

1. Introduction

Sligo Borough Council proposes to vary the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 (SEDP) by inserting an additional strategic roads objective – **T1.3 Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Associated Roads** (described in Section 4 of this report) into **Chapter 10. Mobility** of the SEDP.

This document addresses the potential environmental impact of amending Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 by inserting objective T1.3 into the Plan, in the context of the previously-prepared Environmental Report associated with the SEDP.

It should be noted that no changes are made to the original Environmental Report. This Addendum supplements and should be read in conjunction with the SEDP, the Environmental Report and Addenda I, II and III thereof.

2. Legislative context

In accordance with Section 13K of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004), where a planning authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan under Section 13 of the Act, it shall, before giving notice under section 13(2) of the Act, consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations.

Having regard to the proposed variation's characteristics, and the characteristics of the area likely to be affected, significant environmental effects could not be ruled out. Having already compiled an Environmental Report in association with Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 (SEDP), it was considered appropriate to prepare an Addendum to the existing environmental report.

3. Consultation with environmental authorities

Section 13M of the SEA Regulations requires planning authorities to consult with prescribed environmental authorities on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report.

On 19 January 2011, a notice under Section 13M of the SEA Regulations was sent to the following environmental authorities:

- Development Applications Unit, Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG)
- Co-ordination Unit, Dept. of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR)
- Office of Environmental Assessment, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The letter indicated that submissions or observations in relation to the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report could be made no later than the 9th of February 2011.

The letter also indicated that the proposed course of action was to prepare an **Appendix (Addendum) to the SEDP Environmental Report** (including only the relevant points of information from those outlined in Schedule 2B of the Planning and Development (Strategic

Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004) and an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

Response to consultation

Responses were received from the DCENR (26 January 2011), the EPA (7 February 2011) and the DAU/DoEHLG (10 February 2011).

- The DCENR indicated that the Department had no comments to make, without prejudice to any comments/observations that Inland Fisheries Ireland may have in this regard.
- The EPA submission consisted of a SEA pack (guidance documentation) and a standard SEA Scoping Submission Template (generally applicable to any plan, not customised to the proposed Eastern Bridge variation).
- The DAU submission consisted of the archaeological observations of the Heritage Policy and Architectural Protection section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (generally applicable to any plan, not customised to the proposed Eastern Bridge variation).

Consideration of response

Having regard to the general nature of the submission received from the DAU and the EPA, and to the fact that an Environmental Report had already been prepared in relation to the Sligo and Environs Development Plan, it was considered appropriate to proceed with the preparation of this Addendum IV of the Environmental Report (addressing only the relevant points of information from those outlined in Schedule 2B of the SEA regulations) and also prepare an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

4. Contents of the proposed variation

The proposed variation would involve a change to the text of the SEDP and a change to Map 2 and the corresponding Fig. 10 as follows:

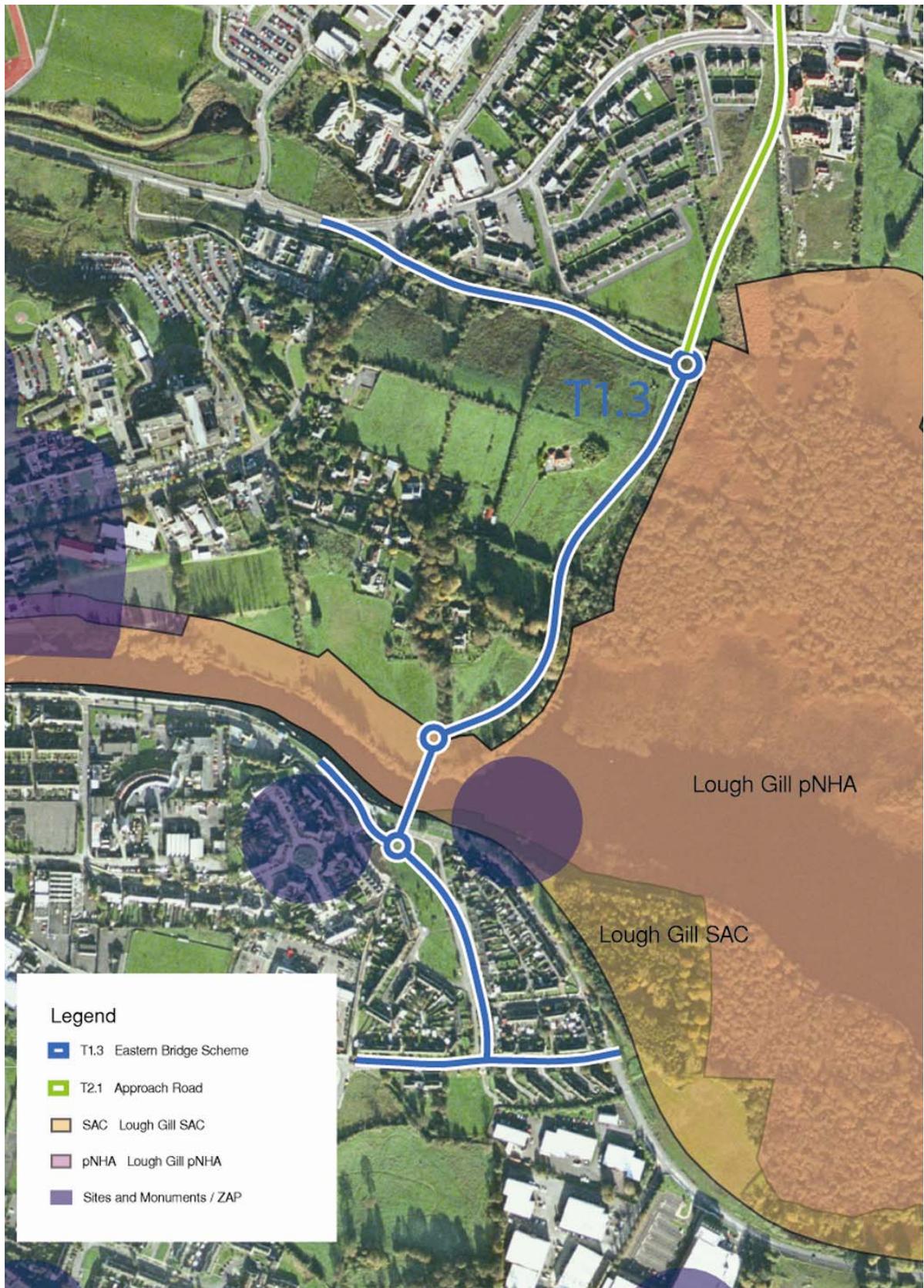
- A.** In **Section 10.2 Strategic road proposals**, under the heading **Strategic roads objectives**, include the following objective:

T1.3 Eastern Bridge scheme (E2) as approved by An Bord Pleanála, crossing the Garavogue River from Cleaveragh Demesne to Rathquarter, continuing north and turning west to connect with Ash Lane at Ballinode neighbourhood centre.

- B.** On **Map 2 Transport Objectives** and on the corresponding **Figure 10** in the SEDP document, indicate the strategic road objective **T1.3**.

The introduction of this proposed objective in the SEDP 2010-2016 would facilitate the construction of the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Roads scheme crossing the Garavogue River and Lough Gill SAC (site code 1976 – a Natura 2000 site).

Fig. 1. Heritage designations in the area affected by the proposed Eastern Bridge variation



5. Background to the proposed variation

In October 2008, the **proposed Draft Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016** submitted to Sligo Borough and County Councils for approval included a written objective as follows:

- T1.3** Eastern Bridge crossing the Garavogue River, from Riverside to Rathquarter, continuing north and turning west to connect with Ash Lane at Ballinode neighbourhood centre.

The route for this objective was also indicated on the proposed draft Map 2 Transport Objectives.

At the time, the strategic road objective T1.3 was included in the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2004-2010 and had already progressed to project level, with an application accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement lodged with An Bord Pleanála on the 3rd of December 2007.

Following a number of objections to the scheme, an oral hearing was held in June 2008 and reopened in early December 2008.

The Inspector's recommendation of 13 July 2008, for approval of the proposed road development subject to conditions, was maintained in the second Inspector's Report, subject to certain changes in conditions. (Subsequently, An Bord Pleanála approved the proposed road development in 2009.)

In late December 2008, after consideration of the proposed Draft SEDP and the preliminary Draft ER, the Borough Council members decided to delete the text and map line corresponding to objective T1.3 from the Plan.

In June 2009, An Bord Pleanála approved the proposed road development in accordance with the submitted documentation, subject to a set of conditions. The *Reasons and Considerations* for this decision were as follows:

Having regard to the provisions of the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2004-2010, the information contained in the Environmental Impact Statement, the report and recommendation of the person who conducted the oral hearing, and the submissions made in relation to the likely effects on the environment, it is considered that, subject to the conditions set out below, the proposed road development would not adversely affect the integrity of the Lough Gill candidate Special Area of Conservation, would not result in significant adverse effects on the environment or on amenities in the area and would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The new SEDP 2010-2016 was adopted in December 2009, without the objective T1.3.

6. Preliminary environmental assessment – October 2008

The preliminary draft Environmental Report (submitted to the Council members in October 2008 alongside the proposed Draft Plan, to inform their decision) considered the potential environmental effects of the Draft Plan including the objective T1.3.

The objective T1.3 was assessed as part of the group of Strategic Road Objectives. The outcome of the assessment is indicated in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1. Extract from the preliminary Draft ER (October 2008) – assessment of strategic road objectives against SEOs (strategic environmental objectives)

Strategic Road Objectives	Likely to improve status of SEOs	Probable conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Potential conflict with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated	Uncertain interaction with status of SEOs	Neutral interaction with status of SEOs	No likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>It is an objective of the local authorities to:</p> <p>T1 - Reserve strategic road corridors for the development of the following roads:</p> <p>T1.1</p> <p>Upgrade and realignment of the N4 and N15, from Hughes Bridge to Sligo/Leitrim County boundary.</p> <p>T1.2</p> <p>Western Distributor Road from the Caltragh Interchange on the Inner Relief Road through Ballydoogan to the Strandhill Road</p> <p>T1.3</p> <p>Eastern Bridge crossing the Garavogue River, from Riverside to Rathquarter, continuing north and turning west to connect with Ash Lane at Ballinode neighbourhood centre.</p> <p>T1.4</p> <p>Realignment of the N16 Enniskillen Road, from the County boundary to Teesan, to connect with the existing N15 (Donegal Road).</p> <p>T1.5</p> <p>A strategic route option for a City Bypass linking N4 at Carrowroe with the realigned N15 and N16, north of the City. A route selection study will be prepared and a recommendation will be made on the optimal route and alignment.</p> <p>T1.6</p> <p>Inner Relief Road Corridor – upgrade junctions on at John Street, Lord Edward Street, Lynns Place and Hughes Bridge, to improve access to the city centre and reduce delays to west-east traffic.</p> <p><i>Note: All proposed road lines shown on the Transportation Objectives Map are indicative corridors only, and shall be subject to further constraints studies and route selection assessments.</i></p>			<p>B1</p> <p>B2</p> <p>B3</p> <p>W5</p> <p>CH1</p> <p>L1</p>			

Note on SEOs

B1 - To avoid loss of relevant habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites

B2 - To avoid significant adverse impacts, including direct, cumulative and indirect impacts, to relevant habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites by development within or adjacent to these sites

B3 - To sustain, enhance or – where relevant - prevent the loss of ecological networks or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity

W5 - To prevent development on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future – a significant flood risk

CH1 - To protect the archaeological heritage of Sligo and Environs with regard to entries to the Record of Monuments and Places - including Zones of Archaeological Potential – and the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant

L1 - To avoid significant adverse impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscapes which are most valuable and most sensitive to change and protected views and routes

Full details on SEOs can be found in Section 4 of the Environmental Report (pp 76-85).

The preliminary Draft Environmental Report of October 2008 recommended mitigation measures in relation to the following areas: biodiversity, flora and fauna; surface and groundwater protection; wastewater; drinking water; flooding and climatic factors; soil and contamination; cultural heritage; landscape; waste management.

Among those mentioned above, the recommendation most relevant to strategic roads objectives was the inclusion in the Draft SEDP of a provision stipulating the following:

No projects giving rise to significant adverse 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 be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)*

Subsequent plan-making and adoption of plans arising from this plan shall be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

* Except as provided for in Section 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.

Consequent to the recommendations contained in the preliminary Draft ER, it was decided to introduce in the proposed Draft SEDP a number of “Strategic Environmental Assessment mitigation policies”.

The following provisions were introduced at the end of Chapter 10. Transport and mobility:

10.8 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) mitigation policies

Any City Bypass project or any road project which involves crossing a Natura 2000 site will:

- A.** demonstrate the need for the project in light of a “do nothing” context;
- B.** examine the potential for intensifying/upgrading existing roads and routes as an alternative to carrying out new road development affecting a Natura 2000 site;
- C.** develop and evaluate a comprehensive series of plausible alternative routes and design strategies (the latter to include long span and tunnel options);

- D. demonstrate how each route has taken due account of, and accommodated, ecological considerations and legislative requirements;
- E. demonstrate that the chosen route will not cause any incursions onto or significant adverse effects on these habitats.

Following the Borough Council’s decision to delete the text and map line corresponding to objective T1.3 from the Plan, the documents placed on public display in February 2009 did not contain any reference to objective T1.3. The assessment of strategic roads objectives in the ER remained identical to that of October 2008 (presented in Table 1 previously).

However, the “SEA mitigation policies” relating to Natura 2000 sites were retained in the Draft Plan.

In the final, adopted version of the SEDP, the “SEA mitigation policies” became policies in their own right in Section 10.2 Strategic road proposals (p. 55 of the SEDP), under the heading **Policies for roads crossing Natura 2000 sites:**

- P-N2000-1** Demonstrate the need for the project in light of a “do nothing” scenario.
- P-N2000-2** Examine the potential for intensifying or upgrading existing roads and routes as an alternative to carrying out new road development affecting a Natura 2000 site.
- P-N2000-3** Develop and evaluate a comprehensive series of plausible alternative routes and design strategies (the latter to include long span and tunnel options).
- P-N2000-4** Demonstrate how each route has taken due account of, and accommodated ecological considerations and legislative requirements.
- P-N2000-5** Demonstrate that the chosen route will not cause any incursions onto or significant adverse effects on habitats in Natura 2000 sites.

7. Information required by Schedule 2B of the SEA Regulations

Schedule 2B of the SEA regulations prescribes the following as information to be included in an environmental report:

- A.** an outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans;

This is provided under heading **4. Contents of the Proposed Variation** of this report.

- B.** the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan;

These are detailed in **Section 3 of Environmental Report** associated with the SEDP 2010-2016.

It is acknowledged that there is potential for the proposed variation to have a significant effect on Lough Gill cSAC and non-designated habitats, water quality and landscape at the proposed location. In the absence of the proposed objective T1.3, the environment would not be affected at the proposed location.

However, these potential impacts of implementing objective T1.3 are likely to be mitigated, given the existence of relevant heritage, water protection and urban design policies in the SEDP (see references under point G on page 10 and also in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report).

C. and **D.** the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected AND any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to the Birds Directive or Habitats Directive;

These are presented in **Section 3 of the Environmental Report** associated with the SEDP 2010-2016.

Natural heritage: At the proposed location of the bridge and roads scheme, Lough Gill is a designated cSAC and a pNHA, with the two sites covering the same area. Circa 1 km downstream there is another designated area – Cummeen Strand cSAC/SPA – (site code 0627 and 4035 respectively). There is no potential for the proposed variation to have a significant effect on Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay cSAC/pNHA. Any potential impacts on Lough Gill cSAC/pNHA are likely to be mitigated, as indicated under point G on page 10 and in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

Architectural heritage: No protected structure would be directly affected by the proposed T1.3 objective. The potential impact of the scheme on the attendant grounds associated with Ardaghown House (SEDP RPS item no. 295) are likely to be mitigated.

Archaeological heritage: There would be no direct impact of the proposed T1.3 objective on any recorded archaeological monuments.

E. the environmental protection objectives, established at international, European Union or national level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;

These are detailed in **Section 4 of the Environmental Report**. A summary of the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEO) is provided below.

- B1** To avoid loss of relevant habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites
- B2** To avoid significant adverse impacts, including direct, cumulative and indirect impacts, to relevant habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites by development within or adjacent to these sites

- B3** To sustain, enhance or - where relevant - prevent the loss of ecological networks or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity
- HH1** To protect human health from hazards or nuisances arising from exposure to incompatible land uses
- S1** Maximise the sustainable re-use of brownfield lands, and maximise the use of the existing built environment rather than developing greenfield lands⁶⁰
- W1** To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality of rivers and lakes
- W2** To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality of transitional waters
- W3** To prevent pollution and contamination of ground water
- W4** To prevent pollution and contamination of bathing water
- W5** To prevent development on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk
- A1** To minimise increases in travel related greenhouse emissions to air
- M1** To serve new development with appropriate waste water treatment
- M2** To reduce car dependency within the Plan area by way of, inter alia, encouraging modal change from car to more sustainable forms of public transport and encouraging development which will not be dependent on private transport
- CH1** To protect the archaeological heritage of Sligo and Environs with regard to entries to the Record of Monuments and Places - including Zones of Archaeological Potential - and the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant
- CH2** To preserve and protect the special interest and character of Sligo and Environs architectural heritage with regard to entries to the Record of Protected Structures and their context within the surrounding landscape where relevant
- L1** To avoid significant adverse impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscapes which are most valuable and most sensitive to change and protected views and routes

F. the likely significant effects¹ on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;

The effects of implementing the proposed variation of the SEDP can be represented as the interactions between the SEOs and the policies/objectives contained in the Plan. These effects include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

These interactions are illustrated in tabular form on the next page.

¹ These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

Table 2. Assessment of proposed strategic road objective T1.3 against SEOs

Strategic Road Objectives	Likely to improve status of SEOs	Probable conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Potential conflict with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated	Uncertain interaction with status of SEOs	Neutral interaction with status of SEOs	No likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>It is an objective of the local authorities to:</p> <p>T1 - Reserve strategic road corridors for the development of the following roads:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>T1.3</p> <p>Eastern Bridge crossing the Garavogue River, from Riverside to Rathquarter, continuing north and turning west to connect with Ash Lane at Ballinode neighbourhood centre.</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>Note: All proposed road lines shown on the Transportation Objectives Map are indicative corridors only, and shall be subject to further constraints studies and route selection assessments.</i></p>	<p>A1</p> <p>S1</p> <p>M2</p>		<p>B1</p> <p>B2</p> <p>B3</p> <p>W1</p> <p>CH1</p> <p>L1</p>			

Note on Table 2

- A1:** the bridge will assist in shortening trips, thereby reducing greenhouse emissions.
- S1:** the bridge will assist in the redevelopment of Cranmore and will enable consolidation of development on the northern river bank, both areas being currently constrained by poor access.
- M2:** the bridge will provide a north-south cycle and walking route, facilitating access to the Hospital, the Institute of Technology, Cleveragh recreational area and Retail Park, County Council offices etc.

G. the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;

B1, B2 and B3

It is considered that the natural heritage policies and objectives contained in Section 13.3 of the SEDP (assessed against SEOs on pp 153-155 of the Environmental Report) ensure mitigation of any potentially negative impact of the proposed variation on habitats and species.

Particularly relevant are the **Policies for roads crossing Natura 2000 sites** (listed on p. 7 of this report) and objectives O-NH-1 and O-NH-4:

- O-NH-1** Require an appropriate environmental assessment in respect of any proposed development likely to have an impact on a designated natural heritage site or those sites proposed to be designated.

- O-NH-4** Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site, but likely to have significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to an appropriate assessment in accordance with Art. 6 of Directive 92/43/EEC, of its implications for the Natura 2000 site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Please refer also to Section 6 of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report that accompanies the proposed Eastern Bridge variation.

W1

It is considered that the inland waters policies/objectives in Section 13.3 of the SEDP and the water quality policies in Section 14.4 of the SEDP ensure mitigation of any potentially negative impacts of the proposed variation on water quality.

Among the most relevant are P-NH-15, P-NH-20, O-NH-13, P-WQ-1, P-WQ-13:

- P-NH-15** Protect rivers, streams and other water courses and, wherever possible, maintain them in an open state capable of providing suitable habitats for fauna and flora.
- P-NH-20** Ensure that proposed developments do not adversely affect groundwater resources.
- O-NH-13** 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-WQ-1** Protect, maintain or improve the water quality of Lough Gill and Kilsellagh catchments, the Garavogue River and all other water bodies in the Plan area to the status required in the Western River Basin district Management Plan.

CH-1

It is considered that the archaeological heritage policies/objectives in Section 13.1 of the SEDP ensure mitigation of any potentially negative impacts of the proposed variation on archaeological heritage.

Among the most relevant are P-AH-3, O-AH-1 and O-AH-4 (p. 92 of the SEDP):

- P-AH-3** Ensure that full consideration is given to the protection of archaeological heritage when undertaking, approving or authorising development in order to avoid unnecessary conflict between development and the protection of the archaeological heritage.
- O-AH-1** Seek archaeological impact assessment as part of a planning application when a proposed development could affect a Recorded Monument, a Zone of Archaeological Potential or an as yet unidentified element of archaeological heritage or its setting.
- O-AH-4** Ensure that all proposals for linear development over one km in length, proposals for development involving ground clearance of a half hectare or more, or proposals for development affecting present or former wetlands, unenclosed land or rivers and estuaries, are referred to the prescribed bodies mentioned above (i.e. prescribed bodies as defined by the Planning and Development Act).

L1

It is considered that the urban design policies in Section 12.7 City Fringes of the SEDP ensure mitigation of any potentially negative impacts of the proposed variation on landscape and visual amenity. The most relevant policies are P-CYF-2 and P-CYF-4:

- P-CYF-2** Ensure that the design of residential, commercial or industrial development located on the edge of the built-up area or in the vicinity of the development limit takes into consideration the context and character of the surrounding countryside, retains and enhances – where appropriate – existing features such as field boundaries, green roads, mature trees, distinctive landscape features etc.
- P-CYF-4** Ensure that all new development at the urban-rural edge is of a high quality in terms of design, layout and use of materials and finishes.

Landscape and visual impacts are generally better addressed at design stage. The EIS approved by An Bord Pleanála includes a section on Landscape and Visual Analysis, which indicates that the key adverse impacts can be significantly mitigated by a public realm enhancement scheme capable of creating a new landscape context.

H. an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;

The proposed objective forms integral part of the **Alternative Scenario 3 – Compact City**, which sought to achieve a balance between consolidation/regeneration of the existing built-up area and the planned expansion of the City into the Environs.

The Compact City Scenario identified the eastern part of Sligo as a target for consolidation (Hazelwood-Ballinode LAP) and regeneration (proposed Cranmore-Cleveragh LAP). The Eastern Bridge and Associated Roads scheme is essential in achieving these goals of the SEDP.

A detailed assessment of all development scenarios is provided in Section 6 of the Environmental Report

I. a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring of the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan;

The monitoring measures relating to the proposed variation will be the same as those employed in relation to the other policies and objectives of the SEDP. These are detailed in Section 10 of the Environmental Report.

J. a non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.”

This is considered unnecessary, given the concision of this Addendum.

8. Conclusion

Having examined the potential effects of the proposed variation on the environment and having assessed these potential effects against the strategic environmental objectives identified in the Environmental Report, it is considered that any negative impact is likely to be successfully mitigated given the existence of relevant policies and objectives in the SEDP 2010-2016.