening for Appropriate Assessment and subsequent stages of Appropriate Assessment, as relevant, carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Service, as appropriate.</p> <p>P-NCODS-1 Minimise the impact of new development on habitats of natural value that are key features of the County's ecological network. Developments likely to have an adverse effect on recognised sites of local nature conservation importance will be required to demonstrate the impacts on the ecological value of the site and will not be approved unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the development that outweigh the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site.</p> <p>P-NCODS-2 Ensure that development proposals, where relevant, improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and encourage the retention and management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>P-NCODS-3 Ensure that proposals for development protect and enhance biodiversity, wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate, which ensure that biodiversity is enhanced.</p> <p>P-NCODS-4 Applications for development that is likely to have significant impact on natural habitats or species shall be required to be accompanied by an ecological impact assessment (EcIA), to ensure that such proposed development will not affect the integrity and conservation value of important biodiversity sites.</p> <p>P-NCODS-6 Provide guidance for developers and the general public in relation to nature conservation outside designated sites and the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geological heritage in general.</p>

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>P-INV-2 Require all development proposals to address the presence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan, in compliance with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.</p> <p>P- INW-3 Ensure that all proposed greenfield residential and commercial developments use sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) in accordance with best current practice, ensuring protection of the integrity of wetland sites in the adjoining area, including their hydrological regime.</p> <p>P- INW-5 Ensure that proposed developments do not adversely affect groundwater resources and groundwater-dependent habitats and species.</p> <p>O- INW-1 Consult with prescribed bodies prior to undertaking, approving or authorising any works or development that may impact on rivers, streams and watercourses.</p> <p>O- INW-2 Require that runoff from a developed area does not result in deterioration of downstream watercourses or habitats, and that pollution generated by a development is treated within the development area prior to discharge to local watercourses.</p> <p>SP-TRA-3 Encourage the shift from car use to sustainable modes of transport such as cycling and walking.</p> <p>SP-TRA-4 Reduce the demand for travel by integrating land use with transport planning, ensuring that new development takes place in a compact form at locations with the highest levels of accessibility for public transport and active travel (walking and cycling).</p> <p>SP-TRA-5 Plan for the future traffic and transportation needs in Sligo and ensure that new development does not compromise the expansion of rail, road and cycling corridors in the County. Proposed road realignment/improvement lines, road corridors and national cycle route corridors shall be preserved free from development that would prejudice the implementation of the schemes.</p> <p>P-UHOU-2 Ensure that appropriate densities are achieved in appropriate locations and circumstances, in accordance with the principles set out in the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and the Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide (DEHLG, 2009), Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021 and any subsequent statutory guidance.</p> <p>P-UH-OS-2 Require developers to retain significant hedgerows, tree groups and wetlands and incorporate these features into residential developments where possible.</p> <p>P-OR-2 Support the provision of a variety of accessible, multifunctional, high-quality open spaces and facilities for active and passive recreation, which meet the needs of residents and visitors to County Sligo, are fit for purpose and are economically and environmentally sustainable.</p> <p>P-CW-4 Consider the use of off-road routes, such as disused railway lines and bridle paths, for both walking and cycling to improve access to rural tourist attractions. Where feasible, provide separate trails for walkers and cyclists in the interests of safety and convenience, with appropriate surfaces for each type of user and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>P-CW-5 Provide, improve and extend cycle and pedestrian routes on existing roads, proposed roads, roads being upgraded and green corridors (including river corridors), and make provision for filtered permeability where feasible and practical and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>O-A-2 Support proposals to upgrade facilities and improve the viability of Sligo Airport, subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>P-WWT-4 Require all new developments to connect to the public wastewater infrastructure, where available, subject a connection agreement with UÉ. In cases where a settlement is not served by a public wastewater treatment plant, or where no spare capacity exists in the relevant wastewater treatment plants, proposals for single houses using on-site wastewater treatment will be considered subject to appropriate scale, site assessment, design and ground conditions, taking groundwater vulnerability into account and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive. Such permitted development shall be subject to legally binding maintenance arrangements agreed with the Planning Authority and shall be required to connect to the public wastewater treatment plant when adequate capacity becomes available. However, communal on-site wastewater treatment systems for multiple housing developments (i.e. systems servicing more than one residential unit) will not be permitted.</p> <p>P-WWT-5 All proposals for on-site treatment systems shall be designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's 2021 Code of Practice: Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10) and/or Treatment Systems for Small Communities, business, Leisure Centres and Hotels, (EPA, 1999) as amended, and any guidance documents issued by the County Council.</p> <p>P-SWD-3 Seek to minimise the extent of hard surfacing and paving in all development proposals.</p> <p>P-SWD-4 Ensure that adequately designed oil interceptors are installed in all commercial developments that include car-parks or other oil- and petrol-related activities.</p>

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>P-SWD-5 Prohibit the alteration of natural and existing drainage systems, in order to preserve and protect historic drainage channels/paths and flow characteristics of existing catchments. In the case of development works, require the provision of acceptable mitigation measures in order to minimise the risk of flooding and negative impacts on water quality (including run-off, erosion and sedimentation).</p> <p>P-SWD-6 Protect the drainage characteristics of river channels and streams that can facilitate surface water drainage, by ensuring that development is kept at an appropriate distance from stream banks and/or adequate protection measures are put in place.</p> <p>P-FRM-2 Zone land for development in areas with a high or moderate risk of flooding only where it can be clearly demonstrated, on a solid evidence base, that the zoning will satisfy the justification test set out in chapter 4 of the <i>Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines</i>.</p> <p>P-CP-1 Ensure that visual and environmental considerations are considered in the design of coastal defence works including compliance with the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>P-UR-1 Promote the regeneration of the County's town and village centres by directing new development to infill sites, brownfield or underutilised lands before considering edge-of-town sites.</p>
Invasive species	<p>P-INV-1 Prevent and control the spread of invasive plant and animal species within the county.</p> <p>P-INV-2 Require all development proposals to address the presence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan, in compliance with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.</p> <p>P-INV-3 Promote best practice in the control of invasive species when carrying out statutory functions of the County Council in association with relevant bodies, including TII, the Department of Transport and the Department of Rural and Community Development.</p> <p>O-INV-1 Undertake studies through the County Heritage Plan and County Biodiversity Plan to quantify the extent of selected invasive species (Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam) within the Plan area, with recommendations of priority species for control or eradication, the degree of threat posed and the resources required for effective management.</p>
Agriculture	<p>O- INW-2 Require that runoff from a developed area does not result in deterioration of downstream watercourses or habitats, and that pollution generated by a development is treated within the development area prior to discharge to local watercourses.</p> <p>P-WQ-1 Support the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, National River Basin Management Plan and Blue Dot Catchment Programme, to ensure protection and improvement of all waters in the County.</p> <p>P-WQ-3 Protect the quality of estuarine and coastal waters by controlling land-based discharges to these areas.</p> <p>O-WQ-1 Continue to monitor, audit, and review the environmental status with regard to the water quality of rivers, lakes, estuarine and coastal waters.</p> <p>O-WQ-2 Protect, maintain, or improve water quality to the status set out in the national RBMP. All discharges to water bodies shall be licensed in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Water pollution) Acts 1977 & 1990.</p> <p>O-WQ-3 Implement the Programme of Measures detailed in the national RBMP.</p> <p>O-WQ-4 Ensure compliance with the relevant objectives and measures that will be set out in the Groundwater Protection Scheme for County Sligo.</p>
Water abstraction	<p>P-WS-6 Proposals relating to water abstractions shall be subject to the appropriate environmental assessments and demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and with the Water Framework Directive.</p>
Flood Risk Management	<p>P- INW-4 Ensure that floodplains and wetlands within the Plan area are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection value.</p> <p>P-FRM-1 Protect and enhance the County's floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas subject to flooding and ensure that no removal of sand dunes, beach sand or gravel is undertaken. These areas represent a vital green infrastructure, which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defences in the future.</p> <p>P-FRM-2 Zone land for development in areas with a high or moderate risk of flooding only where it can be clearly demonstrated, on a solid evidence base, that the zoning will satisfy the justification test set out in chapter 4 of the <i>Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines</i>.</p>

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>P-FRM-3 Contribute towards the general maintenance of a 20-metre-wide flood protection zone around lakes and along both sides of all rivers, and a 100-metre-wide flood protection zone from soft shorelines. Development proposals will be required to maintain these flood protection zones generally free from development.</p> <p>Exceptions may be considered for strategic road projects, water services infrastructure, river bank enhancement works, bridge and road repair works, in the case of brownfield sites, development on lands zoned subject to policy P-FRM-2 and in cases where the maintenance of the flood protection zone is not practically achievable. Such cases will be assessed on an individual basis and subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives.</p> <p>P-FRM-5 Restrict development in areas at risk of flooding unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is demonstrated that there are wider sustainability grounds for appropriate development; • the flood risk can be managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere; • the overall flood risk is reduced, where possible. <p>Developments considered necessary in order to meet the objectives of this Plan, or required on wider sustainability grounds, will be subject to the development management justification test outlined in chapter 5 of the <i>Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines</i>.</p> <p>Measures such as flood compensation storage works or new hard-engineered flood defences alone will not be acceptable as justification for development in flood risk areas. Such measures will be subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive and will only be considered as part of a proposal if the development is warranted by the justification test on planning and sustainability grounds in the first instance, and where no alternative site is available.</p> <p>P-FRM-6 Require development proposals, where appropriate, to be accompanied by a detailed flood risk assessment in accordance with the provisions of the DoEHLG’s Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities and to address flood risk management in the detailed design of development, as set out in Appendix B of the Guidelines.</p> <p>P-CP-1 Ensure that visual and environmental considerations are considered in the design of coastal defence works including compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives.</p> <p>P-CP-2 Require that any development within the coastal zone is appropriately sited and designed, having regard to coastal flooding, future shoreline erosion, predicted sea-level rise and OPW flood mapping.</p> <p>P-CP-3 Require that detailed flood risk assessment is carried out in relation to development proposals within the coastal zone and particularly on all low-lying areas, where appropriate.</p>
Forestry	<p>P-FOR-1 Support sustainable forestry development in County Sligo, subject to the protection of scenic landscapes and views, water quality, heritage features, residential amenity and public safety.</p> <p>P-FOR-2 Discourage new forestry development, except for broadleaf, in proposed/candidate and adopted NHAs, SACs and SPAs, in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes and Visually Vulnerable Areas, along designated Scenic Routes and in water quality-sensitive areas. (Broadleaf forestry will be open to consideration in these areas and in all proposed and adopted NHAs, SPAs and SACs, will be subject to consultation with the DECLG and shall have regard to any management plans prepared by the Department.)</p>
Fisheries / aquaculture	<p>P-AMF-1 Facilitate sustainable fishing, aquaculture and mariculture development associated with job creation, in a manner that is compatible with other uses of the Sligo coast, and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, the provisions of the EC (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations and objectives of Shellfish Pollution Reduction Programmes.</p>
Light, air & noise pollution	<p>P-ALAN-1 Ensure that artificial lighting of public buildings and car parking areas is used only when necessary, with dark-sky friendly lighting and design. New developments shall eliminate or mitigate for potential light pollution.</p> <p>P-ALAN-2 Where artificial lighting must be used, require developments to avoid glare and light trespass on adjacent natural areas such as hedgerows, road verges, tree lines, wetlands and river corridors, using shields and appropriate lighting design.</p> <p>P-ALAN-3 Require proposals for floodlighting of playing fields/pitches to include lighting schemes with measures to mitigate for light pollution through timing and the use of shielding. All schemes shall comply with the guidance within the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note (GN01-2021) The Reduction of Obtrusive Light.</p> <p>Section 33.2.9 Sligo County Council supports the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 and will seek to minimise noise disturbance by implementing the Sligo Noise Action Plan 2018 (and all updates thereafter), including provisions relating to the design and operation of developments and associated relevant noise management standards and guidance.</p>

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>The Council promotes the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/5/0/EC) and will ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011) (or any updated/superseding documents).</p>
Geology	<p>O-SGI-1 Protect from inappropriate development, and maintain the character, integrity and conservation value of those features or areas of geological interest that are listed in this Plan or that may be proposed by the DHLGH and/or the GSI in the lifetime of this Plan.</p>
Extractive Industry	<p>P-MEQ-1 Ensure that extraction and associated processes are carried out in a sustainable manner, which minimises the impact on residential amenities, natural environment and water quality, and do not impinge on existing rights-of-way or walking routes.</p> <p>P-MEQ-2 Seek the reuse of worked out quarries for recreational, industrial, ecological and other uses, following appropriate restoration.</p> <p>P-MEQ-3 In respect of development proposals on or in the proximity of quarry sites, the Council will require that appropriate investigations are carried out into the nature and extent of old quarries (where applicable), the nature and extent of soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development works. Adequate measures to mitigate these risks shall be submitted as part of the planning application.</p>
SEVESO	<p>Section 28.1.5 The Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 209 of 2015), known as the "COMAH Regulations", implement the Seveso III Directive (2012/18/EU). These Regulations lay down rules for the prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances and seek to limit the consequences of such accidents for human health and the environment.</p> <p>This Development Plan does not designate sites or zones for uses that might be classified as Seveso establishments and no such establishments exist at present. However, such developments may occur during the Plan's life.</p> <p>The Council will comply with the Seveso III Directive in reducing the risk and limiting the potential consequences of major industrial accidents. Any proposal for a Seveso development will be considered only in low-risk locations, within acceptable distances from relevant environmental sensitivities.</p> <p>Such development proposals will be referred to the Health and Safety Authority, whose technical advice will be taken into account in the overall assessment of the proposals, in addition to normal planning criteria.</p>
Climate	<p>SP-CA-1 Support the implementation of the government's climate action policy in accordance with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, the national Climate Action Plan 2023, the National Adaptation Framework 2018 and all subsequent relevant updates.</p> <p>SP-CA-2 Ensure that Sligo County Council's Climate Adaptation Strategy, Climate Action Plan and County Development Plan are fully aligned.</p> <p>SP-CA-3 Integrate appropriate climate mitigation and adaptation considerations and measures into all relevant development management and development planning processes.</p> <p>SP-TRA-3 Encourage the shift from car use to sustainable modes of transport such as cycling and walking.</p> <p>SP-TRA-4 Reduce the demand for travel by integrating land use with transport planning, ensuring that new development takes place in a compact form at locations with the highest levels of accessibility for public transport and active travel (walking and cycling).</p> <p>SO-TRA-6 Facilitate the roll-out of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, in line with the NDP Strategic Investment Priority for Transport target of nearly one million electric vehicles on the road by 2030, and with the Implementation Plan associated with the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2025 (and subsequent reviews).</p>
Renewable Energy	<p>P-EN-1 Support the sustainable development, upgrading and maintenance of energy generation, transmission, storage and distribution infrastructure, to ensure the security of energy supply and provide for future needs, as well as protection of the landscape, natural, archaeological and built heritage, and residential amenity.</p> <p>P-EN-2 Facilitate the production of energy from renewable sources and secure the maximum potential from wind energy resources within County Sligo, including the augmentation, upgrading and improvements to existing wind farms, subject to strict location, siting and design criteria.</p> <p>P-EN-3 Support the development of energy from biomass, such as solid fuels (e.g. wood pellets), liquid fuels or biogas (e.g. biomethane), including the cultivation, processing and conversion of energy crops.</p>

Sources and/or pathways for potential significant effects ²	Respective Plan Development Objectives/Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>P-EN-4 Support existing and new enterprises that wish to use renewable energy to serve their own needs by on-site energy production, as well as farm diversification into solar energy production for own use or selling to the grid, subject to normal planning considerations.</p> <p>P-EN-5 Collaborate with urban and rural communities in the development of community-level energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, including solar energy developments where suitable, subject to visual, landscape, heritage, environmental and amenity considerations.</p> <p>P-ENE-1 Encourage the use of renewable energy sources in buildings and the retrofitting of buildings for higher energy efficiency in line with national retrofitting goals. The retrofitting of protected structures and buildings located within ACAs or in historic streetscapes will be facilitated where it is shown that the proposed works will not negatively impact upon the character of the structure or streetscape.</p> <p>P-ENE-2 Promote the incorporation of energy-efficiency measures in the design of new buildings, such as passive solar design, natural ventilation, and vegetation (e.g. green roofs), as well as other design solutions that make effective and sustainable use of water, aggregates and other resources. The proposed energy-efficiency measures or design solutions should be included as part of the documentation submitted at planning application stage..</p> <p>O-REN-1 Prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy for County Sligo within one year of the publication of the Regional Renewable Electricity Strategy (NWRA) or the revised Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (SEAI), as provided for in the Climate Action Plan 2024, whichever occurs first..</p>
Green / Blue Infrastructure	<p>P-OR-2 Support the provision of a variety of accessible, multifunctional, high-quality open spaces and facilities for active and passive recreation, which meet the needs of residents and visitors to County Sligo, are fit for purpose and are economically and environmentally sustainable.</p> <p>P-OR-15 Preserve and improve access for the public to lakes, beaches, coastal, riverside, upland and other areas that have traditionally been used for outdoor recreation and subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive. Where feasible, apply or support the application of universal design principles, as recommended in <i>Building for everyone – a Universal Design Approach (NDA, 2012)</i>.</p> <p>P-CW-4 Consider the use of off-road routes, such as disused railway lines and bridle paths, for both walking and cycling to improve access to rural tourist attractions. Where feasible, provide separate trails for walkers and cyclists in the interests of safety and convenience, with appropriate surfaces for each type of user and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>P-CW-5 Provide, improve and extend cycle and pedestrian routes on existing roads, proposed roads, roads being upgraded and green corridors (including river corridors), and make provision for filtered permeability where feasible and practical and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.</p>
Waste Management	<p>Section 33.2.8 Sligo County Council supports the sustainable management of waste and seeks to enable a significant reduction in the production of waste in County Sligo, in line with the principles of the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (DECC, 2021).</p> <p>The identification and provision of facilities for the reception of C&D waste should be integrated into the project planning and design processes. In order to ensure that this occurs, conditions will be included in the permissions granted to particular developments, requiring resource and waste management plans be drawn up prior to the commencement of the development. These plans will be subject to approval by the Planning Authority and will include site inspections to ensure that all wastes generated during development are being handled in an environmentally-sound and sustainable manner. The plans must be prepared and carried out in accordance with the EPA’s Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource & Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects (2021).</p> <p>The Council will continue to fulfil its duties under the Waste Management (certification of historic unlicensed waste disposal and recovery activity) Regulations 2008 (S.I. No 524 of 2008), including those in relation to the identification and registration of closed landfills.</p> <p>Section 33.2.11 Any new commercial or residential development, urban or rural, must be designed and constructed with adequate space to securely store organic food/garden waste, dry recyclables and residual domestic waste in separate receptacles. The waste receptacles should be protected from vandals and vermin, should not create a nuisance to adjacent receptors and should not be in a public place. Adequate space and height should be provided to allow for unhindered access of refuse collection vehicles. In the case of apartment schemes, the planning and design of the scheme shall have regard to the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2022) and any future revision of these standards.</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 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The Plan is required to be prepared by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which specifies various types of objectives that must be provided for by the Plan. The alternatives available for the Plan are limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, including those of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Plan including on topics such as settlement typology, land use zoning and the sustainable development of rural areas. In addition, the Development Plan Guidelines (2022) contain a detailed methodology (in Section 4 and Appendix A) for implementing the NPF requirement regarding Infrastructural Assessment (IA) of existing and proposed zoned lands. The Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA), based on the IA, must be the basis of Core Strategy formulations and corresponding zoning decisions for residential development.

3.2 Type 1: Alternatives for positioning in the Settlement Hierarchy

Alternative A would retain the Support Towns designations for Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry, despite relatively low population growth in these towns, compared to Satellite Villages.

Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry are urban centres with multiple functions, capable of providing local employment and a good variety of services not just to their residents, but also to rural communities in their large rural hinterlands. These towns, located in the south, south-west and extreme west of the County, are closer and are more accessible to large numbers of rural dwellers than Sligo Town.

Consolidation of these towns, supporting their economic development and improving their social/community infrastructure would help create additional local jobs and services, thereby reducing their residents' need to commute to Sligo Town for work, school, shopping etc.

Alternative B would retain the Support Town designation for Tobercurry and instead designate Ballysadare, Collooney and Strandhill Support Towns, since their population is higher than that of Ballymote and Enniscrone.

Ballysadare, Collooney and Strandhill have seen substantial growth between 2002 and 2022, doubling or even nearly tripling their population – 104%, 190% and 97% respectively.

However, they continue to lack jobs, services and community infrastructure, and function largely as “dormitories” for people who work elsewhere, mostly in Sligo Town. While their designation as Support Towns might help in the provision of suitable community and recreational facilities, it would not be likely to stimulate local jobs creation, given the proximity and competition of Sligo Town.

There are also physical constraints to the further development of these settlements, especially Ballysadare and Strandhill, which are adjoining highly sensitive European sites.

Selected Type 1 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.

3.3 Type 2: Alternatives for Population Allocations

Alternative A comprises "Support "Towns-only" growth", i.e. allocate significant proportions of future housing and corresponding additional population to Sligo Town/Regional Growth Centre and to the Support Towns (Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry), and strictly limit growth in Satellite Villages and lower levels.

Under this option, future population and housing would be directed into Sligo Town, Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry, where employment and services can be provided more efficiently.

The existing residential and mixed-use zoning in Ballymote and Enniscrone would be largely retained. Up to 20-23 ha would be zoned in Tobercurry (as per the Draft LAP 2015). All zoning would be subject to infrastructural assessment.

In order to ensure that sufficient housing land is available in the four towns, no sites would be designated for residential development (or mix of uses including residential) outside these urban areas.

Undeveloped lands previously zoned for residential and mixed uses in serviced villages would be zoned "RV" (Rural Village) instead. The flexible "RV" (Rural Village) zoning objective would allow for local housing need to be catered for in villages with adequate service infrastructure, while unserviced settlements would not be zoned.

Alternative B comprises "Driving growth through the Sligo Regional Growth Centre", i.e. allocate the majority of future housing and corresponding additional population to Sligo Town, and a small proportion to the Satellite Villages located within the RGC Strategic Plan Area (as specified in the NWRA RSES).

This approach would be the most closely aligned with the RSES, which promotes development in the Sligo Regional Growth Centre and requires a Local Transport Plan for the Sligo RGC Strategic Plan Area. Population and housing growth would be promoted in the area where land-use can be best integrated with public transport and active travel.

While the focus remains on Sligo RGC, there would be reasonable population and housing allocations for the three Support Towns (Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry), recognising their roles in the Settlement Strategy.

Similar to Alternative A, the flexible "RV" (Rural Village) zoning objective would allow for locally-needed housing and minimal population growth in other villages with adequate service infrastructure, while unserviced settlements would not be supported for growth.

Selected Type 2 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative B.

3.4 Type 3: Alternatives for Rural Settlements

Alternative A would include specific objectives for serviced villages to support their economic, social and community infrastructure, thereby offering a more attractive alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside.

Objectives would be provided in Village Plans for small settlements with adequate wastewater treatment system but no specific housing or population allocations.

Objectives would relate to the design of any new village-centre development, the provision or improvement of local infrastructure (e.g. school extensions, parks, walkways etc.), and the protection of significant natural and built heritage.

A flexible RV ("Rural Village") zoning objective would allow for the construction of locally-needed houses, thereby providing an alternative to the construction of isolated rural dwellings served by on-site wastewater treatment systems.

Alternative B would designate only development limits for villages, without any provisions targeting economic, social and community infrastructure.

The purpose of designating development limits would be to encourage the clustering of one-off houses in compact areas, to take advantage of existing wastewater treatment infrastructure or to facilitate their future servicing by Uisce Éireann. However, this alternative would not include specific objectives to support the villages in developing community and recreational facilities, or to protect the natural/built heritage and amenities. As a consequence, these villages would not become more attractive as places to live, and would not be seen as viable alternatives to the open countryside in terms of building individual houses.

Selected Type 3 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.

3.5 Type 4: Alternatives for Residential Densities

Alternative A would apply standard residential densities to lands zoned for housing across the entire County, set at the levels recommended in Chapters 5 and 6 of the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines (2009) for larger towns, smaller towns and villages.

A key objective of the NPF and RSES is to promote the compact growth of towns and villages by increasing the density of development in existing built-up areas and in new developments, particularly in town centres. This would lead to more efficient use of existing physical infrastructure and services, thereby reducing the need for motorised travel. It is also likely to decrease the amount of open space and residential amenities available to local people.

Alternative B would involve adopting a tailored approach to residential development by specifying locally appropriate residential densities, to ensure that new development responds to the character, scale and setting of the town or village (as specified in the Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021).

Adapting the scale, design and layout of housing in towns and villages would ensure that suburban or high-density urban approaches are not applied to small villages or to settlements where the natural and built heritage would be negatively affected by dense development.

Reducing the attractiveness of small towns and villages by imposing out-of-character, high-density development is likely to stimulate more house-building in the open countryside.

Having regard to the NPF, the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines (2009) and subsequent Circular Letter (2021), the Planning Authority would determine the appropriate average residential density in each town and village subject to land-use zoning.

Selected Type 4 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative B.

3.6 Type 5: Alternatives for Land-Use Zoning (residential and mixed uses, including residential)

The provisions for land-use zoning introduced by the NPF and Development Plan Guidelines 2022, particularly for residential and mixed uses, including residential, have severely limited the options previously available to the Planning Authority when preparing town and village plans.

Fixed housing targets (calculated in accordance with the Housing Supply Targets Methodology) and increased density requirements indicate clearly that the amount of land currently (2023) zoned for

housing and mixed uses needs to be substantially reduced. Two realistic alternatives have been examined in this regard.

Alternative A would retain unchanged the extent of land zoned for residential and mixed uses including residential, but introduce a phasing policy, whereby only a specified proportion/area of each zoned site can be developed during the Plan period.

Under this approach, lands which have been zoned for residential and mixed uses for more than two iterations of the Development Plan (2011 to present), and which could not be developed because of the economic crisis, Covid-19 pandemic, recent steep rise in energy prices etc., would be given an opportunity to fulfil their potential for development by 2030.

Alternative B would zone lands for residential and mixed uses based on a scoring system designed e.g., to promote the sequential and compact growth of settlements (using the methodology recommended in the Development Plan Guidelines 2022).

This approach would entail an Infrastructural Assessment (IA) and a Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) for each town or village where land is proposed to be zoned.

The IA would consider the availability of transport infrastructure (roads, footpaths, cycleways) and service infrastructure (watermains, foul sewers, surface drainage systems) that would allow the development of lands immediately or during the Plan period.

“Tier 1” (fully serviced) sites resulting from the IA would be subject to a further assessment as part of the SCA. This further evaluation would assign numerical scores to sites, based on criteria grouped under two main headings:

- “Spatially sequential” test – where the main consideration was proximity to the town/village centre (defined as the walking distance to a specified landmark); and
- Availability of social/community/recreational infrastructure in the surrounding area (e.g. primary school, grocery shop, pharmacy, public open space).

Further points would be awarded to sites where planning permission had been previously granted or a Local Authority housing scheme had been approved (“Part 8” development).

In Sligo Town, additional points would also be given to sites that are highlighted in the RSES for their high potential to contribute to the development of the Regional Growth Centre.

Selected Type 5 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative B.

Section 4 AA Determination

Appropriate Assessment Determination

under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended,
for the
Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030

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

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

- 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.

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

As part of the AA, it was identified that the Plan may, if unmitigated, have likely significant effects on 35 (no.) European sites. Plan elements that could potentially have a likely significant effect, if unmitigated, to European sites include: the Plan's Land Use Zoning Framework; Strategies for Planning and Development; county level and town centre civil and economic development; provisions relating to the development of sustainable communities; transport and connectivity; local heritage; infrastructure development; and, energy and utilities development. The elements of the Plan with the highest potential to give rise to the effects are generally associated with construction phase elements of the implementation of the Plan. The operational phase elements of the Plan are generally consistent with the existing condition of the area; however, these also have been carefully considered.

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

- The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the Qualifying Interests, Special Conservation Interests and Conservation Objectives of the European sites identified have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures into the Plan that will prioritise the avoidance of effects in the first place and mitigate against the identified potential significant effects where these cannot be avoided. In addition, all lower-level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Plan will themselves be subject to AA/screening for AA when further details of design and location are known.
- In-combination effects from interactions with other plans and projects are considered and the mitigation measures incorporated into the Plan are seen to be robust to ensure that there will be no significant effects as a result of the implementation of the Plan either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects.
- Having incorporated mitigation measures into the Plan, it has been demonstrated that the Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effects to any designated European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects². This demonstration has been made in view of the Conservation Objectives of the habitats and/or species, for which these sites have been designated.



Dorothy Clarke
Director of Services
Planning, Community and Economic Development

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

² 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.