MOUNTMELLICK FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME PLANNING REPORT

October 2025

Laois County Council
Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co Laois

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1.0 Introduction

Laois County Council (the "Applicant") is seeking planning approval from An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) under Section 175 and Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) for the Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme (FRS).

There are two strands to this application for consent to ACP, namely:

1. Application for planning approval for the Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme is made to ACP under Section 175 and Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2023 (as amended). A Natura Impact Statement (NIS), Preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Hydrology Report and Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) have been prepared for the proposed scheme and are enclosed with the application.
2. Confirmation from ACP that Compulsory Purchase Order powers be applied for the compulsory acquisition of lands to support the Mountmellick FRS.

The purpose of this report is to consider the pertinent planning matters of the proposed development.

1.1 Site Location

Mountmellick has a pivotal location on the N80, National Secondary route, which extends through Portlaoise and provides access to Carlow, Waterford and Rosslare to the south and Tullamore, Mullingar and Athlone to the north. Portlaoise is located approximately 7km south of Mountmellick on the N80, with Portarlington located approximately 10km to the northeast on the R423. Mountmellick has easy access to the M7 and M8 Motorway interchanges at Portlaoise (approximately 12km south) and New Inn (approximately 17km east), which provide excellent access to the south and west of the country, the Greater Dublin Area, Dublin Port and Airport.

The town has a population of approximately 4,900 persons (Census 2022) and is characterised by a long, linear Main Street with O'Connell Square at its centre. The urban core is bounded and shaped by a network of rivers and streams, most notably

the River Owenass, which flows north-east through the town centre before joining the River Barrow, and its tributaries, the Pound River, Clontygar Stream and Garroon Stream. These watercourses collectively influence the hydrology and flood risk of the town.

The River Owenass and its tributaries lie within the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC 002162), designated under the EU Habitats Directive (92/42/EEC) for their ecological importance. The proposed scheme area, Option 2B, extends along these channels through and around Mountmellick, encompassing both urban and hinterlands where fluvial flooding has previously occurred, as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

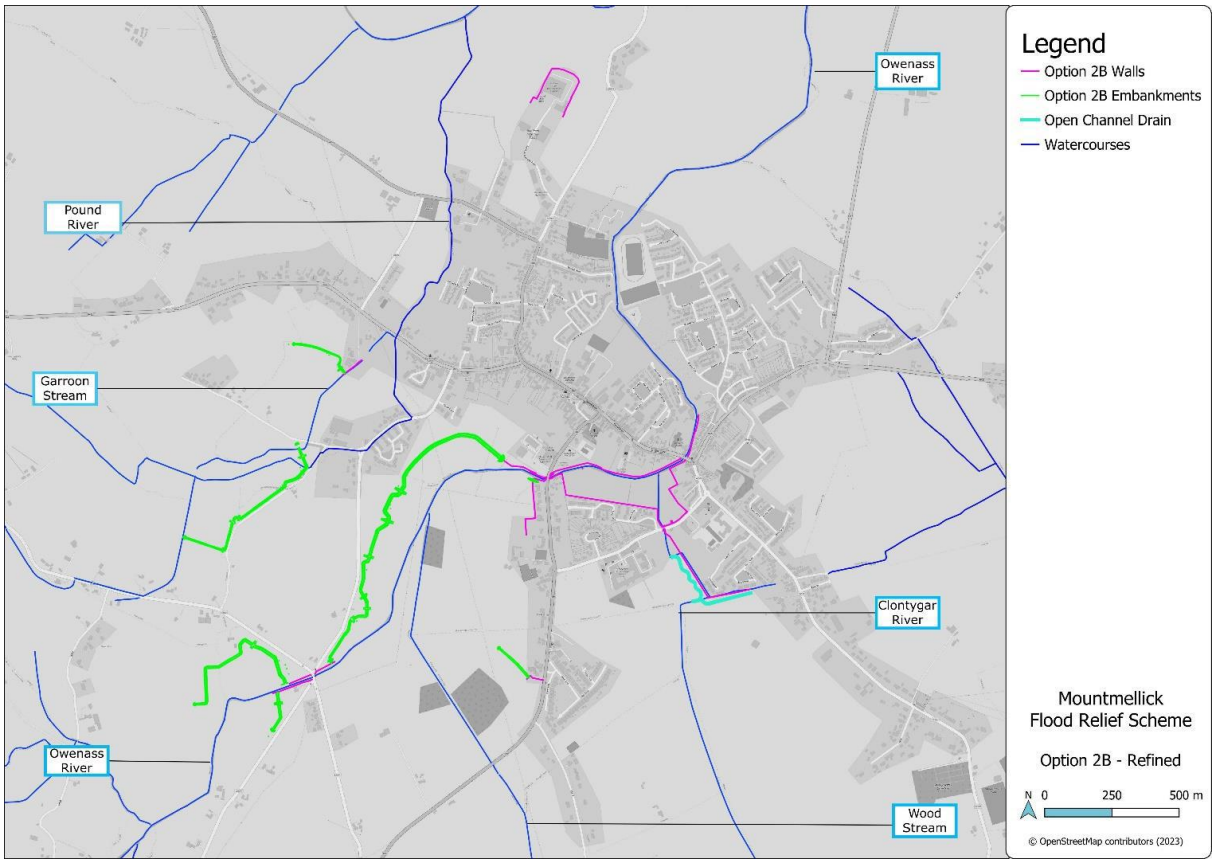

Figure 1.1 - Option 2B

1.2 Background and Need for the Development

Mountmellick has experienced recurrent and severe flooding from the River Owenass and its tributaries, with significant events recorded in 1954, 1968, 1990, 2008, 2017 and 2020. The most serious event occurred in November 2017 when prolonged rainfall caused the Owenass and Pound Rivers to overtop their banks, flooding homes

and businesses in the town centre, Manor Road and O'Connell Square. Over 80 properties were affected, as illustrated in Figure 1.2. Further flooding was experienced during Storm Ciara in February 2020.

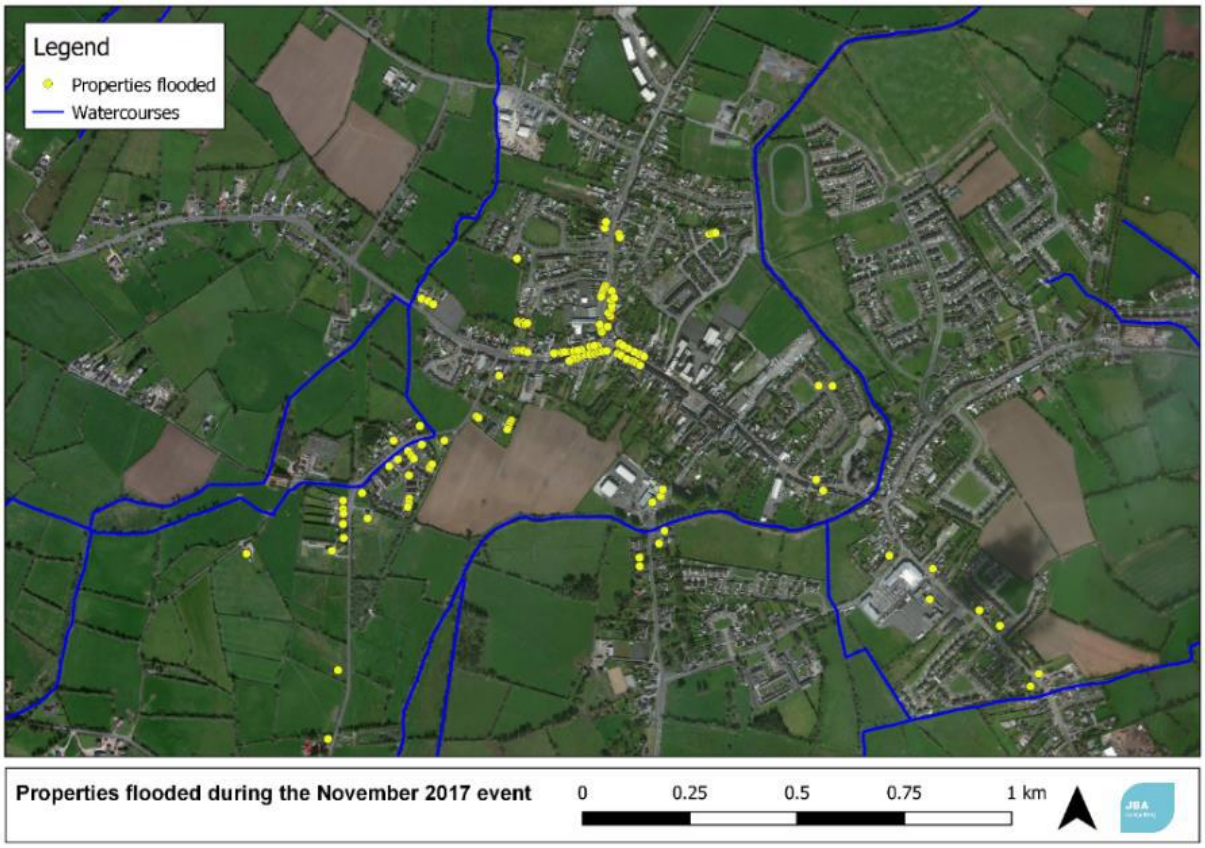

Figure 1.2 - Properties flooded during the November 2017 event

The 2017 and 2020 events highlighted the town's high exposure to fluvial flooding. The Scheme is therefore necessary to safeguard Mountmellick's residents, businesses and infrastructure, to support sustainable growth and to fulfil national and regional policy objectives for climate adaptation and resilience. Once implemented, the scheme will significantly reduce the risk of future flooding.

1.3 The Proposed Development

1.3.1 Overview

The Mountmellick FRS has been designed to provide protection against fluvial flooding associated with the River Owenass, the Pound River, the Garroon Stream, and the Clontygar Stream. The rivers and streams are illustrated in Figure 1.3.

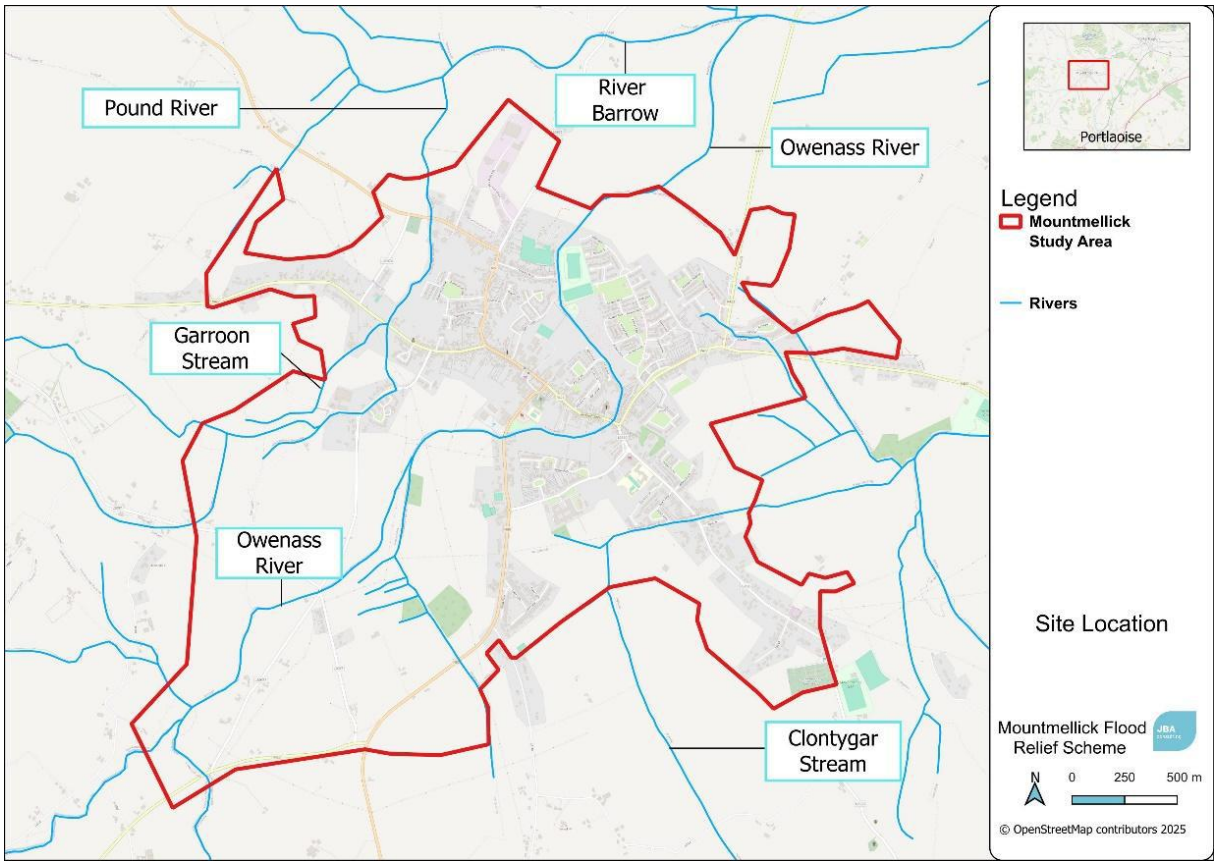

Figure 1.3 – Mountmellick Study Area

The proposed scheme comprises a combination of engineered flood defences, a bridge replacement, and associated environmental works. The design has been developed through detailed hydrological and hydraulic modelling, environmental assessment, and public consultation, culminating in the identification of Option 2B as the Preferred Option, as detailed in the Options Report.

The scheme is designed to protect Mountmellick from flooding during a 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) fluvial flood event, equivalent to a 1-in-100-year event, while incorporating climate change adaptation allowances consistent with OPW and EU Floods Directive guidance, as illustrated in Figure 1.4.

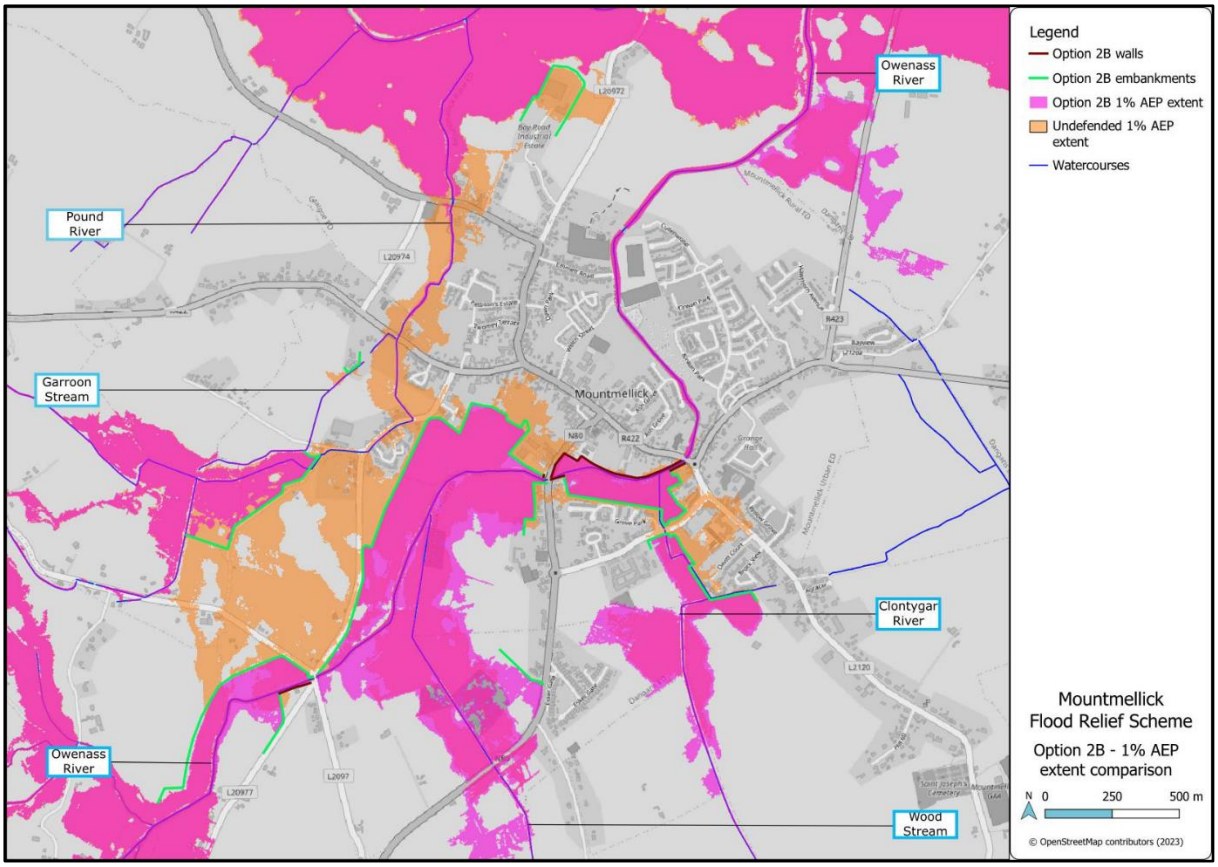

Figure 1.4 - Extent of predicted 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flooding with Option 2B

1.3.2 Key Components of the Proposed Scheme

The proposed Flood Relief Scheme will employ a combination of different flood relief measures across the scheme area to defend properties from flooding originating from the Owenass River, the Garroon Stream, the Pound River and the Clontygar River.

The 10 no. continuous defences are flood walls, flood embankments and culverts, one bridge (a replacement of the Owenass Bridge), and one pumping station. The Clontygar Stream will also be diverted to a new channel, and current surface water drainage networks will be upgraded and protected where necessary, as illustrated in Figure 1.5.

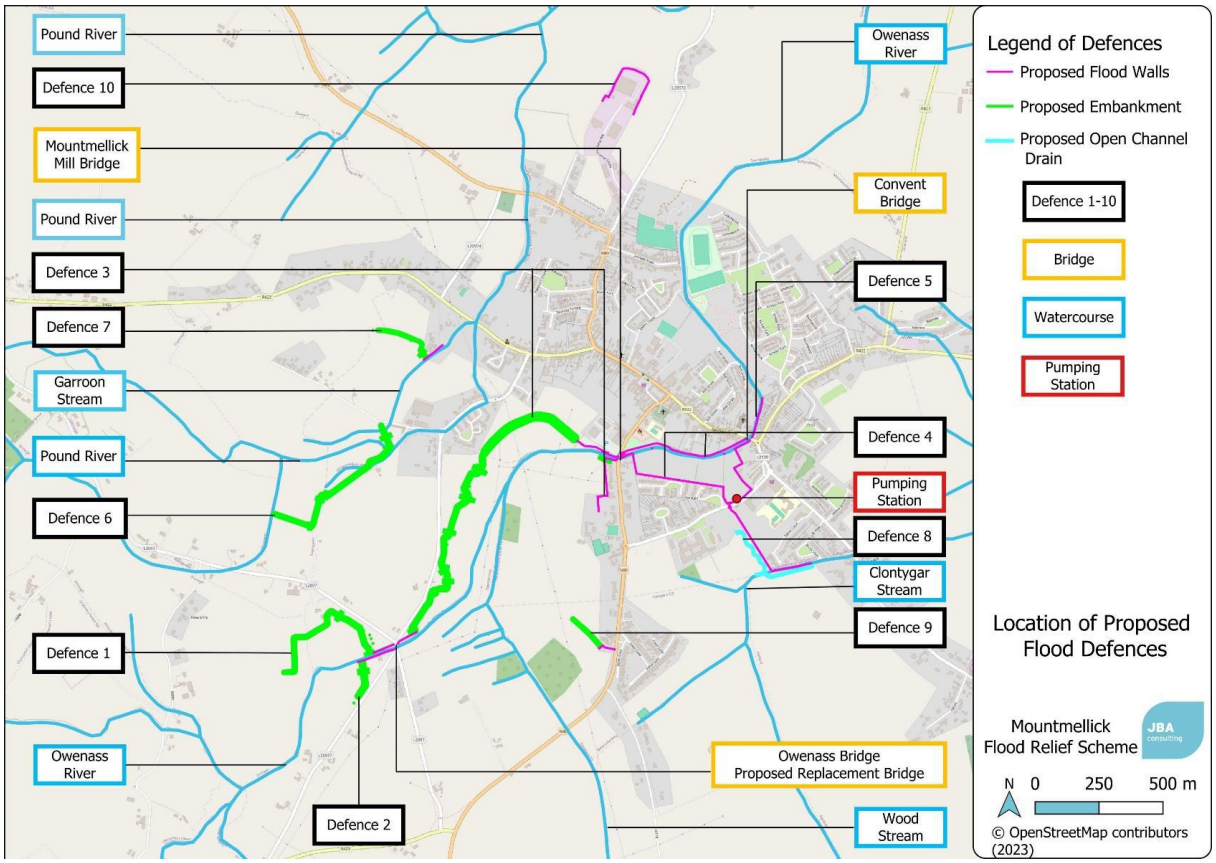

Figure 1.5 - Flood defences, watercourses and bridges

Several site compounds and welfare sites will be erected at appropriate locations to facilitate the works, transport, and storage of material. Enabling and preparatory works for all flood defence features will involve some vegetation clearance and some tree removal in areas around the Garroon Stream, Upstream of Owenass Bridge and Downstream of Convent Bridge, as well as most works located within the riparian zone of watercourses.

An estimated 3,160 linear metres of flood walls will be constructed as part of the scheme. Flood wall heights vary considerably throughout the scheme, depending on topography and the required level of protection. The Owenass Bridge replacement will be constructed using reinforced concrete material and a combination of precast and in-situ elements. The bridge will have a masonry finish, reusing existing stone where possible, to match the existing masonry finish and to provide a similar capping.

Flood embankment height will vary between 1.2 – 3.0m above the surrounding ground level. Embankments will be grass-seeded or sown with an indigenous wildflower mix to suit the location. Trees will not be allowed within a minimum distance

of two metres from the base of the embankment, as this would compromise their structural integrity.

Excavation and backfilling will be required to allow for flood and embankment construction. Suitable excavated material for backfilling will be required in locations where excavated material is not suitable.

- At the western boundary of Midland Steel, strip topsoil and excavation will be required for the flood wall; surplus excavated material will be removed
- At the southern field adjacent to Garroon Stream, there is expected to be unsuitable excavated material, which will be removed. Suitable engineered clay fill will be imported to replace unsuitable indigenous material. Most of the excavated material, deemed unsuitable (e.g., alluvium), will be taken off-site.
- At the greenfield lands adjacent to the Clontygar Stream and Irishtown Road, excavation is needed for the drainage network and pumping station construction. Backfilling at this location will be with Class 808 material or excavated indigenous clay. Imported materials that will be used is well-graded granular material and potentially precast sections for manholes.
- At the South bank of the Owenass River, excavation for flood defence wall; foundation depth depends on bearing stratum. The surrounding area will be backfilled after wall construction. For the precast section, potential imported material will be used.
- In both banks of the Owenass River between Mill Bridge and Convent Bridge, excavation is required for flood walls construction and raised footpaths, with variable excavation depth depending on the stratum. Backfilling is expected to be with imported suitable engineered clays.
- Works adjacent to Davitt Road and the surrounding areas will require excavation for the realignment of the stream channel and flood defence walls. Excavated material from the stream diversion is expected to be removed. Imported material is potentially required for lining the stream channel and backfilling the flood wall.
- For the works between Owenass Bridge and Mill Bridge, excavation for flood defence embankments and walls will be required. Backfilling will be done with suitable clay material, potentially imported, and unsuitable material will be taken off-site

- Works for the replacement of Owenass Bridge will require excavation for the bridge abutment. The removed bridge materials and excavated soil will not be used for backfilling and will be taken off-site. Imported material for the bridge foundation will be required.

The planning application is accompanied by a full suite of detailed drawings for the extent of the proposed development.

2.0 Environmental Impact Assessment

The requirement for an EIA for a project was initially set out in the EU Directive (85/337/EEC) as amended by Directive 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC and 2009/31/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. The amendments were codified by Directive 2011/92/EU (and as amended in turn by Directive 2014/52/EU). The Directives, as amended, are referred to as the 'EIA Directive'. The EIA Directive was transposed into Irish law through the European Union (Planning and Development) EIA Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018).

The EIA Directive requires that certain developments be assessed for likely significant effects before planning permission can be granted. The prescribed classes of development and thresholds that trigger a mandatory EIA and the provision of an EIAR are set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended.

The class under Schedule 5 that is relevant to the proposed development is listed below:

> *10 Infrastructure Projects*
>
> *(f) (ii) Canalisation and flood relief works, where the immediate contributing sub-catchment of the proposed works (i.e. the difference between the contributing catchments at the upper and lower extent of the works) would exceed 100 hectares or where more than 2 hectares of wetland would be affected or where the length of river channel on which works are proposed would be greater than 2 kilometres (S.I. No.600/2001- Planning and Development Regulations 2001)*

This category contains three thresholds; if any of these thresholds are exceeded, the proposed development must undergo a mandatory EIAR. As such, they will be addressed in turn.

> *"where the immediate contributing sub-catchment of the proposed works (i.e., the difference between the contributing catchments at the upper and lower extent of the works) would exceed 100 hectares".*

The immediate contributing sub-catchment of the proposed works was calculated to be c. 175 hectares. The scheme therefore exceeds the 100-hectare threshold.

> *"where more than 2 hectares of wetland would be affected"*

A Fossitt habitat survey had been undertaken of the scheme area and defined the habitats in the areas to be affected. The survey results note that 1.5 hectares of wetland are likely to be impacted during construction. The scheme is therefore under the 2-hectare wetland threshold.

> *"where the length of river channel on which works are proposed would be greater than 2 kilometres"*

Works are proposed on a section of the River Owenass at Mountmellick, from Owenass Bridge in the south to Kirwan Park in the north. The total length of the affected river channel is 2.61km, which exceeds the 2-kilometre threshold.

The proposed flood relief scheme is above the first part and third parts of the threshold, i.e., the immediate contributing sub-catchment of the proposed works is above 100 hectares, and the length of the river channel on which the works are proposed is greater than 2km. Therefore, an EIAR has been automatically triggered for this proposed development.

An EIAR is required to be produced by the developer of a project under Articles 5(1) and 5(2), and with reference to Annex 1 and 2, of the EIA Directive and must contain the information specified in Annex IV.

The information to be provided by the developer shall include at least:

a. *A description of the project comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the project;*
b. *a description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment;*

c. *a description of the features of the project and/or measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;*
d. *a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the project on the environment;*
e. *a non-technical summary of the information referred to in points (a) to (d); and*
f. *any additional information specified in Annex IV relevant to the specific characteristics of a particular project or type of project and to the environmental features likely to be affected.*

In addition, Article 94 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) sets out the information to be contained in an EIAR, with which this EIAR complies.

This application is accompanied by an EIA, the purpose of which is to provide information to allow the competent authority, in this case An Coimisiún Pleanála, to conduct the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed development and to facilitate an informed consent decision. All elements of the Proposed Scheme have been assessed as part of this EIAR.

The EIAR identifies the potential significant environmental impacts and residual effects that may occur in terms of Population, Human Health, Biodiversity, Land, Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology, Air Quality, Climate, Noise and Vibration, Cultural Heritage, Landscape and Visual, and Material Assets as a result of the proposed development.

Mitigation measures and best practice measures for the Construction and Operational / Maintenance Phases are detailed in the accompanying CEMP.

The ZoI considered for the Cumulative impact assessment (CIA) takes into consideration the previously defined study areas in each of the respective specialist chapters of the EIAR which is informed by the appropriate guidance documents together with the professional judgement associated with the potential for cumulative environmental effects to occur based on the location, nature, and characteristics of the cumulative effects of projects in conjunction with the proposed scheme.

Overall, the assessment did identify potential cumulative impacts that may arise for Roads, Traffic and Transport for one project listed below:

- Planning Ref. 321064

Adverse impacts if the construction works along the R423 overlap with the Phase 1 construction of the Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme. This Phase will be based on the eastern side of Mountmellick town, and construction traffic will access the site compounds using the R423. Phase 1 is expected to last 12-18 months.

Potential cumulative impacts also may arise for Air Quality and Dust for projects listed below, which are close to the proposed flood defence sites:

- Planning Ref: 19558
- Planning Ref: 19428
- Planning Ref: 22439
- Planning Ref: 216
- Planning Ref: 22568
- Planning Ref: 16505

Mitigation measures propose regular liaison meetings with other high-risk construction sites. The aim of these is to ensure that plans are coordinated, and dust and particulate matter are minimised.

3.0 Natura Impact Statement

3.1 Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1 - Screening)

A Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) was prepared for the proposed development in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011–2021 (as amended).

The purpose of the Screening Report was to determine, based on the best scientific evidence, whether the proposed Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme (FRS), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant effect on any European Site (Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Area).

The screening identified sixteen (16) European Sites within the potential ZoI of the Proposed Scheme. Of these, only one site, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162), has a direct hydrological and ecological connection with the Scheme.

The River Owenass, Pound River, and Clontygar Stream, which are directly affected by the proposed works, are tributaries of the River Barrow and form part of the designated SAC.

The Screening Report concluded that likely significant effects (LSEs) on the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162) could not be excluded based on the potential for direct hydrological and ecological impacts and therefore, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Statement) was required.

3.2 Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2 - NIS)

The requirement to carry out an NIS follows on from the conclusion of the Stage 1 screening appraisal. The NIS only assesses QIs in relation to which it could not be excluded based on objective information following screening that the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other projects, would have a likely significant effect.

The NIS has considered the potential for effects arising from the Proposed Scheme that would have the potential to adversely affect the integrity of European Sites, with regard to their QIs and conservation objectives. The potential for direct, indirect and in-combination effects on relevant QIs of the following designations has been assessed in this NIS:

- Charleville Wood SAC (000571);
- River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162);
- Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (002170);
- Bricklieve Mountains and Keishcorran SAC (001656);
- Glenade Lough SAC (001919);
- Kilroosky Lough Cluster SAC (001786);
- Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC (002120);
- Lough Corrib SAC (000297);
- Lough Gill SAC (001976);

- Lough Lene SAC (002121);
- Lough Owel SAC (000688);
- Lower River Suir SAC (002137);
- River Moy SAC (002298);
- White Lough Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC (001810);
- Lough Hoe Bog SAC (000633);
- Lough Nageage SAC (002135).

In conclusion, that in view of best scientific knowledge and applying the precautionary principle, and in light of the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites, the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have adverse effects on the integrity of any European site(s), given the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in the NIS.

4.0 Policy Context and Assessment

This chapter provides a brief synopsis of the planning and policy objectives in the context of national, regional and local planning policy. It also identifies how the proposed development fulfils the respective policies, objectives and development standards and guidance.

4.1 National Policy

4.1.1 National Planning Framework (First Revision)

The National Planning Framework 2040 (hereafter referred to as the NPF) was published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) in 2018. The first revision of the NPF (April 2025) is now available following approval in both houses of the Oireachtas. The approval by the Seanad and the Dáil followed the decision of the Government to approve the Final Revised NPF on 8th April 2025.

The NPF includes 108 national policy objectives to help Ireland achieve its long-term sustainable goals and promotes environmentally focused planning at the local level to tackle climate change and the implementation of appropriate measures to mitigate existing issues.

The objectives are integrated as part of the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in areas such as climate action, sustainable cities and innovation and infrastructure.

NSO9 (Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources) states that:

> *Ireland has abundant natural and environmental resources such as our water sources that are critical to our environmental and economic wellbeing into the future. Conserving and enhancing the quality of these resources will also become more important in a crowded and competitive world as well as our capacity to create beneficial uses from products previously considered as waste, creating circular economic benefits.*

The NPF also states that in the context of NSO9, under the subheading of water:

> *Climate change will have significant future effects on the availability of water sources and on the capacity of water bodies to assimilate wastewater discharges through lower water levels in rivers and lakes in longer and drier summer periods. The impact of climate change on the water cycle and the resultant impact on water services and flooding therefore need to be considered in settlement strategies.*
>
> *The policy objectives and priorities of the Government regarding the provision of water services are set out in the Water Services Policy Statement 2018-2025 as provided for under section 32A of the Water Services (No.2) Act 2013 (as amended). These objectives focus on the themes of Quality, Conservation and Future Proofing.*

Section 9.3 (Protecting, Conserving, and Enhancing our Natural Capital) of the NPF outlines that flooding is a cross-sectoral issue that can affect all aspects of life, and that can be influenced, positively or detrimentally, by actions in many other sectors. Of particular importance is the consideration of potential future flood risk in the area of planning and development management, and the planning and design of infrastructure.

The following NPOs are relevant to the proposed development:

National Policy Objective 77:

Enhance water quality and resource management by:

- Ensuring that River Basin Management Plan objectives are fully considered throughout the physical planning process.
- Integrating sustainable water management solutions, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), nonporous surfacing and green roofs, and nature based solutions, to create safe places.

National Policy Objective 78:

Promote sustainable development by ensuring flooding and flood risk management informs place-making by:

- Avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding that do not pass the Justification Test, in accordance with the Guidelines on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management;
- Taking account of the potential impacts of climate change on flooding and flood risk, in line with national policy regarding climate adaptation.

4.1.2 The Planning System and Flood Risk Management

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management 2009 (hereafter, the Flood Risk Management Guidelines) advocates a proactive approach to prevent flooding. This includes, for example, adopting general policies for protection, improving or restoring floodplains, and upgrading flood barriers. Under these guidelines, Planning Authorities have a key role in delivering effective measures, policies and infrastructure to minimise the risk of flooding.

4.1.2.1 Statement of Compliance

The Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme is fully consistent with national policy objectives. It supports National Strategic Outcome 9 of the National Planning Framework, promoting the sustainable management of water and environmental resources. The scheme accords with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009) through a proactive, catchment-based approach to reducing flood risk. It aligns with the Climate Action Plan 2023 by enhancing climate resilience and supporting national adaptation measures. Overall, the project complies with national policy by safeguarding communities, protecting infrastructure, and contributing to sustainable and climate-resilient development.

4.2 Regional Policy

4.2.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019 -2031 for the Eastern And Midland Region

The RSES seeks to enable the implementation of the NPF's vision for the Region. It includes 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes, which include the following that are considered relevant for the proposed development:

RSO 8: Build Climate Resilience

Ensure the long-term management of flood risk and build resilience to increased risks of extreme weather events, changes in sea level and patterns of coastal erosion to protect property, critical infrastructure and food security in the Region.

The following Regional Policy objectives (RPOs) are relevant in the context of addressing flooding:

RPO 7.13:

EMRA will work with local authorities, the OPW and other relevant departments and agencies to implement the recommendations of the CFRAM programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.

RPO 7.14:

Local authorities shall take account of and incorporate into the development of local planning policy and decision making the recommendations of the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk.

RPO 7.15:

Local authorities shall take opportunities to enhance biodiversity and amenities and to ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive sites and habitats, including where flood risk management measures are planned.

RPO 10.15:

Support the relevant local authorities (and Irish Water where relevant) in the Region to improve storm water infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in the urban environment and in the development and provision at a local level of Sustainable Urban Drainage solutions.

4.2.1.1 Statement of Compliance

The Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme aligns with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region (2019–2031). It directly supports RSO 8 by managing long-term flood risk and enhancing the region's capacity to adapt to extreme weather events. The scheme accords with Regional Policy Objectives 7.13–7.15, which require local authorities to implement the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme, integrate flood risk management into local policy, and protect environmentally sensitive sites.

It also aligns with RPO 10.15, encouraging improved stormwater infrastructure and sustainable drainage solutions. By delivering strategic flood protection for Mountmellick and reducing risks to property, infrastructure, and community wellbeing, the project supports the RSES vision for climate adaptation, sustainable settlement growth, and coordinated infrastructure investment across the Eastern and Midland Region.

The proposed development has been designed to mitigate impacts on the environment, particularly water quality and biodiversity. Where appropriate, a suite of relevant mitigation measures proposed is set out within each of the relevant chapters of the EIAR.

4.3 Local Policy

4.3.1 Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (hereafter, the Development Plan) is the primary local statutory planning policy in Laois and guides the development of Mountmellick and the provision of relief defences.

Within the Plan, Mountmellick is identified as a Self-Sustaining Town. Self-Sustaining Towns are described as towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base, which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services, and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining.

The Plan identifies that Mountmellick has had limited growth over the period of the previous development plan. Despite this, the town has an important role as an urban centre in providing a key employment, retail, and community infrastructure base to its urban population, as well as those in the rural hinterland of the town. In addition to this, the Plan identifies that Mountmellick has a role in supporting Portlaoise, the Key Town within the County. The proposed works will facilitate Mountmellick to develop in accordance with the policies outlined, while also continuing to support the population base and the town of Portlaoise. As such, the proposed works are aligned with the policies outlined within the Plan.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), which accompanies the County Development Plan, indicates the extent of the land within Mountmellick which are within Flood Zones A & B. This is illustrated in Figure 4.1.

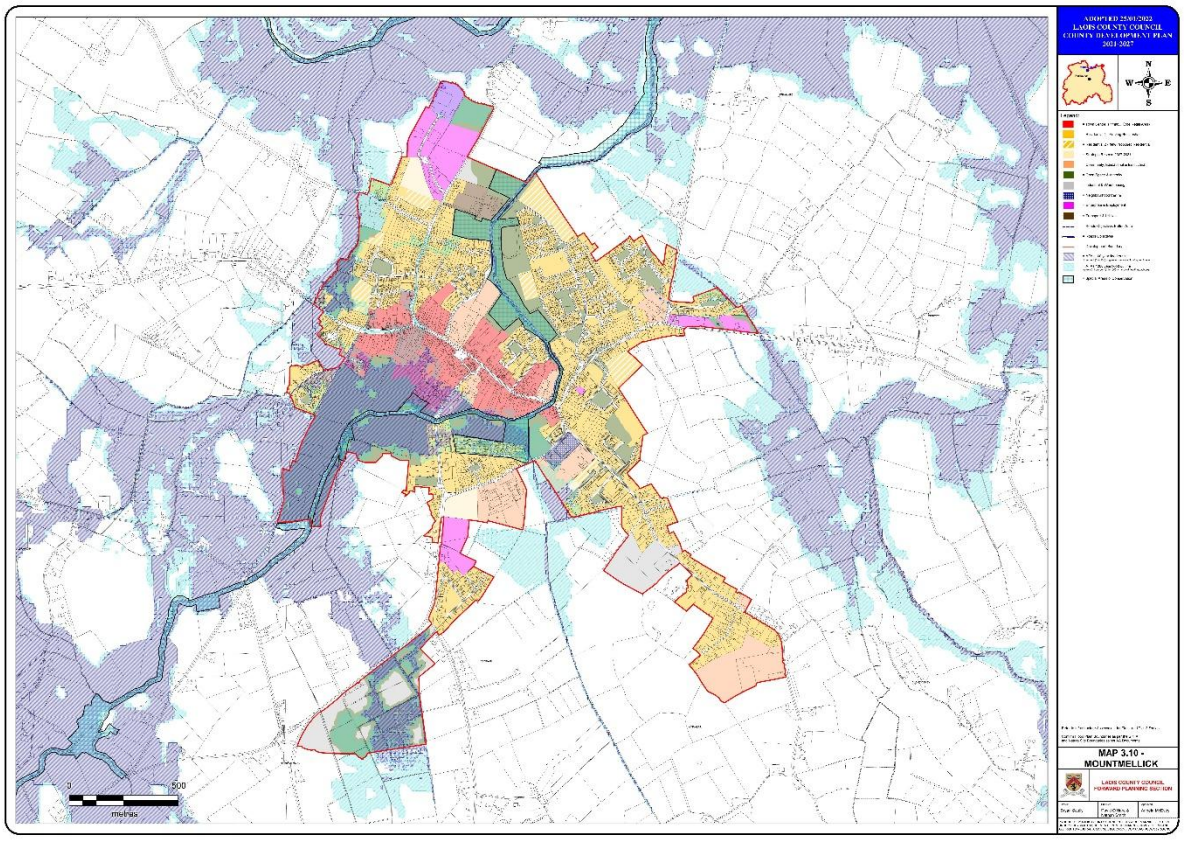

Figure 4.1 - Mountmellick Flood Risk Extents Source: Map 3.10 from the Development Plan

The proposed works seek to mitigate the risk of future flood events in the town. As indicated in Figure 4.1 above, there are significant areas of the town which are at risk of flooding.

The proposed works are to be carried out across a number of areas within Mountmellick. As a result of this, there is a range of different land use zonings in these areas. The land use zonings for the town of Mountmellick are set out below in Figure 4.2.

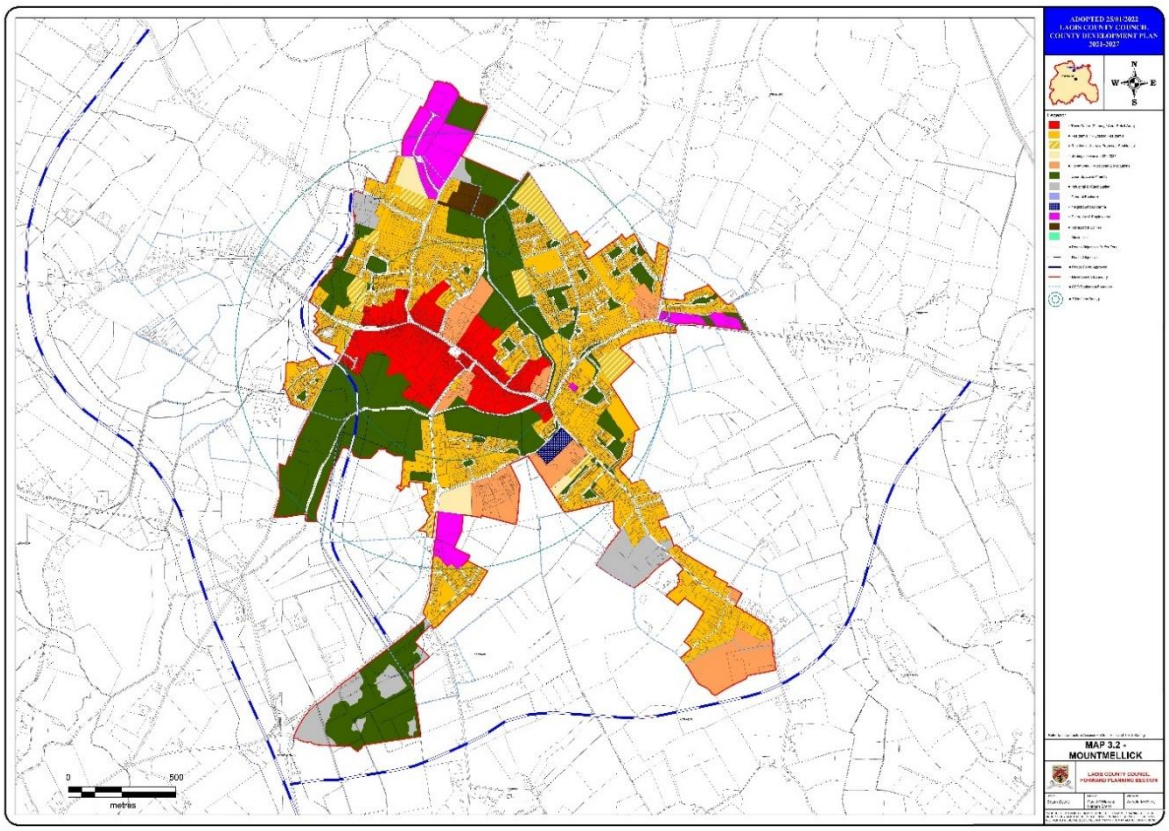

Figure 4.2 - Land Use Zoning in Mountmellick Source: Map 3.2 from the Development Plan

The land use zoning objectives for the lands of the proposed works are outlined below:

Table 4:1 - Land Use Zoning Objectives as per County Development Plan

Area of Proposed Works	Land Use Zoning Objective(s)
Defence 1	No Active Zoning – Outside Development Boundary
Defence 2	No Active Zoning – Outside Development Boundary
Defence 3	Open Space and Amenity Adjacent to Existing Residential
Defence 4	Town Centre Open Space and Amenity Community, Educational and

	Institutional
Defence 5	Open Space and Amenity
Defence 6	No Active Zoning – Outside Development Boundary
Defence 7	No Active Zoning – Outside Development Boundary
Defence 8	Existing Residential Strategic Reserve Community, Educational and Institutional No Active Zoning – Outside Development Boundary
Defence 9	No Active Zoning – Outside Development Boundary
Defence 10	Enterprise and Employment No Active Zoning – Outside Development Boundary

As indicated above in Table 4:1, there are a number of land use zoning objectives on or adjacent to the sites of the proposed works. The objectives of these zoning types are set out below:

Table 4:2 - Zoning Objectives and Purposes

Town/ Village Centre	To protect and enhance the special physical and social character of the existing town centre and to provide for and improve retailing and commercial activities.
Residential 1 (Existing Residential)	To protect and enhance the amenity of developed residential communities.
Strategic Reserve	To provide lands for future development in line with national and regional targets over the next Plan period 2021-2027.
Community, Educational and Institutional	To protect and provide for local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities.
Open Space and Amenity	To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space.
Enterprise and Employment	To provide lands for enterprise and employment use, more specifically low input and emission manufacturing, campus-style offices, storage uses, wholesaling and distribution, commercial services with high space and parking requirements that may not be suitable for town centre locations.

A number of different development types are open for consideration or permissible in these land use zoning objectives, including the development of infrastructure projects.

As indicated in Table 4:1, there are a number of areas which do not fall within the development boundary of Mountmellick; as a result, these areas have no active land use zoning objectives. With regard to this, the Plan states that 'developments in rural areas that would undermine appropriately zoned lands or policies in the foregoing chapters will not be permitted'. The works proposed in these areas will, in fact, support and facilitate the future development of the lands within the town, which are zoned and, as a result, are aligned to the policies set out in the Plan.

Mountmellick town centre is a proposed Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). There are a number of buildings identified within the County Development Plan which have been placed on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) due to the architectural/cultural/historic/social value of the building. Nineteen of these buildings are located within 100 metres of the proposed works.

In addition, there is a significant number of structures listed on the RPS and NIAH within the town centre of Mountmellick. The proposed Flood Relief Scheme will aid in mitigating the risk of future flood events to these structures. There are also three recorded archaeological sites within the study area.

4.3.1.1 Statement of Compliance

The following table provides an assessment of the proposed development with the relevant policy and objectives of the Development Plan

Policy Objective / Development Management Standard	Policy Compliant? (Y/N). If so, why
CA1: Support and facilitate European and national objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the following documents, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage).	**Yes.** The proposed Mountmellick FRS provides long-term flood protection infrastructure designed to accommodate High-End Future Scenario (HEFS) climate projections.
FRM 3: Support the implementation of recommendations in the CFRAM	**Yes.** The Mountmellick FRS directly implements the South Eastern CFRAM

Programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.	Study recommendations for Mountmellick AFA (Area for Further Assessment).
FRM 4: Support the implementation of recommendations in the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk.	**Yes.** The Scheme is consistent with the Flood Risk Management Plan for the River Barrow Catchment (OPW, 2018), which identified structural flood-relief measures for Mountmellick as a priority investment project.
FRM 5: Consult with the OPW in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible, and to retain a strip on either side of such channels where required, to facilitate maintenance access thereto.	**Yes.** Continuous consultation with the OPW has been undertaken during the lifetime of this project, as detailed in Chapter 5 of the EIAR.
FRM 6: Assist the OPW in developing catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans for rivers in County Laois and have regard to their provisions/recommendations.	**Yes.** The Scheme has been progressed collaboratively with the OPW under the CFRAM Programme.
FRM 7: Protect and enhance the County's floodplains and wetlands as 'green infrastructure' which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defences in the future, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.	**Yes.** The Mountmellick FRS protects and enhances functional floodplains and wetland areas by maintaining storage and conveyance capacity wherever feasible.
FRM 8: Protect the integrity of any formal (OPW or Laois County Council) flood risk management infrastructure, thereby	**Yes.** The Scheme safeguards existing flood defences and provides new infrastructure without compromising any

ensuring that any new development does not Adversely impact any existing defence infrastructure or compromise any proposed new infrastructure.	formal OPW or Laois County Council works. Construction setbacks and access corridors are maintained to allow future inspection and maintenance.
FRM 9: Ensure that the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams, and watercourses are protected and enhanced where flood risk management works take place.	**Yes.** The design of the proposed development has been guided by the design principle of minimising impacts on the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams, and watercourses.
FRM 10: 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.	**Yes.** The Scheme's hydrological and hydraulic design includes climate-change allowances in line with the OPW's High-End Future Scenario (HEFS), ensuring long-term adaptability. Climate resilience and justification are detailed in the Options Report.
FRM 11: Consult, where necessary, with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies in the provision of flood alleviation measures in the County.	**Yes.** Continuous consultation with the NPWS and IFI has been undertaken during the lifetime of this project, as detailed in Chapter 5 of the EIAR.
FRM 12: Prioritise plans for flood defence works in the towns as indicated in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in order to mitigate against potential flood risk.	**Yes.** The SFRA of the Development Plan identifies Mountmellick as one of the highest flood-risk settlements in County Laois. The proposed Scheme directly addresses this by providing protection to residential, commercial and community buildings, ensuring compliance with SFRA recommendations.
FRM 13: Ensure new development does not increase flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface water runoff.	**Yes.** The implementation of the proposed development will not result in increased flood risk potential elsewhere.

TC 5: Assist in site assembly and facilitate appropriate new development in town/village centres by way of alterations and extensions, infill development as well as demolition and redevelopment subject to planning considerations such as architectural heritage and flood risk.	**Yes.** The proposed development shall provide flood protection to Mountmellick and underpin the growth and development of Mountmellick consistent with TC 5.
BNH 31: Protect waterbodies and watercourses from inappropriate development, to ensure they are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values and to conserve and enhance where possible, the wildlife habitats of the County's rivers and riparian zones, lakes, canals and streams which occur outside of designated areas to provide a network of habitats and biodiversity corridors throughout the County.	**Yes.** The proposed development will not result in significant adverse effects on biodiversity, and an enhancement proposal, which sets out measures to increase local biodiversity, is included in this application.
LCA 19: Recognise the potential constraints on development created by river flood plains and the value of these flood plains as increasingly rare habitats.	**Yes.** The proposed development provides flood relief measures along the River Owenass, which current flood modelling indicates has the potential to impact residential and commercial properties and may have indirect negative impacts on areas zoned for future development due to investment concerns. The proposed development aims to minimise any potential effects on biodiversity through careful construction programming, mitigation and monitoring during the construction phase and the provision of a CEMP.

5.0 Conclusion

The Mountmellick FRS provides sustainable infrastructure for Mountmellick, designed to protect the town's residents, businesses and heritage from recurring flood events. The scheme delivers the objectives of national, regional and local policy by enhancing climate resilience, safeguarding public safety and supporting compact, sustainable growth. Comprehensive environmental assessments, including the EIAR, NIS and CEMP, confirm that, with mitigation measures implemented, the scheme will not result in significant adverse effects on the environment or Natura 2000 sites. The scheme combines robust engineering design with environmental best practice, ensuring long-term flood protection while enhancing biodiversity and public amenity along the River Owenass. The proposed development has been designed to mitigate impacts on the environment, particularly water quality and biodiversity. Where appropriate, a suite of relevant mitigation measures proposed is set out within each of the relevant chapters of the EIAR. This planning report has assessed the proposed development, demonstrating that it is in full accordance with national, regional and local planning policy.

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23rd October 2025

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24th October 2025