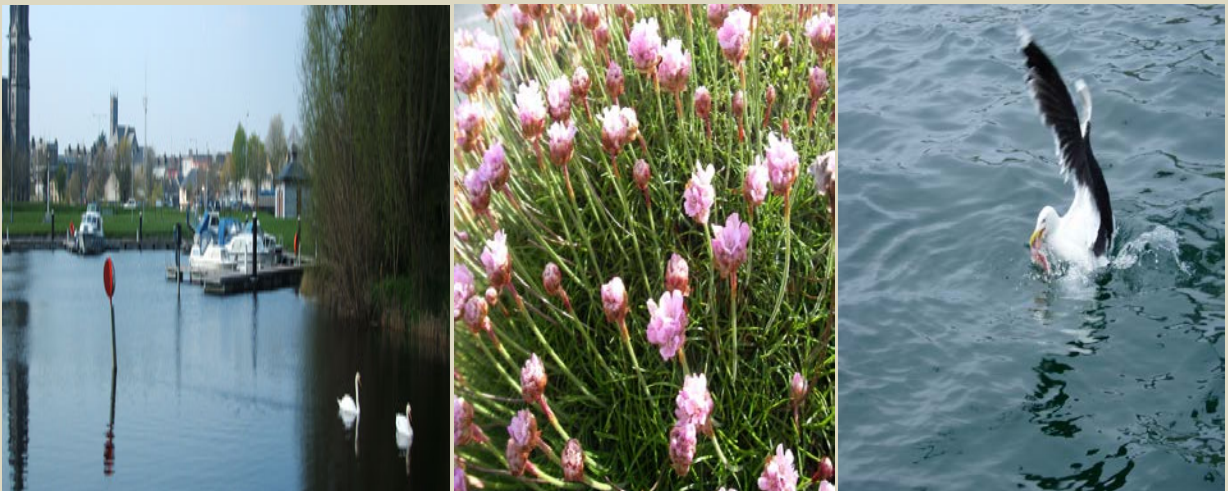


Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021

Strategic Environmental Assessment- Non Technical Report



Forward Planning
Galway County Council
April 2015



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1	Introduction.....	4
1.1	Background.....	4
1.2	What is a non-technical summary?	4
1.3	Legislation and Policy Compliance.....	4
1.4	Ballinasloe LAP Area.....	4
1.5	Structure of the Draft Ballinasloe LAP	5
1.6	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Report	6
1.7	Appropriate Assessment.....	6
1.8	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.....	6
Section 2	Methodology.....	8
2.1	Introduction.....	8
Section 3	Baseline Environment.....	9
3.1	Introduction	9
3.2	Biodiversity,Flora and Fauna.....	9
3.2.1	Introduction.....	9
3.2.2	Existing Environmental Problems.....	10
3.2.3	Inter-relationship with Other Environmental Parameters.....	10
3.3	Population & Human Health	12
3.3.1	Introduction.....	12
3.3.2	Existing Problems.....	13
3.3.3	Inter-relationship with Other Environmental Parameters.....	13
3.4	Soil and Geology	13
3.4.1	Introduction.....	13
3.4.2	Geology and Sites of Geological Interest.....	13
3.4.3	Eskers.....	14
3.4.4	Existing Problems.....	14
3.4.5	Inter-relationships with Other Environmental Parameters.....	14
3.5	Water	14
3.5.1	Introduction.....	14
3.5.2	Ground Waters	15
3.5.3	Flooding	15
3.5.4	Existing Problems.....	15
3.5.5	Inter-relationships with Other Environmental Parameters	16
3.6	Air and Climatic Factors.....	16
3.6.1	Introduction.....	16
3.6.2	Radon Gas.....	16
3.6.3	Noise.....	16

3.6.4	Climatic Factors	16
3.6.5	Existing Problems	17
3.6.6	Inter-relationships with Other Environmental Parameters	17
3.7	Material Assets	17
3.7.1	Introduction	17
3.7.2	Waste Water Treatment Infrastructure	17
3.7.3	Sludge Management Plan	18
3.7.4	Surface Water Drainage	18
3.7.5	Drinking Water Supply, Capacity and Demand	18
3.7.7	Transport	18
3.7.8	Energy/Renewable Energy and Telecommunications Infrastructure	19
3.7.9	Licensed Facilities	19
3.7.10	Existing Problems	19
3.7.11	Inter-relationships with Other Environmental Parameters	19
3.8	Cultural Heritage	19
3.8.1	Record of Monuments and Places	19
3.8.2	Architectural Heritage	19
3.8.3	Record of Protected Structures	19
3.8.4	Architectural Conservation Areas	20
3.8.5	Existing Problems	20
3.8.6	Inter-relationships with other Environmental Parameters	20
3.9	Landscape	20
3.9.1	Introduction	20
3.9.2	Landscape Character Assessment.....	20
3.9.3	Landscape Character Areas.....	21
3.9.4	Landscape Values	21
3.9.5	Landscape Sensitivity Classes	21
3.9.6	Focal Points and Views	21
3.9.7	Existing Problems	21
3.10	Overlay of Environmental Sensitivities of the Plan Area	22
Section 4	Review of Relevant Policies, Plans and Programmes	24
4.1	Introduction	24
Section 5	Strategic Environmental Objectives	26
5.1	Introduction	26
Section 6	Local Area Plan Alternatives.....	28
6.1	Introduction	28
6.2	Identification and Description of Alternative Plan Scenarios	28
6.3	Alternatives Considered for SEA	28
6.4	Evaluation of SEA Alternatives	28

6.5	SEA Preferred Alternative.....	29
Section 7	Assessment of Effects of Implementing the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan ..	31
7.1	Introduction	31
7.2.	Overview of Evaluation of Policies and Objectives	31
7.2.1	Development Strategy	31
7.2.2	Residential Development.....	31
7.2.3	Social and Community Development	32
7.2.4	Economic Development.....	32
7.2.5	Transport Infrastructure	32
7.2.6	Utilities Infrastructure	33
7.2.7	Climate Change and Flooding	33
7.2.8	Urban Design and Landscape	33
7.2.9	Built and Cultural Heritage.....	33
7.2.10	Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	34
7.2.11	Overview of Evaluation of Land Use Zoning Objectives	34
Section 8	Mitigation Measures	39
8.1	Introduction	39
Section 9	Monitoring Measures	45
9.1	Introduction	45
Section 10	Conclusion	49

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Ballinasloe Draft Local Area Plan 2015-2021	7
Figure 3.1	Designated Sites & National Heritage Areas within and surrounding the Plan Area .	11
Figure 3.2	Designated Sites & Natural Heritage Areas within 15km of Plan Area.....	12
Figure 3.3	Overlay of environmental sensitivities in the Ballinasloe area and the resultant Sensitivity Mapping.....	23
Figure 6.1	Preferred Option.....	30
Figure 7.1	Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan Land Use Zoning.....	38

List of Tables

Table 3.1	Population Trend for Ballinasloe Urban and Environs for Census Periods 2002 – 2011	13
Table 5.1	Strategic Environmental Objectives	26
Table 5.1	Strategic Environmental Objectives	27
Table 6.1	Alternatives Option Scores against Strategic Environmental Objectives.....	29
Table 9.1	Monitoring and Reporting Programme	48

Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Galway County Council is currently preparing a Local Area Plan (LAP) for Ballinasloe. This Local Area Plan (LAP) is a land use plan and overall strategy for the development of Ballinasloe over the period 2015-2021. The Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan area is shown in figure 1.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) promotes sustainable development through a process which identifies environmental issues during the plan making process which formally and systematically assesses and evaluates the significant environmental effect on implementing the plan, in this case the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021.

The successful implementation of the Plan will have a positive impact on Ballinasloe ensuring that it develops in a proper and sustainable manner, and will also complement the implementation of the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a key process that promotes sustainable development and highlights significant environmental issues within the planning regime. The purpose of SEA is to formally and systematically evaluate the likely significant effects of implementing a plan or programme, in this instance the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan SEA is an iterative process and has informed and influenced the preparation of the Draft LAP. The purpose of the Environmental Report is to identify, describe, and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the proposed Draft Local Area Plan and should be read in conjunction with the Draft Plan itself.

1.2 What is a non-technical summary?

This document is the non-technical summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which has been prepared as part of the SEA of the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021 in accordance with the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004(as amended 2011). The purpose of the non-technical summary is to provide a summary of the prominent issues raised in the main Environmental Report and also provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the making of the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021.

1.3 Legislation and Policy Compliance

The European Directive (2001/42/EC) on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive), was transposed into national legislation in Ireland by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435/2004), as amended by S.I.4 200 of 2011 and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436/2004), as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011. The Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 is the 'parent' document to this Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021. The Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan is made in accordance with policies and objectives of the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021. The Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 transposes National and Regional policies and provides the strategic context for this Local Area Plan. Detailed development objectives and land use zoning specific to the plan area are included in the Local Area Plan.

1.4 Ballinasloe LAP Area

Ballinasloe is located on the River Suck upstream of its confluence with the Shannon. The town occupies a strategic location adjacent to the M6 National Primary route linking Dublin and Galway and is one of the principal 'Gateways to the West'. Ballinasloe is situated approximately 30.5km (19miles) west of Athlone and 67.5km (42miles) east of Galway and has daily public transport services (both rail and bus) to Galway, Athlone and Dublin. The area to which the current *Ballinasloe Development Plan 2009-2015* applies is in excess of 4,000 acres. The current plan area consists of Ballinasloe town and the surrounding countryside.

A large proportion of the plan area could be described as rural. The county border with Roscommon lies just over 1km from the town centre with some developments in the eastern environs of the town lying within County Roscommon. The eastern boundary of the existing plan area is guided by the Roscommon county boundary. The River Suck forms part of the northern boundary and the Kellysgrove River makes up part of the southern boundary.

Today Ballinasloe is identified as the '*County Town*', in the core strategy of the *Galway County Development Plan* and plays an important role in particular for east Galway and in the delivery of Local Government services. Ballinasloe is a key commercial centre and a large employer for the residents of the town and surrounding hinterland. The town provides higher order important services such as Portiuncula Hospital, one of the largest general and maternity hospitals in the Country. The town is well serviced with educational facilities and spare capacity exists in both primary and second level schools. Ballinasloe hosts a range of industrial/enterprise ventures that are operated by both national and international companies. The industrial developments are located on the outskirts of the town, to the south, southeast, southwest and northwest. The main enterprise areas are located in the IDA Business and Technology Park and the Ballinasloe Enterprise and Technology Centre which are situated to the northeast of the town centre along the R357.

1.5 Structure of the Draft Ballinasloe LAP

Galway County Council is currently preparing a Draft Ballinasloe LAP 2015-2021 to replace the existing Ballinasloe Town Development Plan 2009-2015. The Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan has been prepared by Galway County Council under the provisions of The Planning and Development Act, 2000(as amended). The Electoral Local Government and Planning and Development Act 2013, has abolished all second tier Town Councils effective from the 2014 Local Elections.

The Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan is structured around a range of policies and objectives that aim to promote the sustainable development of Ballinasloe over the plan period. The vision for Ballinasloe is as follows:

"The Local Area Plan envisages Ballinasloe as a sustainable, self-sufficient, vibrant, socially inclusive and innovative 'County Town', which maintains its unique attractive character, capitalises on its strengths – in particular public transport, while offering a pleasant and qualitative environment for a growing population, for living, working, doing business, shopping, recreation and tourism, balanced against the need to safeguard and enhance the environmental sensitivities of the area for present and future generations'.

This strategic vision is informed by guiding principles enabling the overall vision to be achieved, these include the following:

- Realising the town's potential as a '*County Town*' as set out in the current *Galway County Development Plan* and attracting and planning for the population target established in the Core Strategy up to 2021 and beyond;
- Acknowledging that the medium term growth of Ballinasloe should focus on new sustainable communities and adopt a consolidation approach to the zoning of residential lands with sequential development around established consolidated areas;
- Reflecting the needs and aspirations of local communities, businesses and other interested and affected groups, as expressed through the public consultation process;
- Promoting sustainable land use and transport by capitalising on the opportunity presented by the delivery of the M6 Motorway, the railway service so that sustainable travel, including walking and cycling, and integrated land use and transportation become central to the development of new neighbourhoods and the future development of Ballinasloe;
- Maintaining a strong and vibrant town centre that sustains the ability to attract new businesses and meets the retailing and service needs of Ballinasloe and its surrounding hinterland, in addition to offering a pleasant and attractive environment for shopping, business, recreation and living;

- Facilitating the provision of a range of facilities, amenities and supporting services to serve the needs of the town, including educational, recreational, religious, social, community and civic requirements for children, youths, adults and the older persons to serve a growing community;
- Fostering economic development and employment creation by optimising the potential of the town's strategic location and enhancing Ballinasloe as a place of employment through the provision of a positive and flexible framework for the creation of new employment opportunities;
- Seeking the delivery of the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the future growth and sustainable development of the town;
- Promoting strong community spirit, social inclusion, civic pride and local identity for the town within the broader rural area surrounding Ballinasloe;
- Protecting the natural assets, environment, built heritage and public realm of the town, including its local character and riparian amenity, for the benefit of future generations.

A land use zoning map, strategic objectives maps and a land use matrix provides additional details to the above policies and objectives.

1.6 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Report

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) promotes sustainable development through a process which identifies environmental issues during the plan making process which formally and systematically assesses and evaluates the significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in this case the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021.

SEA is an iterative process which has informed the preparation of the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan, the purpose of which is to identify where potential significant environmental effects may arise and identify mitigation measures which can be integrated into the policies and objectives of the Local Area Plan so as to avoid, reduce or off-set any significant adverse environmental effects of its implementation. This process has been followed in the preparation of the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021.

1.7 Appropriate Assessment

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) formed a basis for the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Similarly, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are legislated for under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds). Collectively SACs and SPAs are referred to as Natura 2000 sites. Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken for any plan or programme that is likely to have significant effects on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site. This includes the preparation of the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021. The purpose of an Appropriate Assessment is to identify the possible effects of implementing the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021 on the conservation status of designated Natura 2000 sites within the Plan area. An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out in parallel with the Plan and SEA and a Natura Impact Report accompanies the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015-2021.

1.8 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been undertaken to inform the preparation of the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2015- 2021 by providing a broad assessment of flood risk throughout the plan area, which in turn informs the land-use zoning and objectives of the Plan in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines, issued under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment accompanies the Plan.

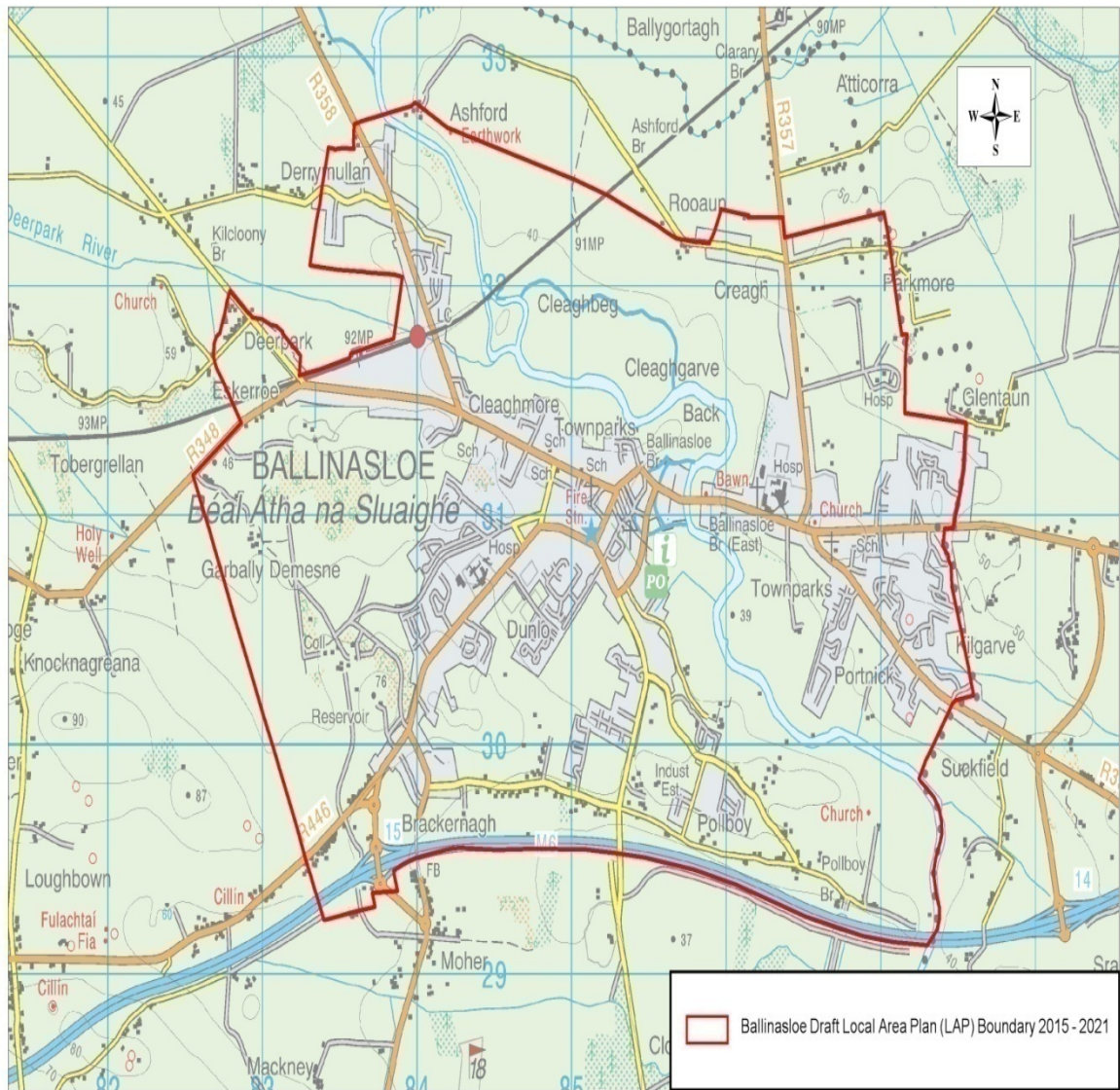


Figure 1.1 Ballinasloe Draft Local Area Plan 2015-2021. (Source GCC).

Section 2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that certain Plans and Programmes, which are likely to have a significant impact on the environment, be subject to the SEA process. The SEA process is broadly comprised of the steps listed in Table 2.1 below.

SEA Step/Stage	Purpose	Status
Screening	This initial step identifies whether or not a particular plan would be likely to have significant environmental effects and would then require a SEA. Given the population of the plan area a full SEA is required.	Completed in December 2014.
Scoping	This step helps to identify the range of environmental issues and the level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report, in consultation with the prescribed environmental authorities. Furthermore, submissions made by the public in relation to the preparation of the LAP at pre-draft stage helped to inform the scope of the SEA and Environmental Report.	Completed in January 2015.
Environmental Assessment	Assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the Plan or Programme culminating in the production of an Environmental Report. In preparing this Environmental Report a Geographical Information System was established that mapped relevant environmental data on the town and where relevant on areas outside the town boundary. Available policies and legislation were also referred to.	Ongoing process. Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan and Environmental Reports published April 2014.
Consultation	Consultation on the draft Plan/Programme and associated Environmental Report.	
SEA Statement	Identification of how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the final Plan/Programme culminating in the production of an SEA Statement.	

Section 3 Baseline Environment

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the principal environmental parameters that are of relevance to the functional area of Ballinasloe and its environs and the constraints and targets that this imposes on the Local Area Plan. The following sections summarises key environmental resources and issues for the Ballinasloe area.

3.2 Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

3.2.1 Introduction

Designated ecological sites in close proximity to the LAP area are shown in Figures 3.1 and Figure 3.2 respectively. The legislative protection of habitats and species provided by the Habitats Directive has been implemented in Ireland and throughout Europe through the establishment of a network of designated conservation areas known as the Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network includes sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), under the EU Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Birds Directive. Under the Habitats Regulations all designated sites are referred to as European Sites. There are a number of ecologically designated sites within and surrounding the Ballinasloe plan area. It is noted that some of the ecological sensitivities occur beyond the fringes of the plan area. They are included, however, to ensure that areas which could be impacted as a result of implementing the plan are identified and assessed.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - by the DEHLG due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the European Union.

There is one designated SPA in the plan area – The Suck River Callows (Site Code 004097) which traverses the plan area; this can be seen on Figure 3.1, and is summarised as follows:

- **Suck River Callows SPA¹**
Site Code: 004097

The Suck River Callows is a long sinuous area of semi-natural lowland wet grassland, which floods extensively each winter along the River Suck between Castlecoote in the north and Shannonbridge in the south, passing through Ballinasloe. The River Suck forms the Roscommon - Galway county boundary and joins the River Shannon at Shannonbridge. The River Suck is the largest tributary of the River Shannon.

The Callows are designated as a Special Protection Area under the EU Birds Directive due to the presence of internationally and nationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl. The Greenland White-fronted Goose and Whooper Swan which are listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive occur regularly within this site.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) - referred to as the Habitats Directive - by the DEHLG due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. SACs are designated in areas that support habitats listed on Annex 1 and/or species listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive. There are no SACs within the plan area.

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated due to their national conservation value for ecological and/or geological/geo-morphological heritage. They cover nationally important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms or geo-morphological features, wildlife plant and animal species or a diversity of these natural attributes. NHAs are designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, and are legally protected under the Wildlife Acts, 1976-2000.

¹ Text in this section is taken from the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Site Synopses. Full Site Synopses for these designations can be found in Appendix III

There is one NHA – The Suck River Callows (Site Code: 000222) and one proposed NHA, Ballinasloe Esker (Site Code: 001779) in Ballinasloe.

- **Suck River Callows NHA²**
Site Code: 000222

This site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummocks and pools. The site is of major ornithological importance. The main habitat of the Callows is flood meadows of wet grassland and the associated aquatic and semi-aquatic habitats of drainage ditches.

- **Ballinasloe Esker pNHA³**
Site Code: 001779

The Ballinasloe Esker is about 6km long and stretches due west from Ballinasloe roughly along the line of the Galway - Dublin rail line. The main habitats are mixed wood and dry broadleaved, semi-natural woodland. Parts of the esker are grazed by cattle which are causing damage due to trampling in places. Also the size of the esker is being reduced due to quarrying and improvement of grassland by fertilising and reseeding. Continued quarrying is a threat to this site as is the clearing of mature trees.

3.2.2 Existing Environmental Problems

There are a number of issues relating to biodiversity, flora and fauna within the plan area.

- There are a number of ecological networks throughout the plan area. Increased development pressures as a result of the projected growth in population may result in the development of the plan area on greenfield lands and/or the removal of trees/hedgerows which may impact on these networks and the integrity of designated areas;
- Habitat loss and fragmentation can occur as a result of development;
- Land cover differences between the CORINE 2006 data and the CORINE data for the year 2012 indicate a cumulative loss of *Transitional Woodland Scrub to Peat Bogs, Land Principally Occupied by Agriculture and Non-irrigated Arable Land to Pastures*;
- Generally, development in Ballinasloe is not significantly impacting upon designated ecological sites. However, the site synopses for these sites identify certain threats to the conservation value of these sites - quarrying activities are identified in relation to the Ballinasloe Esker pNHA, while habitat loss is identified over the wider area covered by the Suck River Callows NHA designation;
- Aquatic flora and fauna is vulnerable to all forms of pollution such as that which can occur as a result of agricultural run-off and industrial and municipal effluents.

3.2.3 Inter-relationship with Other Environmental Parameters

Bio-diversity has an inter-relationship with all environmental parameters presented in this section. There is a significant overlap between nature, human beings, soil, landscape and water.

	PHH	SG	W	AC	M	CH	L
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

(B=Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna, PHH=Population, Human Health, SG=Soil & Geology, W=Water, AC=Air & Climatic Factors, M=Material Assets, CH=Cultural Heritage, L=Landscape).

² Text in this section is taken from the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Site Synopses. Full Site Synopses for these designations can be found in Appendix III

³ Text in this section is taken from the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Site Synopses. Full Site Synopses for these designations can be found in Appendix III

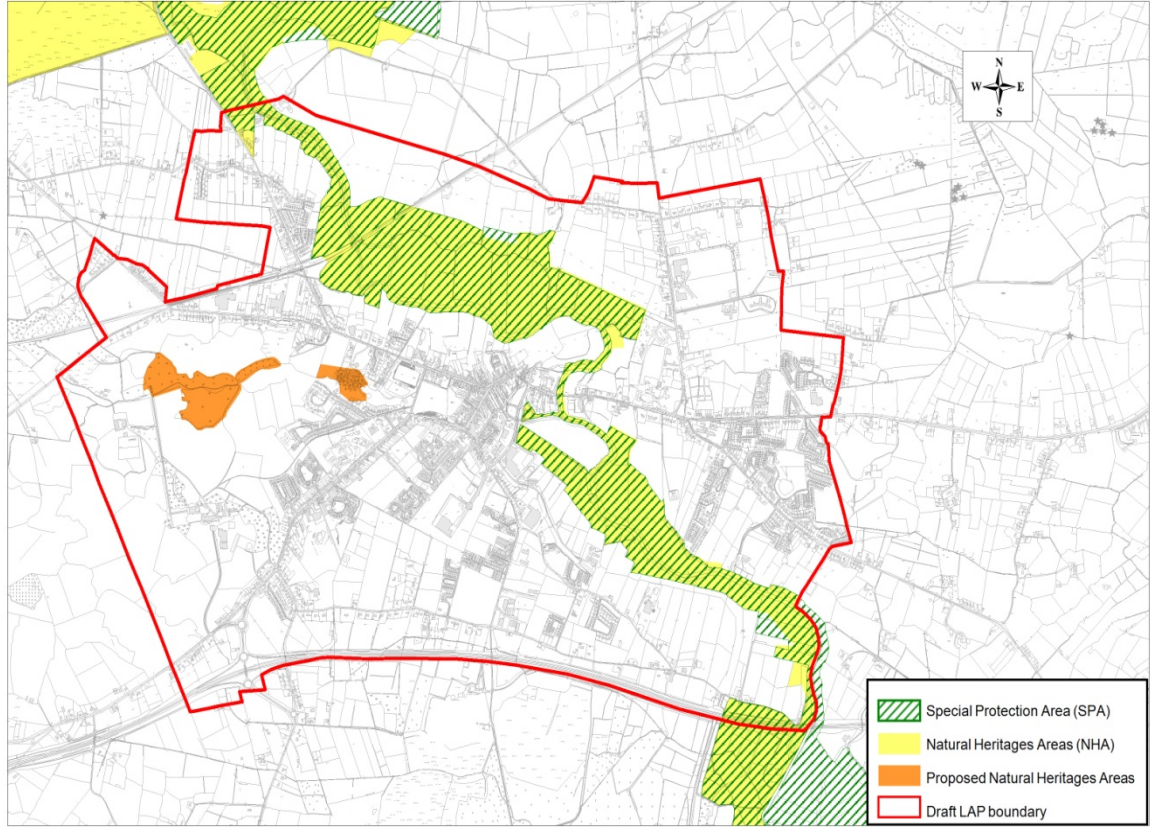


Figure 3.1 Designated Sites & National Heritage Areas within and surrounding the Plan Area. (Source GCC).

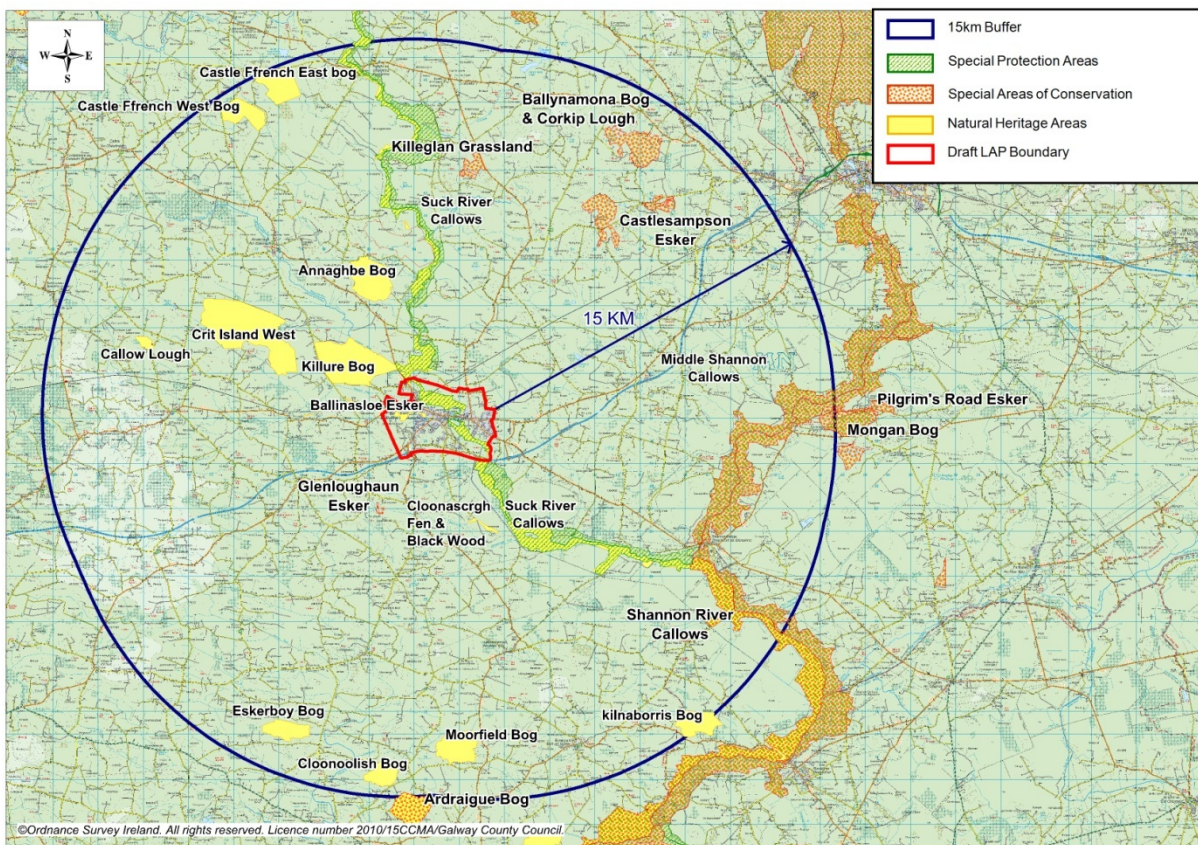


Figure 3.2 Designated Sites & Natural Heritage Areas within 15km of Plan Area. (Source GCC).

3.3 Population & Human Health

3.3.1 Introduction

The *National Spatial Strategy* sets out a national settlement structure which focuses on growing urban centres such as the identified gateways, the hubs, linked hubs and larger towns. It is envisaged that these areas would reach a sufficient size or 'critical mass' in order to enhance economic competitiveness within the region. The *Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2010-2022* prescribe that an additional 12,640 persons will be living in the County (not including Galway City) by 2022. Ballinasloe is on Tier 3 of the County Settlement Strategy hierarchy and its role as a 'County Town' is to perform an important role as a commercial/industrial centre for the eastern area of the County. Ballinasloe also provides higher order important services such as Portiuncula Hospital which serves a regional population.

In terms of population trends, according to the most recent 2011 CSO figures, the total population of Ballinasloe (urban and environs) was recorded as 6,577 persons (6,449 urban and 128 environs), a total change in population of 419 persons or a 6.8% increase on the 2006 population level (see Table 3.1). Given the current economic climate it is considered that over the lifetime of the plan the population of Ballinasloe will stay well within the population growth target.

The Core Strategy as outlined within the *County Development Plan* indicates that Ballinasloe has been assigned a population growth target of 1,540 additional persons, corresponding to 477 additional housing units, up to the year 2021. This population growth target would require housing land of 35.81Ha with 50% over-zoning, in order to accommodate residential development over the plan period. The Local Area Plan will consider various development zoning and phasing options so as to comply with the Core Strategy as outlined within the *Galway County Development Plan* and to ensure that suitable lands are brought forward for development during the plan period.

Population Census 2002	Population Census 2006	Population Census 2011
6101	6158	6577

Table 3.1 Population Trend for Ballinasloe Urban and Environs for Census Periods 2002 – 2011

3.3.2 Existing Problems

- Certain environmental vectors within the plan area - such as air, water or soil - have the potential to transport and deposit contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm and adversely impact upon the health of the area's population;
- The occurrence of severe rainfall events - and changes in the occurrence and magnitude of these events as a result of climate change - have the potential to cause flooding which would be likely to result in a hazard to human health and damage and loss to built development, infrastructure and biodiversity;
- Traffic hotspots located along the main road routes - especially at intersections - are likely to have sensory environments that are relatively more stressful due to air pollution and noise levels.

3.3.3 Inter-relationship with Other Environmental Parameters

Issues relating to population, human health and quality of life are inter-related with all of the environmental parameters.

	B	SG	W	AC	M	CH	L
Population & Human Health	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

(B=Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna, PHH=Population, Human Health, SG=Soil & Geology, W=Water, AC=Air & Climatic Factors, M=Material Assets, CH=Cultural Heritage, L=Landscape).

3.4 Soil and Geology

3.4.1 Introduction

Soils are offered protection through the proposed EU Directive 2004/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council through establishing a framework for the protection of soil and amending Directive 2004/ 35/EC. Whilst this Directive has not been established into law and therefore not established into National Legislation, Article 5 of the proposed Directive states that

“for the purposes of preserving the various functions of soil, sealing, the development of artificial surfaces on top of soil resources should be limited”.

Urban soil underlies the built-up areas within the town. The majority of the plan area is covered by limestone till. Areas of cutover peat lie to the north, north-west and south of the plan area. Alluvial soils and limestone sands and gravels compromise the remainder of the plan area with minor areas of outcropping bedrock, including karstified limestone bedrock, dispersed throughout.

3.4.2 Geology and Sites of Geological Interest

The soils and habitats of Ballinasloe have been influenced by the area's underlying geology. The majority of the plan area is underlain by Visean Limestone. Parts of the boundary of the plan area are traversed by the Lucan Formation, particularly to the south. Waulsortian Limestone makes up the remainder of the geology, occurring in the east of the plan area. There are a number of geological sites within or around the immediate environs of Ballinasloe namely the Suck River Callows, Ballinasloe –Split Hills-Clonmacnoise-Clara Esker and the Ballinasloe Top Quarry.

3.4.3 Eskers

Eskers were created from sands and gravels which were laid down in rivers or meltwater that covered much of Ireland at the end of the Ice Age. There are two eskers in Ballinasloe. The Esker Riada is a natural system of mounds consisting of gravel and rocks which are believed to have been deposited approximately 10,000 years ago, when an ice-age glacier covering Western Europe melted as a result of local climatic warming. The larger of the two eskers, to the south of the town, is a dominant landscape feature, with significant views towards the town and southwards to the bogland area of Pollboy. Ballinasloe Esker is a pNHA and is located within Garbally Demesne.

3.4.4 Existing Problems

- Greenfield development involves the building upon and thereby sealing off of soil, thus representing an environmental problem;
- Soil has the potential to be polluted and contaminated as a result of pollution from development which is not serviced by appropriate waste water infrastructure and from agricultural sources;
- Soil erosion due mainly to surface erosion resulting from construction works and agricultural/forestry operations has potential to impact on water quality. In addition to water quality, these can impact on infrastructure and can have health and safety implications. Erosion of the eskers due to quarrying activity is a problem.

3.4.5 Inter-relationships with Other Environmental Parameters

The environmental parameters soil and geology have a strong inter-relationship with all of the other parameters especially biodiversity, flora and fauna, population and human health and material assets.

	PHH	B	W	AC	M	CH	L
Soil & Geology	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

(B=Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna, PHH=Population, Human Health, SG=Soil & Geology, W=Water, AC=Air & Climatic Factors=Material Assets, CH=Cultural Heritage, L=Landscape).

3.5 Water

3.5.1 Introduction

Since 2000, water management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The WFD requires all member states implementing the necessary measures to prevent deterioration of the status of all waters-surface, ground, estuarine and coastal and to protect, enhance and restore all waters with the aim of achieving good status by 2015.

For the purpose of implementing the WFD, Ireland has been divided into eight river basin districts. The plan area is located in the Shannon International River Basin District (SIRBD) and as such much information regarding the environmental baseline is derived from the Shannon International River Basin Management Plan (SIBMP)⁴. Ballinasloe is located within the Suck Water Management Unit of the Shannon International River Basin Management Plan. The implementation of the Shannon International River Basin Management Plan will bring incremental improvement leading to the majority of waters reaching at least 'good status' at the latest by 2027.

River water quality within the county is monitored by the EPA at a number of locations. Good status as defined by the WFD equates to approximately Q4 in the national biological classification scheme of rivers as set out by the EPA. The River Suck, which runs through the centre of Ballinasloe Town, is the most dominant river. It is the largest of the River Shannon's three tributaries:

⁴ The Shannon International River Basin District Management Plan 2009-2015 is a plan for the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, which commits all members' states to preventing deterioration and achieving at least good status in our rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal and ground waters by the year 2015. The Plan describes actions that are proposed to ensure the necessary protection of waters over the coming years. It sets out the aims and objectives of improving and protecting water quality and ecology in the waters of each river basin district could be achieved, by means of a Programme of Measures.

- The *River Suck*;
- The *Bunowen River*;
- The *Deerpark River* rises in woodland near Killagh

The most recent river water body quality data⁵ identifies the following:

- The River Suck (IE_SH_26_1447_4 & IE_SH_26_1447_5) as being of Good Status (Q4)⁶ before it enters the plan boundary area at Derrymullen where its status drops to Poor Status (Q3);
- The Deerpark River (IE_SH_26_3977) is classified as being of Good Status (Q4);
- The Bunowen River (IE_SH_26_3041) is classified as Poor Status (Q3);
- The Suck Cuilleen (IE_SH_26_936) is classified as Moderate Status (Q3-Q4);
- The Suck Kellysgrove (IE_SH_26_3824) is classified as Moderate Status (Q3-Q4).

3.5.2 Ground Waters

Groundwater is defined as the water stored underground in formations of saturated rock, sand, gravel and soils. The protection of groundwater from human activity is crucial as the resource is highly susceptible to contamination with long term consequences for humans and the environment. The main groundwater water-body in the plan area is the - The Suck South (IE_SH_G_225).

According to the Water Framework Directive the ground water-body is at risk (1a) of not achieving good status by 2015. The overall WFD objective is to restore this ground water-body to good status by 2021.

3.5.3 Flooding

Flooding is a natural environmental phenomenon. Floods are usually caused by a combination of events including overflowing river banks, coastal storms or blocked or overloaded drainage ditches. As well as causing economic, social and ecological impacts, floods in certain circumstances pose a risk to human health. Ballinasloe is vulnerable to adverse effects from changes in the occurrence of severe rainfall events and associated flooding of the local rivers, particularly the River Suck, combined with small changes in sea level. The flood zones identified within the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan was derived from a number of sources which helped prepare the Stage 2 Flood Risk Assessment. Undeveloped land within Flood Zone A and Flood Zone B have been zoned as Open Space, Recreation and Amenity as outlined within the Land Use Zoning Maps 1A/1B of the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan (LAP), which avoids incompatible uses and directs inappropriate development away from these zones. There are a number of existing developments that lie within Flood Zone A and Flood Zone B, a Constrained Land Use zoning has been applied to these areas which seeks to facilitate the appropriate development of existing buildings while ensuring protection against flood risk.

3.5.4 Existing Problems

The above descriptions identify a number of sensitivities with regard to the status of water bodies within the Ballinasloe plan area. Groundwater underlying the plan area and the Suck River Callows SPA are both listed on Registers of Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive.

- The majority of surface waters are at significant risk of failing to achieve the WFD's objectives of good status by 2015;
- The pressures which have been identified by the SIRBD in the characterisation of the water bodies within and surrounding the plan area include:
 - Diffuse source pressures such as the EPA's diffuse sources model;
 - Morphological pressures including intensive land use; and
 - Point sources such as combined sewer and treatment plant overflows and waste water

⁵ WFD RBMP Implementation Plan 2011

⁶ The Biotic Index Values, or Q values, are assigned to rivers in accordance with biological monitoring of surface waters - low Q ratings, as low as Q1, are indicative of low biodiversity and polluted waters, and high Q ratings, as high as Q5, are indicative of high biodiversity and unpolluted waters. Good status as defined by the Water Framework Directive equates to approximately Q4 in the national scheme of biological classification of rivers as set out by the EPA.

treatment plants.

- Potential increase in the levels of flooding within the plan area.

3.5.5 Inter-relationships with Other Environmental Parameters

The environmental parameter water has a strong inter-relationship with all of the other parameters especially biodiversity, flora and fauna, population and human health and material assets. It is essential that a clean and sufficient water supply is provided for the general population of the area.

	PHH	B	SG	AC	M	CH	L
Water	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

(B=Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna, PHH=Population, Human Health, SG=Soil & Geology, W=Water, AC=Air & Climatic Factors=M=Material Assets, CH=Cultural Heritage, L=Landscape).

3.6 Air and Climatic Factors

3.6.1 Introduction

An updated and integrated approach to monitoring, assessment and management of air quality within the European Union was introduced through the Clean Air for Europe Directive, (CAFE, 2008/50/EC) on the 21st May 2008. The Directive replaced the pre-existing Air Quality Framework Directive (96/62/EC, 2nd September 1996) and three of the four preceding Air Quality Framework Daughter Directives. It came into effect as of June 2010. The EU *Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC)* was transposed into Irish legislation by the *Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011)*. The basic principle of the CAFE Directive is that each country should be divided into zones and that the monitoring assessment management and reporting air quality will be undertaken in relation to these zones.

In order to comply with the directives mentioned above, the EPA measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants. For the purposes of monitoring in Ireland, four zones are defined in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 280 of 2011). Ballinasloe falls into Zone D. The current air quality in the Ballinasloe Urban AQIH Region is 1 – Good.

3.6.2 Radon Gas

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive and carcinogenic gas that originates from the decay of uranium in rocks and soils. The Radon Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII) estimates that between 1% - 5% of homes in the 10km grid square pertaining to Ballinasloe town are above the reference level.

3.6.3 Noise

The EU Directive 2002/49/EC, transposed into Irish law under Statutory Instrument number 140 of 2006 (the 'Environmental Noise Regulations', which calls for the development of strategic noise maps and action plans for major roads, railways airports and cities. The over-riding noise source in Ballinasloe is from traffic. Traffic hotspots located along the M6 Motorway and main road routes especially at intersections - are likely to have sensory environments that are relatively more stressful due to air pollution and noise levels.

3.6.4 Climatic Factors

In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions the internationally agreed Kyoto Protocol established emissions reduction targets for developing countries. Ireland's emission target for greenhouse gases is to limit the increase in their combined emissions during the five-year period 2008-2012 to 13 per cent above 1990 levels.

Under the EU Commission's Climate and Energy Package, Ireland is required to deliver a 20% reduction in non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 (relative to 2005 levels). In addition, Ireland also has binding annual emission limits for the period 2013-2020 to ensure a gradual move towards the 2020 target. A *National Climate Change Adaptation Framework* is already in place since 2012 and provides

the policy context for a strategic national adaptation response to climate change. This policy includes mitigation and adaptation measures and the integration of climate change considerations in planning and delivering work programmes.

3.6.5 Existing Problems

- Traffic hotspots within the plan area are likely to have elevated levels of air pollution and noise due to traffic congestion;
- Localised air pollution incidences with regard to PM10 and PM2.5 and noise pollution are both likely to occur when demolition/construction takes place;
- The occurrence of severe rainfall events and changes in the occurrence and magnitude of these events as a result of climate change could have an impact on the Ballinasloe area;
- The loss of habitats could present problems for species numbers and diversity especially in the Suck River Callows SPA.

3.6.6 Inter-relationships with Other Environmental Parameters

The environmental parameter air and climatic factors have a strong inter-relationship with all of the other environmental parameters. In order for the other environmental parameters to succeed it is essential that climate change and air quality is closely monitored and measures incorporated to reduce the impact of climate change on the local environment which has a direct result on the quality of life of the local population. Reduction in greenhouse gases contributes to the air quality thus improving the quality of life of the general population of the area.

	PHH	B	SG	W	M	CH	L
Air & Climatic Factors	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

(B=Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna, PHH=Population, Human Health, SG=Soil & Geology, W=Water, AC=Air & Climatic Factors, M=Material Assets, CH=Cultural Heritage, L=Landscape).

3.7 Material Assets

3.7.1 Introduction

The material assets of Ballinasloe may be broken down into a number of relevant categories including:

- Wastewater;
- Drinking water;
- Waste management;
- Transport infrastructure, telecommunication and energy infrastructure.

Irish Water is responsible for the operation of public water and wastewater services. In May 2014, Irish Water produced the Proposed Capital Investment Plan 2014-2016 and will operate in conjunction with the Water Services Section of Galway County Council in the provision of adequate public water supply and wastewater infrastructure network within the county.

3.7.2 Waste Water Treatment Infrastructure

The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) aims to protect the environment from the adverse effects of wastewater discharges by ensuring that waste water is appropriately treated before it is discharged to the environment. Wastewater arising from the plan area is treated to primary and secondary treatment (with phosphorus removal) at the Ballinasloe Public Sewerage Treatment Works at Pollboy. The public wastewater treatment plant at Pollboy has a current design capacity of 13,500 population equivalent (P.E.) and the current loading to the plant is 12100 P.E., leaving a spare capacity of 1400 P.E. The existing plant is considered sufficient to cater for wastewater loads up to 2020. The proposed additional

upgrade of the WWTP to 18,000 P.E. is not included on Irish Water's Draft Capital Investment Programme 2014-2016 and such works will not commence prior to 2018. The requirement and provision for any further upgrades will be reviewed and considered by Irish Water when planning any subsequent Capital Investment Programme.

A private sewerage works (primary treatment GCC Discharge Licence W 005/78) located in the Portnick area will be connected to the foul sewer network and treatment system. Any new development within the grounds of the former St Brigid's hospital (30 P.E) will be required to link up with Galway County Council network.

3.7.3 Sludge Management Plan

The Galway City Council & County Council Operational Sludge Management Plan was adopted in January, 2011. The objectives of the plan are to:

- Identify sources of sludge;
- Estimate rates for sludge production and final destinations for sludge;
- Recommend sustainable options for the management of non-hazardous sludge.

3.7.4 Surface Water Drainage

There is no dedicated surface water sewer network serving Ballinasloe. Under the Ballinasloe Town Enhancement Scheme some separation will take place from the combined surface and foul sewerage system along a number of streets as proposed under Contracts 1 & 2. The timing of these contracts is dependent on the approval process from Irish Water. Developments within the plan area will be required to comply with the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) as contained within the EPA document entitled *Guidance on Authorisation of Discharges to Groundwater 2011 (or any updated/superseding document)*.

3.7.5 Drinking Water Supply, Capacity and Demand

The primary source of Ballinasloe's public water supply is the Derrymullen Water Treatment Plant which sources water from the River Suck upstream of the town. There are three reservoirs serving Ballinasloe Town and the surrounding areas. These are located at Garbally, Redmount Hill, and Sheepwalk.

The current capacity of the town's water supply at Derrymullen is 4,500m³/day and the current demand is 3,300m³/day. Ongoing water conservation works have increased the potential capacity of the plant and in addition works under the Ballinasloe Town Enhancement Scheme under Contracts 1 & 2 will provide for public water-main replacement along a number of streets.

3.7.6 Waste Management

The Replacement Connaught Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 provides policy guidance on waste management in County Galway. Best practice in terms of waste management recommends that as much waste as possible is dealt with through reduction, reuse and recycling, with as little as possible remaining to be disposed of to landfill.

A landfill site is located just outside the plan area at Pollboy. The landfill closed in December 2005 and is currently being managed in accordance with the EPA licence issued for the site.

There are five bring banks located throughout the town at a number of locations and there is a recycling facility at Pollboy.

3.7.7 Transport

The strategic geographical location of Ballinasloe makes it accessible to most major towns and tourist attractions in Connacht. The town occupies a strategic location adjacent to the M6 National Primary route linking Dublin and Galway and is one of the principal 'Gateways to the West'. A number of regional roads

(R446, R348, R357, R355 & R358) and local roads also converge in the town. These roads link Ballinasloe with a number of towns and villages, such as Tuam, Kilconnell, Laurencetown, Ahascragh, Athlone, Tullamore and Portumna. Ballinasloe is situated approximately 30.5km (19miles) west of Athlone and 67.5km (42miles) east of Galway and has daily public transport services (both rail and bus) to Galway, Athlone and Dublin and these services present the opportunity to commute to work to these destinations.

3.7.8 Energy/Renewable Energy and Telecommunications Infrastructure

The Ballinasloe Metropolitan Area Broadband Network (MANS) is fully constructed and is routed mainly around the town centre. It also services the IDA site and HSE facilities along the R357, industrial lands at Pollboy, educational facilities and along the R446 servicing Garbally College, Portiuncla Hospital and the Dunlo area.

3.7.9 Licenced Facilities

There are currently no licenced IPPC Facilities or Waste Licence Facilities in operation in the plan area.

3.7.10 Existing Problems

- Certain regions of the plan area are not within the catchment of the waste water treatment network and consequently developments in these areas use septic tanks to treat waste water arising
- The main impacts on the River Suck are the Ballinasloe WWTP, private licenced treatment plants and agricultural run-off.

3.7.11 Inter-relationships with Other Environmental Parameters

The environmental parameter material assets (wastewater, drinking water, waste management & transport) all have inter-relationships with the other environmental parameters. It is essential that there are an adequate and sufficient waste water treatment system and quality drinking water for the residents of the plan area. The transport infrastructure is centrally linked with a number of environmental parameters, it has a direct threat to local biodiversity, flora and fauna but it also improves the quality of life for the local residents.

	PHH	B	SG	W	AC	CH	L
Material Assets	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

(B=Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna, PHH=Population, Human Health, SG=Soil & Geology, W=Water, AC=Air & Climatic Factors, M=Material Assets, CH=Cultural Heritage, L=Landscape).

3.8 Cultural Heritage

3.8.1 Record of Monuments and Places

Ballinasloe's archaeological heritage is protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), Natural Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning Acts.

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is an inventory, put on a statutory basis by amendment to the National Monuments Act 1994, of sites and areas of archaeological significance, numbered and mapped. In Ballinasloe, there are currently 54 entries to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

3.8.2 Architectural Heritage

The existing urban form of Ballinasloe was established by the Trench Family in the late 18th and early 19th century with the development of the broad pattern of streets lined with substantial three storey buildings, St. Michael's Square and the Fair Green.

3.8.3 Record of Protected Structures

The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) is legislated under Section 12 and Section 51 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). There are currently 118 Protected Structures within the plan area. These structures include many houses from the Georgian and Victoria periods.

3.8.4 Architectural Conservation Areas

There are currently two Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) within the plan area, namely Ballinasloe Town Centre and St. Brigid's Hospital.

3.8.5 Existing Problems

- Developments within archaeologically or architecturally sensitive areas have the potential to individually or cumulatively impact upon cultural heritage of the plan area;
- Archaeology can be previously unknown but can be damaged through development causing ground disturbance;
- Development which involves material alteration or additions to protected structures can detract from the special character of the structure and its setting;
- Development on sites adjoining protected monuments, places or structures can also impact upon the setting of these cultural heritage items;
- Encouraging and facilitating the accommodation of growth on brownfield sites will contribute to mitigating a number of the adverse impacts associated with greenfield development, however, brownfield development has the potential to have significant adverse impact upon cultural heritage both archaeological and architectural if unmitigated against.

3.8.6 Inter-relationships with other Environmental Parameters

The environmental parameter cultural heritage has an inter-relationship with the other key environmental parameters.

	PHH	B	SG	W	AC	M	L
Cultural Heritage	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

** In relation to Material Assets as this encompasses a wide spectrum of categories it is considered that the inter-relationship with water, wastewater and waste management would be regarded as minimal however there would be a relationship with transport infrastructure.*

(B=Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna, PHH=Population, Human Health, SG=Soil & Geology, W=Water, AC=Air & Climatic Factors, M=Material Assets, CH=Cultural Heritage, L=Landscape).

3.9 Landscape

3.9.1 Introduction

Ballinasloe's undulating landscape has been shaped primarily by the impact of glacial activity and the deposition of eskers. The River Suck which bisects the Town has also played a key role in shaping the development of the town.

3.9.2 Landscape Character Assessment⁷

In accordance with the DEHLG's Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2000), Galway County Council prepared a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the County in 2003. It classifies landscapes according to their:

- Character;
- Values; and,
- Sensitivity.

⁷ Text in this section is sourced from the Galway Landscape Character Assessment (Galway County Council, 2003)

3.9.3 Landscape Character Areas

Landscape character is a combination of landform, land cover and visual units, which are attractive in the landscape. The LCA identified 25 character areas within the county. The following are the character areas relating to the plan area:

Area 1: North East Galway (Ballinasloe to Ballymoe)

Area 2: Shannon and Suck River Valley between Portumna and Ballinasloe

Area 3: East central Galway (Athenry, Ballinasloe to Portumna)

3.9.4 Landscape Values

The LCA derived landscape values were derived for each landscape character area by consideration of environmental and cultural benefits such as visual beauty, ecology, archaeology, social history, religious sites and mythology. The values were given a score ranging from low to medium to high to outstanding.

The west of the plan area - including the town centre and Suck river callows - is classified as being of a moderate value, while the east of the plan area is designated as being of a low value

3.9.5 Landscape Sensitivity Classes

Landscape sensitivity is a measure of the ability of the landscape to accommodate change or intervention without suffering unacceptable effects to its character and values. Sensitivity ratings are derived from a combination of landscape values and landscape character.

The following five sensitivity classes were established by the LCA:

- Class 1 – Low sensitivity;
- Class 2 – Moderate sensitivity;
- Class 3 – High sensitivity;
- Class 4 – Special; and,
- Class 5 – Unique.

The callows of the Suck River and the Ballinasloe esker are both classified as having a high sensitivity - these landscapes are most vulnerable to change. The remainder of the west of the plan area - including the town centre - is classified as being of a moderate sensitivity while the remainder of the east of the plan area is designated as being of a low sensitivity.

3.9.6 Focal Points and Views

There are a number of views proposed to be listed in the local area plan and identified below. The views identified in the map relate to the following:

- To the high and special amenity of the River Suck and surrounds
- To the open character of St Michael's Square (including its focus St Michael's Church),
- The Fair Green and the Le Poer Trench Memorial;
- The narrow streets rising to St John's Church of Ireland a major landmark of the town;
- Vistas as indicated within Garbally Demesne;
- Vistas from the Public Marina;
- Vistas at the junction of Creagh Church and graveyard.

3.9.7 Existing Problems

The intrusion onto greenfield sites for development can have a significant effect on the landscape and local landscape features in rural and urban areas.

A problem with regard to the environmental component of landscape is the cumulative visual impact which occurs as a result of developments such as one off houses. Such developments, which individually often do not have significant adverse impacts, have the potential to cumulatively and adversely have a significant impact upon sensitive landscapes. In the context of Ballinasloe, this type of development has

the potential to occur within the peri-urban areas including the outskirts of the town boundary, but could pose a potential impact on the proposed protected focal views which occur throughout Ballinasloe.

3.10 Overlay of Environmental Sensitivities of the Plan Area

In order to identify where the most sensitivities within the plan area occur, a number of the environmental sensitivities described in this section were weighed and mapped overlapping each other. Figure 3.3 provides an overlay of environmental sensitivities in the Ballinasloe area. By mapping key environmental layers (GIS) to produce an environmental sensitivities map, it provides a visual impression which can assist in identifying which areas within the plan area experience environmental sensitivities, the highest concentration(i.e indicates the level of overlap) of environmental sensitivities and consequently the areas potentially most vulnerable to potential environmental impacts from development.

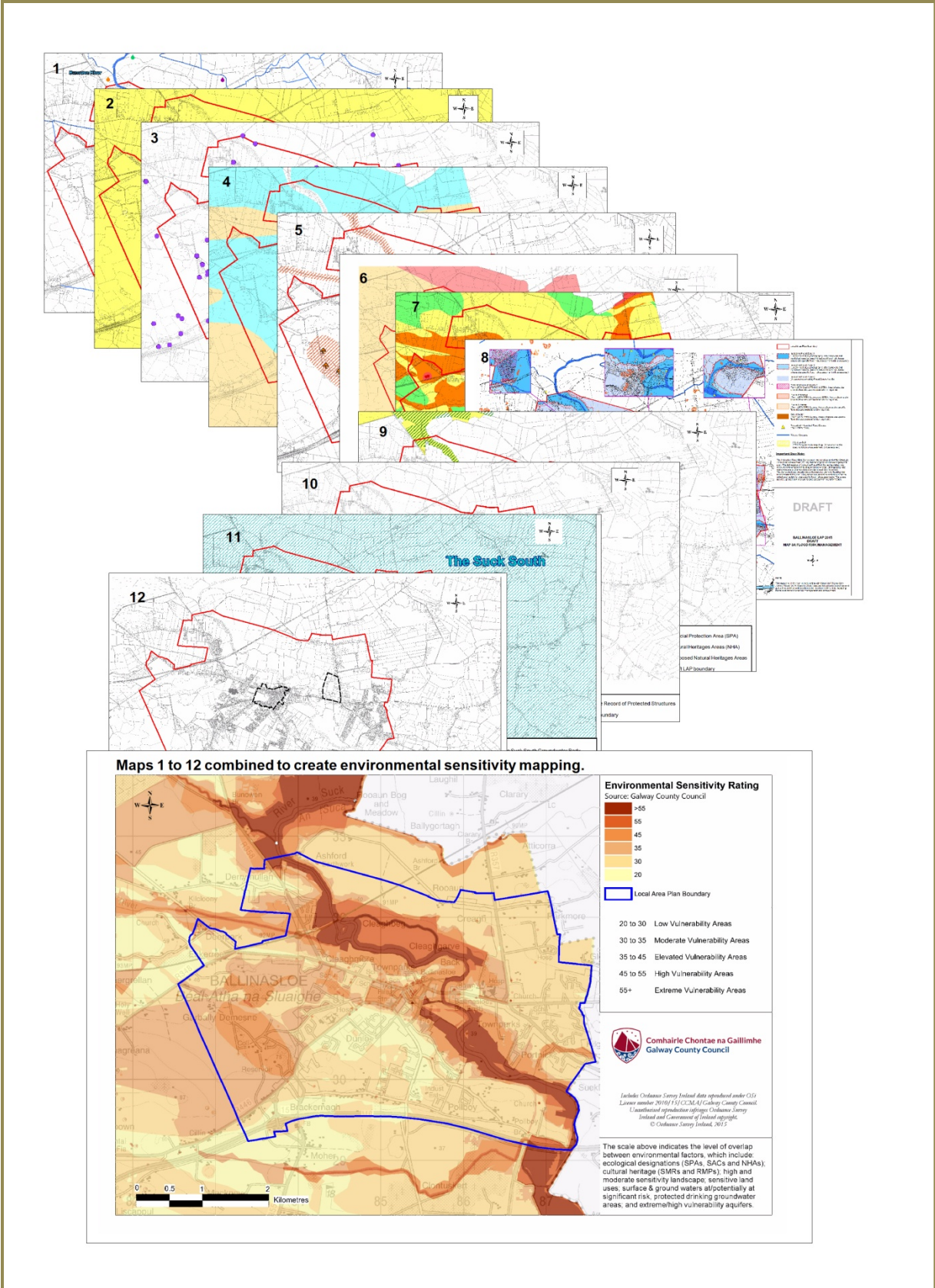


Figure 3.3 Overlay of environmental sensitivities in the Ballinasloe area and the resultant Sensitivity Mapping.

Section 4 Review of Relevant Policies, Plans and Programmes

4.1 Introduction

The Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan is situated within a hierarchy of International, National, Regional and county level policy guidelines. In addition, there is an overarching legislative framework which provides the statutory (legal) basis for designations and objectives. This section of the Environmental Report reviews the consistency of the Draft Plan within this policy and regulatory framework.

International/EU Level

Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)
Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)
SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)
Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC)
Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)
Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)
Freshwater Fish Directive (78/659/EEC)
Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC)
EIA Directive(85/337/EEC) as amended by Directive 97/11/EC
Sewage Sludge in Agriculture Directive
Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)
Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive
Nitrates Directive
IPPC Directive
Waste Framework Directive
The Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC)
Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (revised) (Valletta 1992)
Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada 1985)
Landfill Directive (99/31/EC)
Soil Thematic Strategy (COM) 2006/231) and proposal for a Soil Framework Directive (COM(2006)(232)

National Level

National Development Plan (as amended)
National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020
National Climate Change Strategy
Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Framework
Government White Paper – Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland
Our Sustainable Future, A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland
“Actions for Biodiversity 2011-2016”, Ireland's 2nd National Biodiversity Plan
Flora Protection Order 1999
The Wildlife Act 1976 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000
European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, S.I. 94/1997, as amended S.I. 233/1998, S.I. 378/2005
European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011(S.I. No 477 of 2011)
National Heritage Plan 2002-2006
The National Monuments Acts (2004)
The Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999
Planning and Development Acts 2000(as amended)
Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006
Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas
Best Practice Urban Design Manual
The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment

Relevant Plans, Programmes

Guidelines, 2009
Local Area Plan Guidelines
Retail Planning Guidelines & Retail Design Manual
Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines'
Transport 21
Water Services Investment Programme
Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation)
Regulations 2007(SI No.684 of 2007)
Surface Water Regulations 2009
Waste Management Act 1996(as amended)

Regional Level

River Basin Management Plans,
Flood Risk Management Plans,
Regional Planning Guidelines for the West
Region 2010-2022,
Water Services Strategic Plans
Regional Waste Management Plans,
Groundwater Protection Schemes,
A Platform for Change Strategy 2000-2016,

Local Level

Galway County Development Plan
Galway County Heritage Plan 2010-2016,
Galway County Council Walking & Cycling Strategy Report 2012
Local Area Plans
Regional Planning Guidelines for the West
Region 2010-2022,
Water Services Investment Programme

Section 5 Strategic Environmental Objectives

5.1 Introduction

The overall aim of the SEA is to facilitate environmental protection and to allow the integration of environmental considerations into the development of the Draft Local Area Plan. The SEA process assesses the Draft Local Area Plan as it evolves in terms of environmental impacts. This process highlights how improvements can be integrated into the Draft Plan of Ballinasloe to increase its environmental performance and maintain resources. Establishing environmental objectives is a key element of the SEA as it allows the assessment of the Strategy as it is implemented over time. SEA Environmental Objectives are different to objectives detailed in the Draft LAP, however they are used to assess the development strategies of the Local Area Plan and allow its evaluation and identification of where conflicts may occur.

Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives

SEA Topics	SEO Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	<p>B1: To ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annexed habitats and Species⁸</p> <p>B2: To ensure the protection, conservation to avoid the loss of diversity and integrity of a broad range of habitats, species and ecological and wildlife corridors and networks (non-designated sites) which provide connectivity between areas of local biodiversity within the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan.</p> <p>B3: Conserve and protect other sites of Nature conservation including NHAs and pNHAs.</p>
Population, Human Health	<p>PHH: To protect human health from hazards or nuisances arising from exposure to incompatible land uses.</p>
Soil & Geology	<p>SG1: To prevent pollution and/or contamination of soil.</p> <p>SG2: Conserve, protect and avoid loss of diversity and integrity of designated habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites</p>
Water	<p>W1: To maintain and improve, where possible, the status of surface waters.</p> <p>W2: To prevent pollution and contamination of ground water.</p> <p>W3: To comply as appropriate with the Provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG,2009) and associated Circular PL 2/2014.</p>
Air and Climatic Factors	<p>AC: To reduce travel related greenhouse emissions to air and to encourage modal change from car to more sustainable forms of transport.</p>
Material Assets	<p>M1: To serve new development with adequate and appropriate waste water treatment.</p> <p>M2: To serve growth areas with drinking water that is both wholesome and clean.</p> <p>M3: Make the best use of existing road and transportation infrastructure.</p>

⁸ 'Annexed habitats and species' refer to those listed under Annex I, II & IV of the EU Habitats Directive and Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

Cultural Heritage	<p>CH1: To protect the archaeological heritage of the town including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context and Architectural Conservation Areas.</p> <p>CH2: To preserve and protect the special interest and character of the town's architectural heritage.</p>
Landscape	<p>L: To avoid significant adverse impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscapes which are most valuable and most sensitive to change and protected focal points and views.</p>

Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Section 6 Local Area Plan Alternatives

6.1 Introduction

One of the critical roles of the SEA is to facilitate an evaluation of the likely environmental consequences of a range of alternative strategies for accommodating future development in Ballinasloe. These alternative strategies must be realistic, capable of implementation, and should represent a range of different approaches within statutory and operational requirements of the particular plan. This section identifies and describes different plan scenarios, taking into account higher level strategic actions as well as the geographical scope of the town.

6.2 Identification and Description of Alternative Plan Scenarios

A range of three potential scenarios for the types of planning strategies that could be adopted are described in this section, they represent increasingly intensive and extensive development. A number of features are core to all scenarios, namely the location, extent and use of lands adjoining the Natura 2000 sites and the requirements of lands for housing. As a result the following are key components of the alternatives:

- It is estimated that there is a requirement of 477 additional housing units by 2021;
- The housing land requirement is 35.81Ha (with 50% over provision) in order to accommodate residential development over the plan period;
- Sufficient town centre lands to be provided to allow Ballinasloe develop;
- Sufficient employment lands to be provided to allow Ballinasloe function as “County Town” in accordance with the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021;
- New residential development to be located in proximity to community facilities, educational facilities and local services;
- Phasing of Residential lands;
- The natural and built heritage of the plan area should be protected and enhanced where possible.

6.3 Alternatives Considered for SEA

The following strategic alternatives for the Local Area Plan were considered for assessment and are shown in Figures 6.1. The strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches are evaluated and a preferred alternative derived. The following criteria have been used in the Assessment Matrix:

	Alternative is consistent with environment goal
	Alternative is in conflict with environment goal
	Alternative is both consistent and in conflict with environmental goal
	Neutral/No Impact

6.4 Evaluation of SEA Alternatives

The visual appraisal for each development alternative against the SEO objectives is shown in Table 6.4. Each alternative is mapped in Figures 6.1 and should be referred to whilst reviewing Table 6.1.

Alternative	Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	Population, Human Health	Soil & Geology	Water	Air and Climatic Factors	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape
1.Haphazard Development with a refined plan boundary	Red	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Red
2.Consolidation of Existing Development with Sequential Development around Consolidated Areas with a refined plan boundary	Light Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Yellow
3.Bi-Nodal Development with a refined plan boundary	Red	Light Green	Red	Light Green	Red	Light Green	Dark Green	Red

Table 6.1 Alternatives Option Scores against Strategic Environmental Objectives

6.5 SEA Preferred Alternative

Table 6.4 highlights that Alternative 2 is generally considered to be the most positive alternative when measured against the SEOs of this Environmental Report. Alternative 1 and 3 are generally considered to be more negative when reviewed in relation to the SEOs of this environmental report. Therefore the preferred SEA Alternative for the purpose of the Local Area Plan is Alternative 2.

The alternative chosen within the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan is in accordance with preferred alternative scenario as prepared in this Environmental Report. This alternative scenario would meet a large number of the objectives of the plan as it supports the consolidation of existing developed areas and will ensure the availability of optimal residential lands to accommodate anticipated growth requirements. This alternative also encourages the development of vacant and under-utilised sites in the town and ensures that those lands close to the town are the primary focus for development, thereby placing future residents within reasonable walking and cycling distance from the town centre services and thus reducing or minimising the demand for car generated trips by providing a more sustainable and integrated transport and land-use structure. Rural housing provision on lands in this alternative will be provided for through specific objectives tailored to accommodate such developments within the immediate environs of the settlement areas.

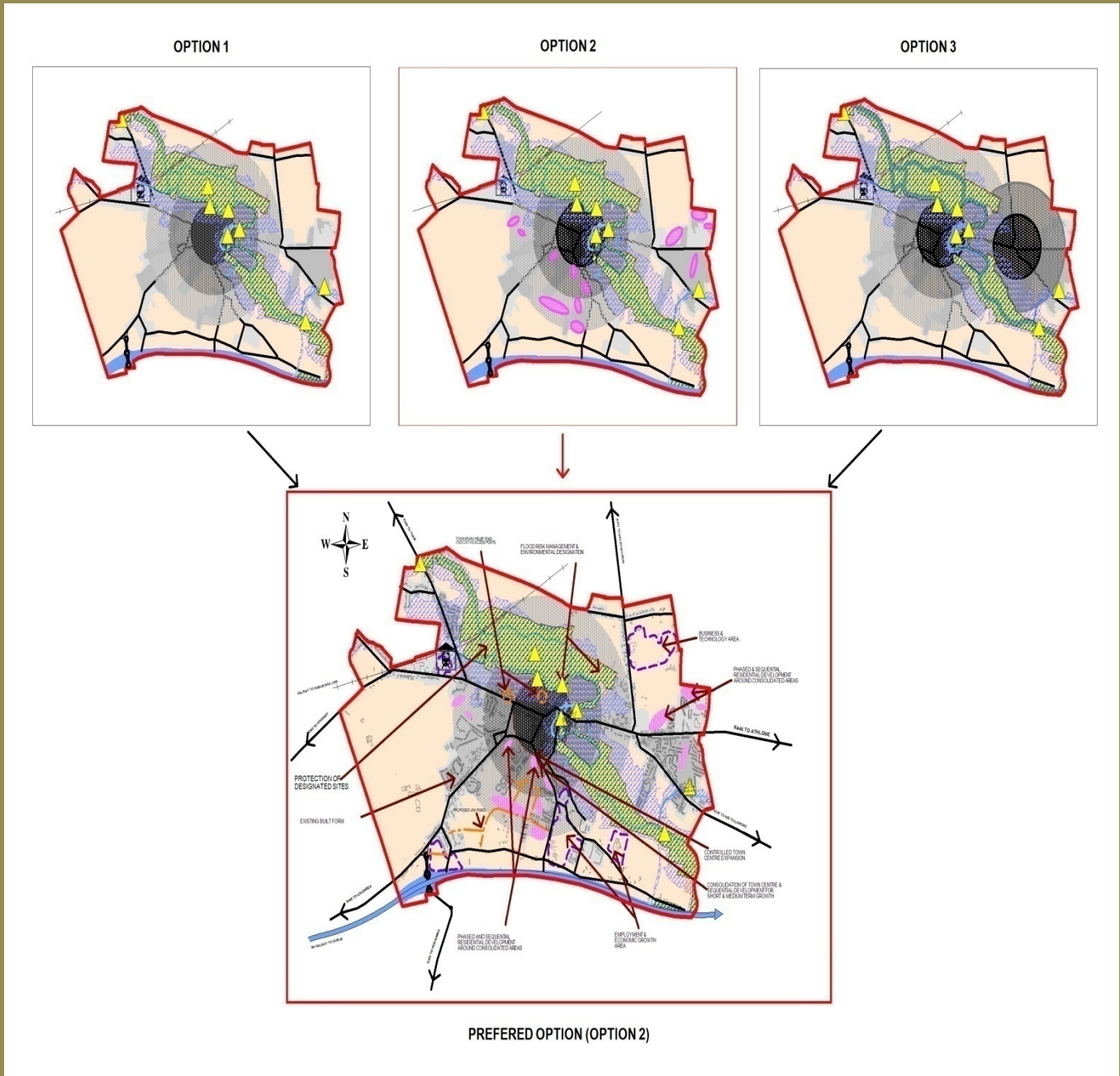


Figure 6.1 Preferred Option

Section 7 Assessment of Effects of Implementing the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of Sections 6, 7 and 8 of the Environmental Report is to evaluate as far as possible the potential environmental effects of the Local Area Plan policies, objectives and zonings and set out measures to prevent, reduce and as far as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment.

7.2. Overview of Evaluation of Policies and Objectives

7.2.1 Development Strategy

Development Strategy objectives aims to support orderly and sequential development which are to be consistent with the following:

- The Core Strategy of the Galway County Development Plan;
- To protect Natura 2000 Network and Habitats Directive;
- To implement the development management standards and guidelines as set out in Galway County Development Plan;
- To ensure that development is preceded by sufficient capacity in the public waste water and potable water infrastructure;
- To direct residential development into appropriately zoned land and serviced lands;
- To ensure that all new developments will be assessed in accordance with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 and associated circular PL2/2014.

The policies and objectives for the Development Strategy support and facilitate the sustainable development of the plan area in line with the preferred development strategy option, Option 2- Consolidation of Existing Development with Sequential Development around Consolidated Areas with a refined plan boundary. This strategy maintains and enhances the quality of life of the local community, promotes opportunities for economic development, social integration, sustainable transport options, protects the cultural, built and natural heritage and environment. There is some potential for negative impacts on biodiversity, water and human health as a result of development and the requirement for population growth in line with the Core Strategy. Any new development applications in this regard will be subject to the objective DS8 which specifically relates to the sufficient capacity in the public waste water and potable infrastructure and therefore potential impacts will be minimised or mitigated at this stage.

7.2.2 Residential Development

The policies and objectives for Residential Development are generally aimed at the provision of adequate suitable housing and at a rate and scale which is in line with the core strategy of the County Development and the Ballinasloe LAP. These policies and objectives are expected to result in positive direct and indirect impacts to population through improvements to quality of life and ensure that there is suitable accommodation for a wide section of the population. Appropriate densities, housing mix and provision of services in relation development of new residential developments are promoted within the section.

Policy RD1 & Objective RD1 promotes the phasing of development and the prioritisation of phase 1 residential lands within close proximity of the town during the lifetime of the plan. This will indirectly assist in maintaining the habitat networks and rivers in undeveloped rural areas by promoting development in the town centre and established settlement areas of the town. There is also a specific objective RD 2 which promotes sequential development of lands in an orderly and phased manner.

There is some potential for negative impacts on biodiversity, water and soils; however there are sufficient policies and objectives that will ensure that these impacts are mitigated especially in Section 3.10.2 objectives NH1, NH2, NH6, NH7 & NH8. Any new development proposals in this regard will also be subject to development management requirements of the Ballinasloe LAP and the Galway County Development Plan and potential impacts will be minimised or mitigated during this process.

Impacts on the human health of the local population as a result of promoting the consolidation of development within and immediate to the town centre would be positive in the promotion of walking and cycling.

7.2.3 Social and Community Development

The policies and objectives for social and community development in Section 3.3.2 are generally aimed at the provision of services and education for the community (Objectives CF3, CF4, CF5, CF6, CF7, CF11 & CF12). It is considered that there would be a direct positive impact on the local population in terms of the requirement that social and community developments are located in close proximity to the residential population (Objective CF4 & CF 5). There is an indirect positive impact with respect to the air and climatic factors of the town as result of the reduction in travel related journeys due to the encouragement of the social and community developments to be in close proximity to the local residential population.

There is some potential for negative impacts on biodiversity, water and soils; however there are sufficient policies and objectives especially in Section 3.10.2 (Objectives NH1, NH2, NH6, NH7 & NH8) that will ensure that these impacts are mitigated. Any new development proposals in this regard will also be subject to development management requirements of the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan and the Galway County Development Plan and potential impacts will be minimised or mitigated during this process.

7.2.4 Economic Development

The policies and objectives regarding Economic Development are aimed at facilitating and encouraging tourism, retail and economic development of Ballinasloe which would reinforce the town's designation as a "County Town" in accordance with the Galway County Development Plan. To achieve this and maintain the status of Ballinasloe as the "County Town" policies and objectives in Section 3.4.2 are crafted to exploit the towns location and to ensure that lands are strategically located to provide for future development. In addition it is anticipated that tourism developments could have the potential to increase tourism and employment numbers which would directly have an impact on the quality of life for the local residents in that with new employment opportunities there is less time commuting to outside the area for work. The objectives in relation to the tourism potential (ED7 & ED8) are largely anticipated to have a positive impact on population through improving the economic prosperity of Ballinasloe.

As with any new commercial, industrial or tourism related developments there is potential for negative impacts arising, however there are sufficient policies and objectives that will ensure that these impacts are mitigated. There are sufficient policies and objectives especially in Section 3.10.2 objectives NH1, NH2, NH6, NH7 & NH8 which will ensure that these impacts are mitigated. Any new development proposals in this regard will also be subject to development management requirements of the Ballinasloe LAP and the Galway County Development Plan and potential impacts will be minimised or mitigated during this process.

7.2.5 Transport Infrastructure

A number of policies and objectives in Section 3.5.2 of the Local Area Plan promotes the use of sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport which will all have positive impacts on the wider environment. This promotion of sustainable transport will also have positive indirect and cumulative impacts on the air and climatic factors as a result of the decrease in emissions associated with the reduction in the use of private vehicles. There are positive impacts on the quality of life for local residents and positive impacts on the material assets through the provision of improved infrastructure for users of sustainable transport modes, e.g. Public Transport, cycling and walking.

In addition, the promotion of sustainable travel with integrated land use and transportation policies should encourage the redevelopment of Ballinasloe rather than development on sites that are not serviced by public transport or cycle/walking networks, which results in a positive direct impact on the quality of life for the residents of the plan area.

There is however potential for indirect negative effects with regard to the development of new road infrastructure with respect to biodiversity, water, soils and landscape in particular however it is considered that there are sufficient policies and objectives especially in Section 3.10.2 under objectives NH1, NH2, NH6 & NH7 that will ensure that these impacts are mitigated.

7.2.6 Utilities Infrastructure

The adequacy of water, waste water and environmental services is essential for the sustainable development of Ballinasloe. These key issues are addressed in various policies and objectives in section 3.6.3 & 3.6.6 to provide for sufficient water, wastewater and drainage infrastructure to serve the projected growth in population that is envisaged.

There are a number of policies and objectives that specifically relate to the provision of waste management in Section 3.6.9 which encourages the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste materials. In Section 3.6.11 the provision of energy infrastructure, renewable energy and telecommunication ensures that existing and future telecommunication requirements of the town are planned in an environmental sustainable manner for the duration of the plan period.

The policies and objectives in relation to waste management will generally have positive direct and indirect impacts through the provision of recycling facilities throughout the plan area which will benefit biodiversity, flora and fauna, human health, soils, air & climatic factors, landscape and material assets. The policies and objectives relating to the provision of energy and communications infrastructure will have direct and indirect positive impacts on population by improving the quality of life for the residents of Ballinasloe.

7.2.7 Climate Change and Flooding

There are a number of policies and objectives within Section 3.7.2 that focus on climate change and green infrastructure, air quality and flooding. The promotion of climate change, improved air quality and climate change adaptation framework will result in positive direct impacts on air and climatic factors, population and human health, biodiversity and material assets.

In relation to avoidance of development in flood risk areas and the recognition of existing built up areas that are prone to flood risk there are a number of policies and objectives (FL1,FL2,FL3 & FL4)that will result in positive direct impacts on water, population and human health, soils and biodiversity.

7.2.8 Urban Design and Landscape

The protection of the built environment and the recognition of the requirement of high quality, and sensitive design of buildings within Ballinasloe are outlined in Section 3.8.1. The importance of Ballinasloe's townscape qualities which are derived from its historic urban structures are noted throughout the Local Area Plan. There are a number of policies and objectives (UD1, UD2, UD3, UD5 & UD6) that support the urban fabric of Ballinasloe and these objectives will result in positive direct impacts on population and human health, material assets and cultural heritage.

In relation to landscape there is a positive presumption in the promotion of the landscape character, values, sensitivities and views within the plan area. The policy and objective in relation to Landscape (UD 7) will result in positive direct impact on population and human health, material assets and the landscape itself.

7.2.9 Built and Cultural Heritage

The consolidation and expansion of the town centre will have a positive direct impact with respect to cultural heritage as this would allow for potential improvements to these areas through re-development. The built heritage should be carefully considered in any such proposed developments. The consolidation and expansion of the town centre is primarily expected to result in positive impacts as these could result

in the redevelopment of brownfield lands, thereby protecting soils, water and biodiversity and population from cumulative impacts of new developments. There can also be instances where development and intensification of construction may have indirect impacts in terms of placing pressure on soils, water and biodiversity. However it is considered that the integration of the policies and objectives in Section 3.9.2 would be expected to reduce indirect negative impacts on other receptors.

The protection and enhancement of Ballinasloe towns built heritage is central to the Local Area Plan. The policies and objectives for cultural, architectural and archaeological heritage will generally be positive through the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage.

7.2.10 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

The importance of green infrastructure and ecological networks is recognised within the plan area. There is a designated ecological site within the plan area, policies and objectives ensure the protection of this designated site. In addition to this designated site there is also proposed natural heritage areas within the plan area, policies and objectives are also set out to ensure that these sites are also protected. The policies and objectives in Section 3.10.2 for natural heritage and biodiversity for the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan will generally be positive for biodiversity as it aims to protect and promote opportunities for enhancement of local biodiversity features throughout the plan area. It is considered that there will be indirect positive impacts on water and soil as the protection, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is expected to also result in protection of these resources.

The policies and objectives in this section are expected to result in largely positive direct and indirect impacts to population through the improvements to the quality of life. It is considered that there will be indirect positive effects in relation to biodiversity and landscape.

7.2.11 Overview of Evaluation of Land Use Zoning Objectives

The purpose of land use zoning is to indicate to property owners, and to the general public, the types of development that the Council considers most appropriate in each zone.

Land use zoning objectives are provided for with respect to the following uses:

- Town Centre/Commercial;
- Commercial/Mixed Use;
- Residential Phase 1;
- Residential Phase 2;
- Industrial;
- Business & Enterprise;
- Business & Technology;
- Community Facilities;
- Environmental Management;
- Open Space/Recreation & Amenity;
- Public Utilities;
- Transport Infrastructure.

Town Centre/Commercial

Lands zoned for town centre uses are generally considered to be quite positive with respect to population, climate change and material assets as they promote the consolidation and improvement of these areas and provision of services in close proximity to same. This will have indirect positive effects on landscape due to the promotion of vacant lands and underutilized sites which will have a net positive effect through reduction in development on greenfield lands.

Residential Phase 1

Undeveloped lands zoned for new residential development during the lifetime of the Local Area Plan are zoned R-residential in Map 1A of the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan. These undeveloped zoned lands

include lands which have the benefit of planning permission and have not yet developed. R-Residential (Phase 1) zoned lands also include residentially zoned lands identified as part of the development strategy for the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan which will aim to deliver the Core Strategy allocations as set out in the Galway County Development Plan. Phase 1 lands are strategically located in close proximity to existing residential and business/commercial developments.

Residential Phase 2

Map 1A of the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan makes provision for residentially zoned Phase 2 lands under zoning R2. These undeveloped lands are reserved for the longer term growth needs of the town and are generally located in more peripheral areas to the south and east of the town with a number of parcels of R2 lands to the north of the town. These lands will not normally be eligible for development during the lifetime of this Local Area Plan. However consideration will be given to single house developments for family members on family owned lands or where it is apparent that Residential (Phase 1) lands cannot or will not be developed within the plan period these lands may accommodate residential units however compliance with the core strategy is required and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development will also be required.

The phased development of lands for residential use in accordance with Map 1A will have an overall beneficial effect on population, climate change, landscape and material assets as residential development will be developed in a planned, phased and serviced manner. This would result in high quality living environments; it promotes sustainable transport, walking and cycling and will reduce potential effects on landscape from otherwise sprawling developments throughout the environs of the town.

As with all new developments on greenfield sites, there is potential for negative effects on biodiversity, water and soils. However it is anticipated that any potential mitigation measures would be offset or mitigated against through the normal development management process which is likely to offset any significant impacts associated with development of these lands.

Industrial

Objectives for the development of Industrial lands are anticipated to have a positive direct impact on population and material assets as these land uses will help to reinforce the town's designation as County Town under the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan. The zoning of these lands provides an opportunity to increase employment in these areas and as a result has a direct positive impact on the quality of life for those living in Ballinasloe.

Zoning of Industrial lands to the south of the plan area and which are in close proximity to the town in line with the Local Area Plans development strategy supports the use of public transport and walking and cycling and will as a result reduce impacts on climate change. Secondary positive impacts on population, climate, landscape and material assets as these objectives would be expected to discourage sprawl of these uses in an unregulated manner throughout the town.

As with all new developments, there is the potential for in combination effects (along with other developments planned for the town) to have impacts on biodiversity, soil, water and landscape through pressure on wastewater systems, water supplies and through development of greenfield lands. However, any new developments on these lands would be subject to the normal development management process which is likely to offset any significant impacts associated with development of these lands.

Business and Technology

Objectives for the development of Business and Technology lands are anticipated to have a positive direct impact on population and material assets as these land uses will help to reinforce the town's designation as the "County Town" under the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan. The zoning of these lands provides an opportunity to increase employment within the town as a result has a direct positive impact on the quality of life for those living in Ballinasloe.

The zoning of Business and Technology lands to the north east of the plan area, which are situated on lands with an established technology park and in with easy access of the town supports the use of public

transport and walking and cycling and will as a result reduce impacts on climate change. Secondary positive impacts will also occur on population, climate, landscape and material assets as these objectives would be expected to discourage sprawl of technology parks in an unregulated manner throughout the town.

Business and Enterprise

Objectives for the development of Business and Enterprise lands are anticipated to have a positive direct impact on population and material assets as these land uses will help to reinforce the town's designation as "County Town" under the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan.

The zoning of these Business and Enterprise lands which are in close proximity to existing residential lands and which are within easy access of the town supports the use of public transport, walking and cycling and will as a result reduce impacts on climate change. Secondary positive impacts will also occur on population, climate, landscape and material assets as these objectives would be expected to discourage sprawl of the business and enterprise uses in an unregulated manner throughout the town.

Community Facilities

The aim of the land use zoning objective for community facilities is to protect and provide for the development of schools, community and educational facilities. It is anticipated that this land use zoning objective would have an overall positive effect on population as it would improve educational and community facilities serving the public. As with all new developments there is potential to impact on biodiversity, soils, landscape and water through the development of greenfield lands. However any new development would be subject to development management requirements of the Local Area Plan and the Galway County Development Plan.

Environmental Management

Objectives for the development of Environmental Management lands relate to lands that have a high biodiversity value and/or environmental sensitivities which include the protection of the integrity of European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network. It is anticipated that this land use will have a positive direct impact on population, biodiversity and material assets. This land use objective is expected to result in direct positive impacts to biodiversity. Positive and secondary impacts are also likely to occur in the areas of soil and water due to the controls that would be placed on development as a result of implementation of this objective.

Open Space/Recreation & Amenity

The land use objective for Open Space/Recreational and Amenity aims to retain and protect existing open space and recreational facilities and uses and to protect these lands from urban sprawl and ribbon development.

Additionally these lands are zoned to ensure that any flood risk areas within the OS zone are appropriately managed to avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate, the risk and potential impact of flooding.

This land use objective will have overall positive effects with respect to population and climate change. It would help to maintain the quality of people's lives through high quality environments and providing recreational areas which may indirectly have positive effects on people. This land use objective is expected to result in direct positive impacts to biodiversity. Positive and secondary impacts are also likely to occur in the areas of soil and water due to the controls that would be placed on development as a result of implementation of this objective.

Agriculture

The land use zoning objective for Agriculture aims to protect the rural character of the plan area from inappropriate development and provide for agricultural and appropriate non-urban uses. This land use objective will have overall positive effects with respect to population and climate change as the quality of people's lives are improved through the provision of high quality environments and recreational areas. This land use objective is expected to result in direct positive impacts to biodiversity. Positive and

secondary impacts are also likely to occur in the areas of soil and water due to the controls that would be placed on development as a result of implementation of this objective.

Public Utilities

The land use objective for public utilities aims to facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential public utility infrastructure, together with necessary ancillary facilities and uses, as appropriate. Zoning of lands for public utilities is necessary to take account of existing wastewater treatment within the boundary of the LAP area. This zoning provides lands for improvements to existing wastewater infrastructure and therefore has the potential to provide positive impacts on population, biodiversity and water quality. However as with all new developments, development within public utilities zones have potential for impacts on biodiversity, soil, water and landscape through construction activities and development of greenfield lands. However, any new developments on these lands would be subject to the normal development management process which is likely to offset any significant impacts associated with development of these lands.

Constrained Land Use Zone (CL) (Refer to Maps 1A/1B)

The land use zoning for constrained land use applies to developed areas that are located within a flood risk area. The underlying zonings or the existing permitted uses are deemed to be acceptable in principal for minor developments to existing buildings subject to normal planning and flood risk assessment (such as small extensions to houses, most changes of use of existing buildings). This land use objective will have overall positive effects with respect to population and human health which would help to maintain the quality of people's lives through high quality environments and ensuring that the flood mitigation measures are considered fully which will directly have positive effects on people and their property.

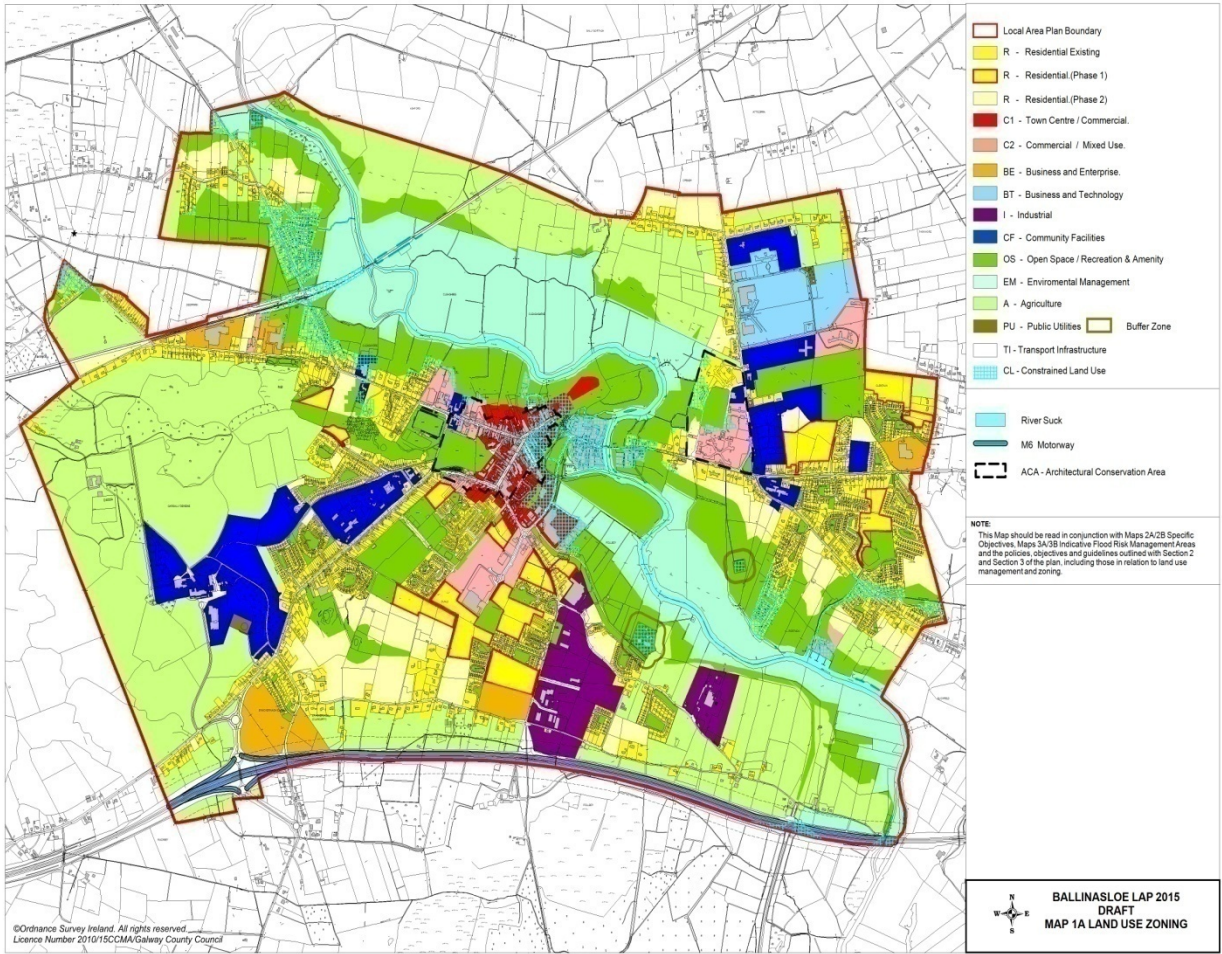


Figure 7.1 Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan Land Use Zoning

Section 8 Mitigation Measures

8.1 Introduction

This section outlines the mitigation measures that will prevent, reduce and offset as much as possible any significant adverse effects on the environment of the plan area resulting from the implementation of the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan.

Table 8.1 proposes a number of changes (indicated in **green font**) to a number of draft objectives and additional new objectives in order to strengthen protection of environmental resources. These have been informed by both the SEA and the AA process.

SEA Recommendations and Suggested Mitigation	Change to the Draft Local Area Plan
Section 2	
<p>In relation to the Land Use Matrix Table:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for Consideration for Take-Aways in the Residential Areas. This should be “Not Normally Permitted”. 	Wording accepted as proposed.
<p>Objective LU 1 – Town Centre/Commercial (C1) (Refer to Maps 1A/1B) Promote the sustainable development of the Town Centre as an intensive, high quality, well-landscaped, human-scaled and accessible environment with an appropriate mix of uses, including residential, commercial, service, tourism, enterprise, public and community uses as appropriate, that provide a range of retail services, facilities and amenities to the local community and visitors to the town. The town centre and associated main streets will remain the primary focus for retail and service activity in Ballinasloe.</p>	Wording accepted as proposed.
<p>Objective LU 2 – Commercial/Mixed Use (C2) (Refer to Maps 1A/1B) Promote the sustainable development of commercial and complementary mixed uses, on suitable lands that can provide focal points for the provision of services to surrounding neighbourhoods/areas and opportunities for commercial enterprises, retail developments and employment creation and which do not undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre.</p>	Wording accepted as proposed.
<p>Objective LU 3 – Residential (R) (Refer to Maps 1A/1B and Objective RD1) Promote a phased, sequential approach on Residential zoned lands, with a strong emphasis on consolidating existing patterns of development, encouraging infill opportunities and promoting sustainable transport options. It is an objective to:</p>	Wording accepted as proposed.

<p>1. Promote the development of appropriate and serviced lands to provide for high quality, well laid out and well landscaped sustainable residential communities with an appropriate mix of housing types and densities, together with complementary land uses such as community facilities, local services and public transport facilities, and sustainable transport options to serve the residential population of the area and the surrounding environment;</p> <p>2. Protect existing residential amenities and facilitate compatible and appropriately designed new infill development, in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</p> <p>A Phasing Scheme shall apply to residential uses on Residential (R) zoned lands, as set out under Objective RD1 in Section 3.2.2.</p>	
<p>Objective LU 5 – Business & Technology (BT) (Refer to Maps 1A/1B)</p> <p>Promote the sustainable development of high value business and technology uses to reinforce Ballinasloe’s potential as a growth centre for medium - large, innovative, companies in sectors including, science and technology based industry in life sciences, bio-pharma, IT, internationally traded services and Research and Development. This zoning shall also provide for office park developments, storage facilities and logistics that are ancillary to the primary uses outlined above. Appropriate training facilities, such as Third Level Outreach facilities, may also be considered.</p> <p>The development of inappropriate or non-complementary uses, and which would be more appropriately located on lands zoned as Industrial, Business & Enterprise and Town Centre/Commercial, Commercial/Mixed Use will not normally be permitted within this zoning.</p>	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>
<p>Objective CF 13 – Amenity Network</p> <p>(a) Support the establishment of an accessible and sustainable network of greenway linkages and amenities that provide safe and attractive circulation routes for pedestrians and cyclists and for the enjoyment and recreational use of the entire community.</p> <p>(b) Galway County Council will also seek to promote the functioning of greenway networks as wildlife corridors and habitats to enhance the biodiversity and the natural environment.</p>	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>

<p>Objective CF 14 – Linear Park (Indicative Route) (Refer to Maps 2A/2B)</p> <p>(a). Support the sustainable development of a Linear Park including recreational facilities and activities that will benefit the local community and visitors to the area and enhance the tourism infrastructure in an environmentally sustainable manner.</p> <p>(b). Ensure that in particular that all such developments shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 Habitats Directive and that other designated sites and habitats of national, regional or local importance are not adversely affected.</p>	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>
<p>Objective CF 15 – Cycle and Pedestrian Networks</p> <p>(a). Encourage and support the development of a series of cycle and pedestrian routes in the Ballinasloe area and in accordance with the Galway to Dublin Cycle Route and the Townspark Relief Road where feasible and in a sensitive manner, incorporating the streams, rivers, woods, and canal. Indirect impacts on built heritage, natural heritage and designated conservation areas arising from such recreational activities should be duly considered and addressed as part of any proposal.</p> <p>(b). Ensure that in particular that all such development shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 Habitats Directive and that other designated sites and habitats of national, regional or local importance are not adversely affected.</p>	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>
<p>Objective ED 7 – Tourism Development</p> <p>Encourage and facilitate the sustainable development of the tourism potential of Ballinasloe and its environs in a manner that respects, builds on, protects and enhances the cultural, built and natural heritage of the town and the local amenities within the Plan area including natural heritage and biodiversity.</p> <p>Key projects and initiatives that will be supported in this plan shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Facilitate the sustainable development of East Galway as a cultural and tourist destination while simultaneously safeguarding its integrity. Promote active collaboration between all stakeholders both in County Galway and adjoining counties and region. b) Collaborate with the Ballinasloe Town 	

<p>Twinning Committee and other tourism agencies in the enhancement and increased economic value of Ballinasloe's town twinning linkages and to create a broader tourist offer within the concept of the 'Fair Towns'.</p> <p>Ensure that in particular all such development shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and any other sites that maybe considered as stepping stones in support of Natura</p>	
<p>Objective ED 8 – Water-Based Tourism (Refer to Maps 2A/2B)</p> <p>The Council will support, subject to meeting the requirements of relevant Irish Planning and European environmental legislation including the Habitats Directive, the development of the necessary infrastructure and amenities to support water-based tourism within the plan area.</p> <p>The Council shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Collaborate with Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, other Local Authorities and other relevant agencies in the implementation of 'The Mid Shannon and Lough Ree Product Development Study' which involves waterways and waterside tourism potential and to enhance water-based tourism product along the Shannon Navigation System including Ballinasloe in order to make the town a more attractive inland water tourism destination; b) Continue to promote and enhance the public marina at Slí na hAbhainn as a sustainable marina resource including ancillary facilities and services as appropriate; c) Ensure that in particular that all such development shall not adversely affect habitats and species protected by Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and that other designated sites and habitats of national, regional or local importance are not adversely affected. 	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>
<p>Objective ED 12 – Town Centre Viability, Vitality and Vacancy</p> <p>Ensure a balance of development in the town centre of Ballinasloe so as to revitalise Dunlo Street, Market Square, Society Street and Main Street, and to reduce vacancies and avoid an unbalanced retail pull from these core shopping streets/side streets and the town centre.</p>	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>

<p>Objective ED 13 – Brownfield Development & Vacancy Encourage the redevelopment of existing brownfield sites within the plan area in order to maximise the sustainable regeneration of underutilized/vacant lands and/or buildings for potential commercial, retail and residential developments.</p>	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>
<p>Objective UD 4 – Green Network and Landscaping (a). Support the development of a network of amenities, open spaces and natural areas that support biodiversity, that incorporate existing landscape features such as local rivers, streams, trees, stone walls and hedgerows. (b). Support the sustainable development of provide pedestrian and cycling linkages and active and passive recreation opportunities, that help to structure and provide relief from the built environment and that can provide areas for surface water attenuation and flood risk management.</p>	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>
<p>Green Infrastructure Green infrastructure can be defined as networks of green areas that provide multiple environmental, social, educational and economic benefits to society and can include open spaces, woodlands, parks, farmland and private gardens. The environmental benefits of identifying a green infrastructure network cannot be underestimated as the protection of natural features like flood plains, wetlands, woodlands and hedgerows provide far-reaching benefits, e.g. in climate change adaptation. Developing a green infrastructure approach can assist with the loss of biodiversity while enhancing an environment in which we live and thereby creating a high quality environment. Comhar Sustainable Development Council publication (2010) <i>‘Creating Green Infrastructure for Ireland: Enhancing Natural Capital for Human Wellbeing’</i> sets out how a network of green spaces can be developed to benefit natural heritage and biodiversity as well as the greater economy and society.</p> <p>Invasive Species Non-native species both animal and plants can represent a major threat to local, regional and global biodiversity. Terrestrial and aquatic habitats can be negatively affected, resulting in significant damage to conservation and economic interests such as agriculture, forestry and civil infrastructure. The <i>Third Schedule of European Communities (Birds & Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011</i> lists restricted non-native species and Regulation No.49</p>	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>

<p>and No. 50 specifically relate to recognised invasive species.</p> <p>Development proposals must ensure that the presence or absence of invasive alien species has been addressed in accordance with the new European Regulations for the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of Invasive Alien Species (1st Jan 2015) and the EC (Birds and Habitats) Regulations 2011. Where invasive alien species are present on a development site an Invasive Alien Species Management Plan will be required.</p>	
<p>Objective NH 9 - Control of Invasive and Invasive Alien Species Seek to prevent the spread of invasive, and alien invasive alien species and noxious weeds and require a landscaping plan to be produced for developments near water bodies and ensure that such plans do not include invasive species.</p>	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>
<p>Objective NH 12 – Eskers (Refer to Specific Objectives Maps 2A/2B)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess applications for quarrying and other proposed developments that are in close proximity to eskers that are located within the plan area that have the potential to impact on their landscape, scientific or amenity value; • Recognise that the Eskers in the plan area have unique landscape, scientific and amenity values and ensure that any development proposals should not detract from these values; • Maintain ridge tops of eskers to the south and northwest of the town as areas of open space. 	<p>Wording accepted as proposed.</p>

Section 9 Monitoring Measures

9.1 Introduction

It is proposed, in accordance with the SEA Directive, to base monitoring on a series of indicators which measure changes in the environment, especially changes which are critical in terms of environmental quality, for example water or air pollution levels. Monitoring will focus on the aspects of the environment that are likely to be significantly impacted upon by the implementation of the Draft Local Area Plan. The targets and indicators are derived from the Strategic Environmental Objectives discussed in Section 6 of the Environmental Report and are presented in Table 9.1 below. The target underpins the objective whilst the indicators are used to track the progress of the objective and targets in terms of monitoring of impacts.

The monitoring programme will consist of an assessment of the relevant indicators and targets against the data relating to each environmental component. Similarly, monitoring will be carried out frequently to ensure that any changes to the environment can be identified.

It is recommended that data arising from planning applications, particularly in terms of environmental constraints mapping and Environmental Impact Statements be integrated into the GIS and monitoring system. This will assist in assessing cumulative impacts also, in particular ecology and water quality.

Environmental Component	SEO Objectives	Target	Indicator	Source/Responsibility
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	<p>B1: To ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annexed habitats and Species⁹;</p> <p>B2: To ensure the protection, conservation to avoid the loss of diversity and integrity of a broad range of habitats, species and ecological and wildlife corridors and networks (non-designated sites) which provide connectivity between areas of local biodiversity within the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan;</p> <p>B3: Conserve and protect other sites of Nature conservation including NHAs and pNHAs.</p>	<p>B1: Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under national and international legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Plan¹⁰;</p> <p>B2: No significant ecological networks or parts thereof which provide functional connectivity to be lost without remediation resulting from development provided for in the Plan;</p> <p>B3: No net loss of habitat and species.</p>	<p>B1:No significant negative impacts on designated habitats and species of the SPA;</p> <p>B2:Habitat Loss e.g. loss of hedgerow, loss of mature trees, treelines, wooded areas and stone walls; No loss of locally rare species/habitats; No net loss of green linkages/ecological networks especially rivers;</p> <p>B3: Habitat quantity and quality of species</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galway County Council; National Parks and Wildlife.
Population, Human Health	<p>PHH: To protect human health from hazards or nuisances arising from exposure to incompatible land uses.</p>	<p>PHH: No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan.</p>	<p>PHH: Number of newly constructed developments Population Equivalent input to WWTP;</p> <p>Also see Water and Biodiversity Indicators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galway County Council.
Soil & Geology	<p>SG1:To prevent pollution and/or contamination of soil;</p> <p>SG2: Conserve, protect and avoid loss of diversity and integrity of designated habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites.</p>	<p>SG1 & SG2: To minimise reductions in soil extent and hydraulic connectivity;</p> <p>SG1 & SG2: Limit residential development to phase 1 lands.</p>	<p>SG1 & SG2: Area of soil where function and quality is compromised e.g. where soil sealing occurs;</p> <p>SG1 & SG2:Limit net loss of groundwater recharge capability through loss of permeable soil resource.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galway County Council; Environmental Protection Agency.
Water	<p>W1: To maintain and improve, where possible, the status of surface waters;</p>	<p>W1 To improve Biotic Quality Rating (Q Values) and Risk Assessment of Water Bodies;</p>	<p>W1:The Biotic Quality Rating;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galway County Council; Environmental Protection Agency.

⁹ 'Annexed habitats and species' refer to those listed under Annex I, II & IV of the EU Habitats Directive and Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

¹⁰ 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.

	<p>W2: To prevent pollution and contamination of ground water;</p> <p>W3: To comply as appropriate with the Provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG,2009) and associated Circular PL 2/2014.</p>	<p>W2 No reductions in the Q value in relevant water courses; No change or improvement in groundwater quality associated with development;</p> <p>% increase in waters achieving “good status” as defined by WFD;</p> <p>W3 No new development in Flood Zone A Developments proposed with Flood Risk Zones to comply with Floods Directive;</p> <p>SUDS in all new developments.</p>	<p>W2 Risk Assessment Implementation of the Programme of Measures identified under the SERBD River Basin Management Plan;</p> <p>Ensure wastewater collection system capacity is provided either prior to construction of new development or is developed in parallel;</p> <p>W3 Number and area of developments within Flood Risk Zones;</p> <p>Ensure that there is no development granted on lands which are outlined in the flood risk assessment as not suitable for development.</p>	
Air and Climatic Factors	<p>AC: To reduce travel related greenhouse emissions to air and to encourage modal change from car to more sustainable forms of transport.</p>	<p>AC Reduce Greenhouse gas emissions in line with 2020 commitments;</p> <p>% Increase in number of people travelling to work and school via public transport.</p>	<p>AC: All new development applications within areas at risk of flooding to be accompanied by Flood Risk Assessment;</p> <p>Increase access by households to public transport, including bus and rail services;</p> <p>Increase number of people travelling to work and school via public transport.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galway County Council.
Material Assets	<p>M1: To serve new development with adequate and appropriate waste water treatment;</p> <p>M2: To serve growth areas with drinking water that is both wholesome and clean;</p> <p>M3: Make the best use of existing road and transportation infrastructure.</p>	<p>M1: % Compliance in wastewater discharges from municipal treatment;</p> <p>M2: % Compliance in potable water quality monitoring;</p> <p>M3: Increase in population in urban areas.</p>	<p>M1: % compliance in wastewater discharges from municipal treatment;</p> <p>M2:% compliance in potable water quality monitoring; % compliance in wastewater discharges from municipal treatment;</p> <p>M3: Maximise development potential within urban envelope in order to reduce travel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galway County Council.

<p>Cultural Heritage</p>	<p>CH1: To protect the archaeological heritage of the town including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context and Architectural Conservation Areas;</p> <p>CH2: To preserve and protect the special interest and character of the town's architectural heritage.</p>	<p>CH1: Ensure that the culture heritage of the town is maintained and protected from damage and deterioration;</p> <p>CH1: Number of monuments on the RMP, impacted by granted planning permissions;</p> <p>CH1: Number of protected structures impacted by development granted planning permission;</p> <p>CH1 & CH2: Number of protected structures that have been demolished because of long term neglect and dereliction.</p>	<p>CH1: % of Protected Structures 'at risk'; No. of archaeological sites Investigated; No impact on the fabric or setting of monuments on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) by development granted planning permission; No impacts on the architectural heritage value or setting of protected structures by development granted planning permission;</p> <p>CH2: No. of ACAs Protect and preserve features of special interest as included in the RPS, RMP and ACA;</p> <p>CH2: Protect and enhance physical features and areas that contribute to the town's special character and setting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galway County Council; Buildings at Risk Register, Heritage Council Ireland.
<p>Landscape</p>	<p>L: To avoid significant adverse impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscapes which are most valuable and most sensitive to change and protected focal points and views.</p>	<p>L: Minimal negative impacts on designated landscapes and scenic views, landscape features of local value;</p> <p>L: Number of protected views impacted by development.</p>	<p>L: Number of developments impacting on designated landscapes and scenic views, routes and landscape features of local value;</p> <p>L: No planning permission granted within special qualities of landscapes that materially contravene the policies or objectives of the plan, within the lifetime of the plan.</p> <p>L: No negative alteration to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protected views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galway County Council.

Table 9.1 Monitoring and Reporting Programme

Section 10 Conclusion

The Draft Ballinasloe LAP sets out an overall strategy, policies and objectives for the period 2015 to 2021 which seeks to provide for the long term planning and overall benefit of the town and its environs. The SEA Environmental Report demonstrates how environmental parameters have been addressed in the LAP preparation process to date. Consultation has been undertaken for the Scoping of the Environmental Report, and current baseline information has been described for all SEA parameters. The Environmental Report forms a key part of the consultation process and is accompanied by the Habitats Directive Assessment and Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan which is subject to public display.

Policies, objectives and land use zonings were assessed in terms of the impacts on the environment and mitigation measures proposed through rewording of the policies/objectives or rezoning where necessary. The mitigation measures proposed for the policies/objectives through the SEA and AA process have been incorporated into the Draft Local Area Plan. The SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) have informed the Draft LAP through an ongoing iterative process that incorporated environmental considerations and sensitivities throughout the Local Area Plan development. The SEA and HDA has been undertaken in line with the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 to 2011 (as amended) and the European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations 94 of 1999, as amended SI 233/1998 and SI 378/2005. Subject to the full and proper implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in the SEA Environmental Report (and subsequently incorporated into the Ballinasloe Draft Local Area Plan), including appropriate site level investigations, it is considered that significant adverse impacts on the environment will be avoided.

The Environmental Report, which identifies the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the LAP has been submitted to the Elected Members of Galway County Council for their consideration and should be read in conjunction with the Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan. Subject to the full and proper implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in the ER, including appropriate site level investigations, it is considered that significant adverse impacts on the environment will be avoided. The Environmental Report must be taken account of before adopting the Plan.