

SCREENING STATEMENT

IN SUPPORT OF THE
APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT
OF THE
PROPOSED VARIATION No. 1
TO THE
ROSCOMMON TOWN LOCAL AREA PLAN
2014-2020

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF
ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE

for: Roscommon County Council

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

CAAS has been appointed by Roscommon County Council to prepare this Screening Statement in support of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the proposed amendment to the Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2014-2020 in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive¹.

An Appropriate Assessment is a requirement of Article 6 of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (as amended) (hereafter referred to as the "Habitats Directive"). The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the "Favourable Conservation Status" of habitats and species of European Community Interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds) with Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as European Sites.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the European Sites at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations (in particular Part XAB of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 477) (often referred to as the Habitats Regulations) to ensure the ecological integrity of these sites. Appropriate Assessment (AA) is an assessment of whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a European Site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Emerging socio-economic factors have resulted in amendments and variations to public policies and developmental requirements within the county. Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2014-2020 has already been subject to an Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment which were both accepted. The mitigation measures proposed within the documents were deemed sufficient to ensure the implementation of the Plan would not result in any likely significant effects to European Sites.

Similarly, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken to assess the impacts of the proposed amendment on a number of environmental considerations including biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between these considerations, whenever applicable.

1.2 Legislative Context

The Appropriate Assessment process (AA) is an assessment of the potential for adverse or negative effects of a plan or project, in combination with other plans or projects, on the conservation objectives of a European Site. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and provide for the protection and long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as "The Habitats Directive", provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. In Ireland, these are candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) designated under the

¹ Directive 92/43/EEC

Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/ECC), hereafter referred to as European Sites.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect European Sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the [Natura 2000] site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

These requirements are implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. These regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in judgements of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project may nevertheless be carried out for "Imperative Reasons Of Overriding Public Interest", including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of European suite is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

Appropriate Assessment should be based on best scientific knowledge and Planning Authorities should ensure that scientific data (ecological and hydrological expertise) is utilised. This report details a Screening Statement to inform the AA process which is finalised by the statutory authority.

1.3 Guidance

This Screening Statement has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010.*

- *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission Environment DG, 2002.*
- *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC: European Commission, 2000.*
- *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (EC 2001);*
- *Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC – Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest, compensatory measures, overall coherence, opinion of the commission. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (EC 2007).*
- *Flora (Protection) Order, 1999 (As amended 2015)*

In addition, a detailed online review of published scientific literature and 'grey' literature was conducted. This included a detailed review of the National Parks and Wildlife Website including mapping and available reports for relevant sites and in particular sensitive qualifying interests/special conservation interests described and their conservation objectives. The EPA Envision Map-viewer (www.epa.ie) and available reports were also reviewed.

Definitions of conservation status, integrity and significance used in this assessment are defined in accordance with 'Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC' (EC, 2000).

- The conservation status of a natural habitat is defined as the sum of the influences acting on a natural habitat and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions as well as the long-term survival of its typical species;
- The conservation status of a species is defined as the sum of the influences acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its population;
- The integrity of a European Site is defined as the coherence of the site's ecological structure and function, across its whole area, or the habitats, complex of habitats and/or populations of species for which the site is or will be classified;
- Significant effect should be determined in relation to the specific features and environmental conditions of the protected site concerned by the plan or project, taking particular account of the site's conservation objectives.

1.4 Approach

There are four main stages in the AA process; the requirements for each depending on likely impacts to European Sites (SAC/ SPA).

Stage One: Screening

The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a European Site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment

The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European Site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts. If adequate mitigation is proposed to ensure no significant adverse impacts on European Sites, then the process may end at this stage. However, if the likelihood of significant impacts remains, then the process must proceed to Stage 3.

Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions

The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plans that avoids adverse impacts on the integrity of the European Site.

Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. First, the plan should aim to avoid any effects on European Sites by identifying possible effects early in the plan-making process and writing the plan in order to avoid such effects. Second, mitigation measures should be applied, if necessary, during the AA process to the point where no adverse effects on the site(s) remain. If the plan is still likely to result in effects on European Sites, and no further practicable mitigation is possible, then it must be rejected. If no alternative solutions are identified and the plan is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI test) under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effect.

1.4.1 Source-Pathway-Receptor Model

Ecological impact assessment of potential effects on European Sites is conducted following a standard source-pathway-receptor model, where, in order for an effect to be established all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism is sufficient to conclude that a potential effect is not of any relevance or significance.

- Source(s) – e.g. pollutant run-off from proposed works.
- Pathway(s) – e.g. groundwater connecting to nearby qualifying wetland habitats.
- Receptor(s) – qualifying aquatic habitats and species of European Sites.

In the interest of this report, receptors are the ecological features which are known to be utilised by the qualifying interests or special conservation interests of a European Site. A source is any identifiable element of the LAP provision which is known to have interactions with ecological processes. The pathways are any connections or links between the source and the receptor. This report determines if direct, indirect and cumulative adverse effects (however minor) will arise from the proposed project.

1.4.2 Zone of Influence

Following the source-pathway-receptor process a Zone of Influence (ZOI) will be determined based on the characteristics of the development (detailed in section 2) and the foreseen distribution of likely effects through any pathways identified. Once the ZOI is established, all European Sites within it will be assessed with specific reference to the sensitive receptors of each site and pathways for effect that relate to the ecological integrity of the site.

2 Description and background of the proposed amendment to Roscommon Town LAP 2014-2020

2.1 Existing Roscommon Town Local Area Plan

The purpose of the Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2014-2020 (RTLAP) is to provide a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town through the provision of policies and objectives to ensure this. The plan will be in operation for a six-year period from 2014 to 2020, unless amended. It aims to co-ordinate the reasonable needs and aspirations of the people of Roscommon, maximise the best-use of its resources, promote its economic and social development, while preserving the best of its natural and built environment and unique character.

Policies and objectives outlined in the RTLAP are in addition to the policies and objectives contained within the relevant Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020. It is acknowledged that not all strategic objectives will be achieved during the six-year LAP timeframe; however, it is important to identify these objectives to ensure commitment to achieving them in the longer term. In the interests of clarity, any reference to a goal, aim, policy, and objective in the text of this Local Area Plan, shall be construed as an 'objective' of this Plan for the purposes of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended and the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended.

2.1.1 Previous Assessments

A detailed Natura Impact Report in support of the AA of Roscommon Town LAP 2014-2020 was compiled along with a detailed Strategic Environmental Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. These assessment processes were conducted through an iterative process to ensure their findings were incorporated into the policies and objectives of the RTLAP itself. This process resulted in a robust set of mitigation and monitoring measures to ensure there were no likely significant adverse effects to any European Site arising from the implementation of the RTLAP. The NIR considered the following:

- Loss / reduction of habitat area (e.g. due to the development of new projects)
- Disturbance to Key Species (e.g. increased public access to protected sites, or during the construction phase of infrastructure projects)
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Reduction in species density
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value such as decrease in water quality / quantity (e.g. through inadequate wastewater treatment, run-off of pollutants during construction and operation of developments, agricultural runoff)

The existing RTLAP provides a framework for sustainable development within Roscommon town. The mitigation suggestions from the Appropriate Assessment process were incorporated into the Policies and Objectives of the plan.

2.1.2 Existing Policies and Objectives relating to the protection of European Sites

- Policy 20 Protect surface water and groundwater resources and their associated habitats and species including fisheries and in particular Annex II listed species.
- Policy 27 Ensure that existing wetland habitats are adequately protected, managed and where appropriate enhanced where flood protection/management measures are necessary.
- Policy 28 Any proposals aimed at alleviating flooding will be subject to Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) and 6 (4) of the EU Habitats Directive.

- Policy 76 Protect cSACs, SPAs, NHAs and pNHAs which are designated or become designated and notified to Roscommon County Council during the lifetime of this LAP.
- Policy 77 Protect any additional areas that may become designated during the lifetime of the plan, including the proposed and designated Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas, by resisting development which would detrimentally impact on the conservation status of those sites.
- Policy 78 Promote development in these areas, for recreational and educational purposes, where it would not conflict with the preservation and protection of these sites.
- Policy 79 Ensure the protection of natural heritage and biodiversity, including European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network, in accordance with relevant EU Environmental Directives and applicable National Legislation, Policies, Plans and Guidelines.
- Policy 80 Ensure the protection of habitats and species listed in the annexes to and/or covered by the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended), Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC) and European Communities (Environmental Liability) Regulations 2008, and regularly occurring-migratory birds and their habitats, and species protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976-2000 and the Flora Protection Order.
- Policy 81 Protect the water resources, including rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, turloughs, groundwater, as well as aquatic and wetland habitats and freshwater and water dependant species in accordance with the requirements and guidance in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/EC), the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the Western River Basin District Management Plan 2009-2015, Shannon International River Basin Management Plan 2009-2015 and other relevant EU Directives, including associated national legislation and policy guidance (including any superseding versions of same).
- Policy 82 Prohibit projects which would give rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)
- Objective 24 All proposals for the development of an upgrade to the water supply system will be screened for Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and where significant impacts are identified, a Natura Impact Statement will be prepared.
- Objective 34 Any proposals for the development of an upgrade of the waste water treatment plant and waste water network will be subject to Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) and 6 (4) of the EU Habitats Directive.
- Objective 79 Ensure Appropriate Assessment Screening, and, where required, Appropriate Assessment, is carried out for any plan or project which, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant direct or indirect impact on any Natura 2000 site or sites; in accordance with best practice guidance as issued by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and / or the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.
- Policy 83 Promote the retention and enhancement of existing habitats, biodiversity and geological heritage in Roscommon.
- Policy 84 Promote the implementation of key actions and objectives set out in the County Roscommon Heritage Plan, the County Roscommon Biodiversity Plan as appropriate.
- Objective 80 Promote the conservation of biodiversity outside of designated areas, while allowing for appropriate development, access and recreational activity.
- Objective 81 Identify, protect and conserve, in co-operation with the relevant statutory authorities and other groups, vulnerable, rare and threatened species or wild flora and fauna and their habitats. These include plant and animal species afforded protection under the Wildlife Acts and the EU Habitats & Birds Directives for example The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland, NPWS & DEHLG, 2008.
- Objective 82 Avoid development in habitats classified as 'Highly Sensitive' and 'Very Sensitive', and minimise development in habitats classified as 'Moderately Sensitive' in the Habitat Mapping of Habitats in County Roscommon, RPS, May 2011.

- Objective 83 Conserve, protect and enhance ecological stepping stones and wildlife corridors, as identified by the Habitat Mapping carried out for Roscommon town.
- Policy 85 Development on or near a site which is considered to be of local importance is required to avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site is considered to be of importance.
- Objective 84 Ensure that the conservation and management of biodiversity is a key priority in water resource management and other infrastructural projects in the LAP area, particularly those undertaken by the Council.
- Objective 85 Have regard to impacts of floodlighting and public lighting in open spaces and to minimise light intrusion in areas of habitat value.
- Objective 86 Protect and conserve Loughnaneane Turlough which is identified by Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) as a feature of geomorphological interest.
- CH1 To protect archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context
- CH2 To protect architectural heritage including entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context
- L1 To avoid significant adverse impacts on the landscape - especially with regard to landscapes which are most valuable and Scenic Routes and Scenic Views
- Policy 17 Encourage and promote compliance with the Water Framework Directive 2000; Groundwater Source Protection Zones document for the Roscommon Central Regional Water Supply Scheme (GSI, April 2003); the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (SI No. 272 of 2009); as well as any National and EU Regulations concerning water quality for the County.
- Policy 29 Facilitate, in conjunction with Irish Water, the provision of an adequate wastewater collection, treatment and disposal system for Roscommon Town LAP area to serve existing and future populations in accordance with the Water Framework Directive 2000, and EU Urban Wastewater Directive and in accordance with the EPA Discharge Licence.
- Policy 30 Support the protection of groundwater resources and dependent wildlife/habitats in accordance with the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC and the European Communities Environmental Objectives (groundwater) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 9 of 2010) or any updated legislation.
- Policy 77 Protect any additional areas that may become designated during the lifetime of the plan, including the proposed and designated Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas, by resisting development which would detrimentally impact on the conservation status of those sites
- Objective 20 Implement the relevant recommendations contained within the River Basin Management Plans for the Shannon International River Basin District and the Western River Basin District, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, in co-operation with Irish Water.
- Objective 83 Conserve, protect and enhance ecological stepping stones and wildlife corridors, as identified by the Habitat Mapping carried out for Roscommon town.

2.2 Proposed amendment to Roscommon Town LAP 2014-2020

The aim of Proposed Variation No.1 of the Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2014 – 2020 is to incorporate objectives to provide for the renewal of areas in need of regeneration as defined under Section 10(2)(h) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. In addition, it provides information and objectives concerning the introduction of the Vacant Sites Levy. Maps have been included which show hatching over zoned lands which indicate “residential” and “regeneration” lands where the Vacant Sites Levy may apply. The proposed variation to the LAP, therefore, does not alter the zoning of lands and simply indicates where the Vacant Sites Levy may apply to lands.

The proposed changes allow for the introduction of this site activation measure to stimulate regeneration and renewal within the LAP area. The lands identified are predominantly brownfield sites.

2.3 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

2.3.1 The National Spatial Strategy

The National Spatial Strategy sets out the strategic planning framework for the future development of Ireland. The NSS focuses on the physical consolidation of the metropolitan area. This necessitates the sustainable development of all vacant, derelict and underused lands including areas of underutilised physical and social infrastructure. In a regional context the NSS aims to boost the performance of strategically placed engines of growth or “gateways”, by attracting people together with business activity, services, infrastructure and amenities. These elements are necessary to drive economic growth and contribute to more balanced patterns of development across Ireland. The idea is that other towns, villages and rural areas will benefit from, contribute to and complement the gateways.

2.3.2 Western Regional Planning Guidelines

Roscommon’s County Development Board Strategy has a number of goals and objectives that it considers need to be executed at a regional level. These goals include developing and enhancing the environment and economy of County Roscommon so as to facilitate existing and future economic growth, in line with balanced regional development. Under this goal the objectives are to ensure a healthy, clean and safe environment for the county, to ensure that there is a well-developed transport system upgraded to a level that can support increased economic, social and cultural development of the county, ensure the county has an adequate supply of power and gas, develop an attractive environment for enterprise and enhance the entrepreneurial spirit in the county and ensure that the provision of technological infrastructure will cater for all telecommunication needs. Another major goal for the county is to develop cultural identity and raise the profile of culture and cultural activities that are accessible to all. An objective to secure this goal will be to develop accessible infrastructure to support the development of heritage, arts and sport.

2.3.3 Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020

The Roscommon County Development Plan provides the overall statutory framework for the development of County Roscommon and details the spatial development strategy for the county which is organized around a hierarchical structure of urban settlements and the rural area. Roscommon town is designated as the county town for Roscommon. Roscommon town is strategically located close to the county’s physical centre and if allowed to develop can have a positive impact on its surrounding regions. North of the town would be a targeted beneficiary of the town’s influence. Currently the town is the administrative and service capital of the county, containing the administrative bases for the local authority, health services and law enforcement. It also has an impact county wide and beyond in terms of retail function. These important and established functions give the town a status that should be reinforced and extended. The Core Strategy and the County Development Plan will reinforce the role of Roscommon town as the primary settlement within the county.

2.3.4 Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2014-2020

The purpose of the Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2014-2020 (RTLAP) is to provide a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town through the provision of policies and objectives to ensure this. The plan will be in operation for a six-year period from 2014 to 2020, unless amended. It aims to co-ordinate the reasonable needs and aspirations of the people of Roscommon, maximise the best-use of its resources, promote its economic and social development, while preserving the best of its natural and built environment and unique character.

2.3.5 Environmental Protection Objectives

The proposed amendment is subject to a number of high level environmental protection policies and objectives with which it must comply. Examples of Environmental Protection Objectives include the aims of the EU Habitats Directive which is to contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of Member States

and the purpose of the Water Framework Directive which is to establish a framework for the protection of inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater which, among other things, prevents deterioration in the status of all water bodies and protects, enhances and restores all waters with the aim of achieving good status.

3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

3.1 Introduction to Screening

3.1.1 Background to Screening

This stage of the AA process identifies any likely significant affects to European Sites from a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans. A series of questions are asked during this Screening Stage in order to determine:

- Whether a plan or project can be excluded from AA requirements because it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site.
- Whether the project will have a potentially significant effect on a European Site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, in view of the site's conservation objectives or if residual uncertainty exists regarding potential impacts.
- Submissions were made during the public consultation process by the EPA, these comments were factored into the Screening Assessment Process.

3.1.2 Desktop Studies

This screening assessment has been largely desktop and has incorporated the following:

- Identification of European Sites within 15km of the LAP area and the identification of potential pathways links for specific sites greater than 15km, only where relevant;
- Review of the NPWS site synopsis and conservation objectives for European Sites with identification of potential pathways from the LAP area; and
- A series of ecological desk studies were undertaken in April 2017. This included but is not limited to the collation of information on protected species including Bats, Otters, Bird species (including Annex I species), Annex II habitat types, protected and Red Data Book Flora species, invertebrates and amphibians. The results of these studies are included as part of this screening where they were deemed relevant to the European Sites and their QI's/SCI's.

3.2 Identification of Relevant European Sites

This section of the screening process describes the European Sites which exist within the Zone of Influence of the site. The DoEHLG (2009) Guidance on Appropriate Assessment recommends a 15km buffer zone be considered around the site. It is foreseen that in the absence of significant hydrological links the characteristics of the Proposed Variation No. 1 (detailed in section 2) will not have effects beyond this Zone of Influence.

European Sites that occur within 15km of the Plan Area or that were identified to have hydrological linkages to the LAP area are listed in Table 3-1 and illustrated in **Figure 3.1** below. Details on the site characteristics and existing threats/vulnerabilities of each European Site are also identified in Table 3-1.

In order to determine the potential for effects from the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 of the RTLAP, information on the qualifying features, known vulnerabilities and threats to site integrity pertaining to any potentially affected European Sites was reviewed. Background information on threats to individual sites and vulnerability of habitats and species that was used during this assessment included the following:

- *Ireland's Article 17 Report to the European Commission "Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland" (NPWS, 2013).*
- *Site Synopses.*
- *NATURA 2000 Standard Data Forms.*

Since the conservation objectives for the European Sites focus on maintaining the favorable conservation condition of the QI's/SCI's of each site, the screening process concentrated on assessing the potential effects of the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 against the QI's/SCI's of each site.

Table 3-1 European Sites which occur within 15 km of Roscommon Town or with hydrological links to the LAP area

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features	Location and Site Vulnerability
000588	Ballinturly Turlough cSAC	[3180]*Turloughs	Site occurs ca 4.3 km south-west of Roscommon town. Grazing occurs over most of the basin but it causes little vegetational damage. The oligotrophic communities require a low nutrient input from external sources to survive (i.e. from ground water, the River Suck and surface flow).
002349	Corbo Bog cSAC	[7110]*Active raised bogs [7120]Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7150]Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	Site occurs ca 7.5 km north-east of Roscommon town. Peat-cutting and, to a lesser extent, burning are the main threats to Corbo Bog at present. Active cutting is common all along the margins of the high bog and cessation of cutting is essential for the long-term survival of the bog. Although burning has not been especially severe in the recent past, further burning should be prevented.
000448	Fortwilliam Turlough cSAC	[3180]*Turloughs	Fortwilliam Turlough is located in County Longford, ca 13.5 km south-west of Roscommon town. Parts of the site are grazed producing an instructive comparison in the vegetation. There is little if any grazing damage. Eutrophication from farm effluent or through the ground water is the main potential risk. There is a farm close to the South end.
001637	Four Roads Turlough cSAC	[3180]*Turloughs	Site occurs ca 12.1 km south of Roscommon town. The vegetation and habitat quality would be further damaged by continuing the present farming patterns. Using fertilisers may not affect the birdlife which would be more sensitive to disturbance.
000609	Lisduff Turlough cSAC	[3180]*Turloughs	Lisduff occurs ca 8.2 km south-west of Roscommon town. There is little human influence on the site at present though hunting probably occurs in winter. The turlough could be affected by eutrophication of ground water and there is some intensification taking place to the north-west.
004139	Lough Croan Turlough cSAC	[3180]*Turloughs	Lough Croan occurs ca 14 km of Roscommon town. The southern side of the wetland includes and adjoins intensive farmland and there is a likelihood of eutrophication from this source. Further drainage would damage the site: it could be done through the Cross River.
000611	Lough Funshinagh cSAC	[3180]*Turloughs	Site occurs ca 12 km south-east of Roscommon town. Lough Funshinagh would be adversely affected by eutrophication from agricultural intensification in the catchment and also from housing on shore. Actual drainage or a lowering of regional water tables would also be damaging as would an increase in human disturbance.

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features	Location and Site Vulnerability
000440	Lough Ree cSAC	[1355]Lutra lutra [3150]Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation [6210] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates(Festuco Brometalia)(*Important orchid sites) [7120]Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7230]Alkaline fens [8240]*Limestone pavements [91A0]Old sessile oakwoods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91D0]*Bog woodland	Lough Ree occurs ca 3.7 km west of Roscommon town. The main threat to the aquatic life in the lake is from artificial enrichment of the waters by agricultural and domestic waste, and also by peat silt in suspension, which is increasingly limiting light penetration. Increased use of the lake for leisure activities, especially boating, will cause disturbance and some physical damage to marginal wetlands. The degraded raised bog is threatened by further cutting, burning and afforestation.
004140	Four Roads Turlough SPA	Pluvialis apricaria [wintering] Anser albifrons flavirostris [wintering] Wetlands	Site occurs ca 12. 1 km south of Roscommon town. The vegetation and habitat quality would be further damaged by continuing the present farming patterns. Using fertilisers may not affect the birdlife which would be more sensitive to disturbance.
004139	Lough Croan Turlough SPA	Anas clypeata [wintering] Pluvialis apricaria [wintering] Anser albifrons flavirostris [wintering] Wetlands	Site occurs ca 14 km south of Roscommon town. The main threat to the birds at this site would be degradation of the wetland habitats as a result of drainage. Disturbance is not considered a problem as the site is a Wildfowl Sanctuary.
004064	Lough Ree SPA	Tachybaptus ruficollis [wintering] Cygnus cygnus [wintering] Anas penelope [wintering] Anas crecca [wintering] Anas platyrhynchos [wintering] Anas clypeata [wintering] Aythya fuligula [wintering] Melanitta nigra [breeding] Bucephala clangula [wintering] Fulica atra [wintering] Pluvialis apricaria [wintering] Vanellus vanellus [wintering] Sterna hirundo[breeding] Wetlands	The SPA occurs ca 8 km south-east of Roscommon town. WFD status for Lough Ree is Moderate. It is vulnerable to artificial enrichment of the waters by agricultural and domestic waste. The recent reduction in phytoplanktonic growth has coincided with the invasion of the Shannon system by the Zebra Mussel; however, in the long-term this invasive bivalve may threaten the ecology of the lake. Recreational activities, especially boating, presently cause some disturbance to the birds and an increase in such activities would be of concern. Developments above the lakeshore could affect feeding grounds of some of the wintering waterfowl and nesting habitat for duck species.
004097	River Suck Callows SPA	Cygnus cygnus [wintering] Anas penelope [wintering] Pluvialis apricaria [wintering] Vanellus vanellus [wintering] Anser albifrons flavirostris [wintering] Wetlands	The River Suck occurs ca 7 km south-west of the town. Arterial drainage in the past has reduced the area of naturally flooded grasslands, and drainage and land improvement remain the principal threats to the site. The intensification of agriculture in recent years, with earlier mowing and the replacement of hay with silage, is likely to have caused the decline and eventual absence of breeding Crex crex. Wildfowling causes some disturbance.

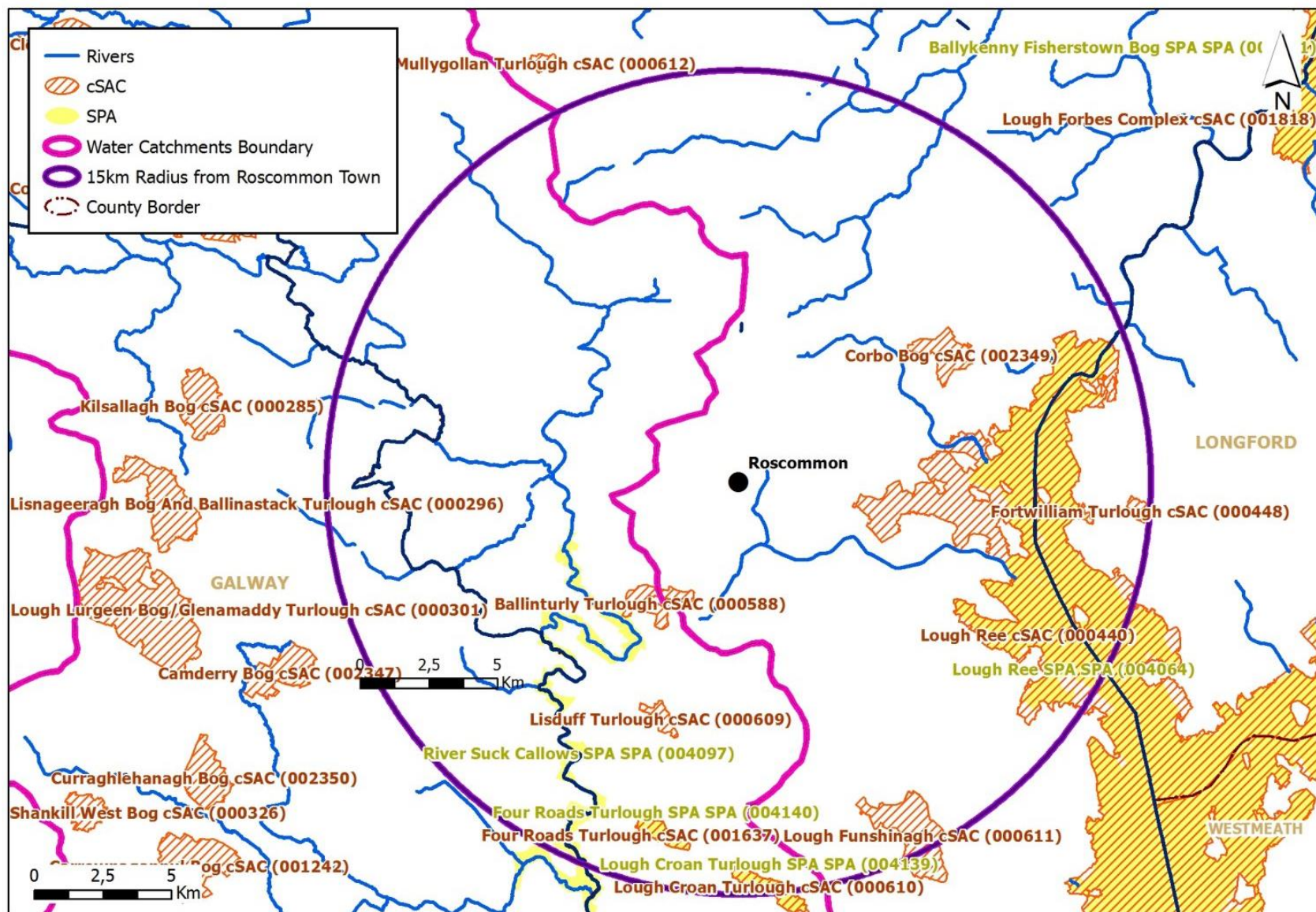


Figure 3.1 Location of European Sites within 15km of Roscommon town

3.3 Assessment Criteria

3.3.1 Is the Plan with its proposed Variation Necessary to the Management of European Sites?

Under the Habitats Directive, Plans that are directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site do not require AA. For this exception to apply, management is required to be interpreted narrowly as nature conservation management in the sense of Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive. This refers to specific measures to address the ecological requirements of annexed habitats and species (and their habitats) present on a site(s). The relationship should be shown to be direct and not a by-product of the plan, even if this might result in positive or beneficial effects for a site(s).

The primary purpose of the Proposed Variation No. 1 to the RTLAP is not the nature conservation management of the sites, but to incorporate objectives to provide for the renewal of areas in need of regeneration as defined under Section 10(2)(h) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, as well as information and objectives concerning the introduction of the Vacant Sites Levy. Therefore, the proposed amendment is not considered by the Habitats Directive to be directly connected with or necessary to the management of European designated sites.

3.3.2 Elements of the proposed amendment with Potential to Give Rise to Effects

The proposed amendment incorporates objectives to provide for the renewal of areas in need of regeneration as defined under Section 10(2)(h) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, as well as information and objectives concerning the introduction of the Vacant Sites Levy. Maps have been included which show hatching over zoned lands which indicate “residential” and “regeneration” lands where the Vacant Sites Levy may apply. Therefore, the proposed variation to the LAP does not alter the zoning of lands and simply indicates where the Vacant Sites Levy may apply to lands.

The existing Roscommon Town LAP 2014 – 2020 incorporates policies and objectives to protect European Sites. The proposed amendment does comply with the mitigation measures detailed in the original NIS for the Roscommon Town LAP 2014 – 2020.

3.3.3 Identification of Potential Likely Significant Effects

This section documents the final stage of the screening process. It has used the information collected on the sensitivity of each European Site and describes any likely significant effects resulting from the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1. This assumes the absence of any controls, conditions, or mitigation measures. In determining the potential for significant effects, a number of factors have been taken into account. Firstly, the sensitivity and reported threats to the European Site. Secondly, the individual elements of the Proposed Variation No. 1 and the potential effect they may cause to the site were considered.

Sites are screened out based on one or a combination of the following criteria:

- where it can be shown that there are no hydrological links between activities recommended in Proposed Variation No. 1 to the RTLAP, and European Sites to be screened;
- where the site is located at such a distance from the LAP area that effects are not foreseen;
- where known threats or vulnerabilities in the LAP area cannot be linked to potential impacts that may arise from the Proposed Variation No. 1 to the RTLAP.

The following parameters are described when characterising impacts (following CIEEM (2016), EPA (2002) and NRA (2009)):

Direct and Indirect Impacts - An impact can be caused either as a direct or as an indirect consequence of a proposed development.

Magnitude - Magnitude measures the size of an impact, which is described as high, medium, low, very low or negligible.

Extent - The area over which the impact occurs – this should be predicted in a quantified manner.

Duration - The time for which the effect is expected to last prior to recovery or replacement of the resource or feature.

- Temporary: Up to 1 Year;
- Short Term: The effects would take 1-7 years to be mitigated;
- Medium Term: The effects would take 7-15 years to be mitigated;
- Long Term: The effects would take 15-60 years to be mitigated;
- Permanent: The effects would take 60+ years to be mitigated.

Likelihood – The probability of the effect occurring taking into account all available information.

- Certain/Near Certain: >95% chance of occurring as predicted;
- Probable: 50-95% chance as occurring as predicted;
- Unlikely: 5-50% chance as occurring as predicted;
- Extremely Unlikely: <5% chance as occurring as predicted.

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidelines for ecological impact assessment (CIEEM 2016) define an ecologically significant impact as an impact (negative or positive) on the integrity of a defined site or ecosystem and/or the conservation status of habitats or species within a given geographic area. The integrity of a site is the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, which enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified (CIEEM, 2016).

The Habitats Directive requires the focus of the assessment at this stage to be on the integrity of the site as indicated by its Conservation Objectives. It is an aim of NPWS to draw up conservation management plans for all areas designated for nature conservation. These plans will, among other things, set clear objectives for the conservation of the features of interest within a site.

Site-specific conservation objectives (SSCOs) have been prepared for a number of European Sites. These detailed SSCO aim to define favourable conservation condition for the qualifying habitats and species at that site by setting targets for appropriate attributes which define the character habitat. The maintenance of the favourable condition for these habitats and species at the site level will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a species can be described as being achieved when: 'population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced or likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.'

Favourable conservation status of a habitat can be described as being achieved when: 'its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.'

Generic Conservation Objectives for cSACs have been provided as follows:

- *To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.*

One generic Conservation Objective has been provided for SPAs as follows:

- *To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.*

Table 3-2 Screening assessment of European Sites within 15km or with significant hydrological links to the LAP boundary related to Proposed Variation No. 1

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Qualifying Interests & Special Conservation Interests (Sensitive Receptors)	Potential effects (Sources of effects with regard to the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and/or conservation objectives of the European Site)	Pathway for Significant Effects	Potential for In-Combination Effects
000440	Lough Ree cSAC	3.7	[1355]Lutra lutra [3150]Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation [6210] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates(Festuco Brometalia)(*Important orchid sites) [7120]Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7230]Alkaline fens [8240]*Limestone pavements [91A0]Old sessile oakwoods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91D0]*Bog woodland	The qualifying features of this SAC are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. The Roscommon Town is down stream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SAC. As there is no pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.	No	No
000588	Ballinturly Turlough cSAC	4.1	[3180]*Turloughs	The Proposed Variation No. 1 introduces no additional sources for effects. There is no change to the zoning in the Plan so potential developments that may arise are unaffected by the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 and the introduction of the levy. Land use zonings were considered within the existing RTLAP which provides robust policies and objectives to protect water quality. These are detailed above in Section 2.1.2.	No	Yes
004097	River Suck Callows SPA	7	Cygnus cygnus [wintering] Anas penelope [wintering] Pluvialis apricaria [wintering] Vanellus vanellus [wintering] Anser albifrons flavirostris [wintering]	Avian species are most sensitive to direct disturbance, however distances beyond 1km are known to have negligible effects on population dynamics ² .	No	No

² Scottish Natural Heritage (2007), A Review of Disturbance Distances in Selected Bird Species M. Ruddock & D.P. Whitfield

			Wetlands	<p>This SPA has aquatic habitat dependent species which are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SPA</p> <p>As there is no significant pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.</p>		
002349	Corbo Bog cSAC	7.5	<p>[7110]*Active raised bogs</p> <p>[7120]Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</p> <p>[7150]Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</p>	<p>The qualifying features of this SAC are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SAC.</p> <p>As there is no pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.</p>	No	No
004064	Lough Ree SPA	8	<p>Tachybaptus ruficollis [wintering]</p> <p>Cygnus cygnus [wintering]</p> <p>Anas penelope [wintering]</p> <p>Anas crecca [wintering]</p> <p>Anas platyrhynchos [wintering]</p> <p>Anas clypeata [wintering]</p> <p>Aythya fuligula [wintering]</p> <p>Melanitta nigra [breeding]</p> <p>Bucephala clangula [wintering]</p> <p>Fulica atra [wintering]</p> <p>Pluvialis apricaria [wintering]</p> <p>Vanellus vanellus [wintering]</p> <p>Sterna hirundo [breeding]</p> <p>Wetlands</p>	<p>Avian species are most sensitive to direct disturbance, however distances beyond 1km are known to have negligible effects on population dynamics³.</p> <p>This SPA has aquatic habitat dependent species which are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SPA</p> <p>As there is no significant pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.</p>	No	No
000609	Lisduff Turlough cSAC	8.2	[3180]*Turloughs	<p>The qualifying features of this SAC are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions.</p>	No	No

³ Scottish Natural Heritage (2007), A Review of Disturbance Distances in Selected Bird Species M. Ruddock & D.P. Whitfield

				Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SAC. As there is no pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.		
000611	Lough Funshinagh cSAC	12	[3180]*Turloughs	The qualifying features of this SAC are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SAC. As there is no pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.	No	No
001637	Four Roads Turlough cSAC	12.1	[3180]*Turloughs	The qualifying features of this SAC are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SAC. As there is no pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.	No	No
004140	Four Roads Turlough SPA	12.1	Pluvialis apricaria [wintering] Anser albifrons flavirostris [wintering] Wetlands	Avian species are most sensitive to direct disturbance, however distances beyond 1km are known to have negligible effects on population dynamics ⁴ . This SPA has aquatic habitat dependent species which are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SPA As there is no significant pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to	No	No

⁴ Scottish Natural Heritage (2007), A Review of Disturbance Distances in Selected Bird Species M. Ruddock & D.P. Whitfield

				adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.		
000448	Fortwilliam Turlough cSAC	13.5	[3180]*Turloughs	The qualifying features of this SAC are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SAC. As there is no pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.	No	No
004139	Lough Croan Turlough cSAC	14	[3180]*Turloughs	The qualifying features of this SAC are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SAC. As there is no pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.	No	No
004139	Lough Croan Turlough SPA	14	Anas clypeata [wintering] Pluvialis apricaria [wintering] Anser albifrons flavirostris [wintering] Wetlands	Avian species are most sensitive to direct disturbance, however distances beyond 1km are known to have negligible effects on population dynamics ⁵ . This SPA has aquatic habitat dependent species which are sensitive to alterations to hydrodynamics, in terms of water quality and flow interactions. Roscommon Town is downstream of this site, therefore there is no hydrological link between potential effects from the site to the SPA. As there is no significant pathway for effects present there are no effects foreseen due to the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1 on this site.	No	No

⁵ Scottish Natural Heritage (2007), A Review of Disturbance Distances in Selected Bird Species M. Ruddock & D.P. Whitfield

3.4 Other Plans and Programs

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combinations with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely effect European Sites.

As the amendment has to comply with the policies and objectives of Roscommon Town LAP as well as higher-level plans (detailed above) the potential for effects to European Sites are thought to be very low. Therefore, in-combination effects to the integrity of European Sites are not seen to be likely.

Given the uncertainties that exist with regard to the scale and location of developments facilitated by the proposed amendment, it is recognised that the identification of in-combination effects is limited and that the assessment of in-combination effects will need to be undertaken in a more comprehensive manner at the project-level.

In combination effects were considered in relation to the projects and plans listed in **Table 3-3**.

Table 3-3 Plans & Projects Likely to Cause In-Combination Effects

Directive	Status	Overview	Possible significant effects from plan or project	Possible significant in-combination effects	Is there a risk of significant in-combination effects from the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1
International					
EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	Published	Objectives seek to maintain and enhance the quality of all surface waters in the EU.	No	No	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EU Freshwater Fish Directive (78/659/EEC)	Published	Objectives seek to protect those fresh water bodies identified by Member States as waters suitable for sustaining fish populations. For those waters it sets physical and chemical water quality objectives for salmonid waters and cyprinid waters.	No	No	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EU Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	Published	This directive establishes a regime, which sets underground water quality standards and introduces measures to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater.	No	No	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	Published	The Floods Directive applies to river basins and coastal areas at risk of flooding. With trends such as climate change and increased domestic and economic development in flood risk zones, this poses a threat of flooding in coastal and river basin areas.	No	No	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure such as flood walls or flood defences. Avoidance on, or near protected areas should be implemented or where this is not possible, favouring infrastructure that carries a lower risk of damage to

Directive	Status	Overview	Possible significant effects from plan or project	Possible significant in-combination effects	Is there a risk of significant in-combination effects from the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1
					protected areas should be emphasised in the plan.
Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)	Published	This Directive has the objective of reducing water pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources and preventing further pollution.	No	No	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC)	Published	The primary objective is to protect the environment from the adverse effects of discharges of urban wastewater, by the provision of urban wastewater collecting systems (sewerage) and treatment plants for urban centres. The Directive also provides general rules for the sustainable disposal of sludge arising from wastewater treatment.	No	No	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
Sewage Sludge Directive (86/278/EEC)	Published	Objective is to encourage the appropriate use of sewage sludge in agriculture and to regulate its use in such a way as to prevent harmful effects on soil, vegetation, animals and man. To this end, it prohibits the use of untreated sludge on agricultural land unless it is injected or incorporated into the soil.	No	No	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.

Directive	Status	Overview	Possible significant effects from plan or project	Possible significant in-combination effects	Is there a risk of significant in-combination effects from the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1
The Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Directive (96/61/EC)	Published	Objective is to achieve a high level of protection of the environment through measures to prevent or, where that is not practicable, to reduce emissions to air, water and land from industrial sources.	No	No	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
National					
National Development Plan 2007 - 2013	Published	Objectives of the NDP are to promote more balanced spatial and economic development	No SEA and AA were completed	No Potential effects are to be avoided through avoidance policies in the Plan.	Policies and Objectives contained within both the Plan and Proposed Variation No. 1 are robust. Development proposals which arise as a result of the Development Plan are subject to Appropriate Assessment. This will provide specific project level detail to ensure no adverse significant effects to European Sites.
National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020	Published	Objectives of the NSS are to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective planning.	No SEA and AA were completed	No Potential effects are to be avoided through avoidance policies in the Plan.	Policies and Objectives contained within both the Plan and Proposed Variation No. 1 are robust. Development proposals which arise as a result of the Development Plan are subject to Appropriate Assessment. This will provide specific project level detail to ensure no adverse significant effects to European Sites.
Regional					
Regional Planning Guidelines For The Western Region 2010 – 2022.	Published	Policy document which aims to direct the future growth of the Western Area over the medium to	No SEA and AA were completed	No Potential effects are to be avoided through	Policies and Objectives contained within both the Plan and Proposed Variation No. 1 are robust. Development

Directive	Status	Overview	Possible significant effects from plan or project	Possible significant in-combination effects	Is there a risk of significant in-combination effects from the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1
		long term and works to implement the strategic planning framework set out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS)		avoidance policies in the Plan.	proposals which arise as a result of the Development Plan are subject to Appropriate Assessment. This will provide specific project level detail to ensure no adverse significant effects to European Sites.
Local					
Roscommon County Development Plan 2014 - 2020	Published	Overall strategies for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of the relevant Local Authorities.	No Appropriate Assessment carried out	No Potential effects are to be avoided through avoidance policies in the Plan.	Policies and Objectives contained within both the Plan and Proposed Variation No. 1 are robust. Development proposals which arise as a result of the Development Plan are subject to Appropriate Assessment. This will provide specific project level detail to ensure no adverse significant effects to European Sites.
Boyle Local Area Plan 2015-2021	Published	Overall strategies for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of the relevant Local Authorities.	No Appropriate Assessment carried out	No Potential effects are to be avoided through avoidance policies in the Plan.	Policies and Objectives contained within both the Plan and Proposed Variation No. 1 are robust. Development proposals which arise as a result of the Development Plan are subject to Appropriate Assessment. This will provide specific project level detail to ensure no adverse significant effects to European Sites.
Lough Key local Area Plan 2015-2021	Published	Overall strategies for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of the relevant Local Authorities.	No Appropriate Assessment carried out	No Potential effects are to be avoided through avoidance policies in the Plan.	Policies and Objectives contained within both the Plan and Proposed Variation No. 1 are robust. Development proposals which arise as a result of the Development Plan are subject to Appropriate

Directive	Status	Overview	Possible significant effects from plan or project	Possible significant in-combination effects	Is there a risk of significant in-combination effects from the adoption of Proposed Variation No. 1
					Assessment. This will provide specific project level detail to ensure no adverse significant effects to European Sites.
Monksland/Bellanamullia Local Area Plan 2016 – 2022	Published	Overall strategies for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of the relevant Local Authorities.	No Appropriate Assessment carried out	No Potential effects are to be avoided through avoidance policies in the Plan.	Policies and Objectives contained within both the Plan and Proposed Variation No. 1 are robust. Development proposals which arise as a result of the Development Plan are subject to Appropriate Assessment. This will provide specific project level detail to ensure no adverse significant effects to European Sites.
Ballaghaderreen Local Area Plan 2012-2018	Published	Overall strategies for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of the relevant Local Authorities.	No Appropriate Assessment carried out	No Potential effects are to be avoided through avoidance policies in the Plan.	Policies and Objectives contained within both the Plan and the Proposed Variation No. 1 are robust. Development proposals which arise as a result of the Development Plan are subject to Appropriate Assessment. This will provide specific project level detail to ensure no adverse significant effects to European Sites.
Castlerea Local Area Plan 2016 - 2022	Published	Overall strategies for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of the relevant Local Authorities.	No Appropriate Assessment carried out	No Potential effects are to be avoided through avoidance policies in the Plan.	Policies and Objectives contained within both the Plan and Proposed Variation No. 1 are robust. Development proposals which arise as a result of the Development Plan are subject to Appropriate Assessment. This will provide specific project level detail to ensure no adverse significant effects to European Sites.

4 Conclusions

Stage 1 Screening for AA of Proposed Variation No. 1 of the Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2014-2020 has been carried out. It has been demonstrated that implementation of the proposed amendment is not foreseen to have any likely significant effects on any European Site.

The proposed amendment must and does comply with the policies, objectives and mitigation measures contained within this existing Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2014-2020. The LAP was subject to its own AA and SEA process which determined there are no likely significant effects to the integrity of any European Site foreseen as a result of the implementation of the plan.

The Appropriate Assessment screening process considered potential effects which may arise during implementation of the proposed amendment. Through an assessment of the sources for effects and an evaluation of the proposed amendment it was determined that the existing LAP accounts for development within Roscommon town. The existing mitigations within this Plan are seen to be robust, thus the effects arising from the proposed amendment are thought to be very low. It has been evaluated that the proposed amendment has no likely significant adverse effects on the qualifying interests, special conservation interests or the conservation objectives of any designated European Site. Any effects arising from the development of Vacant Sites will be subject to project level AA's when fine scale detail is known.

It is concluded that Proposed Variation No. 1 of the Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2014-2020 is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effects on designated European sites⁶, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species for which these sites have been designated. This screening statement is accompanied by an Appropriate Assessment Determination Statement. Stage 2 NIS is only required if there are likely significant effects to any European Sites Identified. Consequently, a Stage 2 – NIS is not required for the Proposed Variation No. 1 as there are no effects identified.

⁶ 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.

Appendix I:

Detailed Evaluation of each part of the Proposed Amendment

Proposed Amendment	AA
<p>Text is green is that text which is proposed to be included as part of the Variation. Text in yellow highlights where policy and objective numbers will change as well as the inclusion of relevant maps.</p>	
<p>5.2 HOUSING STRATEGY AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT 5.2.1 Development Strategy for Residential Development</p>	
<p>The Roscommon Area Plan 2008-2014 identified almost 277 hectares of land for residential development in the town - more than 10 times the amount of land needed to accommodate the population growth identified in the RPGs for the West Region 2010-2022. Development of this extent of land could potentially accommodate up to 5540 new residences and approximately 13,296 people i.e. a tripling of the current population of the town. This would be unsustainable and would give rise to deficiencies in servicing such a large population increase, as well as being inconsistent with the town's low growth rate and the current economic climate. Development of this level would also be likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.</p> <p>Therefore the DECLG's 'sequential approach', as outlined earlier in this section, has been used to identify suitable lands for new residential development in this Local Area Plan. Within such an approach, it is imperative that those areas which are more remote and potentially do not have direct access to a public sewer system are developed over the longer term.</p> <p>The Council will maintain a Vacant Site Register and implement the Vacant Site Levy as required by the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015, as a mechanism to stimulate site activation in urban areas, which is intended to "bring underutilised vacant sites and buildings into beneficial use, ensuring more sustainable urban development and an efficient return on state investment in enabling infrastructure."⁷</p> <p>The site activation measure aims to encourage the release of zoned lands at key locations in order to stimulate development, deliver housing at appropriate locations, and, stimulate the regeneration of vacant urban sites.</p>	<p>The existing Roscommon Town LAP 2014 already provides for housing and regeneration development⁸. The proposed change further contributes towards such provisions. There are no additional adverse effects arising from this change (significant, potential or uncertain) that were not envisaged and mitigated by the NIR of the Roscommon Town LAP 2014. That AA process successfully facilitated the integration of mitigation into the Town Plan in order to contribute towards the protection of Ecological Processes.</p>
<p>6.1 LAND USE ZONING FIGURES 6.1.1 Land Use Zoning Objectives and Matrix</p>	
<p>Land Use Zoning Objectives</p> <p>This plan identifies specific areas for specific types of land use in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and the Land Use Zoning Maps reflect this detail.</p> <p>In addition, explanatory maps have been provided which apply specific hatching over the Land Use Zones for "Residential" lands to give effect to the requirements of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015. The hatching applies to lands where the Vacant Site Levy may apply.</p>	<p>The Amendment does not change the underlying land use zoning objectives provided for by the existing Plan. This part of the Amendment identifies the application of hatching over the Land Use Zones for "Residential" lands to give effect to the requirements of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015. The hatching applies to lands where the Vacant Site Levy may apply.</p>

⁷ Circular letter PL6/2015, 31 August 2015.

⁸ For example:

- **Policy 94** Ensure that retail and service outlets are located within the identified town centre where they can best serve the population of the surrounding area, and discourage inappropriate out-of-town shopping facilities that detract from the viability and vitality of the existing town centre, in line with the Sequential Approach.
- **Policy 97** Promote the reuse of small vacant sites within the town for pocket parks, temporary exhibitions etc. and the use of larger sites for community gardens, allotments etc.
- **Policy 102** Ensure that areas of vacant, derelict and under-used land within existing built-up areas (brownfield sites) are brought into productive use, as an alternative to the use of Greenfield sites.
- **Strategic Aim 7** Positively impact on the economic, social and environmental well-being of the town and on the overall character and appearance of its streetscapes, by promoting the development of all areas of the town to their fullest potential. This includes ensuring the redevelopment and reuse of vacant and derelict residential, commercial and industrial buildings as well as retail warehousing in the town and promoting the renewal and environmental improvement of neglected areas.

Proposed Amendment	AA
<p>Text in green is that text which is proposed to be included as part of the Variation. Text in yellow highlights where policy and objective numbers will change as well as the inclusion of relevant maps.</p>	
<p>Objectives for each of these the land uses zones are outlined below. It should be noted that there are several which are common and repeated but which are relevant to the land uses proposed. It should also be noted that the objectives as listed are not exhaustive.</p>	<p>This has no relevance to ecological processes and introduces no source for effects.</p>
<p>7.12 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT 7.12.1 Economic Development and Employment Strategy</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Policies for Retail and Commercial Development</p> <p>Policy 95 Encourage consolidation of the existing retail core of the town through the reuse and regeneration of derelict and vacant buildings for retail uses in line with the sequential approach, in order to prevent— (i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land, (ii) urban blight and decay, (iii) anti-social behaviour, or (iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses. Those properties listed on the Vacant Sites Register are of particular relevance.</p> <p>Policy 96 Encourage and facilitate the reuse of existing vacant units outside the town centre, particularly retail warehousing, for alternative uses provided proposals are not contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Those listed on the Vacant Sites Register are of particular relevance.</p> <p>Policy 97 Promote the reuse of small vacant sites within the town for pocket parks, temporary exhibitions etc. and the use of larger sites for community gardens, allotments etc.</p> <p>Policy 102 Ensure that areas of vacant, derelict and under-used land within existing built-up areas (brownfield sites) are brought into productive use, as an alternative to the use of Greenfield sites.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Objectives for Retail and Commercial Development</p> <p>Objective 97 Encourage the regeneration of areas and the reuse of derelict buildings in need of renewal for retail uses, in line with the sequential approach. In Roscommon town this will include the Opportunity Sites identified in Chapter 4 and within those areas included as Regeneration and Residential Lands on Maps 18a and b.</p>	<p>These changes have no interactions with ecological processes and therefore introduce no sources for effects.</p>
<p>7.13 URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN 7.13.1 Residential Development</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Policies for Residential Development</p>	<p>The existing Roscommon Town LAP 2014 already provides for the development of vacant sites and the renewal of areas in need of regeneration⁹.. There are</p>

⁹ For example:

Proposed Amendment	AA
<p>Text in green is that text which is proposed to be included as part of the Variation. Text in yellow highlights where policy and objective numbers will change as well as the inclusion of relevant maps.</p>	
<p>Policy 110 Identify and facilitate the development and renewal of obsolete areas, vacant and derelict sites and derelict buildings in a manner appropriate to the area, including the completion of unfinished residential estates.</p> <p>Policy 111 To provide for the renewal of areas in need to regeneration in order to prevent— (i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land, (ii) urban blight and decay, (iii) anti-social behaviour, or (iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses.</p> <p>Note: Policy numbers will change from here</p>	<p>no additional adverse effects arising from this change (significant, potential or uncertain) that were not envisaged and mitigated by the NIR of the Roscommon Town LAP 2014. That AA process successfully facilitated the integration of mitigation into the Town Plan in order to contribute towards the protection of the ecological integrity of European Sites.</p> <p>As these changes would not result in significant ecological effects a stage 2 NIS is not required.</p>
<p>8.3 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS 8.3.4 Derelict Sites Dereliction, Vacancy and Regeneration</p>	
<p>1. Derelict Sites The Council will continue to take appropriate action in accordance with the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act 1990, and amendments, to ensure the elimination of dereliction as it occurs. At the community meeting several sites within the LAP area were identified as derelict. The Council will encourage the redevelopment of these sites and facilitate well-designed new development.</p> <p>2. Vacant Sites Register and Levy The Council will maintain the Vacant Site Register and implement the Vacant Site Levy as required by the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015, as a mechanism to stimulate site activation in urban areas, which is intended to “bring underutilised vacant sites and buildings into beneficial use, ensuring more sustainable urban development and an efficient return on state investment in enabling infrastructure.”¹⁰</p> <p>The site activation measure aims to encourage the release of zoned lands at key locations in order to stimulate development, deliver housing at appropriate locations, and, stimulate the regeneration of vacant urban sites.</p> <p>INCLUSION OF MAPS 14A, B AND C SHOWING REGENERATION AND RESIDENTIAL LANDS</p>	<p>These changes have no interactions with ecological processes and therefore introduce no sources for effects.</p>

- **Policy 97** Promote the reuse of small vacant sites within the town for pocket parks, temporary exhibitions etc. and the use of larger sites for community gardens, allotments etc.
- **Policy 102** Ensure that areas of vacant, derelict and under-used land within existing built-up areas (brownfield sites) are brought into productive use, as an alternative to the use of Greenfield sites.
- **Strategic Aim 7** Positively impact on the economic, social and environmental well-being of the town and on the overall character and appearance of its streetscapes, by promoting the development of all areas of the town to their fullest potential. This includes ensuring the redevelopment and reuse of vacant and derelict residential, commercial and industrial buildings as well as retail warehousing in the town and promoting the renewal and environmental improvement of neglected areas.

¹⁰ Circular letter PL6/2015, 31 August 2015.