

AA CONCLUSION STATEMENT

FOR THE

GORT LOCAL AREA PLAN 2025-2031

for: Galway County Council



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

by: CAAS Ltd.



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Table of Contents

Section 1	Introduction and Background.....	1
1.1	Introduction.....	1
1.2	Legislative Requirements in relation to AA	1
1.3	AA Conclusion Statement	1
Section 2	How the findings of the AA were factored into the Plan	3
Section 3	Consideration of Alternatives	7
3.1	Introduction.....	7
3.2	Limitations in Available Alternatives	7
3.3	Alternatives Description and Assessment Summary	7
Section 4	AA Determination.....	11

Section 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for the Gort Local Area Plan. The obligation to undertake AA derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC as transposed into Irish legislation by, inter alia, the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action (such as a plan or programme) or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of any European Site in view of its conservation objectives. This AA Conclusion Statement should be read in conjunction with the Plan and associated documents including the AA Natura Impact Report (NIR).

1.2 Legislative Requirements in relation to AA

In carrying out the AA for the Plan, Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, requires, inter alia, that the Council considers the matters arrayed in the first column on Table 1.1 below. The second column identifies how these issues have been addressed.

Table 1.1 Matters taken into account by the AA

Matter specified by the Regulations	How addressed by AA
(a) the Natura Impact Report	An AA NIR accompanies this AA Conclusion Statement and the Plan.
(b) any supplemental information furnished in relation to any such report	This AA Conclusion Statement accompanies the NIR that provides additional detail on European Sites. Submissions made during the Plan preparation/AA process were taken into account in the preparation of the final, consolidated AA NIR. Proposed Material Alterations were screened for the need to undertake Stage 2 AA (Stage 2 AA was not required for the Alterations).
(c) if appropriate, any additional information sought by the authority and furnished by the applicant in relation to a Natura Impact Report	
(d) any information or advice obtained by the public authority	
(e) if appropriate, any written submissions or observations made to the public authority in relation to the application for consent for proposed plan or project	
(f) any other relevant information	

In addition to the above, the Regulations require that the Council makes available for inspection a determination regarding the outcome of the assessment with respect to whether or not the Plan would adversely affect the integrity of a European site (a copy of this determination is provided at Section 4).

1.3 AA Conclusion Statement

Non-Statutory AA guidance (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009) states that (Section 4.14) it *"is recommended that planning authorities include a clear and discrete AA Conclusion Statement as a distinct section in the written statement of the plan separate to the SEA statement."* This guidance recommends that the following issues are addressed by the AA Conclusion Statement:

- Summary of how the findings of the AA were factored into the Plan (see Section 2);
- Reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered as part of the AA process (see Section 3);
- A declaration that the Plan as adopted will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of European Sites (provided at Section 4); and
- The NIR (the AA NIR is accompanied by this AA Conclusion Statement and has informed the AA Determination – see Section 4).

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

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

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

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

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

The Plan was prepared in an iterative manner whereby the Plan and AA documents have informed subsequent versions of the other. The findings of the AA were integrated into the Plan through mitigation measures. These mitigation measures ensure that the Plan will not affect the integrity of the European Sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.¹ The mitigation measures included in the Local Area Plan that most relevant to the protection of European sites are identified in Table 2.1 below.

Furthermore, the detailed Plan preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department for the higher-level County Development Plan, combined with specialist input from the SEA and AA processes, resulted in the integration of mitigation into that Plan that must be complied with in the Plan area. These measures are also identified on Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Measures that will protect European sites and their sustaining resources integrated into the Plan

Topic	Mitigation Measure(s)
Adherence to policy objectives of the County Development Plan	<p>Section 1.2 Planning Context The development strategy and planning policy objectives outlined in this Local Area Plan must align with the objectives set out in national, regional and local planning policy including, the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES), and the Galway County Development Plan (GCDP) 2022-2028.</p> <p>GSST 1 Consistency with Core Strategy Galway County Council will ensure that developments permitted within the settlement of Gort are consistent with the zoned land allocations in the Core Strategy and associated provisions of the <i>Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028</i>.</p>
Natural heritage, biodiversity and National / European sites	<p>GSST 3 Environmental Assessment To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications in the plan area to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report that accompany this LAP.</p> <p>GSST 55 European Sites Protect European Sites including Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) that form part of the Natura 2000 network. In accordance with the requirements in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011) (and any subsequent amendments or updated legislation) and having due regard to the guidance in the Appropriate Assessment Guidelines 2010 (and any updated/superseding guidance). A plan or project (e.g., proposed development) within the plan area will only be authorised after the competent authority (Galway County Council) has ascertained, based on scientific evidence and an Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.The plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any European Sites (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or 2.The plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites (that does not host a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions, and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of European Sites; or 3.The plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites (that hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of 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. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of European Sites. <p>GSST 57 Biodiversity & Ecological Networks Support the protection of biodiversity and ecological connectivity within the Plan Area including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, rivers, streams, natural springs, peatlands, wetlands, stonewalls, and other landscape features, where these form part of the ecological network. Seek to retain and/or incorporate these natural features into developments, to avoid ecological fragmentation and maintain ecological corridors.</p> <p>GSST 56 Trees, Parkland/Woodland and Hedgerows</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Protect important trees, tree clusters and hedgerows in the plan area and ensure that development proposals take cognisance of significant trees/tree stands. Ensure that all planting schemes use suitable native variety of trees. b) Seek to retain natural boundaries, including stone walls, hedgerows and tree boundaries, wherever possible and replace with a boundary type similar to the existing boundary where removal is unavoidable. Discourage the felling of mature trees where possible. All works to be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Forestry Act, 1946 (as amended); c) Carry out a tree survey on important tree stands within the plan area by suitably qualified personnel (excluding Ash).

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

Surface water courses, groundwater, peatlands and other wetlands *WFD	<p>GSST 22 The River Walk Protect and enhance walkways along the Cannahowna/Gort River including the Kinincha and Pound Road in a sustainable manner where possible. Regard should be had to the protection of Otters and Otter breeding sites and resting places along the river walk. <i>Any proposals shall be required to comply with environmental considerations and the relevant DM Standards.</i></p> <p>GSST 62 Protection of Waterbodies and Watercourses Protect waterbodies and watercourses within the County from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains. This will include protection buffers in the riverine, wetland and coastal areas as appropriate. To contribute towards protection and improvement of the status of surface and ground waters in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. Applications for development under the Plan must demonstrate that the proposed development would not adversely affect a water body's ability to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive, individually as a result of the proposed development or cumulatively, in combination with other developments.</p> <p>GSST 65 River Basin Management Plan and Protection of Waters Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the National River Basin Management Plan or any other plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of this Local Area Plan. Development shall only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface water, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated wetlands. Galway County Council will support the protection and, where appropriate, the restoration of all water bodies in order to reach good status and will seek to prevent deterioration in the status of all water bodies.</p>
Monitoring	<p>GSST 74 Implementation and Monitoring Monitor development for compliance with the policy objectives of the Core Strategy and adjust, where necessary, the approach taken to the consideration of development proposals to ensure effective alignment with the National, Regional and County policy objectives.</p>
Tourism and leisure activities	<p>GSST 21 Tourism Galway County Council shall encourage and foster appropriate tourism opportunities that capitalise on Gort's tourist potential and better promote itself as a traditional Irish market town, with strong links to its natural, cultural and architectural heritage. <i>Any proposals shall be required to comply with environmental considerations and the relevant DM Standards.</i></p> <p>GSST 19 Open Space, Recreation and Amenity Promote the sustainable management, use and/or development, as appropriate, of open space/recreation and amenity lands. This will include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of open spaces and recreational activities, in accordance with best practice and on suitable lands with adequate access to the local community; • Existing open space, sport and recreational facilities should be retained unless it can be clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of Galway County Council that these uses are surplus to requirements of the local community or are to be replaced by an equivalent or better provision; • Appropriate management and use of any flood risk areas within the OS zone to avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate, the risk and potential impact of flooding; • Support the protection of habitats and species listed in the annexes to and/or covered by the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), and species that are protected under the Wildlife Acts, 1976-2000, and stepping stones or ecological corridors in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive • Tourism <p>Encourage and assist the development of the tourist potential within Gort in a manner that protects the architectural, archaeological and cultural significance of the town and its environs in a sustainable manner.</p>
Built environment	<p>GSST 4 Compact Growth Galway County Council shall support the delivery of new homes within the existing built-up footprint of Gort, by sites such as infill or opportunity sites in the settlement and prioritising underutilised land in preference to greenfield sites.</p> <p>GSST 5 Opportunity Sites To encourage and support the appropriate and sustainable development or redevelopment of lands identified as development opportunity sites within the Land Use Zoning Map. See Section 3.0 in respect of individual sites.</p>
Flood Risk Management	<p>Section 2.10 Flood Risk Management Chapter 14 Climate Change, Energy and Renewable Resource from the GCDP 2022 – 2028 sets out the Strategic Aims and key Policy Objectives pertaining to Flood Risk Management in County Galway. Any forthcoming proposals must comply with <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> and its accompanying Technical Appendices Document 2009 (including any updated/superseding documents), in addition to the flood risk management policies contained in the GCDP and this plan.</p> <p>GSST 25 Constrained Land Use To facilitate the appropriate management and sustainable use of land within Flood Zones A and B. New development in these areas will generally be limited (apart from where the Plan-level Justification Test outlined in the accompanying SFRA has been passed or where the uses comprise minor developments in existing developed areas, as outlined in Section 5.28 of the Guidelines as amended by Circular PL 2/2014) to water-compatible uses in Flood Zone A, and less vulnerable or water compatible uses in Flood Zone B, and a detailed site-specific Flood Risk Assessment will be required in these areas. This limitation shall take primacy over any other provision relating to land use zoning objectives. The Plan-level Justification Test has been passed for all lands zoned Town Centre overlapping within Flood Zone A or B.</p> <p>GSST 58 Flood Risk Management Guidelines It is the policy objective of Galway County Council to support, in co-operation with the OPW, the implementation of the EU Flood Risk Directive (2007/60/EC), the Flood Risk Regulations (SI No. 122 of 2010) and the DEHLG/OPW publication <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines</i> (2009) (and any updated/superseding legislation or policy guidance) and Department Circular PL2/2014 or any updated / superseding version.</p> <p>GSST 59 Flood Risk Management and Assessment It is a Policy Objective of the Council to comply with the requirements of the DoEHLG/OPW <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> and its accompanying Technical Appendices Document 2009 (including any updated/superseding documents). This will include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate in accordance with the Guidelines; • Development proposals in areas where there is an identified or potential risk of flooding or that could give rise to a risk of flooding elsewhere will be required to carry out a Site- Specific Flood Risk Assessment, and justification test where appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines</i> 2009 (or any superseding document); Any flood risk assessment should include an assessment of the potential impacts of climate change, such as an increase in the extent or probability of flooding, and any associated measures necessary to address these impacts; • Development that would be subject to an inappropriate risk of flooding or that would cause or exacerbate such a risk at other locations shall not normally be permitted;

	<p>d) Galway County Council shall work with other bodies and organisations, as appropriate, to help protect critical infrastructure, including water and wastewater, within the County, from risk of flooding.</p> <p>GSST 60A Principles of Flood Risk Management Guidelines The Council shall implement the key principles of flood risk management set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines as follows:</p> <p>a) Avoid development that will be at risk of flooding or that will increase the flooding risk elsewhere, where possible;</p> <p>b) Substitute less vulnerable uses, where avoidance is not possible; and,</p> <p>c) Mitigate and manage the risk, where avoidance and substitution are not possible.</p> <p>Development should only be permitted in areas at risk of flooding when there are no alternative reasonable sites available in areas at lower risk that also meet the objectives of proper planning and sustainable development. Vulnerable development in areas which have the highest flood risk should be avoided and/or only considered in exceptional circumstances (through a prescribed Justification Test) if adequate land or sites are not available in areas which have lower flood risk.</p> <p>GSST 63 Flood Risk Assessment for Planning Applications and CFRAMS Protect Flood Zone A and Flood Zone B from inappropriate development and direct developments/land uses into the appropriate Flood Zone in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009 (or any superseding document) and the guidance contained in Development Management Standards 2 and 3. Site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required for all planning applications in areas at elevated risk of flooding, even for developments appropriate to the particular flood zone. The detail of these site-specific FRAs will depend on the level of risk and scale of development. A detailed site-specific FRA should quantify the risks, the effects of selected mitigation and the management of any residual risks. The Council shall have regard to the results of any CFRAM Studies in the assessment of planning applications. Where a development/land use is proposed that is inappropriate within the Flood Zone, then the development proposal will need to be accompanied by a Development Management Justification Test in addition to the site-specific Flood Risk Assessment. In Flood Zone C, where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1%, Flood Zone C), site-specific Flood Risk Assessment may be required, and the developer should satisfy themselves that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed.</p> <p>GSST 64 Flood Risk Assessment and Climate Change Flood Risk Assessment in Gort shall provide information on the implications of climate change with regards to flood risk in relevant locations. The Flood Risk Management – Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan 2019 (or any superseding document) shall be consulted with to this effect.</p> <p>GSST 65 River Basin Management Plan and Protection of Waters Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the National River Basin Management Plan or any other plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of this Local Area Plan. Development shall only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface water, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated wetlands. Galway County Council will support the protection and, where appropriate, the restoration of all water bodies in order to reach good status and will seek to prevent deterioration in the status of all water bodies.</p> <p>GSST 66 Flood Vulnerable Zones It is a policy objective of the Council to ensure that applications pertaining to existing developments in flood vulnerable zones provide details of structural and non-structural risk management measures to include, but not be limited to specifications of the following – floor levels, internal layout, flood resilient construction, flood resistant construction, emergency response planning, access and egress during flood events.</p> <p>GSST 67 Flood Risk Management Ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.</p>
Invasive species	As a result of alignment with the objectives of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 through policy GSST 1 and Section 1.2 Planning Context , objectives relating to the management and prevention of spread of invasive species within the Plan area are provided for in the Plan.
Agriculture	GSST 23 Agriculture To promote the development of agriculture and agriculture-related uses in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development. There will be a general presumption against residential development on Agricultural zoned lands, located within the plan boundary except for single house developments for family members on farm family-owned lands.
Air Pollution	GSST 35 Green Infrastructure Galway County Council shall promote the benefit of open spaces and implement the integration of green infrastructure/networks (e.g., interconnected network of green spaces (including aquatic ecosystems) and other physical features on land) into new development and regeneration proposals in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change. GSST 46 Sustainable Transportation Facilitate any Smarter Travel initiatives that will improve sustainable transportation within the plan area and facilitate sustainable transportation options including public transportation, rail freight, electric vehicles rentals, car clubs, public bike schemes, cycle parking as appropriate. GSST 53 Climate Change Support and encourage sustainable compact growth and settlement patterns, integrated land use and low carbon transportation, and maximise opportunities through development location, form, layout and design to secure climate resilience and reduce carbon emissions
Climate	Section 1.3 Climate change and its associated challenges has been covered throughout the GCDP 2022-2028 as an embedded theme. Chapter 14 <i>Climate Change, Energy and Renewable Resource</i> details the nature and extent of climate change and how it impacts people's lives, society and the broader economy. In line with the provisions of the GCDP 2022-2028, this LAP seeks to deliver well planned communities, where sustainable modes of transport are utilised in the first instance when travelling to local facilities such as education, work, and commercial activity. GSST 35 Green Infrastructure Galway County Council shall promote the benefit of open spaces and implement the integration of green infrastructure/networks (e.g., interconnected network of green spaces (including aquatic ecosystems) and other physical features on land) into new development and regeneration proposals in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change. GSST 46 Sustainable Transportation Facilitate any Smarter Travel initiatives that will improve sustainable transportation within the plan area and facilitate sustainable transportation options including public transportation, rail freight, electric vehicles rentals, car clubs, public bike schemes, cycle parking as appropriate. GSST 53 Climate Change Support and encourage sustainable compact growth and settlement patterns, integrated land use and low carbon transportation, and maximise opportunities through development location, form, layout and design to secure climate resilience and reduce carbon emissions.

	<p>GSST 54 Climate Change and Local Renewable Energy Sources Support and facilitate the implementation of European, National and Regional objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage) and having regard to the Climate mitigation and adaptation measures.</p> <p>GSST 72 Renewable Energy Promote and facilitate the development of renewable sources of energy and associated infrastructure within the LAP area and encourage the integration of micro-renewable energy sources into the design and construction of new developments as appropriate.</p>
Management of water services, wastewater and implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems	<p>Section 2.9 Water supply and wastewater treatment Galway County Council has had regard to Uisce Éireann's (formerly Irish Water) strategic plans in preparing this LAP. The <i>Draft Water Services Strategic Plan 2050</i> (WSSP 2050) is Uisce Éireann's forthcoming long-term strategic plan setting out the strategic direction and objectives over a 25-year period. Galway County Council recognises that the delivery of infrastructure and utilities in a sustainable manner are critical to the future development of the county. Any development proposals within the settlement of Gort should liaise with Uisce Éireann in respect of water supply and wastewater infrastructure required as set out in Chapter 7 of the GCDP.</p> <p>GSST 31 Water Supply and Water Conservation Ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with a suitable quantity and quality of drinking water supply, promote water conservation to reduce the overall level of water loss in the public supply and require that new domestic developments provide for water supply metering in accordance with their connection agreement with Uisce Éireann.</p> <p>GSST 61 Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the existing surface water drainage system in Gort. Ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in all new developments. Surface water runoff from development sites will be limited to pre-development levels and planning applications for new developments will be required to provide details of surface water drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems proposals. To maximise the capacity of existing collection systems for foul water, the discharge of additional surface water to combined (foul and surface water) sewers is not permitted. Refer also to Section 3.5 of the accompanying SFRA, "Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Surface Water Guidance and Strategy".</p>
Waste Management	<p>GSST 2 Service - Led Development Development under the plan shall be preceded by sufficient capacity in the public wastewater infrastructure and potable water infrastructure. Potential developers shall make a Pre-Connection Enquiry to Uisce Éireann in order to establish the feasibility of a connection to the public network.</p> <p>GSST 68 Waste Prevention, Reduction and Recycling Promote the prevention, reduction and recycling of waste in new developments, new development proposals shall be required to submit proposals demonstrating how this is to be achieved and shall seek to ensure on-site provision for waste storage and segregation (bio-waste/dry recyclables/residual waste) pending collection at all new domestic and non-domestic premises.</p>

Section 3 Consideration of Alternatives

This section summarises the alternatives considered for the Plan during the preparation process. These alternatives have been incorporated into the Plan having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects (including those related to ecology and European sites) which are identified by the SEA (informed by the AA) and are summarised below; and
2. Planning - including social and economic - effects that also were considered by the Council.

3.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme) are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment.

Alternatives for the Plan are identified and assessed under a number of types as summarised below.

3.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The Plan is required to be prepared by the existing, already in force, Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which specifies various types of objectives that must be provided for by the Plan.

The alternatives available for the Plan are significantly limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, including those of the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Western and Northern Region and the County Plan. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Plan including on topics such as land use zoning and the sustainable development of settlements.

3.3 Alternatives Description and Assessment Summary

3.3.1 Type 1: Alternatives Already Considered

The preparation of the County Development Plan and associated SEA process already considered various different types of alternatives, including those relating to population allocations, which were integrated into that Plan and which set requirements for lower tier planning in the County.

3.3.2 Type 2: Land Use Zoning Alternatives

Galway County Council in preparing the Plan developed the following alternatives for land use zoning in Gort (there are various alternative components under each heading):

Type 2 (i): "More Consolidated, More Compact"

- Gort to reach population allocation, resulting in balanced orderly development and implementation of the core strategy as contained in Chapter 2 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028.
- This alternative involves preparing the Plan using a Serviced/Serviceable Land and Infrastructure Assessment approach. Methodologies for this approach are set out in higher level documents, including the National Planning Framework and the 2013 Local Area Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities.
- The infrastructure required to be in place to achieve the growth targets is already in place or planned.
- Residential Development to take place on Residential Phase 1 and Residential Infill lands over the lifetime of the Plan, with 30% expected within the existing built-up footprint.

- Community development facilities to be developed in tandem with economic and residential growth.
- Town Centre developments would be developed in a planned and coordinated manner focused within the town centre.
- Industry would occur in the periphery close to existing infrastructure.
- Opportunity sites identified with clear design and proposed uses identified.
- Open Space/Recreation and Amenity Lands would be preserved.

The more compact, serviced/serviceable land and infrastructure assessment approach under this alternative would allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Plan to the highest degree.

The infrastructure required to be in place to achieve the growth targets is already in place or planned under this alternative.

The development of the Town Centre would be more compact and sustainable under this scenario and would support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of Residential units would be expected within the existing built-up footprint.

Opportunity sites identified with clear design and proposed uses identified – making successful applications for the sustainable, compact development of the town more likely.

The approach under Alternative Type 2 (i): “More Compact Development” would benefit the protection of various environmental components. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to a significant degree.

Type 2 (ii): “Less Consolidated, Less Compact”

- Gort to reach population allocation, resulting in balanced orderly development and implementation of the core strategy as contained in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2024.
- This alternative involves preparing the Plan while not using the Serviced Land and Infrastructure Assessment approach.
- Additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate sporadic development, more than would be required for Alternative 1 ‘More Consolidated Development’ and some development may have to be serviced by private waste water treatment systems, which would have to be properly maintained.
- Residential Development to take place on Residential Phase 1, Residential Infill, Residential Phase 2 and certain peripheral, outer fringe lands (beyond the existing LAP boundary) over the lifetime of the Plan, with 30% less likely to be achieved within the existing built-up footprint (in comparison with Type 2 (i)).
- Industry would occur at locations including those close to residential development.
- Creation of commercial/social centres throughout the Plan area and associated dispersal of Town Centre, commercial development and local services.
- Town centre development would be sporadic and uncoordinated around the Town centre zonings.
- Opportunity sites are identified but no clear guidance on the design parameters or uses identified.

By not following a more compact, serviced/serviceable land and infrastructure assessment approach, this alternative would not allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Plan to the highest degree.

Additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate sporadic development, more than would be required for Alternative 1 ‘More Compact Development’ and some development may have to be serviced by private waste water treatment systems which would have to be properly maintained.

The development of the Town Centre would be less compact and less sustainable under this scenario and would not optimally support the longer-term viability of the settlement. 30% of Residential units would be less likely to be achieved within the existing built-up footprint (in comparison with Type 2 (i)).

Opportunity sites are identified but no clear guidance on the design parameters or uses identified – making successful applications for the sustainable, compact development of the town less likely.

An opportunity to mitigate potentially adverse effects arising from land use development to a significant degree would have been missed by the approach under Alternative Type 2 (ii): “Less Compact Development”.

Selected Alternative: Type 2 (i): “More Consolidated, More Compact”

3.3.3 Type 3: Transport Alternatives

A Local Transport Plan would assist in placing sustainable transport considerations to the forefront of land use planning decisions in the formulation of the Plan. It would examine existing and proposed transport infrastructure for all modes of transport, including walking and cycling, and would provide some insight into existing transport patterns and constraints, facilitating the integration of land use and transport provisions.

- **Local Transport Plan Alternative Type 3i:** Inform the Plan with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes.
- **Local Transport Plan Alternative Type 3ii:** Do not inform the Plan with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, relying solely on existing provisions, including those of the County Development Plans.

Informing the Plan with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, (**Transport Alternative Type 3i**) would provide a more coordinated and more orderly provision of transport infrastructure and services, with delivery of projects, and associated benefit with respect to sustainable mobility and compact development, more likely. This approach would be more likely to improve the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions and energy use. Potentially adverse impacts on environmental components including ecology and water would need to be adequately mitigated at project level.

Transport Alternative 3i would:

- Support greater alignment between and integration of land use planning and transport planning.
- Ensure the assessment of transport demand and its associated impact informs the scale of development proposals, including location, density, required transport infrastructure etc.
- Facilitate a greater shift towards a more sustainable, healthy, and low carbon-built environment.
- Prioritise of active travel measures and considerations in the formulation of development proposals, including the consideration of suitable land for development.
- Promote and encourage a modal shift from the private car to walking and cycling, particularly for short to medium distance trips.
- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport accessibility.
- Result in improvements in the built environment for the safety and security of those walking and cycling.
- Potentially reduce traffic congestion at peak traffic times, improving road network reliability.

Alternative 3i would be more likely to result in more connected and accessible built environments, with associated positive benefits for the health and wellbeing of local communities. Alternative 3i would contribute to the transition of the Plan area to a more low-carbon, climate resilient and healthy urban environment, with reduced car dependency and an increase in sustainable travel such as walking and cycling.

Not informing the Plan with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, (**Transport Alternative Type 3ii**) would provide a less coordinated and less orderly provision of transport infrastructure and services, with delivery of projects, and associated benefit with respect to sustainable mobility and compact development, less likely. This approach would be less likely to improve the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions and energy use. Potentially adverse impacts arising from more coherently planned transport developments on environmental components, including ecology and water, could be mitigated at both Plan and project level.

Transport Alternative 3ii would:

- Increase the potential for land use planning and developments aspects of the Plan to be considered in isolation of transport planning considerations.
- Mean that the assessment of existing traffic, transport, and movement conditions within the Plan area would not be taken into account in the formulation of policies and objectives.
- Undermine ability to plan for efficient movement of people and services within the Plan area.
- Limit the ability and scope to plan for required transport interventions in the Plan area.
- Not inform site specific transport assessment for development proposals with a Local Transport Plan.
- Reduce support for modal shift from private car travel to active travel, including walking and cycling.

There would be greater potential for the existing pattern of car dependency to continue and increase under Alternative 3ii. Alternative 3ii would undermine policies and objectives supporting climate action and the transition to a more low-carbon urban environment. There would be potential for negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of local communities due to absence of measures for targeted active travel infrastructure.

Selected Alternative: Alternative Type 3i

Section 4 AA Determination

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Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Appropriate Assessment Determination under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for the Gort Local Area Plan 2025-2031

In order to comply with the requirements of Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether or not a plan or project would affect the integrity of any European site(s), this Appropriate Assessment determination is being made by Galway County Council relating to the potential for the Gort Local Area Plan 2025-2031 that is being adopted¹ to have effects on the integrity of European sites.

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

- The Natura Impact Report prepared for the Draft Plan (December 2024);
- The Screening for AA Report prepared for Proposed Material Alterations (May 2025);
- The Consolidated Natura Impact Report (July 2025);
- Written submissions made during the Plan preparation process; and
- Ongoing advice on AA from the Council's agents.

As part of the AA, it was identified that the Plan may, if unmitigated, have likely significant effects on 5 (no.) European sites. Plan elements that could present sources with pathways for likely significant effects to European sites are:

- The Plan's provisions, including those relating to land use zoning, residential development, residential infill, economic and enterprise development, community facilities, built and natural heritage, tourism, agriculture, transportation and movement, water supply and wastewater treatment, flood risk management and opportunity sites, which introduce sources for potential effects through construction phase such as habitat loss, light pollution, disturbance effects and hydrological interactions through surface hydrological connectivity and/or shared groundwater sources;
- Loading pressures from the operational phase of developments – these sources could result in habitat loss/fragmentation, light pollution, disturbance effects and interactions with water quality (surface and/or groundwater); and
- Increases in visitor numbers to ecologically sensitive areas during the operational phase of developments which have potential to introduce sources for significant effects, such as recreational and tourism developments.

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

- Implementation of the Plan to be adopted² has the potential to result in likely significant effects to the ecological integrity of 5 (no.) European sites, if unmitigated.
- The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the Qualifying Interests, Special Conservation Interests and Conservation Objectives of the European site have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures into the Plan that will prioritise the avoidance of effects in the first place and mitigate against the identified potential significant effects where these cannot be avoided. In addition, all lower-level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Plan will themselves be subject to AA/screening for AA when further details of design and location are known.
- In-combination effects from interactions with other plans and projects are considered and the mitigation measures incorporated into the Plan are seen to be robust to ensure that there will be no effect on the integrity of any European site as a result of the implementation of the Plan, either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects.

¹ Incorporating the Draft Plan and all and any material alterations and associated modifications considered by the AA process.
² Incorporating the Draft Plan and all and any material alterations and associated modifications considered by the AA process.

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- Having incorporated mitigation measures³ into the Plan, it has been demonstrated that the Plan to be adopted⁴ is not foreseen to give rise to any effect on the integrity of any designated European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects⁵. This demonstration has been made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats and/or species, for which these sites have been designated.

Signatory:

Valerie O'Connell SP.
Date: 29.07.2025

Brian Corcoran. SEP.
29/07/2025.

³ As identified by the following in the Consolidated Natura Impact Report: text from Section 1.2 Planning Context, Section 2.9 Water supply and wastewater treatment, Section 2.10 Flood Risk Management, Section 1.3; and Policy Objectives GSST 1 Consistency with Core Strategy, GSST 2 Service - Led Development, GSST 3 Environmental Assessment, GSST 4 Compact Growth, GSST 5 Opportunity Sites, GSST 19 Open Space, Recreation and Amenity, GSST 21 Tourism, GSST 22 The River Walk, GSST 23 Agriculture, GSST 25 Constrained Land Use, GSST 31 Water Supply and Water Conservation, GSST 35 Green Infrastructure, GSST 46 Sustainable Transportation, GSST 53 Climate Change, GSST 54 Climate Change and Local Renewable Energy Sources, GSST 55 European Sites, GSST 56 Trees, Parkland/Woodland and Hedgerows, GSST 57 Biodiversity & Ecological Networks, GSST 58 Flood Risk Management Guidelines, GSST 59 Flood Risk Management and Assessment, GSST 60A Principles of Flood Risk Management Guidelines, GSST 61 Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs), GSST 62 Protection of Waterbodies and Watercourses, GSST 63 Flood Risk Assessment for Planning Applications and CFRAMS, GSST 64 Flood Risk Assessment and Climate Change, GSST 65 River Basin Management Plan and Protection of Waters, GSST 66 Flood Vulnerable Zones, GSST 67 Flood Risk Management, GSST 68 Waste Prevention, Reduction and Recycling and GSST 72 Renewable Energy, and GSST 74 Implementation and Monitoring.

⁴ Incorporating the Draft Plan and all and any material alterations and associated modifications considered by the AA process.

⁵ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.