

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION STATEMENT

FOR THE CARLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028

for: Carlow County Council

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Carlow



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Section 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for the Carlow 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).

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

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

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

The Plan was prepared in an iterative manner whereby the Plan and AA documents have informed subsequent versions of the other. The findings of the AA were integrated into the Plan through mitigation measures. These mitigation measures ensure that there will be no significant effects to the ecological integrity of any European site from implementation of the Plan. The mitigation measures most relevant to the protection of European sites are identified in Table 2.1 below.

Furthermore, the detailed Plan preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department combined with specialist input from the SEA and AA process facilitated zoning that avoids inappropriate development being permitted in areas of high ecological sensitivity.

Table 2.1 Mitigation relating to AA

Topic	Measures integrated into the Plan, including:
Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	RH P6 (iv) Ensure, in addition to the requirement to comply with the rural housing policy criteria, that applicants demonstrate compliance with all normal siting and design requirements. The siting, layout and design of a new rural house shall appropriately integrate with its physical surroundings, including the natural and built heritage of the area, taking account of: the protection and preservation of features in the landscape that contribute to local distinctiveness, attractiveness, and ecology, and which can assist in visually absorbing rural housing into its countryside. These features include hedgerows, trees, sod/stone banks and stone walls, historic and archaeological landscapes, water bodies, ridges, skylines, topographical features and important views and prospects. Recessed development located / set back into the landscape away from the public road may be considered where the siting is appropriate to the rural context and provides for the protection of environmental, visual and residential amenities.
	LA P10 Ensure that features which contribute to local landscape character, including historic features and buildings, trees, hedgerows, shelter belts and stone walls, are retained, protected, and enhanced where appropriate, so as to preserve the appearance and local landscape character of an area, whilst supporting sustainable landscape change and development. Development proposals necessitating the removal of such features will be discouraged.
	NH P1 Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Carlow in recognition of its importance as a non-renewable resource, a unique identifier, and as a natural resource asset.
	NH P2 Ensure as far as is practicable that development does not adversely impact on wildlife habitats and species and that biodiversity is conserved for the benefit of future generations in the interests of sustainability. This will include moving towards no net loss of biodiversity from plans adopted by and projects granted permission/authorised by the Council.
	NH P3 Support and co-operate with statutory authorities such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and others on measures to manage designated nature conservation sites in order to achieve their conservation objectives. Specific regard shall be had to conservation objectives and conservation management plans where they exist for designated nature conservation sites.
	NH P5 Recognise that nature conservation is not just confined to designated sites and acknowledge the need to protect non-designated biodiversity, habitats and species not otherwise protected by legislation.
	NH P7 Promote development for recreation and educational purposes that does not conflict with maintaining the favourable conservation status of designated natural heritage sites, including the achievement of their conservation objectives.
	NH P8 Promote, protect and enhance sustainable and appropriate access to the natural heritage of the county.
	NH P9 To promote the carrying out of ecological/habitat assessments to inform the layout and design of development proposals and ensure they integrate the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and landscape features wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats (whether designated or not) and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate.
	NH O1 Implement relevant actions from the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 (and any superseding plan) and to prepare a County Heritage Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan during the lifetime of this County Development Plan in accordance with RPO 126 in the RSES, to ensure the protection and appreciation of heritage and nature at local level including recognition of rich biodiversity of designation of existing special areas of conservation i.e. Blackstairs Mountains, Slaney River Valley and River Barrow and River Nore SAC.
	NS P1 To support the conservation and enhancement of Natura 2000 Sites, and to protect the Natura 2000 network from any plans and projects that are likely to have a significant effect on the coherence or integrity of a Natura 2000 Site, in accordance with relevant EU Environmental Directives and applicable National Legislation, Policies, Plans and Guidelines.
	NS P2 Screening for Appropriate Assessment and if required Appropriate Assessment is undertaken for all plans to be adopted and projects to be granted permission/authorised by the Council. Where likely significant effects have been identified in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 Site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, ensure appropriate assessment, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. The Council shall only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned, unless the plan or project is subject to the provisions of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.
	NS P3 Consider impacts within a plan or project's zone of influence, which may include Natura 2000 sites outside the County, when assessing whether a plan or project is likely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites.
	NS P4: Maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of County's Natura 2000 sites qualifying interest habitats and species.
	NS O1 Strictly protect areas designated or proposed to be designated as Natura 2000 sites, including any areas that may be proposed for designation or designated during the period of this Plan.
	NHA P1 Contribute towards the protection, from significant adverse effects, of the ecological integrity and the visual, recreational, environmental and amenity value of the County's proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) and associated habitats, including any designated Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) during the lifetime of this Plan.
	NHA P2 Ensure that development proposals within or adjacent to a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) or Natural Heritage Area (NHA) are designed and sited to minimise significant impacts on the biodiversity (including net loss) and ecological, geological and landscape value of the site, particularly plant and animal species listed under the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive, including their habitats.
	NHA P3 Restrict development within a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) or Natural Heritage Area (NHA) to development that is directly related to the area's amenity potential or development that is required for the conservation management of these sites, subject to the protection and enhancement of natural heritage and visual amenities including biodiversity and landscapes.
	NHA P4 To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and other appropriate prescribed bodies when assessing development proposals affecting proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHA).
	ND P1 To conserve the existing flora, fauna and wildlife habitats in the county, including rare and threatened plant, animal and bird species, through the preservation of ecological corridors and ecological networks.
ND P2 Ensure that development does not have a significant adverse effect on rare and threatened species, their breeding places, resting places, habitat or environment, as applicable, including those protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2021, the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and including plant species listed on the Flora (Protection) Order	

Topic	Measures integrated into the Plan, including:
	<p>2015 (S.I. No. 356 of 2015).</p> <p>ND P3 Require the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment, where deemed necessary, for any development proposal likely to have a significant impact existing flora, fauna and wildlife habitats, including rare and threatened plant, animal and bird species.</p> <p>ND P4 Ensure that, where evidence exists of species that are protected under the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), the Bird Directive 1979, and the Habitats Directive 1992, appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are incorporated into development proposals as part of any ecological impact assessment. In the event of a proposed development impact on a site known to be a breeding or resting site of species listed in the Habitats Regulations or the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended) a derogation licence, issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, may be required.</p> <p>ND P5 Consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) 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>ND P6 Ensure that the management of the Council's open spaces and parks is pollinator-friendly and provides more opportunities for biodiversity, supporting the objectives of the National Pollinator Plan 2021-2025. Where it is used, herbicide should be certified and applied as per the manufacturer's instructions.</p> <p>ND P7 Support the implementation of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 and to incorporate actions as appropriate into a Biodiversity Plan for County Carlow providing more opportunities for biodiversity in accordance with RPO 128.</p> <p>ND P8 That biodiversity data generated during the lifetime of this Development Plan for the preparation of environmental assessment reports, shall be made available to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC).</p> <p>WT P1 Protect and manage existing woodlands, trees and hedgerow which are of amenity or biodiversity value and/or contribute to landscape character and ensure that proper provision is made for their consideration, protection and management when undertaking, approving or authorising development.</p> <p>WT P2 Ensure that hedgerow removal to facilitate development is kept to an absolute minimum and, where unavoidable, a requirement for mitigation planting will be required comprising a hedge of similar length and species composition to the original, established as close as is practicable to the original and where possible linking in to existing adjacent hedges. Native plants of a local provenance should be used for any such planting.</p> <p>WT P3 Adhere to the provisions of the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended) in prohibiting the cutting of hedges during the bird nesting season (1st March to 31st August), except in certain legally defined circumstances.</p> <p>WT P4 Encourage the protection of historic hedgerows or significant hedgerows which serve to link habitat areas to each other and the surrounding countryside.</p> <p>WT P5 Recognise the biodiversity and archaeological importance of townland boundaries, including hedgerows, and promote their protection and retention.</p> <p>WT P6 Protect individual or groups of trees which are important for environmental, recreational, historical, biodiversity and/or aesthetic reasons or by reason of contribution to sense of place, and to discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development.</p> <p>WT P7 To contribute towards the protection where possible of the trees which are considered to be an important component of demesne landscapes.</p> <p>WT P8 Ensure a Tree Management Plan is provided so as existing tree planting is adequately protected during development and incorporated into the layout and design of new developments.</p> <p>WT O1 To promote the Native Woodland and Neighbourhood schemes and other initiatives that aim to establish and enhance woodlands for recreational and wildlife benefits.</p> <p>Development Management Standard 16.2.1 Appropriate Assessments Projects giving rise to adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (cumulatively, directly or indirectly) arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall not be permitted on the basis of this plan¹.</p>
Water services and quality	<p>WS P1 Work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect existing water and associated drainage infrastructure and to promote investment in the water and drainage network to support environmental protection and facilitate the sustainable growth of the County</p> <p>WS P4 Assist Irish Water in their commitment to water conservation and support efforts to address leakage including watermain rehabilitation.</p> <p>WS P3 To support Irish Water in delivering key water service projects to meet the future needs of the County subject to compliance with all relevant EU and national legislation and normal environmental and planning criteria."</p> <p>WQ O1 Ensure through the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan, and any associated legislation, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground waters throughout the County</p> <p>WQ O2 Work with the Local Authority Waters Programme and other relevant State agencies to develop and implement the River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, and any updates subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>WQ O3 Implement the Blue Dot Catchment network programme under the RBMP to protect and maintain the excellent 'High' status water bodies."</p> <p>WQ P4 Promote and support locally led community initiatives aimed at improving local water quality standards subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive. "</p> <p>IW P7 Require that runoff from a development area will not result in deterioration of downstream watercourses or habitats, and that pollution generated by a development is treated within the developed area prior to discharge to local watercourse.</p> <p>IW P9 Ensure that development proposals do not adversely affect groundwater resources and groundwater dependent habitats and species.</p>
Peatlands, wetlands and water courses	<p>GI P14 Take account of Inland Fisheries guidance 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment, A Guide to the Protection of Watercourses through the use of Buffer Zones, Sustainable Drainage Systems, Instream Rehabilitation, Climate/Flood Risk and Recreational Planning' (2020) when considering development proposals in the vicinity of rivers and streams in urban areas.</p> <p>IW P1 Protect the biodiversity of rivers, streams and other watercourses, to maintain them in an open state, to discourage culverting or realignment, and where possible, uncover existing culverts and restore the watercourses to acceptable ecological standards and for the passage of fish.</p> <p>IW P2 Ensure that the County's watercourses are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values and to conserve and enhance where possible, the wildlife habitats of the County's rivers, streams and riparian zones, including those which occur outside of designated areas, in order to provide a network of habitats and biodiversity corridors throughout the County.</p> <p>IW P3 To control the encroachment of development on watercourses and riparian zones and provide for protection measures to watercourses and their banks, including but not limited to: the prevention of pollution of the watercourse, the protection of the river bank from erosion, the retention and/or provision of wildlife corridors and the protection from light spill in sensitive locations, including during construction of permitted development.</p> <p>IW P4 Require the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment where deemed necessary (and where necessary an Appropriate Assessment where in relation to Natura 2000 sites), including bat and otter surveys, for development proposals along rivers, streams and canal corridors and areas of ecological importance.</p> <p>IW P5 Maintain a biodiversity protection (buffer) zone of not less than 10 metres from the top bank of all watercourses in the County, with the full extent of the protection zone to be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Authority, based on site specific characteristics and sensitivities and consultation with Inland Fisheries Ireland.</p> <p>IW P10 Consult with Inland Fisheries Ireland, as appropriate, in relation to any works or development that could have potential impacts on watercourses, aquatic habitats, species, and associated riparian habitats, and to take full account of any Guidance documents issued by Inland Fisheries Ireland in this regard, including 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment, A Guide to the Protection of Watercourses through the use of Buffer Zones, Sustainable Drainage Systems, Instream Rehabilitation, Climate/Flood Risk and Recreational Planning' (2020).</p> <p>IW P11 Promote the use of watercourses for the pursuit of angling, through working with Inland Fisheries Ireland to improve water quality, to improve fish stocks and to provide safe access to fishing, where appropriate, taking full account of the requirements of the Habitats Directive and other relevant legislation.</p> <p>IW P12 Promote the natural, historical and amenity value of the County's watercourses, including public access where feasible and appropriate, in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Services, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland, and other relevant stakeholders, while maintaining the watercourses free from inappropriate development.</p> <p>WT P1 Protect, manage, and enhance wetlands in the County, and resist development that would remove, fragment, or degrade wetlands.</p> <p>WT P2 Protect the biodiversity and flood protection value of wetlands and floodplains in the County.</p> <p>WT P3 Ensure that ecological impact assessment is carried out, where appropriate, for development proposals involving, drainage,</p>

¹ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

Topic	Measures integrated into the Plan, including:
	<p>reclamation, or infill of wetland areas.</p> <p>To promote voluntary construction of new wet lands where deemed in accordance with proper planning and environmental considerations and where same maybe facilitated by ecological schemes.</p> <p>Carry out a Wetlands Survey of the County during the lifetime of this Plan.</p>
Light, air & noise pollution	<p>WT P4</p> <p>IW O1</p> <p>AP P1 Promote 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 ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards set out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011) or any updated/ superseding documents.</p> <p>AP P2 Require activities likely to give rise to air emissions (not licenced under separate legislation) to implement measures to mitigate impacts and to undertake air quality monitoring.</p> <p>NP P1 To have regard to the provisions of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Acts 1992 and 2003 and the Environmental Protection Agency Act (Noise) Regulations 1994 or any amendments thereto when assessing planning applications.</p> <p>NP P2 Support and seek the implementation of the Carlow Noise Action Plan 2018 -2023 (and any revisions thereto during the life of this Plan).</p> <p>NP P3 To regulate and control activities likely to give rise to excessive noise, other than those activities which are regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency.</p> <p>NP P4 To ensure new development does not cause an unacceptable increase in noise levels affecting noise sensitive properties. Proposals for new development with the potential to create excessive noise will be required to submit a construction and/or operation management Plan to control such emissions.</p> <p>LP P1 Ensure that the design of external lighting schemes minimises the incidence of light spillage or pollution in the immediate surrounding environment and has due regard to the residential amenity of surrounding areas and the need to mitigate adverse impacts on sensitive fauna and protected species.</p> <p>IW P6 Ensure that lighting proposals along water courses, rivers, streams and canal corridors, are not in conflict with bat species, and to ensure that expert advice is sought on such lighting proposals in order to mitigate the impacts of lighting on bats and other species.</p> <p>LP P3 Seek to ensure that the use of energy efficient (LED) lighting, both in relation to planning applications and local authority projects, minimises any significant adverse effects on biodiversity with the use of appropriate lighting in sensitive areas.</p>
Invasive species	<p>IS P1 Prevent the spread of invasive alien species in the County, and to require landowners and developers to adhere to best practice guidance in relation to the containment and control of invasive alien species, including the Invasive Species Ireland guidelines (see www.invasivespeciesireland.com), TII (2020) The Management of Invasive Alien Plant Species on National Roads – Standard GE-ENV-01104 https://www.tiipublications.ie/library/GE-ENV-01104-01.pdf, TII (2020) The Management of Invasive Alien Plant Species on National Roads – Technical Guidance https://www.tiipublications.ie/library/GE-ENV-01105-01.pdf.</p> <p>IS P2 To require, as appropriate, development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species, and to require the preparation of an Invasive Species Management Plan for their eradication and/or containment and control where identified on a site or in the vicinity of a site, in accordance with the requirements of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.</p> <p>IS P3 Prohibit invasive alien plant species from inclusion in landscape design proposals and to require the use of native local plant species.</p> <p>IS O1 Prepare an Invasive Alien Species Management Strategy, in conjunction with a Hedge and Road Verge Maintenance Strategy, during the lifetime the Plan.</p> <p>IS O2 To raise awareness of the potential threat of invasive alien species in the County, and to inform the public of appropriate management measures for the prevention, containment, and control of invasive alien species.</p> <p>IS O3 Undertake a programme of mapping of invasive alien species in the County and initiate control programs with relevant stakeholders and landowners on the prevention, containment and control of invasive alien species.</p>
Agriculture	<p>AG. P3 Encourage the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance are protected from the threat of pollution.</p> <p>AG P4 Ensure that all agricultural activities comply with legislation on water quality, such as the Phosphorous Regulations, Water Framework Directive and Nitrates Directive</p> <p>HO P1 Encourage the development and expansion of environmentally sustainable horticultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance are protected from the threat of pollution.</p> <p>Section 14.4 'Ensure that all agricultural activities comply with legislation on water quality, such as the Phosphorous Regulations, Water Framework Directive and Nitrates Directive. In relation to intensive agricultural installations (i.e. intensive pig and poultry farming), recent EPA Guidance (2021) on Assessment of the Impact of Ammonia and Nitrogen on Natura 2000 sites from intensive agriculture installations should be consulted when carrying out project assessment.</p>
Extractive Industry	<p>EI P2 Ensure that extractions (e.g., stone, sand and gravel pits, limestone reserves) which would result in a reduction of the visual amenity of sensitive landscapes or damage to designated sites, habitat types or species shall not be permitted.</p> <p>EI P6 To ensure that development for aggregates / mineral extraction, processing and associated processes does not significantly impact the following: - Existing and proposed European Sites; - Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna; - Areas of significant archaeological potential including recorded monuments; - Important aquifers and sensitive groundwater resources; - Sensitive landscapes; and - Established rights of way.</p> <p>EI P8 Ensure compliance with the overall objectives of the Water Framework Directive in the context of quarry development(s) and the extractive industry.</p> <p>EI O1 Support RSES policy for the adequate supply of aggregate and mineral resources to ensure the continued growth of the county and region and to ensure that all quarrying activities and projects associated with the extractive industry comply with all relevant Planning and Environmental Legislation.</p>
Fisheries	<p>FA P2 Require adequate provisions are made to accommodate free upstream and downstream migration of fish in development proposals.</p> <p>FA P4 Ensure any new major aquaculture projects will be environmentally sustainable and have a limited impact on the visual amenity of the area.</p> <p>FA P5 Require proposed services / facilities to support fisheries along water courses to undertake the required level of Appropriate Assessment in accordance with appropriate environmental assessments including Habitats Directive Assessment and planning legislation.</p> <p>FA P6 Ensure that the development of services / facilities along watercourses will seek to ensure the protection of water quality and will also be subject to, and consistent with, the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the relevant South Eastern River Basin Management Plan.</p>
Flood Risk Management	<p>FR P5 To protect and enhance the county's floodplains and wetlands as "green infrastructure" which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed. Riparian buffer zones shall have regard to Policies contained in Section 10.8 of this Plan.</p>
Forestry	<p>FR P3 Promote the avoidance of deforestation or commercial afforestation within Natura 2000 sites unless directly relating to the management of the site for its qualifying interests.</p> <p>FR P1 Encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector with a diversity of species including native hardwood species, which maximises its contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of the county and which is: compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites; which does not detract substantially from landscape and visual amenity, protected or scenic views, , built heritage, archaeological / geological features, or cause pollution or degradation to wildlife habitats, natural waters or areas of ecological importance; and, which is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity, Water Quality and requirements regarding the protection of Freshwater Pearl Mussel.</p>
Green / Blue Infrastructure	<p>SO10 Conserve protect and enhance the County's Green Infrastructure including ecosystems and habitats and associated biodiversity and so provide communities with a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits (ecosystem services).</p> <p>NB P1 Actively promote and encourage nature-based approaches and green infrastructure solutions as viable mitigation and adaptation measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase the adaptive capacity of ecosystems and optimise the multifaceted benefits through: Conservation, promotion, and restoration of the natural environment; Integrating an ecosystem services approach and promote healthy living environments through enhanced connection with nature and recreation/amenity;</p>

Topic	Measures integrated into the Plan, including:
	<p>- Enhancing biodiversity in urban and rural settings; Assist with water and flood risk management; and Carbon storage or sequestration.</p> <p>GI P5 Restrict development that would fragment or prejudice landscape features and ecological corridors which significantly contribute to the County's green infrastructure network.</p> <p>GI P6 Require proposals for large scale developments such as road or drainage schemes, wind farms, solar farms, residential schemes, industrial parks or retail schemes, to submit a green infrastructure Plan as an integral part of a planning application.</p> <p>GI P7 Promote a network of walking and cycling trails to enhance accessibility to the County's green infrastructure network, and ensure such proposals are subject to feasibility (including alternatives to the use of existing green infrastructure) and route/site selection processes so that impacts to biodiversity and nature conservation interests are avoided.</p> <p>GI O1 Prepare a Green Infrastructure Strategy for County Carlow in accordance with international best practice and in partnership with key stakeholders and the public.</p> <p>GI O2 Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy for County Carlow reflects a long-term perspective, including the need to adapt to climate change, and recognises and promotes the benefits that can be achieved for the County's biodiversity, landscape, natural and cultural heritage, open space and recreation, and sustainable water management.</p>
Renewable Energy	<p>RE P1 Encourage and facilitate the production of energy from renewable sources, such as from wind, solar, bioenergy, hydroelectricity, and geothermal, subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations.</p> <p>HP O1 Support the development of micro-hydroelectric generation opportunities, where demonstrated technically viable and subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations including provisions of the Habitats Directive.</p>
Telecommunication Infrastructure	<p>IC P6 Protect areas of significant landscape importance, within or adjoining the curtilage of protected structures, within the setting of archaeological sites or within Natura 2000 sites from the visual intrusion of telecommunication infrastructure that would have a serious impact on the visual amenity of these sensitive sites and locations.</p>
Tourism	<p>HT P2 Protect and conserve the natural and built heritage of the County upon which the tourism industry is based, including landscapes, designated sites, habitats and species, water quality, archaeology and historic buildings and structures.</p> <p>HT P9 Facilitate the development of a variety of high-quality tourist attractions, accommodation and services in towns and village, subject to compliance with good quality design criteria, normal planning and environmental criteria.</p> <p>HT P10 Develop and maximise the tourism potential of the County by facilitating the appropriate expansion of existing facilities and the provision of new universally accessible and sustainable tourist attractions, facilities, and infrastructure in towns and villages, while ensuring the protection of the environment and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.</p> <p>HT P11 Maximise, enhance and support opportunities for the use of the County's uplands and waterways, including the Blackstairs Mountains, the River Barrow and the River Slaney, as tourism and recreational amenities, and engage with relevant agencies, bodies, and key stakeholders in this regard, including Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, and local communities, to develop the infrastructure, quality and amenity of these natural assets.</p> <p>R P8 Support and promote public access to the County's high amenity, scenic and recreational lands, including upland areas, waterways, and other natural amenities, which does not endanger the conservation of such natural amenities.</p> <p>Development Management Standard 16.15.4 Tourism Activities / Developments Based on Natural Features There are a range of recreational activities based on natural resources. In many cases these are generally based in rural areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All planning applications for these adventure / recreational activities involving special natural features should be accompanied by a management plan indicating projected numbers of users, hours of operation, seasons of operation, and an undertaking to protect the natural environment in the form of a risk assessment with proposed amelioration measures in respect of flora, fauna, hydrology, geology and soils. • Proposals should seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that any new projects are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Where relevant, the Council and those receiving permission for development under the Plan shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate. • All proposals should be accessible insofar as possible by sustainable means of transport including public transport and by modes other than the car. • Where the traffic generated is likely to exceed the capacity of the local road network or require changes to the road network that would adversely affect the character of the area, these will not be permitted • Where the activity is likely to be noise generating, a noise assessment will be required in connection with the application, measuring likely noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive recipients. Measures to mitigate and adverse impacts shall be identified.
Water Services/ Waste Management	<p>RH P6 (vi) Ensure, in addition to the requirement to comply with the rural housing policy criteria, that applicants demonstrate compliance with all normal siting and design requirements. The siting, layout and design of a new rural house shall appropriately integrate with its physical surroundings, including the natural and built heritage of the area, taking account of: the ability of a site to accommodate an on-site wastewater treatment system in compliance with the EPA Code of compliance with the 2021 EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses p.e. ≤ 10.</p> <p>RH P6 (vii) Ensure, in addition to the requirement to comply with the rural housing policy criteria, that applicants demonstrate compliance with all normal siting and design requirements. The siting, layout and design of a new rural house shall appropriately integrate with its physical surroundings, including the natural and built heritage of the area, taking account of: The ability of a site to accommodate an appropriate on-site surface water management system in accordance with Carlow County Council SuDS Policy and the 'SuDS Manual' CIRIA C753.</p> <p>PW P2 Facilitate Irish Water in the delivery of public wastewater services which address the residential, commercial and industrial needs of the county subject to compliance with all relevant EU and national legislation and normal planning and environmental criteria.</p> <p>PW P3 Encourage and support a changeover from septic tanks/ private wastewater treatment plants to public collection networks where ever feasible, subject to connection agreements with Irish Water and to ensure that any future development connects to the public wastewater infrastructure where it is available.</p> <p>WW P1 Require that private wastewater treatment systems for individual houses where permitted, comply with the recommendations contained within the EPA Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (2021) Serving Single Houses (population equivalent less than or equal to 10) or any updated version during the period of this Plan, the Water Framework Directive, the National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 (as maybe updated) and the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>WT P1 Ensure that the proposed wastewater treatment system for development in unserved areas complies with the relevant EPA Code of Practice, the Water Framework Directive, the National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 (as maybe updated) and the Habitats Directive².</p> <p>SW P1 Ensure adequate surface water drainage systems are in place which meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plan.</p> <p>WM O1 Implement the provisions of the Southern Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021, and any updates thereto during the life of this Plan, subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive and normal planning and environmental considerations.</p>

² Irish Water will not retrospectively take over responsibility for developer provided treatment facilities or associated networks, unless agreed in advance. The opportunity may arise for the development to connect into the network in the future, however, the developer provided treatment facility would be not taken over by Irish Water.

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 Type 1: Alternatives for an Ecosystem Services Approach to the Plan

Although many natural capital³ and ecosystem⁴ service issues have been taken into account over previous Plan periods, the importance of these in fulfilling environmental obligations has increasingly emerged. An Ecosystems Services Approach would provide a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.

Alternative A: “A Plan follows an Ecosystems Services Approach to a greater degree” would integrate a strategy throughout the Plan for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.

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

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

This would mean that there would be:

- An increased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of positive effects occurring with regard to natural capital⁵ and ecosystem service issues, such as the management of air quality, noise pollution, light pollution, pollination, flood risk, water bodies and river basins and natural resources supporting energy production and recreation; and
- A decreased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of adverse effects on natural capital and ecosystem services.

Alternative B: “A Plan that does not follow, or follow to a lesser degree, an Ecosystems Services Approach” would not integrate a strategy throughout the Plan for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.

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

³ Renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals)

⁴ Ecosystems are multifunctional communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. Ecosystems provide a series of services for human well-being (ecosystem services) either directly or indirectly contributing towards human wellbeing

⁵ Renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals)

This would mean that there would be:

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

Selected Type 1 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.

3.2 Type 2: Alternatives for an infrastructure led approach to the Plan

In terms of infrastructure led approach to the plan, two alternatives can be considered:

- **Alternative A:** A Plan that takes a strict infrastructure led approach. This alternative ensures that the sustainable development of settlements occurs, with new development accompanied by adequate and appropriate infrastructure.
- **Alternative B:** A Plan that does not takes a less strict infrastructure led approach. This alternative considers existing and future demand and capacity in infrastructure but the allocation of growth and associated policy responses are looser than under Alternative A. Decisions relating to infrastructure assessment are left to project level wherever this is possible.

Alternative A provides for a robust and transparent policy approach to manage rural housing.

Restricting the development of single dwellings in rural areas that are under strong urban influence/pressure would positively impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The restrictions would help to both reduce levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and encourage brownfield development within existing centres.

Single dwellings in rural areas would be facilitated as appropriate and urban development would be directed towards established settlements. This alternative would help to prevent low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

Alternative B Provides a vague and unclear policy approach to rural housing and risks facilitating a significant increase in urban-generated one-off housing in the open countryside which will undermine the role of small towns and villages and have consequences for the environment.

Not restricting the development of single dwellings in rural areas that are under strong urban influence/pressure would adversely impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The absence of restrictions would result in increased levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and less demand for brownfield development within existing centres.

Urban generated housing development would occur within rural areas outside of established settlements. This alternative would result in low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

3.3 Type 3: Alternatives for Rural Areas and Serviced Sites

Type 3 (i) Rural Areas under Urban Influence

- **Type 3 (i) Alternative A:** Designate Rural Areas under Urban Influence, requiring various criteria to be demonstrated and met in advance of planning permission being granted for a single dwelling for permanent occupation in such areas.
- **Type 3 (i) Alternative B:** Do not designate Rural Areas under Urban Influence and assess each planning application on its merits.

Alternative A provides for a robust and transparent policy approach to manage rural housing.

Restricting the development of single dwellings in rural areas that are under strong urban influence/pressure would positively impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The restrictions would help to both reduce levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and encourage brownfield development within existing centres.

Single dwellings in rural areas would be facilitated as appropriate and urban development would be directed towards established settlements. This alternative would help to prevent low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

Alternative B Provides a vague and unclear policy approach to rural housing and risks facilitating a significant increase in urban-generated one-off housing in the open countryside which will undermine the role of small towns and villages and have consequences for the environment.

Not restricting the development of single dwellings in rural areas that are under strong urban influence/pressure would adversely impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The absence of restrictions would result in increased levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and less demand for brownfield development within existing centres.

Urban generated housing development would occur within rural areas outside of established settlements. This alternative would result in low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

Selected Type 3 (i) Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.

Type 3 (ii) Serviced Sites

- **Type 3 (ii) Alternative A:** Promote new homes and serviced sites in villages as an attractive alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside.

Serviced sites would be served by infrastructure (including water services infrastructure) and more likely to protect the environment including the status of ground and surface waters, water used for drinking water, human health, biodiversity and flora and fauna and the landscape. Development would be required to be subject to siting, design, protection of residential amenities and normal development management criteria, subject to the satisfactory provision of infrastructure and services and in keeping with the character of the settlement.

- **Type 3 (ii) Alternative B:** Do not promote new homes and serviced sites in villages as an attractive alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside.

Alternative B would be less likely to provide a viable alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside. Development within the open countryside would be less likely to be served by

infrastructure (including water services infrastructure) and less likely to protect the environment including the status of ground and surface waters, water used for drinking water, human health, biodiversity and flora and fauna and the landscape. Alternative B would be the least sustainable of these two alternatives and would be most harmful to the environment.

Selected Type 3 (ii) Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.

3.4 Type 4: Alternatives for Densities

Alternatives identified relating to densities comprise:

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

The application of a low net singular residential density across the County's settlements would have the potential to push new development towards more environmentally sensitive lands that are less well-serviced and less well-connected, resulting in unnecessary potentially significant adverse effects on all environmental components.

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

Alternative B: The Application of different densities at different locations, as appropriate, would provide for the most sustainable development, which would contribute towards environmental protection and management the most.

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

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

Taking cognisance of the range and diversity of settlements across the functional area of the draft development plan, and the settlement typology/ hierarchy, it is considered that Alternative B is the most sustainable option for delivering on the principles of compact growth, while facilitating placemaking, and the development of diverse rural areas a range of options for the housing market in terms of house type mix, tenure, design and cost, and delivering the Housing Strategy. Alternative B takes into account the objectives of the higher-level NPF and Southern RSES, and the need to comply with the densities set out in Ministerial Guidelines, including those related to *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)* and *Urban Development and Building Heights (2018)*.

Selected Type 4 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative B.

3.5 Type 5: Alternatives for Land Use Zoning

Alternatives for Land Use Zoning are assessed on Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Assessment of Type 5 Alternatives against Strategic Environmental Objectives

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Commentary
Carlow Town (old Town Council area)	Alternative A: More Compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components.
	Alternative B: Less Compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
Borris	Alternative A: More Compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components.
	Alternative B: Less Compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
Ballon	Alternative A: More Compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components.
	Alternative B: Less Compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
Leighlinbridge	Alternative A: More Compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components.
	Alternative B: Less Compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
Rathvilly	Alternative A: More Compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components.
	Alternative B: Less Compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Commentary
Hacketstown	Alternative A: More Compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components.
	Alternative B: Less Compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.
Carrickduff	Alternative A: More Compact	By consolidating land use zoning and reducing unnecessary land use zoning this alternative would provide for a more compact form of development that would help to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By consolidating the zoning and helping to avoid unnecessary sprawl of the settlement, this alternative would increase the likelihood of brownfield development and contribute towards efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Reducing unnecessary zoning would help to minimise sprawl and would avoid potential adverse environmental effects that would otherwise occur - this would benefit the protection of multiple environmental components.
	Alternative B: Less Compact	By not consolidating land use zoning and including unnecessary land use zoning, this alternative would provide for a less compact form of development that would fail to maximise benefits from infrastructural investment. By facilitating the unnecessary sprawl of the settlement and failing to consolidate zoning, this alternative would decrease the likelihood of brownfield development and conflict with efforts to improve sustainable mobility (with associated effects on energy, air, noise and human health). Providing for unnecessary zoning would be likely to result in higher levels of sprawl and associated avoidable potential adverse environmental effects.

Section 4 AA Determination



COMHAIRLE CONTAE
CHEATHARLACH
CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Dúiglán Clontar,
Bóthar Átha I,
Ceatharlach, R93E7R7

County Buildings,
Athy Road,
Carlow, R93E7R7

Appropriate Assessment Determination

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

Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028

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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 Carlow County Council relating to the potential for the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 that is being adopted to have effects on the integrity of European sites.

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

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

As part of the AA, it was identified that the Plan may, if unmitigated, have significant effects on 4 (no.) European sites. Factors that could potentially affect the integrity of European sites include:

- Provisions (such as those relating to: housing; enterprise and employment; sustainable travel and transport; infrastructure and environmental management; climate action; community development; landscape and green infrastructure; natural and built heritage; tourism and recreation; urban design and regeneration; and rural development) that introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions and disturbance effects;
- Loading pressures from the operational phase of developments - these sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and habitat fragmentation; and
- Increasing visitors to sensitive areas during the operational phase of, for example, recreational developments.

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

- Implementation of the Plan would have had the potential to result in effects to the integrity of European sites, if unmitigated.
- The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and conservation objectives of the European sites have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of effects in the first place and reliably mitigate effects where these cannot be avoided. In addition, any lower-level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Plan will themselves be subject to AA when further details of design and location are known.
- In-combination effects from interactions with other plans and projects have been considered in this assessment and the mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Plan – these measures are robust and will ensure there will be no effects on the integrity of European sites as a result of the implementation of the Plan either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects.
- Having incorporated mitigation measures, the Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any effect on the integrity of any European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects¹. This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species, for which these sites have been designated.

Signed: 

Name: MICHAEL RAMSEY

Date: 23rd MAY 2022

¹ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.