



COAKLEY O'NEILL
town planning

Planning Report

Strategic Infrastructure Development –

Proposed Upgrades to the
Mortarstown Wastewater Treatment Plant and Kilkenny
Road Pumping Station, Carlow, Co. Carlow

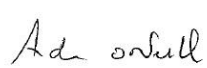
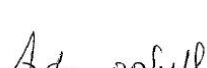
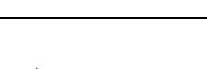
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Uisce Éireann

Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We, Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd, NSC Campus, Mahon, Cork T12 H7AA, have been retained by Uisce Éireann (UÉ), c/o AtkinsRéalis, Atkins House, 150 Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin, K67 K5W4, to prepare this planning report in support of an application for planning permission for a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID), hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development', in respect of the proposed upgrade of the existing Mortarstown Wastewater Treatment Plant (WwTP) and Kilkenny Road Pumping Station in the townlands of Mortarstown Upper and Carlow, Carlow Town, Co. Carlow.
- 1.2 In accordance with its statutory obligations under the Water Services Acts, UÉ is focused on ensuring its wastewater infrastructure is fit for purpose, is compliant with the requirements of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and is also capable of supporting sustainable population and economic growth.
- 1.3 In this context, the Proposed Development seeks to upgrade the treatment capacity of the existing Mortarstown WwTP from 36,000 population equivalent (PE) to 58,500 PE.
- 1.4 This planning report sets out the key planning policies that have informed the nature and extent of the Proposed Development; presents an assessment of the key planning issues pertaining to it; and discusses how the Proposed Development is aligned with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The existing Mortarstown WwTP is located on a generally level site of c. 3.66ha, c. 2.2km to the south of Carlow Town Centre, accessed from Green Road via a security gate, in the townland of Mortarstown Upper, Carlow, Co. Carlow.
- 2.2 The boundaries of the WwTP are characterised by mature trees/hedgerow to the north, east, south and south-east, and a palisade fence to the west. It is bounded agricultural land and Tyndall College Carlow to the south; agricultural land, and a dwelling house and sheds (c. 75m from the WwTP boundary) to the south-east; an existing, vacant residential dwelling (in UÉ's ownership), agricultural land and the Kilkenny Road (R448) to the west; agricultural land, the Glen residential estate (c. 52m from the WwTP boundary), and the South East Technological University (SETU) Carlow Campus to the north; and agricultural land, and the Cluain Bui residential estate (part under construction) (c. 70m from the WwTP boundary), to the east. The River Barrow, to which the existing outfall discharges, is approximately 250m further west.
- 2.3 The existing Kilkenny Road Pumping Station is located on a generally level site, c. 1.3km to the south-west of Carlow Town Centre, between the Kilkenny Road, and the River Barrow. It is bounded to the east by the Kilkenny Road; vegetation and trees to the south; vegetation and trees and the River Barrow to the west; and a part-cleared area of vegetation and trees to the north. The SETU Carlow Campus and student accommodation is located to the east, on the opposite side of the Kilkenny Road. To the south-east is a mini roundabout that connects Kilkenny Road with the Green Road.

- 2.4 Kilkenny Road is a single-carriageway regional road with a shared footpath/cycle lane on the eastern side and a cycle lane on the western side of the road in the vicinity of the Pumping Station site. This pedestrian/cycle infrastructure extends as far as the 30km/h speed zone, with a footpath only on the eastern side of the road as far as the mini roundabout with the Green Road. To the north of this roundabout as far as the extent of the site of the Proposed Development, there is a shared footpath on both sides of the road. An Active Travel Scheme (Carlow to SETU Pedestrian & Cycle Scheme) is currently under construction to the north of the Proposed Development.
- 2.5 The WwTP serves the agglomeration of Carlow Town and its environs, including a section in Co. Laois. The WwTP also treats the wastewater from a micro-brewery and a housing development to the west of Carlow Town in the village of Killeshin, Co. Laois.

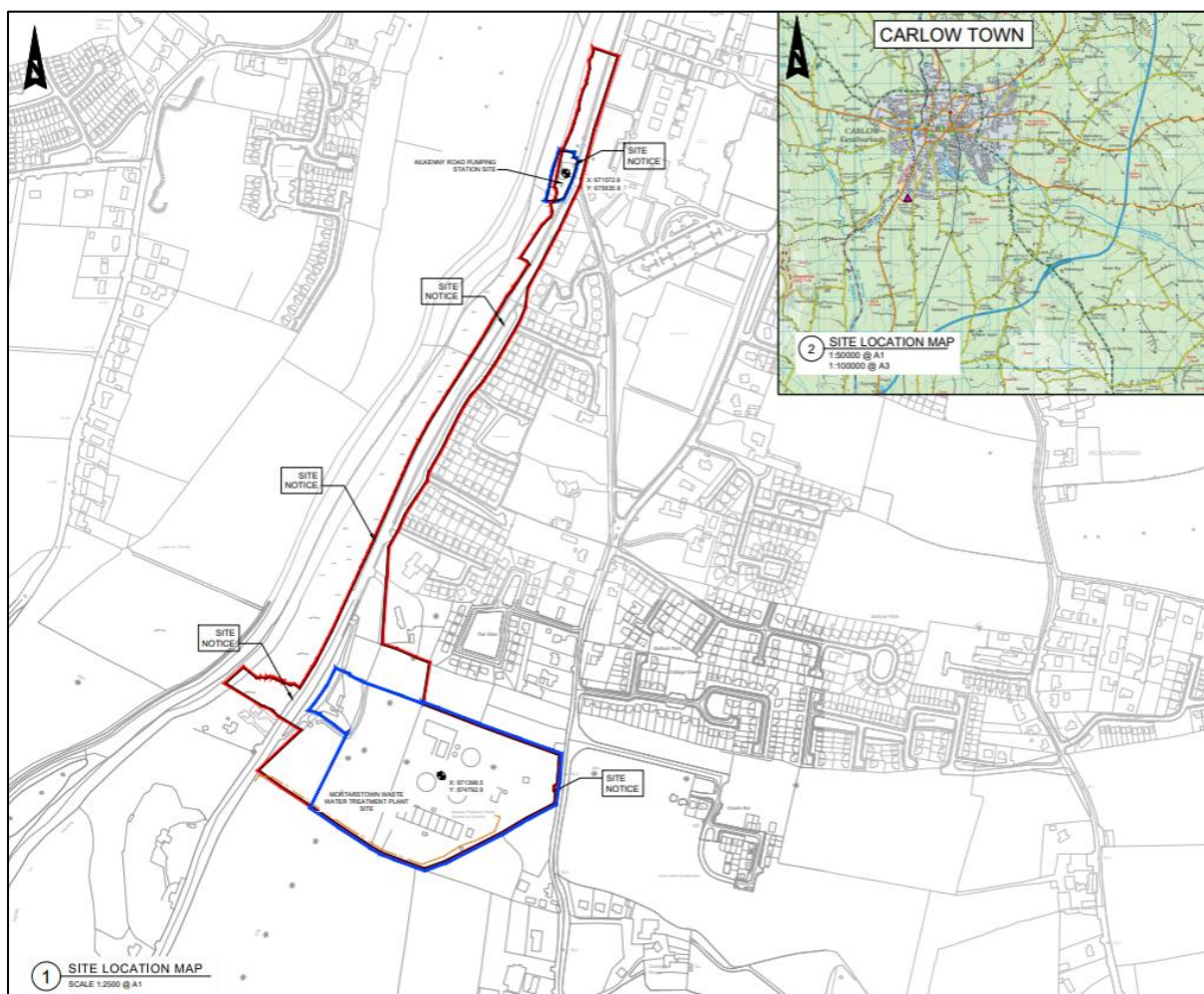


Figure 1. Site Location of the Proposed Development



Plate 1. Aerial View of the existing Mortarstown WwTP

3.0 POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Key Legislative Context

European Context

Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD)

3.1.1 The EU's original Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/27/EEC) was adopted in 1991 and recast on 27th of November 2024 (EU/2024/3019). The revised Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, which entered into force on the 1st of January 2025, protects human health and the environment from the effects of untreated urban wastewater. It requires EU countries, including Ireland, to ensure that towns and cities properly collect and treat wastewater cost-effectively.

3.1.2 The Directive aims to:

Improve water quality through stricter water treatment and the inclusion of new pollutants;
Strengthen the EU's polluter-pays principle by ensuring that those responsible for pollution bear the costs of remediating it;
Advance circularity through water reuse and the recovery of valuable resources from wastewater;
Address climate change through GHG emission reduction of treatment plants and urban adaptation to heavy rainfall;
Ensure access to sanitation for all, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised.

- 3.1.3 The Directive requires urban wastewater agglomerations with a minimum of 10,000PE and which discharge into sensitive water bodies, to provide secondary treatment facilities to remove at least 80% micropollutants by 2045. The Directive also introduces binding targets for energy neutrality in the wastewater sector.

Wastewater Discharge Regulations 2020

- 3.1.4 The European Union (Wastewater Discharge) Regulations 2020 came into operation on the 30th of June 2020 as an update to the Wastewater Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007. These regulations empower planning authorities to invite the Environmental protection Agency (EPA) to submission observations regarding Environmental Impact Assessments for wastewater discharge applications.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD)

- 3.1.5 The purpose of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), dated 23rd of October 2000, is to halt the deterioration in the status of EU water bodies and achieve good status for Europe's rivers, lakes, and groundwater. The WFD was given legal effect in Ireland by the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003), which requires Ireland to protect and improve water quality in all waters to achieve good ecological status by 2015 or, at least, by 2027, and to prevent any deterioration in their current status.

Energy Efficiency Directive

- 3.1.6 The Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) is an EU-wide initiative aimed at improving energy efficiency across all sectors of society. The recast 2023 EED strengthens previous measures and sets targets for improving energy efficiency across the EU. Through promoting the more efficient use of energy, it supports the transition to a climate neutral Europe, reduces carbon emissions and lowers energy bills for citizen and businesses.

The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework

- 3.1.7 The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework was presented by the European Commission on the 22nd of January 2014. The 2030 framework proposes new targets and measures to make the EU's economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable. It includes targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing use of renewable energies and proposed a new governance system and performance indicators.
- 3.1.8 The Framework sets out what European Union (EU) Member States must do to ensure that the land use, land use changes and forestry sector helps meet the EU's greenhouse gas emission reduction target for 2021-2030; lays down rules to account for emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry and to check that Member States meet their commitments.

EIA Directive

- 3.1.9 Under the EU's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive (2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU), major building or development projects in the EU must first be assessed for their impact on the environment.
- 3.1.10 The EIA procedure guarantees environmental protection and transparency with regard to the decision-making process for several public and private projects. With its wide scope and broad purpose, the EIA ensures that environmental concerns are considered from the very beginning of new building or development projects, or their changes or extensions. It allows the public to actively engage in the EIA procedure.

Habitats Directive

- 3.1.11 The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) was adopted in 1992. The Habitats Directive aims to protect over a thousand species, including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish invertebrates, and plants, and 230 characteristic habitat types.
- 3.1.12 The overall objective is to ensure that these species and habitat types are maintained, or restored, to a favourable conservation status within the EU. In addition to halting the further decline or disappearance of these species and habitats, the Directive aims to allow them to recover and thrive over the long term.

National Context

The Water Services Acts of 2007 – 2022

- 3.1.13 The Water Services Acts of 2007-2022, lay out the legislation, governing functions, standards, obligations and practice in relation to the planning, management, and delivery of water supply and wastewater collection and treatment services.
- 3.1.14 UÉ's Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) 2050, prepared under the Water Services No. 2 Act, 2013, sets out a long-term strategic plan to ensure sustainable water services, in the context of significant challenges, including climate change, population and economic growth, the environment and biodiversity crises, and ageing infrastructure. It sets out 4no. strategic objectives, including:

Strategic Objective 3: Protect and restore our environment: providing safer water services is closely linked with protecting the water environment. Action 3.1 under this Objective commits UÉ to work with regulators and stakeholders to develop a Wastewater Strategy Framework; Action 3.5 seeks to manage wastewater services to achieve regulatory requirements.

Strategic Objective 4: Sustainable services fit for the future: ensuring sustainable water services is key to securing safe water and a protected environment for future generations. Action 4.2 under this Objective seeks to work to embed sustainability in the delivery of water and wastewater infrastructure.

- 3.1.15 The Water Services Policy Statement (WPS) 2024-2030, prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in accordance with the Water Services Acts, acknowledges that *Ireland's future economic and social progress is critically dependent on upscaling our capacity to deliver reliable, sustainable high-quality water and wastewater services*. Further stated is the priority to ensure that *current water and wastewater services are maintained, requiring infrastructure investment in maintenance and renewal*.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (As Amended)

- 3.1.16 The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended, committed the State to 2030 and 2050 legally binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and providing the governance framework by which this is to be realised. Section 15 of the Act states that:

(1) A relevant body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to –
The most recent approved national mitigation plan,
The most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plan,
The furtherance of the national transition objective,
The objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

3.2 National, Sectoral & Regional Policy context

National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision (2025)

- 3.2.1 The NPF First Revision, published in April 2025, focuses on the need to reflect changes in policy arising from climate transition, regional development, demographics, digitalisation, and investment and prioritisation.
- 3.2.2 It highlights the delivery of critical strategic infrastructure, which includes wastewater services, as essential for sustainable growth in the future. Table 2.1 of the NPF 2025 identifies a target population growth for the Southern Region - in which Carlow is located - of approximately 330,000 people to 2million people by 2040.
- 3.2.3 National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 9 (Sustainable Management of Environmental Resources), highlights the need to bring and maintain wastewater services to acceptable international levels.
- 3.2.4 NSO 9 further seeks to *devise detailed network and capacity assessments to support the provision of water services infrastructure that facilitates housing and economic development in the priority towns and urban areas identified in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies in order to ensure plan-led development decisions are underpinned by coordinated investment plans*.
- 3.2.5 In addition, National Policy Objective (NPO) 92 seeks to *ensure the alignment of planned growth with the efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure, in order*

to manage and conserve water resources in a manner that supports a healthy society, economic development requirements and a cleaner environment.

- 3.2.6 The NPF First Revision further outlines that *the treatment and disposal of wastewater in an environmentally sound manner is critical for human health* and that *we need to ensure adequate treatment and capacity, storm water overflows operating correctly and that we avoid direct discharges of untreated wastewater.*
- 3.2.7 The NPF First Revision also highlights the importance of investing in wastewater infrastructure as it is critical to the implementation of the NPF and the National Development Plan (NDP).

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030 and NDP Review 2025

- 3.2.8 The National Development Plan (NDP) outlines investment priorities that will support the NPF to be implemented in a successful manner, and to achieve a high-quality stock of infrastructure throughout Ireland.
- 3.2.9 The NDP addresses water infrastructure and services as follows:
Significant continued investment in water and wastewater infrastructure and services will also involve the increases delivery of new connections, co-ordinated with the planning process to support economic growth and meet the needs of priority housing developments and urban renewal areas, while at the same time supporting implementation of national strategies in relation to public health, safety and environmental compliance.
- 3.2.10 The NDP Review includes an additional injection of €4.5 billion on top of the original NDP provision, a total of €12 billion, for specifically water services infrastructure.

Accelerating Infrastructure Report and Action Plan – Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation July 2025

- 3.2.11 The Accelerating Infrastructure Report and Action Plan identifies water services and infrastructure as fundamental and critical to support compact growth, economic growth and environmental goals. It is noted that Ireland's water and wastewater infrastructure must expand to meet the rising demand while maintaining service quality.
- 3.2.12 Action 17, Sub-Action (ii), of the Infrastructure Report and Action Plan further acknowledges the importance in wastewater infrastructure throughout the country, this sub-action states the following:

Prioritise funding for enabling infrastructure, such as grid upgrade, wastewater expansion and strategic transport corridors.

National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 – 2030

- 3.2.13 The National Biodiversity Action Plan highlights urban wastewater as one of the pressures on biodiversity loss across the country, and the need for improved wastewater treatment. Uisce Éireann's own Biodiversity Action Plan seeks to ensure no net loss of biodiversity.

National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan 2016

- 3.2.14 The National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan (NWSMP) outlines Uisce Éireann's strategy to ensure a nationwide standardised approach for managing wastewater sludge over a 25-year period (with 5 yearly reviews, with the Plan currently under review). The management of sludge waste at the existing WwTP is aligned with this Plan, and so too will future sludge waste arising from the proposed development.

Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure – Sectoral Adaptation Plan 2025

- 3.2.15 This Plan highlights Uisce Éireann's role as Ireland's national public water services provider, including collecting wastewater through their 25,000km of sewerage networks, for treatment in one of their 1,000 wastewater treatment plants.
- 3.2.16 Goal 3 (Secure, Resilient, and Adaptable Water Services) seeks to *ensure the delivery of Water Services Infrastructure (WSI) that meets the requirements of the European Drinking Water and Urban Wastewater Directives, providing safe, reliable and resilient WSI. This involves upgrading existing infrastructure while delivering new infrastructure to cope with increased supply and demand pressures.*
- 3.2.17 Objective 3.2 of the Plan states the following:

Ensure wastewater management and wastewater services are delivered in a safe and reliable manner.

Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland

- 3.2.18 The Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland sets out the measures that are necessary to protect and restore water quality in Ireland. The aim of the plan is to ensure that Ireland's natural waters are sustainably managed and that freshwater resources are protected to maintain and improve Ireland's water environment.
- 3.2.19 The Action Plan highlights that inadequately treated wastewater is one of the principal causes of the decline in Ireland's water quality.
- 3.2.20 The Plan supports *Uisce Éireann to implement the National Water Resource Plan and associated regional plans and to maintain national water and wastewater capacity registers to ensure security of supply and sufficient capacity in drinking and wastewater networks to inform decisions on balanced regional development in line with the National Planning Framework.*

- 3.2.21 The Plan further sets out several actions for each of the most significant pressures and issues of which urban wastewater and domestic wastewater are outlined.

Urban Wastewater Treatment in 2024

- 3.2.22 Appendix D of the Urban Wastewater Treatment in 2024 report prepared by the EPA notes that *improvement measures are required at the 34 priority areas listed below to prevent wastewater discharges from harming rivers, estuaries, lakes and coastal waters*. This lists Carlow, and notes that *infrastructural upgrades are underway*.

Uisce Éireann's Strategic Funding Plan 2025-2029, Water Services Strategic Plan 2025, and Capital Investment Plans 2020-2024 and 2025-2029

- 3.2.23 Uisce Éireann's Strategic Funding Plan 2025-2029 sets out the measures that are proposed between 2025 and 2029 to implement the objectives of the Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) 2025. Strategic Objective WW (Wastewater) of the WSSP seeks to ensure the effective management of wastewater services, while Strategic Aim WW1 specifically aims to protect environmental quality and bring wastewater treatment plants into compliance with the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. The Capital Investment Plans further set out and particularise the investment in water services infrastructure that Uisce Éireann considers necessary for the effective performance of its functions.
- 3.2.24 In this context, the Proposed Development:
- forms part of UÉ's Capital Investment Plan 2020–2024, which identifies fifty-one priority “above-ground” wastewater treatment projects required to address strategic capacity and compliance deficits across the country. The Mortarstown WwTP upgrade is listed as one of these priority projects.
 - is also identified as a priority capital project in Appendix 4 of the Capital Investment Plan 2025–2029 (referred to as Carlow WWTP Upgrade), which has been the subject of recent consultation by the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU).

Southern Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032

- 3.2.25 The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region supports the implementation of the strategic outcomes and objectives of the NPF. The RSES is currently under review on foot of the publication of the NPF First Revision.
- 3.2.26 The vision for the Southern Region is to *promote the Southern Region as an attractive, competitive, and sustainable place to live, work and visit, a region of considerable opportunity for growth based on the quality of its cities, towns and rural areas, well developed physical and social infrastructure, a diverse modern economy and pristine natural environments*.

3.2.27 Carlow is designated as a Key Town, prioritised for infrastructure investment and sustainable compact growth. Infrastructural investment includes the upgrading and development of wastewater infrastructure to support anticipated growth.

3.2.28 Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 14 (a) states the following:

To strengthen and support the role of Carlow Town as a self-sustaining regional and inter-regional economic driver supporting investment in the strategic employment potential of the town.

(iv) To seek investment in water and wastewater infrastructure to facilitate the sustainable development of the town as a regional growth centre;

(vii) To support the delivery of infrastructure requirements identified for Carlow subject to the outcome of the planning process and environmental assessments.

3.2.29 RPO 215, sets out that *Development Plans shall support strategic wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and facilitate the separation of foul and surface water networks to accommodate future growth of the region.*

3.2.30 Section 8.1 of the RSES describes the strategy for the sustainable management of wastewater. It states that it is a key priority to *ensure targeted investment to enable growth at appropriate locations, and that development is phased such that water service infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner to enable infrastructure led sustainable growth patterns.*

3.2.31 RPO 14 (a)(iv), directly addresses the need for water and wastewater infrastructure in Carlow:

To seek investment in water and wastewater infrastructure to facilitate the sustainable development of the town as a regional growth centre.

3.2.32 The following RPOs are of relevance to this proposed development:

RPO 212 – Strategic Wastewater Treatment Facilities: (a) It is an objective to support investment and the sustainable development of strategic wastewater treatment facilities by Uisce Éireann in the region arising from initiatives including Investment Plans, Strategic Drainage Area Plans subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process. (b) For the management of wastewater, increasing population growth should be planned on a phased basis in collaboration with Uisce Éireann and the local authorities to ensure that the assimilative capacity of the receiving environment is not exceeded and that increased wastewater discharges from population growth does not contribute to degradation of water quality and to avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 Network.

RPO 214 – Eliminating Untreated Discharges and Long-term Planning: It is an objective to support Uisce Éireann and the relevant local authorities in the Region to eliminate untreated discharges from settlements in the short-term, while planning strategically for the long-term in tandem with

Project Ireland 2040 and the RSES and in increasing compliance with the requirements of the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive.

Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031

- 3.2.33 The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region also supports the implementation of the strategic outcomes and objectives of the NPF. The RSES is currently under review on foot of the publication of the NPF First Revision.
- 3.2.34 Regional Strategic Outcome (RSO) 7 in relation to Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources seeks to conserve and enhance our water resources to ensure clean water supply, adequate wastewater treatment and greater resource efficiency to realise the benefits of the circular economy.
- 3.2.35 Section 4.6 of the RSES acknowledges that whilst Carlow is largely located within the Southern Regional Assembly's functional area, part of the town around Graiguecullen is located within County Laois and so within the functional area of the EMRA. Policy Objective RPO 4.75 states that a cross-boundary Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) shall be prepared for Carlow by Carlow County Council and Laois County Council having regard to its location within the combined functional area of both local authorities. As with the RSES for the Southern Region, Graiguecullen (Carlow) is identified as a Key Town in Table 4.2 of the RSES. Policy objective RPO 4.27 states that Key Towns shall act as economic drivers and provide for strategic employment locations to improve their economic base by increasing the ratio of jobs to workers.
- 3.2.36 In relation to wastewater treatment, policy objective RPO 10.10 seeks to support Irish Water and the relevant local authorities in the Region to eliminate untreated discharges from settlements in the short term, while planning strategically for long term growth in tandem with Project Ireland 2040 and in increasing compliance with the requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive from 39% today to 90% by the end of 2021, to 99% by 2027 and to 100% by 2040.

3.3 Local Planning Context

Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028

- 3.3.1 The Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (hereafter the Plan) is the relevant statutory plan which applies in respect of the proposed development.
- 3.3.2 The key objective of the Plan is *to promote the sustainable compact growth of Carlow Town and strengthen its position as a self-sustaining regional and inter-regional economic driver.*
- 3.3.3 The Plan sets out a number of strategic objectives in section 1.5.1, of which (v) *Enabling Infrastructure*, is of particular relevance to this proposal. This strategic objective states the following:

The goal of achieving compact growth will require improved accessibility, sustainable mobility, and the requisite infrastructure to enable Carlow Town to grow as a Key Town. The importance of protecting and investing in, road, rail, wastewater, and energy infrastructure is recognised in this Plan in order to facilitate the sustainable development of Carlow Town as a Key Town.

3.3.4 In addition, the following strategic objectives are also noted:

SO 2: Support and promote the role of Carlow Town as a Regional and Inter-regional economic growth driver and to fulfil its role as a Key Town, focussed on regeneration, implementation of Project Carlow 2040 A Vision for Regeneration, sustainable development, quality of life and economic investment.

SO 11: Promote the provision and maintenance of high-quality infrastructure and infrastructural networks and environmental services which seek to complement the overall economic and settlement strategy and contribute to the sustainable development of the area.

3.3.5 Table 2.1 of the Core Strategy of the Plan designates Carlow Town as the Tier 1 settlement of the County, in view of its status as a large population scale urban centre, functioning as a self –sustaining regional driver. It is a strategically located urban centre with accessibility and significant influence in a sub-regional context. The population of Carlow Town and environs (Graiguecullen) in 2022 was 27,351 (+3,079 from 2026 (24,272)). Section 2.8.1 of the Plan sets out the key policies for the town, to include:

CSP 1: Support the continued growth and sustainable development of Carlow Town to act as a regional and inter-regional growth driver in the region and to fulfil its role as a Key Town, focussed on sustainable development, quality of life and economic investment.

3.3.6 Chapter 6 of the Plan sets out the key objectives for infrastructure and environmental management in the County, specifically to seek the provision and maintenance of high-quality infrastructure networks and environmental services to complement the overall economic and settlement strategy and contribute to sustainable development.

3.3.7 Section 6.1.6 of the Plan discusses water supply policies, and the following policy objective is of note:

WS P3: To Support Uisce Éireann in delivering key water service projects to meet the future needs of the County subject to compliance with all relevant EU and national legislation and normal environmental and planning criteria.

3.3.8 Section 6.2 of the Plan, Public Wastewater Collection and Treatment, specifically identifies the proposed development as an infrastructural improvement and upgrade works:

Improvement and upgrade works are also proposed for Mortarstown WwTP in Carlow.

3.3.9 The following policies from the Plan are of relevance to this proposal:

PW P1: Support strategic wastewater treatment infrastructure investment by Uisce Éireann and to support Uisce Éireann in providing and maintaining adequate and appropriate wastewater treatment infrastructure to service zoned lands, towns, and villages and developments over the period of the Plan in accordance with the Core Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy.

PW P2: Facilitate Uisce Éireann in the delivery of public wastewater services which address the residential, commercial, and industrial needs of the County subject to compliance with all relevant EU and national legislation and normal planning and environmental criteria.

3.3.10 In addition, of critical note is that the Plan identifies the following specific objective:

*PW 01: Facilitate the required upgrade of wastewater projects that may arise during the lifetime of this Plan subject to compliance with all relevant EU and national legislation and normal planning and environmental criteria including upgrade and improvement works on current and planned IW schemes for Tullow WWTP, Bagenalstown/Leighlinbridge WWTP, **Mortarstown WWTP**, and Borris WWTP. (our emphasis).*

3.3.11 Section 6.6.4 of the Plan notes that UÉ is responsible for the treatment and disposal of sludge from both its water and wastewater treatment plants in accordance with the National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan (NWSMP).

3.3.12 Chapter 10 of the Plan sets out the following natural heritage policies:

NH P1: Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Carlow in recognition of its importance as a non-renewable resource, a unique identifier, and as a natural resource asset.

NH P2: Ensure, as far as is practicable, that development does not adversely impact on wildlife habitats and species, and that biodiversity is conserved for the benefit of future generations in the interests of sustainability. This will include moving towards no net loss of biodiversity from plans adopted by and projects granted permission/authorised by the Council.

3.3.13 Table 10.1 identifies the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162) as one of three Natura 2000 sites in County Carlow, to which the following policy and objective applies:

NH P1: Support the conservation and enhancement of Natura 2000 Sites, and to protect the Natura 2000 network from any plans and projects that are likely to have a significant effect on the coherence or integrity of a Natura 2000 Site, in accordance with relevant EU Environmental Directives and applicable National Legislation, Policies, Plans and Guidelines.

NH O1: Strictly protect areas designated or proposed to be designated as Natura 2000 sites, including any areas that may be proposed for designation or designated during the period of this Plan.

3.3.14 In relation to woodlands, trees and hedgerows, the following policy applies:

WT P1: Protect and manage existing woodlands, trees and hedgerow which are of amenity or biodiversity value and/or contribute to landscape character and ensure that proper provision is made for their consideration, protection and management when undertaking, approving or authorising development.

3.3.15 In relation to inland waters, the following policy is of note:

IW P1: Protect the biodiversity of rivers, streams and other watercourses, to maintain them in an open state, to discourage culverting or realignment, and where possible, uncover existing culverts and restore the watercourses to acceptable ecological standards and for the passage of fish.

3.3.16 In relation to inland waters, the following policy is of note:

IW P1: Protect the biodiversity of rivers, streams and other watercourses, to maintain them in an open state, to discourage culverting or realignment, and where possible, uncover existing culverts and restore the watercourses to acceptable ecological standards and for the passage of fish.

Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

3.3.17 Map 2.1 of the Core Strategy for Laois identifies Graiguecullen as a Key Town in the Gateway Region that has an important function as a town that straddles the regional boundary with the southern region and acts as a Gateway in this respect. It will play a regional role in providing key employment and services for its own extensive hinterland.

3.3.18 Table 2.16 of the Core Strategy identifies a total population for Graiguecullen of 5,553 to 2031. Section 2.10.1.2 of the Plan defines the vision for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen urban area as:

A high-functioning, inclusive, compact and accessible greater urban area, underpinned by a robust and diverse local economy comprising retail, commercial, industrial, education and tourism uses; with characteristics including a strong sense of place, a vibrant and vital town centre, opportunities for education and cultural experiences for all, a network of linked open spaces, recreational uses and other social infrastructure elements to provide for a good quality of life and increased emphasis on sustainable forms of transport and patterns of development.

3.3.19 Policy objective CS 18 of the Plan seeks to support the continued growth and sustainable development of Graiguecullen to act as a growth driver in the region and to fulfil its role as a Key Town.

- 3.3.20 In relation to wastewater, policy objective WS 15 commits the Council to work in conjunction with Irish Water and the DHPLG during the lifetime of the plan for the provision, extension and upgrading of waste water collection and treatment systems in the County that have existing facilities to serve existing populations and facilitate sustainable development of those towns, in accordance with the requirements of the Settlement Strategy and associated Core Strategy.

Carlow-Graigucullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030

- 3.3.21 Carlow County Council and Laois County Council have worked collaboratively to prepare the Carlow Graigucullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030. The Joint Urban Local Area Plan (JULAP, hereafter referred to as the LAP) addresses the spatial planning of the Carlow-Graigucullen area.
- 3.3.22 The vision of the LAP is to *ensure that Carlow-Graigucullen maximises and builds on its Key Town designation, strategic accessible location, regional and inter-regional connections, and existing strengths, prioritising quality of life considerations, the economic and employment potential of the town, town centre led urban regeneration, focusing on low carbon and compact patterns of development, while seeking to conserve and enhance the town's existing natural and built heritage assets.*
- 3.3.23 Section 2.10 of the LAP states that *Carlow-Graigucullen is served by the Mortarstown Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) which has a capacity of 36,000PE. It is further noted that while Irish Water confirm through their current capacity registers that the WWTP has spare capacity, improvement and upgrade works are planned to bring it up to 58,000PE, with anticipated completion towards the end of 2025.*
- 3.3.24 Section 3.2.1 of the LAP sets out a total requirement of a further 2,107 no. housing units for Carow Town and Environs to 2028, and a further 276no. units in Graigucullen.
- 3.3.25 Section 7 of the LAP highlights the importance of available high-quality infrastructure such as public water supply, wastewater, energy, surface water drainage and ICT. Ensuring that these services are planned for in the urban area and that there is adequate capacity, will enhance the economic competitiveness of Carlow-Graigucullen, as well as making the joint urban area an attractive place to live, work and visit.
- 3.3.26 It is stated in section 7.2 that the Mortarstown Wastewater Treatment Plant (WwTP) provides treatment for the sewerage effluent generated by the Carlow-Graigucullen joint urban area. It is further stated that *the Uisce Éireann wastewater capacity register indicates that the WWTP has spare capacity available. However, improvements and upgrade works are planning by Uisce Éireann for the WWTP to increase its treatment capacity to 58,000pe with a forecasted completion date for this upgrade is date of 2027, subject to statutory and regulatory approvals processes.*
- 3.3.27 In this context, the following policy is relevant to the proposed development:

WW. P1: Facilitate and support Uisce Éireann in the delivery of public wastewater services in Carlow-Graigucullen to serve the needs of the existing and future population of the Plan

area, subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the standards set out in the EU and national legislation and guidance.

3.3.28 In addition, policy objective WW. O1 seeks to support wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and provision by Uisce Éireann in Carlow-Graiguecullen, including any maintenance works and planned upgrades for Mortarstown WwTP and the associated wastewater network serving the joint urban area, including the safeguarding of existing such infrastructure corridors, in order to ensure that zoned lands are adequately serviced over the period of the Plan and in accordance with the Core Strategies of Carlow and Laois County Councils.

3.3.29 In addition, policy objective WW. O2 seeks to implement, in conjunction with Uisce Éireann, the relevant recommendations set out in the EPA (2022) publication 'Urban Wastewater Treatment in 2021' and any subsequent update to this document. Appendix D of the Urban Wastewater Treatment in 2024 report prepared by the EPA notes that improvement measures are required at the 34 priority areas listed below to prevent wastewater discharges from harming rivers, estuaries, lakes and coastal waters. This lists Carlow, and notes that infrastructural upgrades are underway.

3.3.30 The Proposed Development is located within the development boundary of the Carlow-Graiguecullen LAP and are primarily zoned, Q-Transport and Utilities which, according to Chapter 12 of the LAP, seeks to provide for transport infrastructure and public utilities. Utility Structures are stated to be Permitted in Principle.

3.3.31 A section of the proposed development will pass through lands zoned, B-Existing/Infill Residential, which seek to protect and improve existing residential amenity, to provide for appropriate infill residential development, to provide for new and improved ancillary services. Utility Structures are stated to be Open for Consideration.

3.3.32 The purpose of the Q-Transport and Utilities zoning objective is as follows:

This zoning identifies lands associated with the provisions of transport infrastructure and public utilities such as roads, rail, electricity, gas, telecommunications, broadband, and water/wastewater infrastructure etc. The nature of these facilities is such that the use of the lands is dedicated to the provision and maintenance of such uses.

Car parks and commercial development associated with the provision of public transport services are considered appropriate in this zoning.

This zoning also provides for and preserves land in the ownership of Carlow County Council, Laois County Council, or other bodies charged with the provision of services such as electricity, telecommunications, water/wastewater etc.

3.3.33 The purpose of the 'B-Existing/Infill residential' is as follows:

The purpose of this zoning is to conserve and enhance the quality and character of established residential communities and protect their amenities. Infill developments, extensions, and the

refurbishment of existing dwellings will be considered where they are appropriate to the character and pattern of development in the area and do not significantly affect the amenities of surrounding properties. The strengthening of community facilities and local services will be facilitated subject to the design, scale, and use of the building or development being appropriate for its location.

3.3.34 The existing and proposed outfalls from the WwTP to the River Barrow crosses over lands zoned 'O - Open Space and Amenity', the objective of which is to *protect, provide for and enhance open space, amenity facilities, and recreational uses*. The same O zoning objective applies to the lands to the east of Kilkenny Road and to the WwPS site. Utility Structures are Open for Consideration.

3.3.35 It is stated in Chapter 12 of the LAP that the areas included in the O zoning objective cover both private and public open space and are dispersed throughout towns and villages, as well as riparian zones and environmental buffers. The aims of this land use-zoning objective include:

- to protect residential amenity in housing developments;
- to protect, improve and provide for recreation, open space, and amenity provision;
- to protect, improve and maintain public open space;
- to preserve private open space, and
- to provide recreational and community facilities.

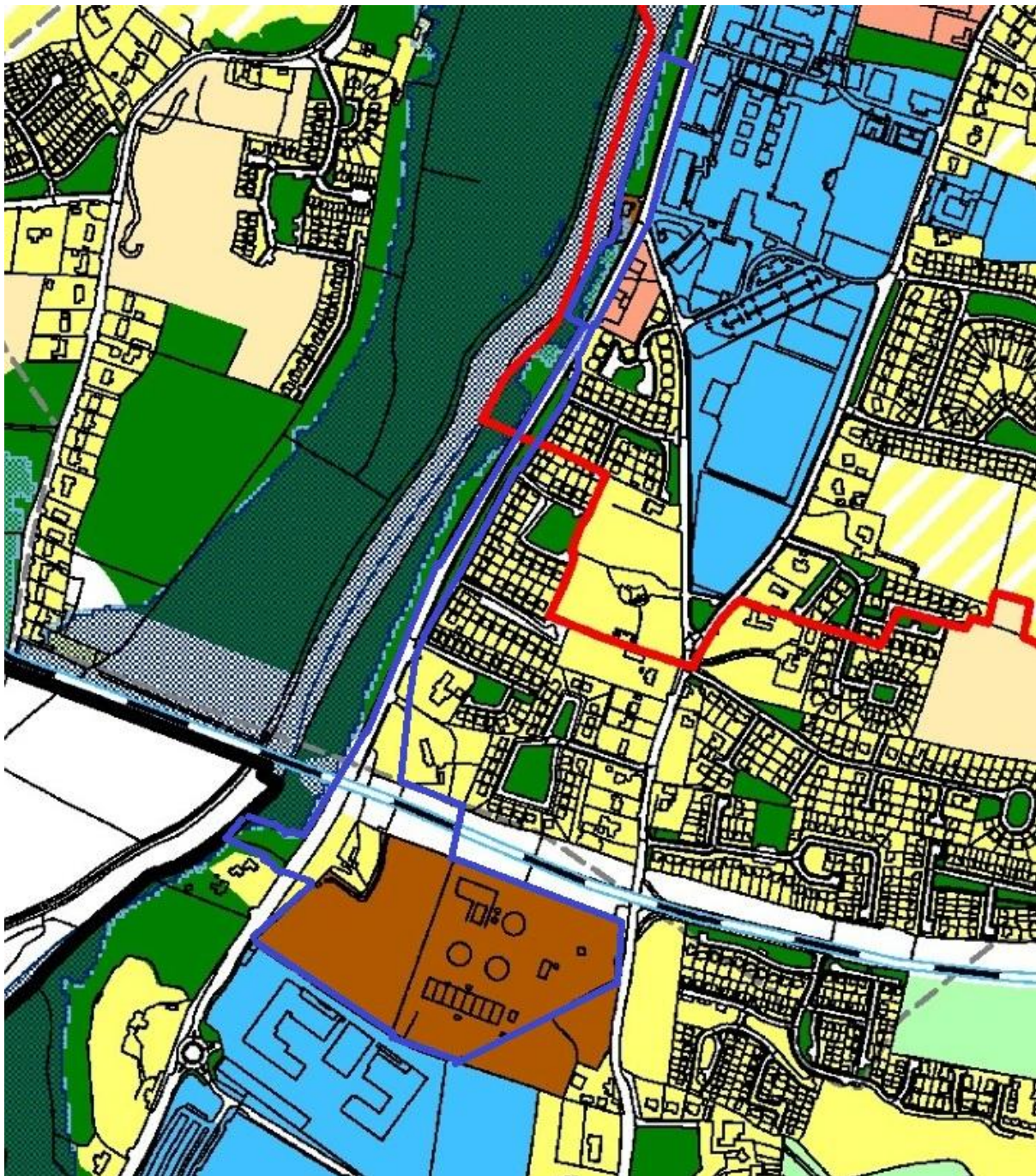


Figure 2. Proposed Development Site outlined in blue relative to the LAP zoning objectives

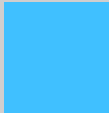
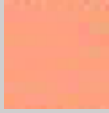
Zoning Objective	Description
	Q – Transport and Utilities
	K – Community/Education
	B – Existing/Infill Residential
	O – Open Space and Amenity
	R – Strategic Reserve
	D – Commercial/Residential
	C – New Residential
	N - Agriculture

Table 1. Zoning Map Key

- 3.3.36 There is a Roads objective applicable to lands to the immediate north of the existing and proposed WwTP in relation to the indicative route of the proposed Carlow Southern Relief Road, to which objective RI.02 of the LAP applies. Section 6.3.6 of Chapter 6 of the LAP notes that *the longer term, Carlow County Council and Laois County Council are seeking the construction of the Southern Relief Road in the respective County Development Plans. The Southern Relief Road will provide alternative routes for those that need to drive, removing traffic from the town centre and ensuring measures which reallocate road space to sustainable modes of transport are more feasible.* Furthermore, section 6.3.6.1 states that *at a national level the delivery*

of the Carlow Southern Relief Road is identified in the National Development Plan 2021-2030 as a priority strategic project. At a regional level, the RSES for the Southern Region supports the delivery of the Southern Relief Road N80 – R448 and its completion to link with the N80 within County Laois, including the provision of an appropriate crossing of the River Barrow and other transport measures with adjoining local/ regional authorities and stakeholders (see RPO 14 v.). It is further stated that the completion of the Southern Relief Road is of strategic regional importance in terms of enhancing the connectivity between the Midlands Region and South-East Region.

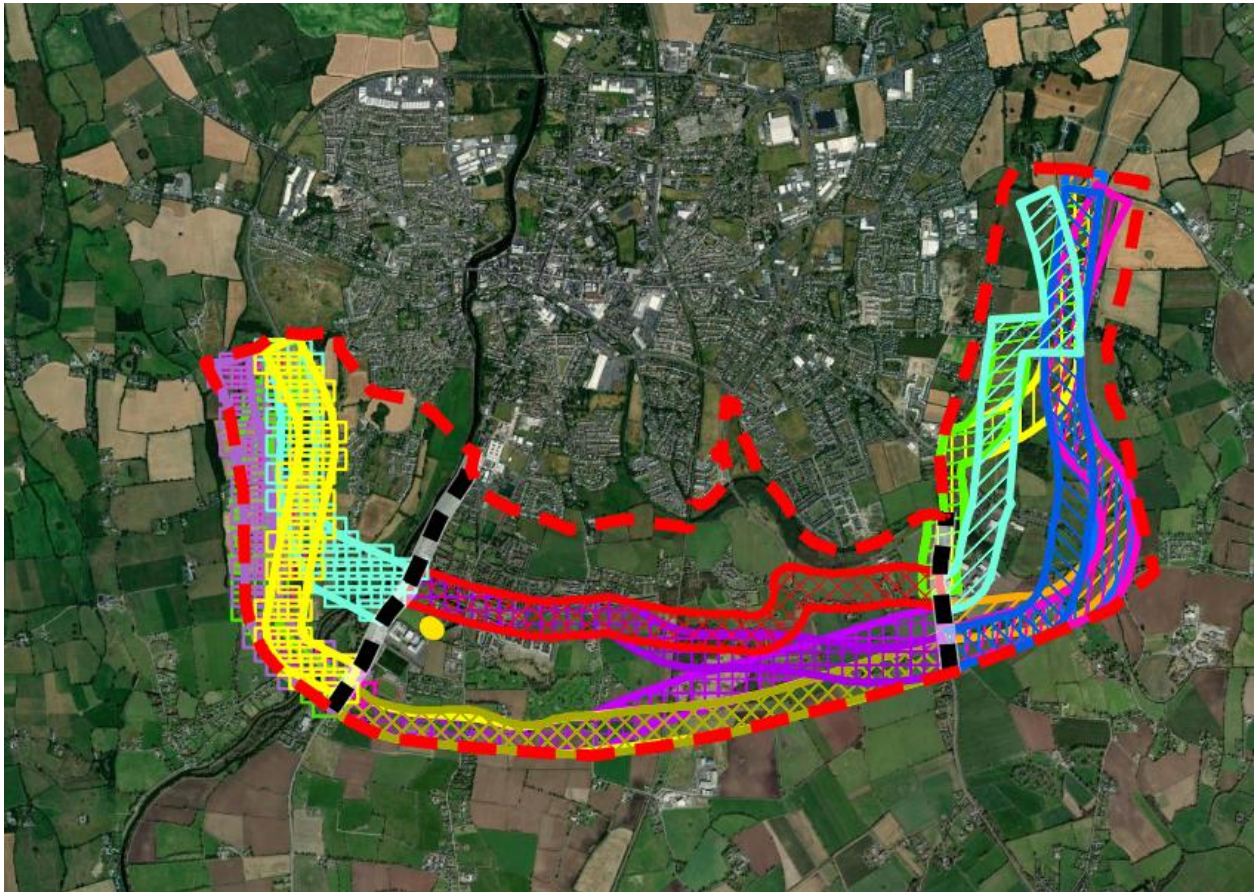


Figure 3. Phase 2 Route Corridor Options for the Carlow Southern Relief Road (Proposed Development Site indicated by a yellow dot)
 (Source: Carlow Southern Relief Road Project – Public Consultation)

- 3.3.37 The Proposed Development site is proximate to the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code: 002162). There are no known built heritage designations in the vicinity.
- 3.3.38 The site of the proposed new inlet pumping station on Kilkenny Road is located adjacent to Flood Zone A and B. The proposed outfall pipe and headwall for the WwTP fall within Flood Zone A and B.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 A review of the Carlow County Council (CCC) Planning Portal, Laois County Council (LCC) Planning Portal and An Coimisiún Pleanála's case files was carried out in June, 2026 to identify any planning history for the Proposed Development site and the surrounding area.

- 4.2 There is no planning history pertaining to the Proposed Development site. The existing Mortarstown WwTP and Kilkenny Road WwPS are existing and long-established water services infrastructure for the key town of Carlow.
- 4.3 Chapter 16 of the EIAR summarises the principal planning history in the general area, for the purposes of the assessment of cumulative effects.

5.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL



Plate 2. Proposed Upgrade to Mortarstown WwTP

- 5.1 The Proposed Development site, c. 10.766ha in area, is located in the townlands of Mortarstown Upper and Carlow, Carlow Town, Co. Carlow, and principally comprises the existing Mortarstown WwTP and Kilkenny Road Pumping Station.
- 5.2 The existing WwTP, which has an existing EPA wastewater discharge licence (EPA. Ref. D0028-01), was commissioned in 1986 as a conventional extended aeration WwTP with a design capacity of 28,500PE. The aeration basins were upgraded in 2003 to provide an additional treatment capacity of 7,500 p.e. in the bioreactors. The WwTP has inadequate capacity to cater for future demand and much of the existing mechanical and electrical equipment is at end of serviceable life and some equipment is no longer functioning. In addition, the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system is defunct and the systems for automatic control and measurement of the storm return and surplus sludge are not operational, consequently, the plant requires greater manual input than was originally intended.
- 5.3 In summary, the Proposed Development will consist of an upgrade to the existing Mortarstown WwTP, including the provision/refurbishment/demolition of various associated structures; decommissioning of existing Kilkenny Road Pumping Station; construction of a new inlet pump station at Mortarstown WwTP;

construction of a new microtunnel gravity sewer along Kilkenny Road (R448) between the existing Kilkenny Road Pumping Station and the proposed new inlet pump station; construction of a new outfall chamber and outfall pipe including a microtunnel under the Kilkenny Road (R448); and landscaping, boundary treatment works, an upgrade to an existing borehole, and all ancillary site works above and below ground to facilitate the Proposed Development. The existing Mortarstown WwTP has a treatment capacity of 36,000 population equivalent (PE). It is proposed to upgrade the WwTP to increase its treatment capacity to 58,500 PE.

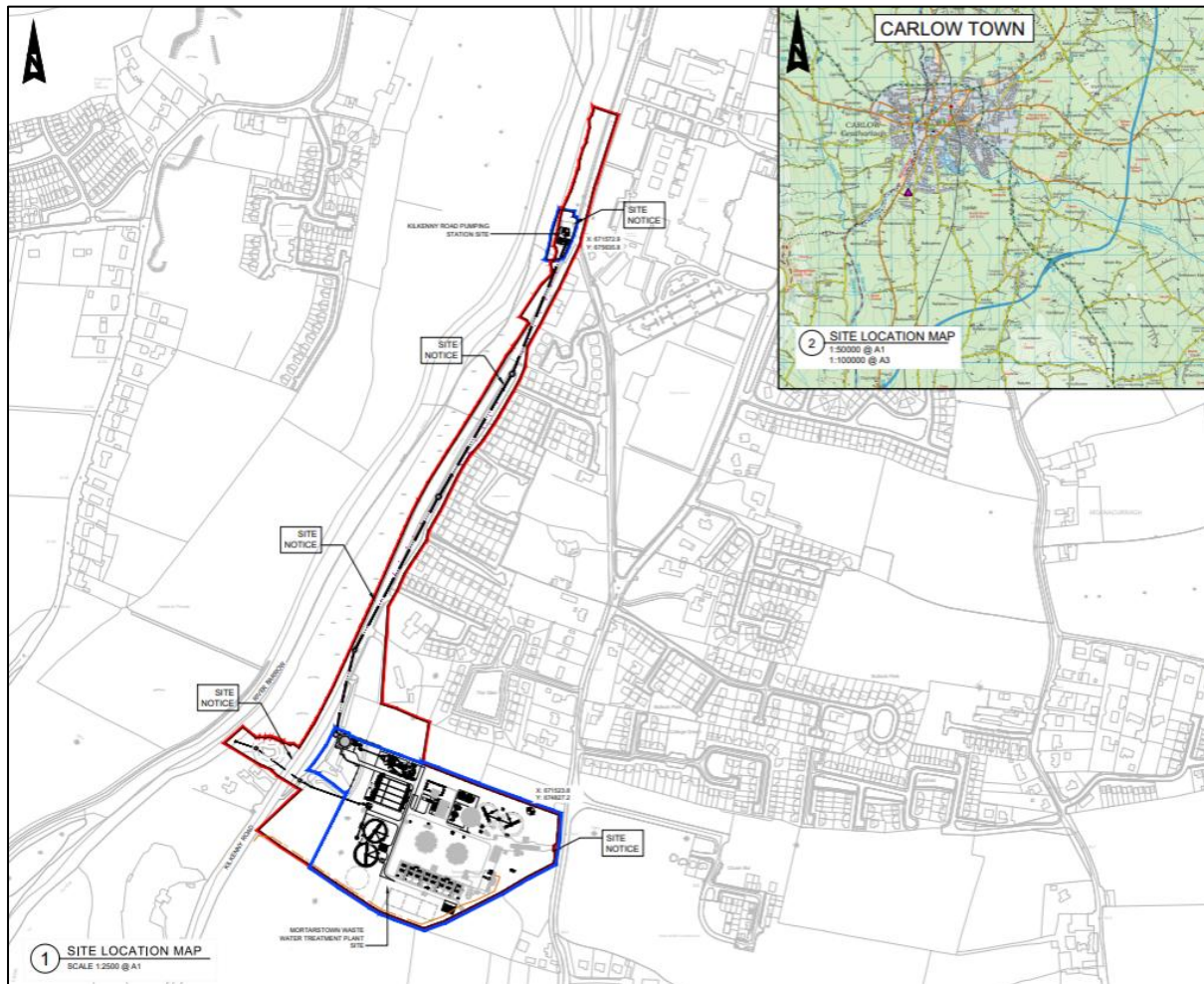


Figure 4. Proposed Overview Site Layout Plan

5.4 The Proposed Development is directly underpinned by UÉ's Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP). It is proposed to upgrade the WwTP to increase its treatment capacity to 58,500 PE, the key objectives of which are:

- To alleviate current overloading of the WwTP, which is currently operating beyond its design capacity,
- To incorporate the technology and infrastructure required to meet the higher standard of treatment (specifically involving nutrient removal) to improve compliance with the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (2024/3019), and
- To facilitate sustainable growth in the agglomeration served by this wastewater infrastructure.

5.5 The proposed upgrade to the WwTP will consist of the following:

- Microtunnel Gravity Sewer (785m in length) connecting the decommissioned Kilkenny Road Pumping Station to a new inlet Pump Station.
- New inlet Pump Station.
- Decommissioning of Existing Kilkenny Road Pumping Station.
- New Outfall chamber, Outfall Pipe including a microtunnel for the section crossing under the R448.
- Provision of various new structures at existing Mortarstown WwTP which comprise the following structures:
 - New foul pumping station for local agglomeration adjacent to existing inlet works (supplemented by standby generator).
 - A new fuel storage tank and standby diesel generator to service the WwTP.
 - New inlet works which includes the provision of a new odour treatment unit.
 - 2 no. stormwater storage tanks and 2 no. stormwater return pumps.
 - New primary settlement tanks and new primary sludge pumps.
 - Provision of 4 no. air blowers and modifications to existing air delivery pipework.
 - Provision of new air blower building and new bubble diffused air system,
 - Provision of 2 no. final settlement tanks with half-bridge scrapers.
 - Provision of new Return Activated Sludge (RAS) / Waste Activated Sludge (WAS) pumping station and station fitted with 2 no. RAS pumps and 2 no. WAS pumps.
 - Provision of 2 no. additional picket fence tank thickener.
 - Provision of 1 no. belt press, polymer prep unit and polymer dosing pumps.
 - Provision of new pumped sludge transfer system.
 - Provision of sludge import facility.
 - Provision of minimum 6 no. odour control units.
 - Provision of Mechanical, Electrical, Instrumentation, Control and Automation (MEICA) and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) upgrades.
 - New storage shed and associated gantry.
- Refurbishment of the following structures at Mortarstown WwTP:
 - Structural refurbishment of picket fence tanks.
 - Mechanical and electrical refurbishment of existing picket fence thickener and conversion of second existing tank to a sludge blending tank.
 - Modifications to existing administration building.
- Demolition of the following structures:
 - Existing inlet works structure.
 - Existing storm tank.
 - Various small chambers within the site.
 - Existing sludge cake transfer facility.
- Decommissioning of the following plant/items:
 - Kilkenny Road Pumping Station.
 - Existing rising main.
 - Existing settlement tanks.
- The installation of ground-mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar panels.

- Diversion of existing ESB 38kV high voltage (HV) overhead lines and 10kV/20kV medium voltage (MV) overhead line on site (to be carried out by ESB).
- The proposed development will also consist of all site development, landscaping and boundary treatment works, an upgrade to an existing borehole; and all ancillary works above and below ground to facilitate the proposed development.

The Proposed Development will be constructed in the Carlow Town Agglomeration licenced under the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) (WWDA) Regulations 2007 (Discharge Licence No D0028-01). This application relates to a proposed development which requires a review of the existing WWDA Licence.

The planning application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

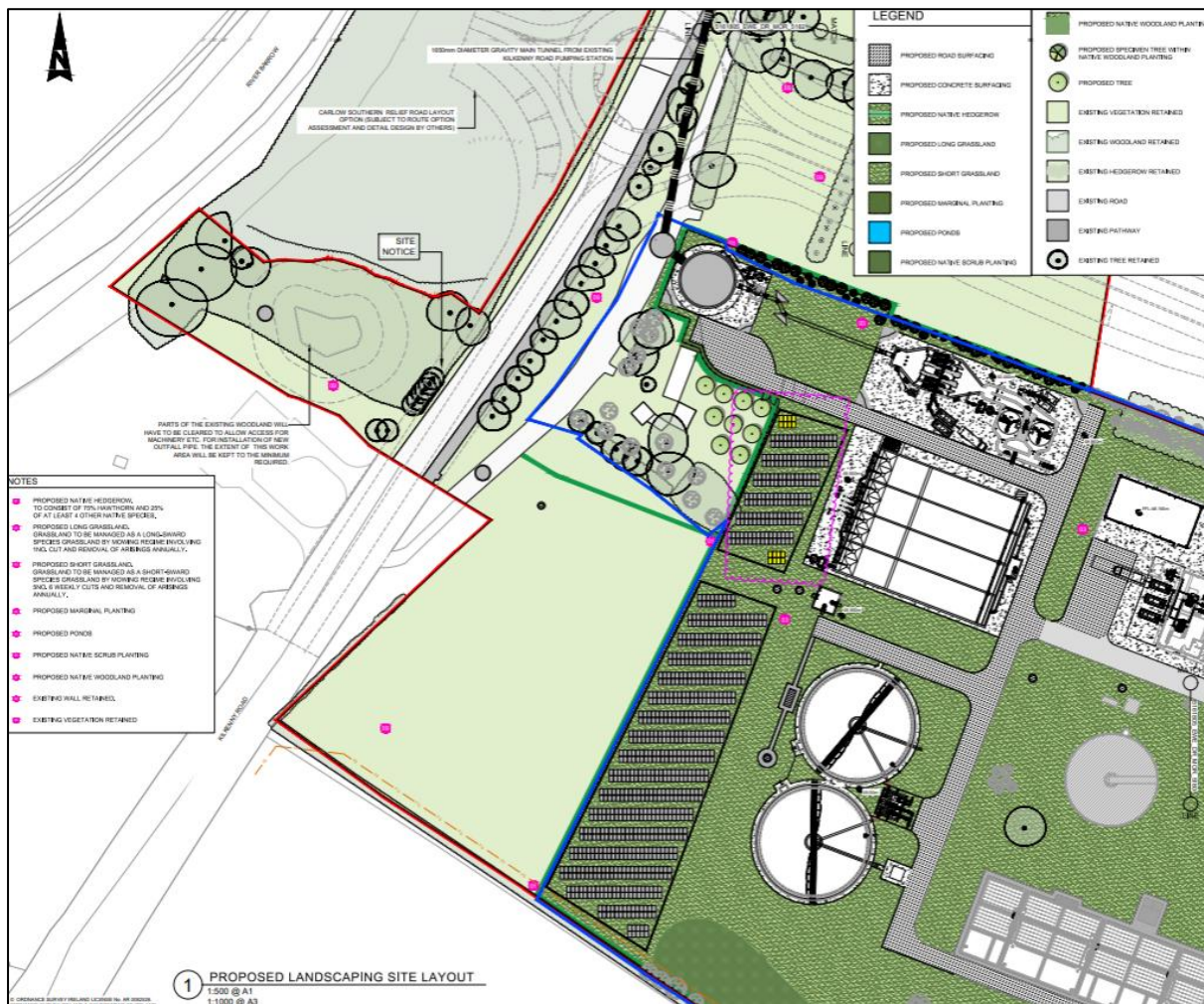


Figure 5. Proposed WwTP upgrade – landscaping layout

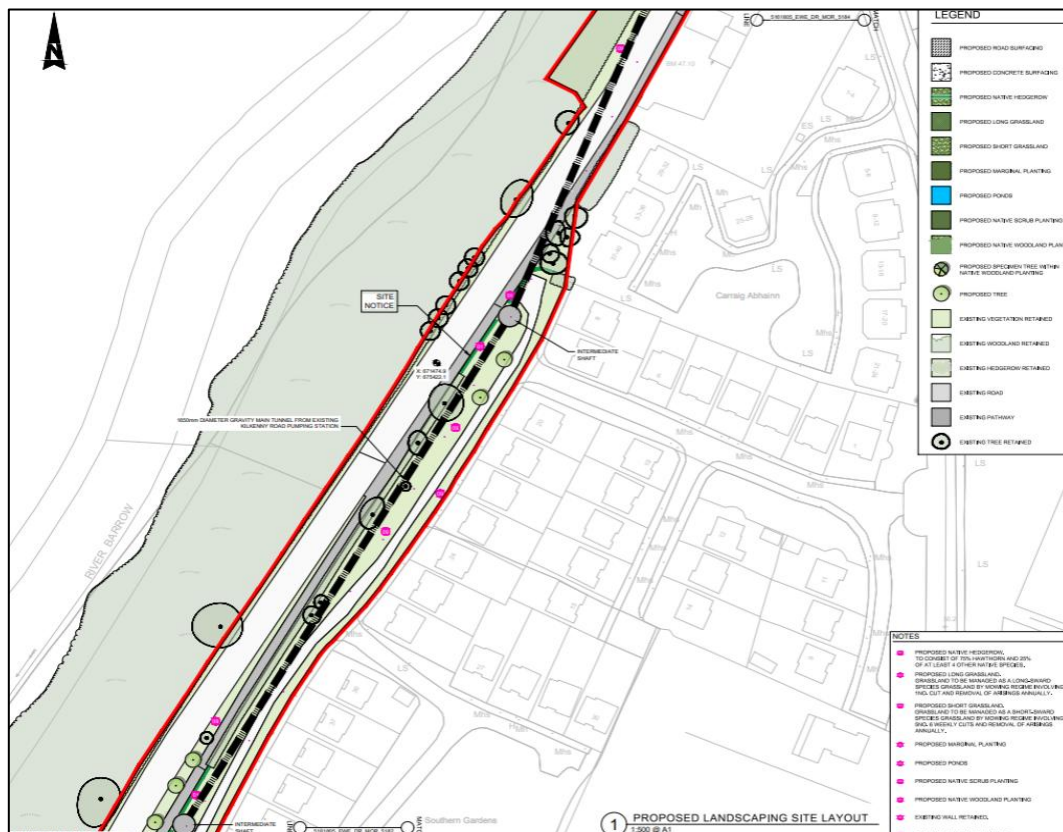


Figure 6. Proposed microtunnel – landscaping layout

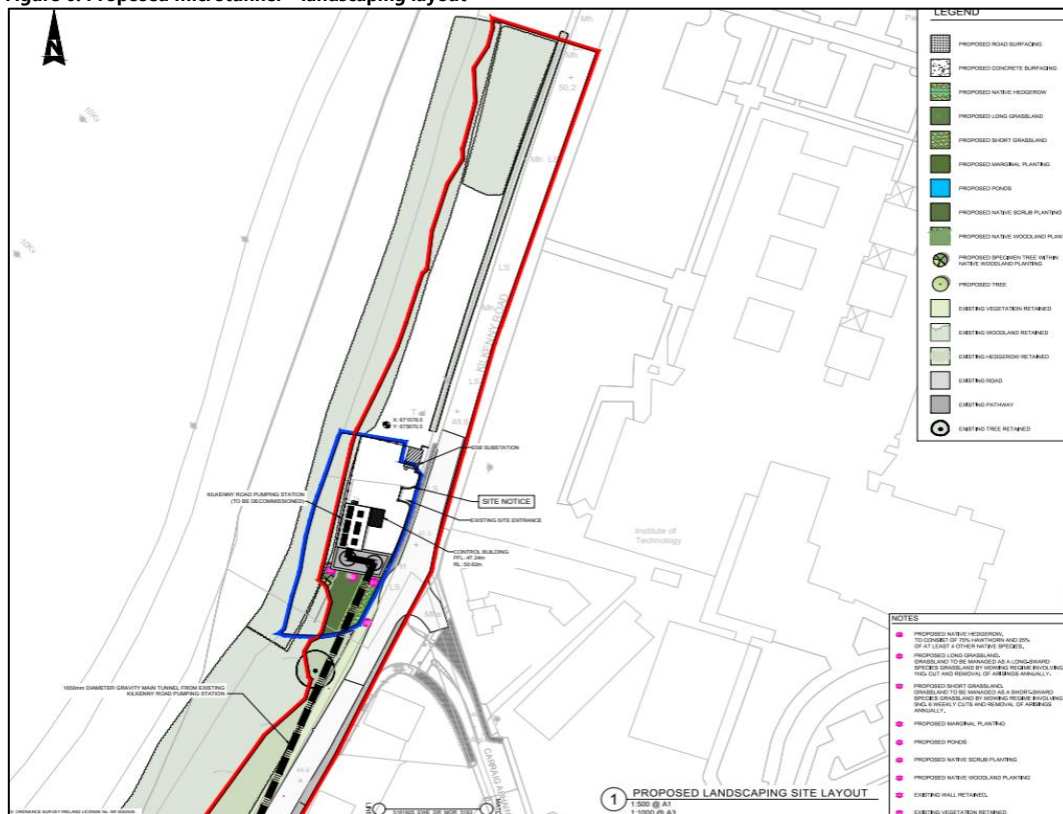


Figure 7. Kilkenny Road Pumping Station – landscaping layout

- 5.7 The Proposed Site Layout Plan also indicates the locations of a future storm tank, a future aeration tank, and a future final settlement tank. These structures do not part of the Proposed Development and are not required to facilitate the proposed increase in capacity to 58,000 PE.
- 5.8 The existing Kilkenny Road Pumping Station will be decommissioned; however, the existing structure will remain. The existing above ground steel gantry structure, access stairs and pumps will be removed from site and repurposed. Incoming flows will be diverted via the existing below-ground holding tank to a newly constructed manhole positioned south of the existing Pumping Station, conveying flows to the new gravity microtunnel. Existing overflows at the Kilkenny Road Pumping Station will be retained in accordance with the current Wastewater Discharge Licence (EPA WwDL Ref: D0028-01), and utilised in extreme events where the new gravity microtunnel may be at maximum capacity.
- 5.9 The Proposed Development also includes the provision of 785m micro tunnel gravity sewer from the south side of the existing Kilkenny Road Pumping Station to the wet well of the new pumping station to be constructed adjacent to the new inlet works on the upgraded WwTP. The micro tunnel will run adjacent to the Kilkenny Road (R448) before traversing agricultural land to connect to the WwTP. The micro tunnel will comprise of an interception manhole, 2 no. launch shafts and 2 no. reception shafts where the main launching facilities are proposed at the main Pumping Station shaft at the WwTP.
- 5.10 It is proposed to replace the existing 600mm diameter outfall pipe with a new 900mm diameter gravity outfall pipe 250m in length. The new outfall pipe will be constructed to the south side of the existing outfall; the pipe will cross under the R448 by microtunnelling and enter the previously cleared woodland that is adjacent to the existing residential dwellings to the west of the Kilkenny Road. A temporary cofferdam/shoring will be required and is proposed to be carried out from a barge operating on the River Barrow, it is intended to avoid potential adverse effects of excavation from the riverbank. It is proposed that the outfall pipe will enter the river ca. 1.5m below the low water level. The existing outfall pipe will be retained, however it will not be used as part of the proposed development.
- 5.11 The proposed development will be designed in accordance with Uisce Éireann's Energy Management Policy and Uisce Éireann Energy Efficient Design standards are aligned with ISO50001 and the relevant EU legislation in Section 3 above. Uisce Éireann's recent sustainability and renewable energy policies target generation of minimum 10% of plant's energy demand from renewable energy sources. Solar panels are proposed to the west of the WwTP. The proposed solar panels can provide 15% of the energy demand of the Mortarstown WwTP. The project aligns with the aims and objectives of the Energy Efficiency Directive and the 2030 Climate Energy Framework.
- 5.12 A Glint and Glare Assessment, prepared by Macro Works Ltd, was undertaken to determine the potential for solar reflectance effects upon dwelling and transport route receptors in respect of the proposed ground mounted solar element of the proposed development (See Appendix 6-3, Volume 3 of the EIAR).

- 5.13 The current WwTP access from Green Road will be retained. A new internal access point is provided to facilitate entry to the rear of the Uisce Éireann-owned property situated to the west of the WwTP boundary. The current Kilkenny Road Pumping Station access will also be retained.
- 5.14 Construction compounds have been identified within the red line boundary of the proposed development site. The sites compounds including site offices, material storage and parking will be established at 3 no. locations, 2 no. at the WwTP site and 1 no. immediately north of the existing Kilkenny Road PS. There will also be a number of areas within the red line boundary that will be allocated for temporary works associated with the construction of the tunnel.
- 5.15 The existing vacant dwelling to the west of the WwTP that is in UÉ's ownership will remain as such. There is the potential for the vacant dwelling to be repurposed for an ancillary wastewater function, but that will be the subject of a future planning application and does not form part of the Proposed Development.
- 5.16 Letters of Consent have been provided from majority of landowners including Carlow County Council. A minor portion of the subject lands adjoining the R448 is not in the ownership of Carlow County Council. Uisce Éireann is satisfied that it has sufficient interest to undertake the proposed development on the basis of its statutory powers. These statutory powers include the ability to pursue a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), which remains an available option should it be required in circumstances where the lands are not taken in charge by Carlow County Council.
- 5.17 It is noted in the EIAR that a preliminary construction phase of c. 20 months is envisaged, as well as a 3-month commissioning phase. Notwithstanding, a 10-year permission is requested, having regard to:
- The strategic nature and extent and complexity of the Proposed Development.
 - To provide adequate time for the planning consent process and other consent processes including a review of Discharge Licence No. D0028-01.
 - To allow adequate time for the provision of funding and the procurement process.

It is considered reasonable and appropriate to seek a period of the permission in excess of the standard five-year period in this context.

- 5.18 The following table outlines the key statistics of the Proposed Development:

Development Statistics	Proposed Development
Total Site Area	10.766ha
Existing WwTP Site Area	3.66ha
Proposed WwTP Site Area	5.53ha
Gross Floor Space of Existing Structures	1,367sqm • Storm Screen Building – 178sqm • Admin Building – 233sqm • ESB Transformer Building – 200sqm • Blower Building – 376sqm • Sludge Dewatering Building – 277sqm • Washwater Kiosk – 3sqm • Sludge Cake Transfer Facility – 100sqm
Gross Floorspace of Demolition Works	103sqm • Washwater Kiosk – 3sqm • Sludge Cake Transfer Facility – 100sqm
Gross Floorspace of New Structures	439sqm • New Blower Building – 117sqm • New Washwater Kiosk – 6sqm • New Shed – 316sqm

Table 2. Key Development Statistics

6.0 STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 The applicant entered into pre-application consultation with An Coimisiún Pleanála under Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, with meetings held on 30th September 2021, 20th July 2022, 29th September 2022, and 21st May 2025. On the 3rd December 2025, the applicant wrote to the Commission seeking to close the pre-application consultation.
- 6.2 On the 18th December 2025, the Commission advised the applicant that, having regard to the size of the proposed WwTP and associated development, with a capacity greater than a PE of 10,000, the Proposed Development would fall within the definition of environmental infrastructure in the 7th schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and therefore satisfies Section 37A (1) of the Act. It also determined that the Proposed Development is of strategic importance, as it meets relevant national policy objectives of the NPF (National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 9 and National Policy Objective (NPO) 92) and would also serve to fulfil the relevant regional policy objectives of the RSES (Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 14), and that the proposal would be of strategic importance to the region, having regard to Carlow's interregional role as espoused in the RSES for the Southern Region. It was therefore considered that the Proposed Development meets the requirements of Section 37A (2)(a) and Section 37A (2)(b) of the Act, and that an application for permission must, therefore, be submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála under Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Policy Compliance

- 7.1 The purpose of the Proposed Development is to align the existing WwTP with the requirements of the Urban Wastewater Directive through the provision of a higher standard of effluent treatment, and subsequent improved quality of water to be discharged to the receiving water environment. It will ensure that the collection, treatment, and discharge of urban wastewater will protect the environment from the potential adverse effects of increased wastewater discharges.
- 7.2 The Proposed Development is fully supported by national, regional and local planning policy. The Proposed Development will facilitate additional capacity in the treatment of wastewater in Carlow to enable the town to fulfil its role as a Key Town.
- 7.3 Specifically, in relation to European and National legislation, the Proposed Development:
- Will facilitate an upgrade to the existing Mortarstown WwTP to comply with the provisions of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, including additional treatment of micropollutants, and also, through the provision of solar panels, to ensure energy neutrality.
 - Will contribute to the achievement of good water quality in the River Barrow, and to prevent any deterioration in its current status in compliance with the WFD.
 - Will contribute to the provision of fit for purpose, safer water services, and to manage the Mortarstown WwTP to achieve its regulatory requirements, consistent with UÉ's Water Services Strategic Plan, and the Water Services Policy Statement, in the context of the Water Services Acts.
 - Will increase resilience, including in relation to Emission Limit Values, and will provide solar panels, in compliance with the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts.
- 7.4 In relation to the provisions of national, sectoral and regional policy context, the Proposed Development:
- seeks an upgrade to the existing Mortarstown WwTP as essential strategic infrastructure for the sustainable growth of Carlow, supporting the implementation of National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) 9 and 92, in the context of the provisions of the NDP Review and Government objectives to accelerate wastewater infrastructure, as well as Goal 3 of the Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure - Sectoral Adaption Plan, and the Water Action Plan.
 - is referenced in the EPA's Urban Wastewater Treatment in 2024 Report. Carlow is a priority area where the wastewater treatment plant requires improvement measures to prevent wastewater discharges from harming rivers.
 - is identified in UÉ's own Capital Investment Plan. The Proposed Development is also identified as a priority capital project in Appendix 4 of the Draft Investment Plan 2025–2029.
 - is aligned with Uisce Éireann's Biodiversity Action Plan seeks to ensure no net loss of biodiversity.
 - is also aligned with Uisce Éireann's National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan (NWSMP, and

- will contribute to the sustainable development and compact growth of Carlow Key Town as envisaged in Regional Policy Objectives RPO 14 (a) and RPO 14 (a)(iv) of the RSES in the context of RPO 212 and 214.

7.5 The relevant key provisions of local planning policy, as outlined in Section 3.3 above, are as follows:

- The Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 provides a robust policy context for the Proposed Development, including:
 - Strategic objective (v), Enabling Infrastructure, which acknowledges the importance of protecting and investing in wastewater infrastructure to secure the sustainable development of the town.
 - Strategic objective S O2 which supports Carlow's role as a regional and inter-regional growth driver and as a Key Town.
 - Strategic objective S 11 which seeks to promote the provision and maintenance of high-quality infrastructure and infrastructural networks.
 - Policies PW. P1 and PW. P2 which supports strategic wastewater treatment infrastructure investment by Uisce Éireann, to support Uisce Éireann in providing and maintaining adequate and appropriate wastewater treatment infrastructure, and to facilitate Uisce Éireann in the delivery of public wastewater services, subject to compliance with all relevant EU and national legislation and normal planning and environmental criteria.
 - Objective PW. 01 which specifically references the requirement to upgrade Mortarstown WwTP.
- In the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027, Map 2.1 of the Core Strategy identifies Graiguecullen as a Key Town in the Gateway Region that has an important function as a town that straddles the regional boundary with the southern region and acts as a Gateway in this respect. Furthermore, policy objective WS 15 commits the Council to work in conjunction with Irish Water and the DHPLG on the provision, extension and upgrading of waste water collection and treatment systems in the County that have existing facilities to serve existing populations and facilitate sustainable development of those towns, in accordance with the requirements of the Settlement Strategy and associated Core Strategy.
- The LAP provides specific policy support for the proposed development in the form of policies WW. P1, WW. O1 and WW. O2. Objective WW. O1 in particular seeks to *support wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and provision by Uisce Éireann in Carlow-Graiguecullen, including any maintenance works and planned upgrades for Mortarstown WwTP*. Objective WW. O2 also notes that infrastructural upgrades are proposed in Carlow to address recommendations in the EPA's Urban Wastewater Treatment in 2024 Report. The EPA's Urban Wastewater Treatment in 2024 Report outlines that to bring Ireland's wastewater treatment infrastructure up to standard will require substantial and sustainable sustained investment over many years, and that any infrastructural upgrades highlighted in the report must be treated as a priority.

- 7.6 It is clear that the Proposed Development is supported by national, regional and local policy, and would provide improved infrastructural benefits for the existing and future growth in Carlow, while improving the receiving water environment.

Need and Justification

- 7.7 The current WwTP has a treatment capacity of 36,000 population equivalent (PE). In order to support the economic and population growth of Carlow Town, the Carlow-Graiguecullen area and surrounding areas, as envisaged in the applicable planning policy, an upgrade increase in the treatment capacity is crucially needed.
- 7.8 The proposed upgrades to the capacity of the Mortarstown WwTP will alleviate current overloading, improve compliance with the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and facilitate further growth.
- 7.9 The existing WwTP requires upgrades to support anticipated growth; the treatment capacity of the plant needs to be significantly increased to serve a future projected PE of 58,500.
- 7.10 The upgrades to the treatment plant will ensure compliance with discharge licence for the site and the protection of the River Barrow SAC.
- 7.11 In addition to the lack of capacity, much of the existing mechanical and electrical equipment is at the end of serviceable life and some of the equipment is no longer functioning.
- 7.12 Furthermore the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system is defunct, and the systems control and measurement of the storm return, and surplus sludge are not operational, consequently, the plant requires greater manual input than was originally intended.
- 7.13 Upon completion of the Proposed Development, the following benefits will accrue:
- Enable future growth and development in the community and cater for an expected increase in the population area;
 - Enhance Carlow's amenity value by providing a cleaner environment and act as a platform for social and economic development;
 - Improve water quality in the River Barrow, benefiting the environment, ecology, sporting and tourism activities. This would be consistent with the aims of the WFD which seek to protect, enhance and restore the status of all bodies of water with the aim of achieving at least 'good status';
 - Ensure that wastewater will be treated in accordance with the European Wastewater Treatment Directives and the Environmental Protection agency wastewater discharge licensing.
- 7.14 The achievement of improved standards and bringing the WwTP into compliance with the requirements of the Urban Wastewater Directive would clearly result in a significant positive benefit on the receiving water environment.

Compliance with the applicable zoning objectives of the LAP

- 7.15 The Proposed Development is also supported by the applicable zoning objectives, including the Q-Transport and Utilities zoning objective that applies to the existing WwTP and Pumping Station sites, in which utilities are permitted in principle, and also the 'B-Existing/Infill residential', where utilities are open for consideration, and 'O – Open Space and Amenity', where utilities are open for consideration.
- 7.16 In relation to the 'B – Existing/Infill Residential', this zoning objective seeks to *protect and improve existing residential amenity* and to *provide new and improved ancillary services*. The Proposed Development is a necessary infrastructural upgrade to support the existing population of Carlow but also for future housing and population growth targets. It is critical that the capacity of the WwTP can support this planned growth to ensure national, regional and local targets can be achieved. The Proposed Development will have long term positive impacts with only a short-term negative impact during the construction phase.
- 7.17 In relation to the 'O – Open Space and Amenity' zoning objective, the overall premise of the Carlow County Development Plan, the Laois County Development Plan, and the LAP is to ensure Carlow fulfils its strategic role, which will require investment in, and upgrades of, the Mortarstown WwTP. It is critical that the capacity of the WwTP is in place to support the realisation of the strategic goals for Carlow. It is also noted that the existing outfall to the River Barrow traverses over lands zoned 'O'. The Proposed Development will involve works, principally below ground, in 'O' zoned lands, however, these lands will be landscaped on completion of the works to ensure that their open character is retained.
- 7.18 The proposed microtunnel gravity sewer traverses the indicative route corridor options of the proposed Carlow Southern Relief Road, to which objective RI.02 of the LAP applies. As illustrated in Figure 8, the Proposed Site Layout Plan has included the current available proposed layout for the Road, as provided by Carlow County Council. The sewer will be located underground. There are no other structures located on, or in the vicinity of the route corridor as defined in the LAP. The Proposed Development has been designed to avoid the indicative route corridor set out in the LAP. It is further noted that the Carlow Southern Relief Road has been the subject of public consultation in November 2025 on Phase 2 Route Corridor Options, an excerpt of which is illustrated in Figure 3 above. These include route corridors to the immediate north of the WwTP and to the south of Tyndall College. It is understood that a third consultation will be held to present the Preferred Option for feedback before progressing to Phase 3: Design and Environmental Evaluation. The Route Corridor Options assessment will have to have regard to the presence of the existing WwTP at Mortarstown, and the proposed upgrade, in refining the preferred option. The design of the Proposed Development has also been modified in consultation with Carlow County Council to ensure that there will be no interaction with the proposed Carlow Southern Relief Road. In this context, it is not considered that the Proposed Development is constrained by the proposed Carlow Southern Relief Road.

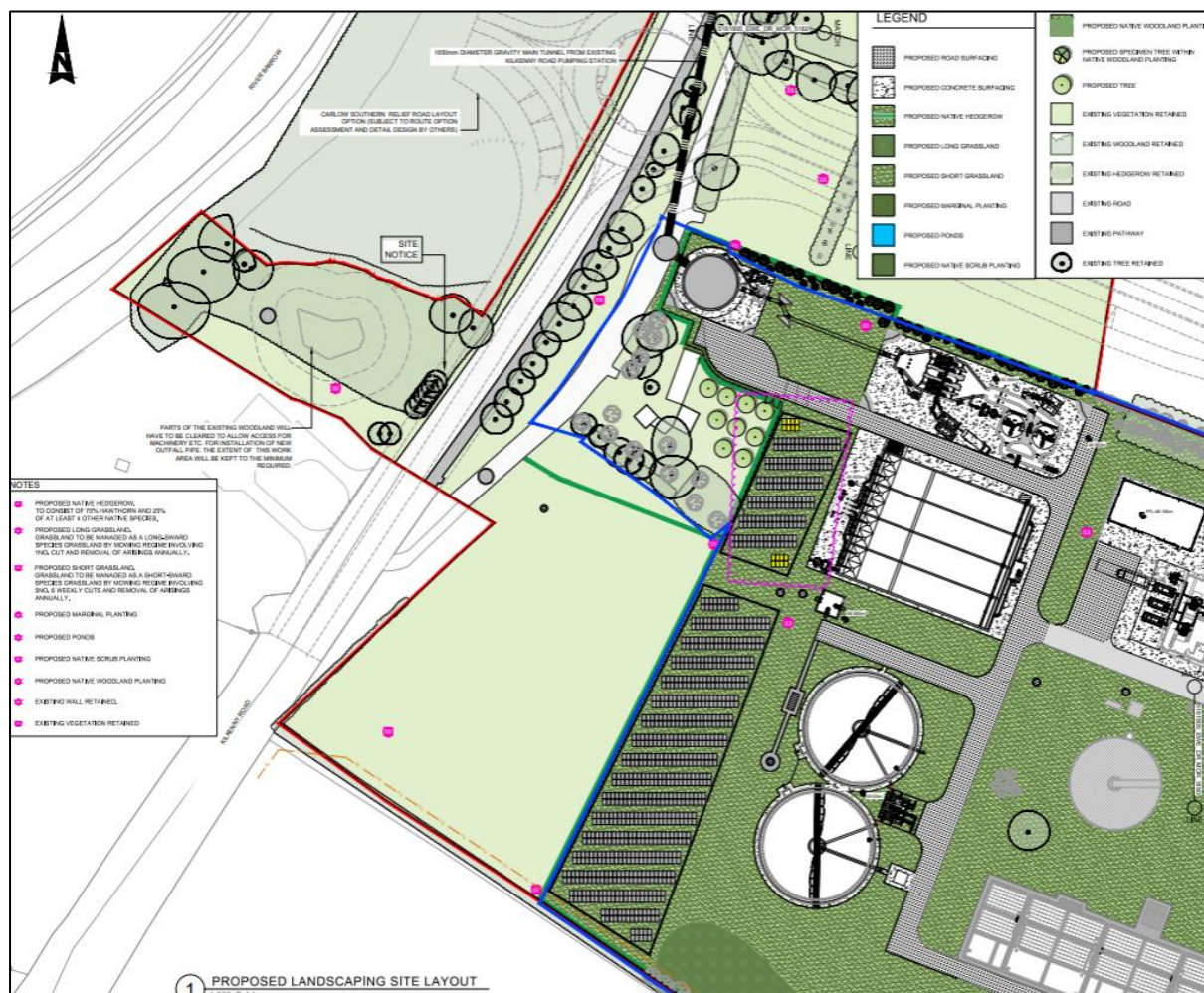


Figure 8. Proposed WwTP upgrade – relative to the route of the proposed Carlow Southern Relief Road

Environmental Impact Assessment

7.19 The Proposed Development was screened early in the design process to establish the requirement for an EIA. In accordance with the EIA Directive, EPA Guidelines (2022) and applicable legislation, the Proposed Development was examined in the context of 'type' of development and 'thresholds'.

7.20 Section 13 (a)(ii) of Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) states that:

Any change or extension of development already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed which would –

- (ii) *result in an increase in size greater than –*
 - *25 per cent, or*
 - *an amount equal to 50 per cent of the appropriate threshold, whichever is the greater.*

In this context, as the proposed upgrades to the WwTP will increase the capacity of the WwTP by greater than 25% and 50% of the relevant threshold the Proposed Development is accompanied by an EIAR.

7.21 The technical assessments have concluded the following:

- **Traffic and Transport:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation measures during the construction phase, including that road closures along Kilkenny Road will be limited to 100m stretches, and that one side of the road will remain open via 'Stop/Go' system with a minimum 3m carriageway, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant traffic effects. An Outline Traffic Management Plan (OTMP) has been provided to guide the preparation of the final Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), which will be developed by the appointed contractor prior to the commencement of construction.
- **Noise and Vibration:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant noise and vibration effects.
- **Biodiversity:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation and enhancement measures, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant negative effects on Biodiversity or any adverse effects on the integrity of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other Natura 2000 site.
- **Water:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation measures, there will be no significant likely effects on water during construction or operation.
- **Land, Soil, and Geology:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation measures, no significant likely effects on land, soil and geology are expected during construction or operation.
- **Population and Human Health:** Subject to the implementation of specific mitigation measures, all effects identified during construction will be not significant and will be temporary. The community can also expect benefits resulting from the Proposed Development, such as improved services, infrastructure, and potential job opportunities.
- **Air Quality and Odour:** The Proposed Development has been designed to ensure that there are no significant adverse effects on air quality and Odour.
- **Landscape and Visual:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant adverse landscape and visual effects.
- **Climate:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant effects on climate.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation and enhancement measures, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant negative effects on cultural heritage.
- **Material Assets:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation and enhancement measures, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant negative effects on material assets.
- **Risk of Major Accidents and Disasters:** Subject to the implementation of mitigation and enhancement measures, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant negative effects in relation to major accidents and disasters.
- **Cumulative Effects and Interactions:** Subject to the implementation of specific mitigation measures, no significant likely effects are expected during construction or operation.

- 7.22 A description of the reasonable alternatives, which are relevant to the Proposed Development and its specific characteristics, have been assessed in the EIAR, together with an indication of the main reasons for selecting the Proposed Development, considering the effects on the environment. The 'Do Nothing' scenario was not considered further because, if the Proposed Development did not proceed, the Mortarstown WwTP would not be upgraded and the absence of additional storage capacity for stormwater would mean that excessive stormwater flows would continue to be discharged into the River Barrow. The WwTP would be in breach of their EPA Discharge Licence and would not provide sufficient wastewater treatment for the population for Carlow Town and its surroundings.
- 7.23 Overall, subject to the implementation of specific mitigation measures, it is clear that the benefits associated with the Proposed Development over the long-term would far outweigh any temporary adverse impact on the amenities of the area.

Appropriate Assessment

- 7.24 As the Proposed Development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 sites, an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was prepared to determine whether or not it was likely to have a significant effect on any such site.
- 7.25 The report concluded that the Proposed Development without mitigation measures in place has the potential to significantly affect the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (site code: 002162) and recommended that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) be prepared to assess the implications of the Proposed Development on the SAC.
- 7.26 The NIS examined the details of the Proposed Development and the Natura 2000 site; it then assesses the implications of the proposed project for the integrity of this site by analysing the impacts and evaluating their effects in view of the site's conservation objectives.
- 7.27 The NIS concludes that *given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation detailed in the NIS, it can be concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the Proposed Development will not, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, give rise to any impacts that would constitute adverse effects on the River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other Natura 2000 site, in view of their conservation objectives. Therefore, it is recommended that the competent authority may determine that the Proposed Development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site, provided that the mitigation prescribed in the NIS is fully and properly implemented.*

Flood Risk

- 7.28 A detailed Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment Report has been completed for the Proposed Development. The proposed outfall pipe and associated headwall are located within the mapped fluvial flood zones along the River Barrow. All other infrastructure is located in Flood Zone C and is considered to be at low risk of flooding. The elements of the Proposed Development mapped within the flood zones are

considered to be “Water Compatible”. Modelling has revealed that the construction of these elements will not result in any negative effects to the existing hydrological regime or any increase in the downstream/upstream flood risk. The potential flood risk is considered to be low and the Proposed Development is considered to be appropriate from a flood risk perspective.

Construction Environmental Management Plan

- 7.29 An Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), contained in Appendix 2.2 of Volume 3 of the EIAR, together with mitigation measures to be employed, as summarised in Chapter 18 of the EIAR, provide a description of the overarching general mitigation measures embedded in the project design and delivery for construction and operational stages.
- 7.30 The construction activities for the development are anticipated to run for 18-20 months between Q4 2027 and Q2 2029, with commencement of operation expected to be Q3 2029. At this preliminary juncture, the proposed construction works will comprise 4 no. key stages, summarised as follows:
- **Phase 1** - Construction of a new microtunnel gravity sewer between the existing Kilkenny Road pumping station and the new inlet pump station and construction of the outfall pipe and the headwall;
 - **Phase 2** – Construction of inlet works, primary settlement tank, picket fence thickeners, blower building, storage shed, and other ancillary units;
 - **Phase 3** – Decommissioning of the existing Kilkenny Road WwPS;
 - **Phase 4** – Construction of the stormwater holding tanks.

Dry weather flow will be calculated by the Contractor to determine the available downtime for linking new elements of the works to ensure the stormwater storage works are scheduled in a period of dry weather.

- 7.31 The construction of the Proposed Development will be in accordance with the Construction and Demolition Resource and Waste Management Plan (RWMP) submitted as Appendix 2.3 of Volume 3 of the EIAR which was prepared in accordance with the relevant following guidance ‘Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource & Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition projects’ (EPA, 2022).
- 7.32 All construction activities will be managed and informed by a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) which will be implemented by the Contractor. The details of the CTMP will be agreed with the Carlow Co. Council Roads Department in advance of construction activities commencing on site.

Sustainability

- 7.33 A Sustainability Report has been prepared for the Proposed Development, the purpose of which is to provide a clear framework for contractors to achieve the sustainability management requirements, targets and objectives for the design and construction phases of the Proposed Development.

7.34 A number of sustainability measures have been incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development, including:

- permanent electrical metering infrastructure based on asset energy demand;
- provision of solar panels to the west of the WwTP. These can provide 15% of the energy demand of the WwTP.
- Locating the new inlet pump station to avoid sensitive ecological zones in the vicinity of the River Barrow SAC.
- Sizing of the hydraulic capacity to accommodate long-term population growth
- Installation of primary settlement tanks to reduce organic loading and downstream aeration energy requirements.

Section 15(1) of the Climate Action & Low Carbon Development Act (Amended) 2021

7.35 A Section 15(1) of the Climate Action & Low Carbon Development Act (Amended) 2021 Alignment Report is included with the application. This discusses in detail how the Proposed Development is aligned with the plans, strategies and objectives outlined in Section 15(1) of the Act. It is considered that the information provided in the application demonstrates that the relevant body can be satisfied that, by granting permission for the Proposed Development, it would, in so far as practicable, be in alignment with Section 15.1.

Water Framework Directive

7.36 A Water Framework Directive (WFD) Compliance Assessment has been completed for all waterbodies (surface water and groundwater bodies) with the potential to be impacted by the Proposed Development, and is presented in Appendix 12.6, Volume 3 of this EIAR.

7.37 The available quantity (volume) of groundwater will remain unaltered during the construction and operational phase of the Proposed Development.

7.38 The Proposed Development is underlain by the Athy-Bagenalstown Gravels and Bagenalstown Lower GWBs. Due to the scale of the Proposed Development in comparison to the overall scale of the underlying GWB, there is no potential for a change in the qualitative status of the underlying GWB. Nevertheless, mitigation measures for the protection of groundwater quality will be implemented during the construction and operation phases of the Proposed Development.

7.39 The Proposed Development will involve a direct discharge of treated wastewater to the River Barrow. However, the discharge will comply with Emission Limit Values (ELV). Compliance with these will ensure that the Proposed Development does not impact the ability of the receiving surface waterbody to achieve 'Good' status. Furthermore, mitigation for the protection of surface water during the construction and operation phases of the Proposed Development will ensure the qualitative status of the receiving waters will not be altered by the Proposed Development.

7.40 The Proposed Development will not impact upon any surface water or groundwater body as it will not cause a deterioration of the status of the body and/or it will not jeopardise the attainment of good status.

7.41 As such, the Proposed Development:

- will not cause a deterioration in the status of all surface and groundwater bodies assessed
- will not jeopardise the objectives to achieve 'Good' surface water/groundwater status
- does not jeopardise the attainment of 'Good' surface water/groundwater chemical status
- does not jeopardise the attainment of 'Good' surface water/groundwater quantity status
- does not permanently exclude or compromise the achievement of the objectives of the WFD in other waterbodies within the same river basin district
- is compliant with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)
- and,
- is consistent with other Community Environmental Legislation including the EIA Directive (2014/52/EU), the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC).

Road Safety

7.42 A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit is included with the application. This recommends minor measures to ensure road safety is achieved, including that the vegetation along Green Road should be maintained regularly to ensure it does not impede visibility, and that temporary traffic cones at the entrance should be removed and consultation undertaken with the WwTP to consider a permanent bollard installation.

Consultation

7.43 As part of the EIAR assessment process, consultation was undertaken with statutory organisations at various stages of the pre-planning process for both the original application, and the current application.

7.44 In addition, as part of the consultation process individual meetings were arranged with a number of key stakeholders to discuss the key potential issues of the project. A copy of all pre-application consultation correspondence received from statutory organisations is included in Appendix 2.2 of the EIAR. All relevant comments from the various consultees have been fully addressed as required within the EIAR and the accompanying NIS.

7.45 The applicant also held a non-statutory public consultation on the proposed development between Monday 22nd September, 2025 and Sunday 19th October 2025. One non-statutory in person consultation event was held on 9th October 2025. The non-statutory public consultation process sought feedback from the local community and stakeholders on the proposal ahead of the formal planning submission.

7.46 The relevant project stakeholders of the Proposed Development were identified and afforded the opportunity to participate in the non-statutory public consultation and provide their feedback. The relevant stakeholder groups included; Councillors and TD's, Landowners, Local Authorities (Carlow County

Council and Laois County Council), Members of the public and/or community groups (including local residents, businesses and schools), Non-Statutory Bodies, and Prescribed Bodies.

- 7.47 To inform and notify the relevant stakeholders and local community of the Proposed Development, the following communication materials were prepared; Resident Letters, Landowner Letters, Stakeholder Letters, Project Information Leaflet, Project Website, Social Media Posts, Local Print and Broadcast Advertisements, an Elected Representatives Briefing Presentation and Public Information Event Display Boards.
- 7.48 A total of 37 no. responses were received over the course of the non-statutory public consultation period, 6 no. responses from the project website feedback survey, 5 no. responses via emails from member of the public, 3 no. responses via email from stakeholders and 23 no. verbal responses from those who attended the in-person discussions at the public information event.
- 7.49 The following key issues were raised across these sources:
- *Noise – during construction and operation.*
 - *Traffic – construction and future increase in traffic once the WwTP is operational.*
 - *Odour – currently and in operation of the upgraded WwTP, feedback was particularly concerned about the existing sludge dewatering unit.*
 - *Construction – the length and impact of construction, including consideration of noise and traffic.*
 - *Project Design – including changes to existing signage, improvements to the facility entrance, and wider queries relating to project design and technical aspects.*
 - *Capacity of the WwTP – capacity in the interim and of the planned upgrade to support future development in Carlow. The catchment of the WwTP was also raised.*
 - *Environmental – including surface water treatment and flooding.*

Stakeholders also expressed interest in:

- *Continued Engagement.*
 - *The protection of the human and natural environment.*
 - *Potential storage of dangerous substances.*
- 7.50 Uisce Éireann have considered and responded to concerns raised in the feedback received by reviewing technical aspects of the design, as well as ongoing engagement with key parties. Upon analysis of the feedback and engagement with relevant stakeholders, the alignment of the tunnelled sewer between the WwTP and the Kilkenny Road Pumping Station was reviewed, and amended. The Uisce Éireann Consultation Report is included with the planning application.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 In conclusion, the Proposed Development which will consist of an upgrade to the Mortarstown WwTP is being made under the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006.
- 8.2 The Proposed Development is supported by national, regional and local policy, and will provide improved infrastructural benefits for the existing and future growth in Carlow. The achievement of improved standards and bringing the WwTP into compliance with the requirements of the Urban Wastewater Directive would clearly result in a significant positive benefit on the receiving water environment.
- 8.3 The proposal has been subject to an EIAR and NIS, which have demonstrated that, with mitigation, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant effects on the environment or adverse impacts on designated sites, with the implementation of specific mitigation measures.
- 8.4 The benefits of the Proposed Development are overwhelmingly positive. It will enable sustainable residential and economic growth through the delivery of increased wastewater treatment capacity while protecting the environment through improving the quality of effluent discharged to the receiving water environment.
- 8.5 Having regard to:
- the relevant provisions of Council Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU (EIA Directive) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (Birds Directives) which set the requirements for Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union
 - European Union Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC
 - the European Union Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 91/271/EEC
 - the European Union (Wastewater Discharge) Regulations 2020
- the national, regional and local strategic policies and objectives, inclusive of those set out in National Planning Framework First Revision, The Water Services Strategic Plan 2015-2040, Uisce Éireann's Strategic Funding Plan 2025-2029 and Capital Investment Plan 2025-2029, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region and the Southern Region, the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028, the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027, and the Carlow-Graigucullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030
- the established site context and the pattern of development in the area;
 - the proposed mitigation measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement

it is considered that the Proposed Development would enable sustainable residential and economic growth through the delivery of increased wastewater treatment capacity, would assist in meeting

obligations under EU Directives, national legislation and planning policy, and would be acceptable in respect of its likely effects on the environment and its likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, including matters of odour, noise, traffic and visual impact.

On this basis, it is submitted that the Proposed Development is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and the Commission is respectfully requested grant permission for the Proposed Development.