

2.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1

Introduction

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) outlines the site of the Proposed Development, including its location, physical characteristics, and surrounding land uses, site access arrangements and planning history. This chapter presents information on planning policy as it relates to the Proposed Development in the context of European, national, regional and local policies. The Proposed Development site measures approximately 9 hectares (ha) in area and is located within the townland of Barrymore, Co. Roscommon. The Proposed Development consists of the following elements:

- The construction of a new **Water Sports Pavilion**, which will incorporate 3 no. buildings consisting of a café building, water sports building and a maintenance building/multifunctional space. The Water Sports Pavilion will also include a flexible-use canopy structure.
- The demolition of the existing water sports building and adjacent public toilet block on site.
- The **Redevelopment of the Existing Waterways Ireland-operated Marina** comprising an extension of the existing breakwater and the creation of a new jetty to accommodate approximately 59 new boat berths.
- **Public Realm Upgrades** including the construction of a playground, nature observation space, picnic areas, benches, wellness meadow, changing shelter and events spaces including the development of a continuous promenade along the lakeshore.
- **Active Travel and Site Access Improvements** along the length of the L2020 Local Road from the N61 National Road junction to the Hodson Bay Marina. Expansion and realignment of the car parking provision
- All ancillary works including site clearance, boundary treatments, associated public lighting, bin storage, hard and soft landscaping, site drainage upgrades, connections to existing utilities to include foul and surface water drainage, water supply, electrical & telecommunications networks.

2.2

Site of the Proposed Development

2.2.1

Site Location

The Proposed Development site is situated at Hodson Bay within the townland of Barrymore, Co. Roscommon, extending northwards from the junction of the L2020 Local Road and the N61 National Road. The site is located approximately 4 kilometres (km) north of Athlone and extends over an area of approximately 9 ha. The location of the site in the context of Athlone and its surrounding area is illustrated in Figure 2-1.

The site is bounded to the east by Lough Ree and to the west by Athlone Golf Club. The grounds of the Hodson Bay Hotel and Athlone Golf Club are located partially within the site boundary. The immediate surrounding area is characterised by established tourism and recreational uses. Athlone Golf Club and the Hodson Bay Hotel represent key tourism assets adjoining the site, while Hodson Bay also supports a range of water sports and recreational activities, including those operated by Baysports. These existing uses contribute to the area's established role as a recreational and leisure destination. The wider surrounding area of Hodson Bay/Barrymore is predominantly low density residential in nature.



Map Legend

 Site Boundary



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Drawing Title
Site Location in the Context of Athlone and the Surrounding Area

Project Title
Hudson Bay Waterfront Park

Drawn By ML	Checked By MK
Project No. 241220	Drawing No. 2-1
Scale 1:30,000	Date 11/08/2026



2.2.2 Physical Characteristics of the Site and Surrounding Lands

The Proposed Development site comprises a mix of established built development and open waterfront lands. The Hodson Bay Hotel forms a prominent feature within the site, accompanied by existing marina infrastructure along the shoreline of Lough Ree. These elements reflect the established recreational and tourism function of the site.

The eastern boundary of the site is defined by the shoreline of Lough Ree, which includes a combination of managed edges associated with marina uses and more natural shoreline features. The site transitions inland to landscaped grounds associated with the hotel, while the western boundary adjoins the managed grounds of Athlone Golf Club. The wider area also includes linear residential development along the L2020 Local Road, forming a pattern typical of the rural setting.

The Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 Volume 2 sets out a Hodson Bay / Barrymore Area Plan. While the Area Plan identifies lands as either under 'Leisure, Tourism and Amenity' or 'Green Belt' land use zonings, these are not formal land use zonings which are guided by land use zoning objectives or a land use zoning matrix. The development of these zones is therefore guided by general Policy Objectives set out for the development of the Hodson Bay / Barrymore Area Plan. The lands closer to the lakeshore are zoned 'Green Belt' and lands further inland are zoned 'Leisure, Tourism and Amenity'.

Surrounding land uses are primarily recreational and tourism-related, including the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone Golf Club, and established water sports activities, contributing to the area's role as a key amenity and leisure destination.

The site is located within an area of high environmental sensitivity. Lough Ree, which the Proposed Development site is located adjacent to and partially within, forms part of the Natura 2000 Network and is designated as both a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code: 000440) and a Special Protection Area (SPA) (Site Code: 004064). In addition, Lough Ree is designated as a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) (Site Code: 000440). These designations reflect the ecological importance and biodiversity value of the lake and its associated habitats.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was prepared by CAAS Ltd. for Roscommon County Council (RCC) as part preparation of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2029 (RCDP). The SFRA is prepared in line with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), hereafter referred to as the Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009. The Guidelines set out the likelihood of flooding within a geographical area through the assignment of Flood Zones. In terms of risk the probability of flooding from rivers, the Flood Zones are defined as follows:

- Flood Zone A: The probability of flooding from rivers is greater than 1% or 1 in 100;
- Flood Zone B: The probability of flooding from rivers is greater than 0.1% or 1 in 1000;
- Flood Zone C: The probability of flooding from rivers is less than 0.1% or 1 in 1000.

The SFRA has examined the flood risk at Hodson Bay, and the assignment of Flood Zones at Hodson Bay are shown in Figure 2-2. There is a portion of the site located along the shoreline of Lough Ree designated as Flood Zone A and further west, away from the shoreline of Lough Ree, a portion of the site is designated as Flood Zone B. In accordance with the OPW Guidelines, development within these areas is subject to the sequential approach and, where applicable, the justification test¹.

¹ Office of Public Works (OPW) (2009) *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities November 2009*.

A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (Appendix 8-1) has been prepared to assess flood risk and inform the design of the Proposed Development.

There are four recorded archaeological monuments (CH001-CH004) within the Cultural Heritage study area. Of these, two are redundant records, while RO049-005002- : 'Causeway'.is located adjacent to the Proposed Development Site. See Section 12.3.2.4 of Chapter 12 Cultural Heritage for further information. The closest structure listed on the Record of Protected Structures and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage is 'Ballybay Presbytery' (RPS Ref 04900577 / NIAH Ref 31949002) located approximately 860m northeast of the site.

2.2.3 Site Access

The Proposed Development site is accessed via the national road network, the N61 National Road, with local access provided by the L2020 Local Road, which directly serves the site. The existing road infrastructure facilitates vehicular access to the Hodson Bay Hotel, marina facilities, and associated recreational uses. Internal circulation within the site is supported by a network of local roads, parking areas, and service routes.

A railway line runs broadly parallel to the N61 National Road and crosses the L2020 Local Road at a level crossing within the Planning Application site boundary; however, there is no rail station in the immediate vicinity of the site. The nearest stations are located in Athlone, approximately 10 km to the south, and in Roscommon town approximately 27.5 km to the north. Athlone Railway Station is serviced by the Dublin-Galway and Dublin-Westport railway lines which provide regular services connecting to urban centres along these lines.

2.3 Planning History

A planning history search was carried out for the area within the Planning Application site boundary at Hodson Bay, as well as for applications for developments within a 1 km radius of the site boundary. There are several previous planning applications within the site according to RCC's Online Planning Register, and the An Coimisiún Pleanála Online Planning Register. The valid planning applications for development which were decided within the last 5 years (June 2021 onwards), within the site at Hodson Bay and within 1 km of the site boundary, are summarised in Table 2-1 and Appendix 2-1 respectively.

The applications noted in the tables overleaf illustrate the development of tourism facilities at Hodson Bay. Permission has previously been granted for the construction of tourism facilities, primarily tourism accommodation and associated works, and for the installation of water sports facilities including inflatable waterslides and associated marquees to be operated on a seasonal basis. This showcases the focus on tourism development in this area. Permission has also been granted for residential developments primarily along the L2020 Local Road.

2.3.1 Planning Applications within the Site Boundary

Table 2-1: Noted planning history of the site at Hodson Bay.

Pl. Ref.	Applicant	Description	Decision
2460049	Niamh O'Donohue	Permission for erection of single storey dwelling with associated ancillary site works, single storey outbuilding and new proposed site entrance with new gates and piers at Hodson Bay, Barrymore, Athlone, Co. Roscommon.	Granted with conditions (06/01/2025)
2360194	David Heavey	Permission for the construction of a new two storey dwelling (280 sqm) and associated ancillary works to facilitate the development including site development works, parking, drainage, foul connection to the mains drainage and landscaping at Hodson's Bay, Barrymore Townland, Athlone, Co. Roscommon, N37C6V9.	Granted with conditions (18/06/2024)
2360204	New Island Resorts Limited	Permission for development consisting of: a) Conservation and protection of all existing woodland areas and the natural environment as a fundamental objective of the development, b) Regeneration of the former woodland areas towards the centre of the Yew Point peninsula, now largely depleted following generations of agricultural activity, with the extensive planting of native tree species of Irish provenance, c) Construction of 36 no. timber eco-cabins providing 12 no. family cabins and 24 no. two-person cabins raised on stilts above ground levels, to conserve existing ground conditions and preserve through routes for movement of wildlife. The cabins arranged in five clusters confined to the southern portion of the lands, carefully respond to their specific site context, respecting existing woodlands and topographical conditions, d) Provision of 4 no. timber guest shelters distributed across the site, and a covered shelter to facilitate the charging and storing of electric golf buggies,	Granted with Conditions (16/02/2024)

Pl. Ref.	Applicant	Description	Decision
		e) Extension and refurbishment of the existing building/shop, with minor internal reconfigurations and the upgrading of the exterior with slatted timber screens, new doors and windows and a covered deck area, f) Construction of an Environmental Induction Area to facilitate the immersion of guests in environmental topics and the principles of fully sustainable living, and inform them, specifically, on the ecology and biodiversity of the Yew Point/Lough Ree area, g) All cabins and other new structures are designed to minimise environmental impact and disruption through the off-site fabrication of the main components, careful siting and reversible forms of construction. Materials of low embedded carbon are to be used, and operational carbon is minimised through the use of renewable sources of energy. Surface water run-off is dealt with by strategically located Rain Gardens to filter and slowly release rainwater into the ground, h) Sustainable energy sources with the use of renewable solar photovoltaic panels as the primary source of energy generation for the entire development, i) Provision of slatted timber entrance gate structure to provide vehicular access and a covered pedestrian entrance with related signage, j) Construction of 1 no. reinforced "Grass-crete" surfaced car park at the existing site entrance providing 48 no. car parking spaces in total (1 no. car parking space per cabin and 12 no. staff car parking spaces). The car parking provision includes 10 no. EV charging spaces (with provision for future expansion of EV charging facilities) and 3 no. spaces associated with the accessible cabins, k) Resurfacing in gravel of existing pathways with minor extensions and realignments to avoid tree canopy overhangs to proposed cabin locations, l) Provision of low-level public lighting and appropriate way-finding signage specifically designed to minimise visual intrusion and impact on wildlife, m) Provision of foul sewer drainage network and vacuum pump station, with new connection to the existing Hodson Bay Waste Water Pumping Station located to the south of the site,	

Pl. Ref.	Applicant	Description	Decision
		n) Upgrading of the existing 50mm watermain from the existing Hodson Bay Hotel to provide a 100mm watermain to service the proposed site (approx. 550m in length), o) all ancillary and associated site works (See newspaper notice for full description). The planning application is supported by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), at Yew Point, Hodson Bay, townlands of Barrymore, Kiltoom, Athlone, Co. Roscommon.	
2262 ABP-315842-23	Athlone Baysports Ltd.	Permission for development consisting of the following recreational facilities: Part A. Landside installations details of which are outlined below: 2 No. marquees for use as a reception and wet suit distribution, measuring 9m X 9m X 6.6m high and 21m X 15m X 7.8M high; 1 No. 9m X 9m X 3.8m high disabled changing marquee; 1 No. 9m X 9m X 4.7m high safety briefing marquee; 9 No. 12m X 6m X 3.3m high changing marquees; 3 No. 12m X 15M X 5m high marquees for use as a customer observation area, a dining area and a gift shop; 1 No. 4m X 8m X 3.7m high café marquee; 2 No. 3m X 6m X 3m high prefabricated office buildings; - Outdoor showers 5m X 6m; - Realignment of existing fencing. All the marquees will be coloured white. The proposed development includes all ancillary and enabling site works. The changing rooms and coffee shop will be connected by gravity to existing public sewerage. Part B. Waterside Installations, details of which are outlined below: - Main waterpark consisting of inflatable platforms, slides and climbing walls with overall dimensions of 35m X 40m X 8m high;	Granted with Conditions (11/04/2024)

Pl. Ref.	Applicant	Description	Decision
		2. Inflatable junior waterpark measuring 8m X 15m X 5.2 high; 3. No. 1 inflatable water slide measuring 15m X12m X 12m high; 4. No. 1 inflatable water slide measuring 31m x 22m x 16m high; 5. No. 1 inflatable water slide measuring 20m X 8m X 13m high; 6. No. 1 inflatable water slide measuring 32m X 16m X 13m high; 7. 50 No. cylindrical shaped inflatable safety booms 4m by .4m diameter. All of the above installations are inflatable PVC structures which are permanently fixed to the lakebed using ropes and anchors. Proposed Operation Periods: It is intended that the overall facility will be operational annually between the 15th March and the 15th of October. The facility will operate during daylight hours only and will not operate past 21:00 hours on any day. A NIS will be submitted to the Planning Authority with the planning application) at Barrymore Townland, Hodson Bay, Kiltoom, Athlone, Co. Roscommon.	
2347	David Heavey	Permission for the construction of a single new dwelling including a new connection to the public mains, all associated landscaping and earthworks and all associated drainage at Hodson Bay, Barrymore, Athlone, Co Roscommon.	Refused (13/04/2023)

2.3.2 Other Planning Applications within the Vicinity of the Application Site

Applications identified on the Planning Applications Registers for RCC which are within c. 1km radius of the site are summarised in Appendix 2-1. The identified applications are valid applications which have received a decision from the planning authority in the last five years (since June 2021). This 1 km radius has been applied to capture the planning history within the surrounding area of the Proposed Development site, which is considered a reasonable distance to capture sufficient information on the planning history of the surrounding area.

2.4 Planning Policy

This section of the EIAR sets out the relevant European, national, regional and local planning policies which are of relevance to the Proposed Development.

2.4.1 European Planning Policy

2.4.1.1 European Union ‘Just Transition Fund’

To facilitate a just transition towards a low-carbon economy in the Midlands, the EU and the Government of Ireland have established a €169 million ‘European Union Just Transition Fund’ (EU JTF) for the period of 2023-2026. It operates under Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 within the framework of the EU Cohesion policy. The Fund’s single specific objective is to support the regions and communities in Europe that are most negatively affected by the transition to climate neutrality, ensuring that no one is left behind:

- The EU JTF aims to address employment, economic, social and environmental impacts that come with the shift away from carbon-intensive activities.
- In Ireland’s case, the territory supported by the fund will focus on the regions where there have been direct impacts from the move away from peat production and electricity generation from peat.
- Ireland will receive up to €84.5 million from the EU JTF over the period to 2027.

The fund will support the transition of the Midlands to a carbon neutral destination through funding of sustainable tourism projects that are designed to have significant regenerative impacts on local communities and peatlands. The fund will be used to create more reasons for tourists to visit the Midlands and to ensure they have memorable experiences when they are here. Fáilte Ireland launched its Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Private and Community Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as part of the EU JTF Regenerative Tourism & Placemaking Scheme for Ireland’s Midlands 2023-2026, in August 2023. The scheme’s aim is to transform tourism across 8 counties in Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands and Ireland’s Ancient East by diversifying the local economy and providing new opportunities for employment for workers and communities that were heavily dependent on peat.

This Investment Grant-Aid Scheme is the first part of up to €68 million Regenerative Tourism & Placemaking Scheme 2023-2026 to be delivered by Fáilte Ireland, as part of the EU JTF and is expected to benefit Counties Laoise, Westmeath, Offaly, Longford, **Roscommon** and parts of Galway, Tipperary and Kildare.

While the EU JTF 2023-2027 has 3 key priorities, the Fáilte Ireland Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme for Ireland’s Midlands 2023-2026 applies to Priority 1 and Priority 2 only:

- **“Priority 1: Generating employment for former peat communities by investing in tourism and the diversification of the local economy.**
- **Priority 2: Support the regeneration and repurposing of peatlands and related land.**

- *Priority 3: Providing former peat communities with smart and sustainable mobility options to enable them to benefit directly from the green transition.” [our emphasis].*

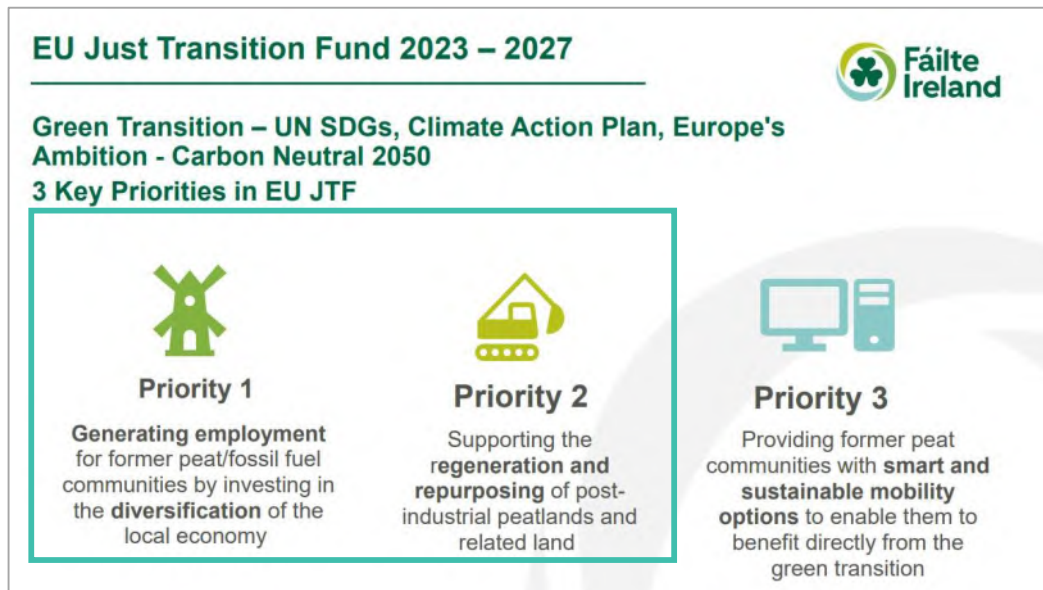


Figure 2-3 Dunne, FD. 2023. Irish Planning Institute Conference Regenerative Tourism and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Irish Planning Institute Annual Conference, 20th-21st April 2023, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. Slides edited by MKO.

Additionally, the Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Private and Community SMEs, which is part of the Regenerative Tourism & Placemaking Scheme, there are five project categories for funding under this:

- **Category 1: Development or Enhancement of Sustainable Visitor Experiences**
- Category 2: Development of Sustainable/Low Carbon Tourist Accommodation
- Category 3: Capital Project Planning & Design
- Category 4: Digital Transformation
- **Category 5: Accessibility enhancements to provide a more inclusive visitor experience.**

RCC and Waterways Ireland have received funding from Fáilte Ireland under the EU JTF, to take the project to the Design & Environmental Evaluation and Statutory Consent Stages. This funding stream ensures that the local community, which has been identified as being affected by the green transition to a climate resilient economy, will benefit from a balanced socio-economic transition through the diversification of the local economy, restoration of degraded environmental assets and provision of smart and sustainable mobility.

2.4.1.2 Summary of Compliance with European Planning Policy Framework

Table 2-2 Summary of Compliance with European Planning Policy Framework

Compliance With European Planning Policy
The Proposed Development aligns with the objectives of the EU Just Transition Fund (Regulation (EU) 2021/1056) by supporting the sustainable economic diversification of the Midlands region, which has been significantly impacted by the transition away from peat-based industries. Through its integration within the Fáilte Ireland Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme (2023-2026), the development will enhance the tourism offering of the area by providing upgraded marina facilities, water sports facilities, active travel facilities and an enhanced public realm, thereby contributing to job creation and increased visitor activity in accordance with Priority 1 of the Fund.

Compliance With European Planning Policy

Accordingly, the Proposed Development supports a balanced socio-economic and environmental transition and is consistent with the overarching aims of EU climate and cohesion policy.

2.4.2 National Planning Policy

2.4.2.1 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

In February 2018 the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government published the National Planning Framework (NPF) entitled 'Project Ireland 2040' to succeed the National Spatial Strategy. The NPF comprises the Government's long-term strategic planning framework to guide national, regional and local planning and investment decisions over the next 25 years. The NPF is a high-level document which provides a framework for future development and investment in Ireland, providing a long-term and place-based aspect to public policy and investment, and aiming to coordinate sectoral areas such as housing, jobs, transport, education, health, environment, energy and communications, into an overall coherent strategy.

The first revision, published in April 2025, seeks to update the NPF to reflect changes to the government policy that have taken place since the first publication. These changes include (and may not be restricted to) climate transition, regional development, demographic, digitalisation and investment and prioritisation.

The NPF sets out 10 National Strategic Objectives (NSO) which together outline a vision for the sustainable development of the country to 2040. The following NSO's are identified as being relevant to the proposed project:

NSO 6: A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills

'This will depend on creating places that can foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. It can be achieved by building regional economic drivers, by recognising and supporting enterprise specialisations and clusters which can drive economic activity in each region by strengthening linkages between companies of different sizes and stages of development, regionally, nationally and across the island and by supporting opportunities to diversify and strengthen the rural economy. Delivering this outcome will require the coordination of growth and place making with investment in world class infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and in skills and talent to support economic competitiveness and enterprise growth.' [our emphasis]

The Proposed Development aligns with national and international policies designed to allow tourism to continue to be a contributor to the economy while becoming a regenerative contributor to the environment.

NSO 7: Enhanced Amenity and Heritage

'This will ensure that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. This is linked to and must integrate with our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place.' [our emphasis]

The Proposed Development will include a range of compelling measures to conserve and protect all the existing woodland areas and the natural environment as a fundamental objective of the development.

NSO8: Transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate Resilient Society

'The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act was enacted in 2021 with a commitment to a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% and increase the share of electricity generated from renewable sources to 80% over the decade (2021 - 2030), and to achieve net zero emissions no later than 2050. This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Climate Action Plan and the National Adaptation Framework. New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.'

NSO 9: Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources

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

The NPF supports the development of the economy of the Northern and Western Region to balance with the economy of the Eastern and Midlands Region, to ensure the spread of economic development across the island. The Proposed Development will aid in achieving the economic growth of the Northern and Western Region through the provision of increased employment opportunities in line with the following NPO:

"NPO 1:

The projected level of population and employment growth in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area will be at least matched by that of the Northern and Western and Southern Regional Assembly areas combined..."

The NPF notes the contribution of tourism to the rural economy and the role it has in supporting many rural communities across the country. The NPF recognises the opportunities from sustainably harnessing the assets of the natural landscape of Ireland for the development of outdoor recreational facilities to attract tourists and provides amenities for local residents. This can be achieved through the coordinated approach of the development of greenways, blueways and peatways as outlined in the following National Policy Objective:

"National Policy Objective 34

Continue to facilitate tourism development and in particular the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, and a Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises:

- *A coordinated approach to the sustainable management of outdoor recreation sites;*
- *Projects on the basis of their environmental sustainability, achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level while ensuring their development is compliant with the National Biodiversity Action Plan, the national climate change objective and requirements for environmental assessments."*

The Proposed Development will provide for outdoor recreational facilities at Hodson Bay which will integrate into wider plans for the development of a Greenway between Athlone, Lanesborough and Roscommon. It could also link into a future Blueway which incorporates Lough Ree along the River Shannon.

The Proposed Development is located in an environmentally sensitive area on the shore of Lough Ree. The development has been designed to integrate into the natural landscape and local environment while providing for enhanced tourism facilities in line with the following NPOs:

"National Policy Objective 77

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

National Policy Objective 78

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

National Policy Objective 79

Support the management of stormwater, rainwater and surface water flood and pollution risk through the use of nature-based solutions and sustainable drainage systems, including the retrofitting of existing environments to support nature based solutions.

National Policy Objective 80

Support the retrofitting of existing environments to cater for surface water run-off through the use of nature based solutions."

The Proposed Development represents the enhancement of existing tourism and recreational facilities and the creation of new facilities at Hodson Bay. This supports the development of sustainable tourism at this location, aiming to increase the number of visitors to Hodson Bay, while also providing enhanced amenities for local residents. This promotes the generation of new employment while also protecting the surrounding environment.

2.4.2.2 Climate Action Plan 2025

The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25) is the third statutory update to Ireland's Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. It is noted that at the time of writing the Climate Action Plan 2026 (CAP26) has still not been published. In the absence of the CAP26, the Proposed Development is considered with regards to its alignment with CAP25.

CAP25 sets out the roadmap of actions that will support the delivery of Ireland's climate ambition to transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy no later than end of the year 2050. The Act also requires a reduction of 51% in Greenhouse Gases emissions by 2030, compared to 2018 levels. CAP25 builds on the previous Climate Action Plan, published in 2024, by refining and updating the measures of actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The CAP25 also notes that it should be read in conjunction with Climate Action Plan 2024.

Central to CAP25 is the delivery of a Just Transition that supports economic diversification and low-carbon technologies that align with established and future climate objectives. The Plan outlines how the Midlands region is particularly impacted by the transition away from fossil fuels following the end of peat extraction. Accordingly, there is a clear need to support the Midlands region in the development of vibrant and innovative enterprise that can support the local economy.

The development of sustainable tourism and amenity opportunities in the Midlands region is essential in the delivery of a just transition and the strengthening of the regional economy. In particular, there is a focus on the development of slow tourism as a means of enhancing the regenerative and commercial potential of the Midlands. The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan highlights the opportunities for slow tourism and the development of recreational and amenity uses. CAP25 views sustainable tourism as valuable means of strengthening the regional economy of the Midlands in line with climate targets.

The Proposed Development will support the development of sustainable and slow tourism in the Midlands Region through the enhancement of the existing tourism offering in the area, with a focus on

utilising the natural assets of Lough Ree and the lakeshore, to provide for a range of water sports and active travel facilities, to encourage more tourists to visit and stay for longer.

2.4.2.3 **Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025**

The Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025, hereafter referred to as Our Rural Future, aims to achieve a co-ordinated multi-sectoral approach to rural development. The Policy provides an understanding of the challenges faced by rural areas, noting that each area is different and therefore faces different challenges. The Policy therefore supports a place-based approach to rural development, supporting rural communities in developing plans to meet the long-term needs of their locality. However, there is an overall focus on the development of appropriate infrastructure and services to effectively serve local communities and allow them to capitalise on their existing assets.

Our Rural Future was written in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and Ireland's recovery from the economic and social fallout of the pandemic. The Policy provides an understanding of the importance of the tourism sector's role in employment in rural areas, with the Tourism Recovery Taskforce, established in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, noted that tourism is the only employer of note outside of agriculture in many rural areas.

The recovery and support of the tourism sector was seen as an important means of generating employment in rural areas. The Policy suggests that the development of tourism should take a sustainable focus and should be guided by overarching tourism initiatives such as the 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' development strategies and tourism branding which guides the development of tourism in the Midlands Region. The Policy outlines the opportunities for rural communities to capitalise on outdoor activity tourism through the development of outdoor recreation infrastructure such as walking trails, greenways, blueways and angling infrastructure, which take advantage of the natural landscape of rural communities.

The Proposed Development supports the generation of additional employment at Hodson Bay, supporting the rural economy in the surrounding area. The economic benefits from the attraction of additional tourists to this site as well as the provision of enhanced amenity facilities for the local rural community supports the development of this area and ensures it remains an attractive place to live and work into the future.

2.4.2.4 **A New Era for Irish Tourism: National Tourism Policy Statement (2025)**

A New Era for Irish Tourism: National Tourism Policy Statement (NTPS) sets out a five-year framework for the sustainable development of tourism. The policy sets a target of growing overseas tourism revenue to €9 billion by 2031 and domestic tourism revenue to €5.8 billion by 2031. The policy supports regional development and the development of less mature tourism destinations and there is a target to achieve a minimum annual increase of 7% in visitor numbers at less mature tourism destinations. There is an aim to prioritise growth in the off-peak seasons (October to May) to address seasonal imbalances in tourism revenue.

The role of the EU Just Transition Fund in supporting the Midlands region in transitioning to a climate neutral economy is outlined in the Policy. The fund will address employment, social and economic changes arising out of this transition through the generation of new employment and enhancement of local communities through the enhancement of the tourism offering in the area as outlined in the following policy objective:

"5.2.1 It is recognised that the Midlands region has not benefitted from tourism growth to the same extent as many more mature tourism destinations. The EU Just Transition Fund provides an opportunity to transform the tourism offering in the region. The Department and Fáilte Ireland as the intermediary body, will work closely with other State agencies and private stakeholders to ensure that all projects in receipt of EU Just Transition Funding are delivered by 2026."

The Policy sets out to deliver authentic, engaging and memorable tourism experiences. The growing interest in water-based tourism and the variety of water-based tourism activities is noted. There is an

opportunity to optimise the use of inland waterways to increase visitor numbers in less mature tourism destinations in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. The opportunities for the development of inland waterways are further outlined in the following policy objective:

“3.6.3 The tourism agencies will work with relevant bodies to increase the focus on nature-based tourism opportunities associated with our inland waterways system and landscape, including angling, cruising, water sports, and outdoor activities such as walking and hiking. In relation to less mature tourism destinations, all new and updated regional tourism development strategies and relevant DEDPs will include specific proposals on how to optimise the inland waterway system from a tourism perspective.”

The economic benefits of the development of greenways, blueways and walking trails for less mature tourism destinations and rural areas more generally is set out in the following policy objective:

“3.4.1 Local authorities and other relevant agencies will continue to progress development of infrastructure such as greenways, blueways, walking trails (including through the National Walks Scheme) and active travel routes. This will include a renewed focus on solutions to link key tourist attractions, including the Trail Network in the Midlands and Blue Flag beaches on the coast with towns and villages.”

The Proposed Development will support the development of tourism in the Midlands Region, which is undergoing a climate transition as a result of the move away from peat extraction for energy generation where tourism is less developed. The tourism-based Proposed Development utilises the natural land and water environment at Hodson Bay to provide for a range of activities. The proposed Water Sports Pavilion and extended marina will increase access to water based activity, while the proposed active travel infrastructure and public realm enhancements will provide safer and more enjoyable facilities for tourists and locals alike.

2.4.2.5 Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030, aiming to deliver the changes needed to protect, conserve and appropriately govern biodiversity through a “whole of government, whole of society” approach. The NBAP is structured around 5 no. overarching objectives, each addressing a different theme and supported by a series of specific, measurable actions.

The NBAP recognises the essential role that healthy ecosystems play in supporting biodiversity, with Ireland supporting globally important population of birds, fish, mammals, invertebrates, plants and fungi, which are in decline due to unfavourable habitats. It notes that Ireland's natural environment is not in good health and is in most cases getting worse. It identifies key threats such as air pollution, urban wastewater, recreation, development, and problematic species.

2.4.2.6 Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS 2023) was first published by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in April 2013, with a revised version published in July 2023. DMURS provides guidance relating to the design of urban roads and streets. The document encourages designers to give due consideration to creating a ‘sense of place’ which is of core significance to the creation of safe and more integrated street designs. It notes that four interlinked characteristics influence the sense of place within a street, including:

- **Connectivity:** The creation of vibrant and active places requires pedestrian activity. This in turn requires walkable street networks that can be easily navigated and are well connected.
- **Enclosure:** A sense of enclosure spatially defines streets and creates a more intimate and supervised environment. A sense of enclosure is achieved by orientating buildings toward the street and placing them along its edge and can be enhanced with street trees.

- **Active Edge:** An active frontage enlivens the edge of the street creating a more interesting and engaging environment. An active frontage is achieved with frequent entrances and openings that ensure the street is overlooked and generate pedestrian.
- **Pedestrian Activity/Facilities:** The sense of intimacy, interest and overlooking that is created by a street that is enclosed and lined with active frontages enhances a pedestrian's feeling of security and well-being. Good pedestrian facilities also make walking a more convenient and pleasurable experience.

The Proposed Development has sought to comply with the technical and policy requirements of DMURS. The design of the roads within the development prioritises the safety of pedestrians and cyclists in line with the 'User hierarchy that promotes and prioritises sustainable forms of transportation' outlined in Figure 2.21 of DMURS, with segregated active travel infrastructure, crossing points and traffic calming measures along carriageways. The streets create a sense of place, providing access to Hodson Bay for all road users, without allowing the motor vehicle to dominate.

2.4.2.7 The Cycle Design Manual

The Cycle Design Manual (CDM, 2023) seeks to provide guidance on the delivery of high-quality cycling and active travel infrastructure, necessary to create a modal shift away from cars in cities, towns, and rural areas. The CDM seeks to complement the standards contained in DMURS. The CDM states that:

"Where new developments are being delivered in greenfield sites, which are generally less constrained environments, the expectation should be that high-quality cycle facilities are provided as standard".

The CDM sets out five main requirements for cycle-friendly infrastructure:

- **Safety:** Facilities should be designed to enable actual safety for ages and abilities, as well as creating perceived safety for everyone from the most to least confident users.
- **Coherence:** The cycle network should be connected and easy to navigate. Gaps and interruptions should be eliminated to strengthen the overall level of service.
- **Directness:** Cycle routes should connect origins and destinations using the shortest route with as little delay as possible, including facilities at junctions that minimise delay and the need to stop.
- **Comfort:** Anything that causes unnecessary discomfort or delay is likely to reduce the attractiveness of the facility. Factors to consider include width, gradients, stoppages and delay, surfacing, shelter, and maintenance.
- **Attractiveness:** As cycling is a sensory experience, with people directly exposed to their environment, the cycling environment along a route should ideally be as pleasant and interesting as possible.

The Proposed Development, in particular the proposed active travel route along the L2020 Local Road, has sought to comply with the technical and policy requirements of the CDM. Pedestrian routes and, where possible, cycling routes have been segregated from motor traffic. Traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossing infrastructure have been integrated into the design. These measures create a safe environment for cyclists within the development in line with the CDM.

2.4.2.8 Healthy Ireland Framework 2019 – 2025

The Healthy Ireland Framework 2019 – 2025 is the national strategy aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. It outlines key goals to promote healthier diets, increase physical activity, and enhance mental health across the population.

The Proposed Development supports the goals of the strategy by integrating design measures that promote health and wellbeing including safe, accessible walking and cycling routes and points of access to the lake to encourage physical activity; landscaped areas that support outdoor exercise and social interaction; and green spaces for relaxation to enhance mental wellbeing.

2.4.2.9 National Physical Activity Plan

The National Physical Activity Plan, launched on 14th January 2016, introduced Ireland's first cross-sectoral approach to promoting physical activity. Its core objective is to increase opportunities for people to be active and to remove barriers that limit participation. The plan sets out eight action areas as outlined which aim to encourage greater participation in physical activity:

- Public awareness, education and communication
- Children and young people
- Health
- Environment
- Workplaces
- Sport and physical activity in the community
- Research, monitoring and evaluation
- Implementation through partnership

The National Physical Activity Plan emphasises the importance of both the natural and built environments in encouraging physical activity. It also highlights how a high-quality built environment can create greater opportunities for movement and recreation, ultimately supporting better physical and mental health.

The most recent implementation review of the National Physical Activity Plan took place in May 2022 and called for ongoing investment in target groups such as women, children and young people, notably through investment to *'improve or tailor facilities to increase and maintain levels of physical activity particularly among young people'*.

The Proposed Development enhances access to physical activity through the provision of enhanced water sports facilities, access to the lake and the provision of a variety of active travel infrastructure types. This will provide the opportunity people of all age groups and abilities to engage in physical activities at this site, in particular younger people.

2.4.2.10 Summary of Compliance with National Planning Policy Framework

Table 2-3 Summary of Compliance with National Planning Policy Framework

Compliance with National Planning Policy Framework
The Proposed Development is consistent with the National Planning Framework (NPF) NSO 6, the Climate Action Plan 2025, Our Rural Future 2021 and 'People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025' and their approach to the diversification of the regional economy through the promotion of sustainable tourism which facilitates investment and employment opportunities in a rural economy. It supports NSO 7 through the provision of enhanced amenity, recreational and waterfront infrastructure, while conserving and integrating the natural environment to reinforce sense of place. The development is in line with NSO 8 and 9 of the NPF supporting the shift toward a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy through regenerative tourism and sustainable land use, and through the protection and sustainable management of environmental resources including water resources. The Proposed Development enhances access to facilities for land and water based physical activity, benefitting the health of visitors of all ages to Hodson Bay in line with the National Physical Activity Plan and the Healthy Ireland Framework. The streetscape and active travel facilities have been designed in line with the DMURS and CDM to provide for a safe and comfortable environment for all road users, in particular pedestrians and cyclists, providing traffic calming measures while successfully creating a sense of place.

Accordingly, the Proposed Development represents a coherent and policy-aligned intervention that supports sustainable tourism growth, environmental stewardship, and climate resilience at a national level.

2.4.3 Regional Planning Policy

2.4.3.1 Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032

The Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) adopted the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) on 24th January 2020. This RSES provides a high-level development framework for the region that supports the implementation of the NPF. The RSES outlines that the region has several key centres which act as Tourism Hubs, both in terms of overnight destinations and as onward destinations to some of the region's key tourist sites. The Plan highlights that the tourism industry needs to develop the off-peak season to ensure a significant number of visitors travel into the region over the shoulder seasons (Easter to May and September to October), to grow its share of annual visitors, which in turn will extend the tourist season across much of the region.

The role of Hodson Bay as a satellite village of Athlone is noted under the Athlone Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan under section 3.7a of the RSES, as outlined in the following extract:

Extract from Page 76:

"The delineation of Athlone as a regional growth centre should be ambitious and consider incorporating the satellite villages, such as Hodson Bay and Glasson, which may be considered to operate as part of the regional centre and are the nearest fully serviced and zoned areas to the town. These may provide alternative residential and employment options, but the main growth driver will remain the principal urban area of Athlone".

The RSES supports the development of the tourism sector in the Athlone area, outlining the town as the centre of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. This provides an opportunity to develop Athlone as a starting point for exploring the area and attractions covered by Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. As Hodson Bay is located within the hinterland of Athlone, it can benefit from the development of tourism in the wider Athlone area, in line with the following Regional Policy Objectives:

"RPO 3.7.4:

Support the development of a cross-sectoral approach to promote Athlone as a key tourism destination in the midlands, building on Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand and the forthcoming Shannon Tourism Masterplan to develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.

RPO 3.7.8:

Support the promotion of Athlone as a destination centre for the development of Hidden Heartlands including the development of a Wilderness Park Project based around Lough Ree."

The RSES outlines the following RPOs to guide the development of tourism in the Northern and Western Region more generally which are relevant to the Proposed Development:

RPO 4.1:

To support working with relevant landholders and recreational/tourism agencies to increase access to the countryside and our coastal areas, and to ensure maintenance and access to the existing network of trails, paths, ways etc.

RPO 4.2:

To support the maintenance of, and enhanced access to state lands, such as National Parks, Forest Parks, Waterways together with Monuments and Historic Properties, for recreation and tourism purposes.

RPO 4.3:

To support the preparation and implementation of Visitor Experience Development Plans (VEDPs) within the Northern and Western Region, to underpin the overarching regional tourism benefits and to promote the natural and cultural assets of the region.

The Proposed Development will be in line with the RPOs which aim to develop Athlone as a focal point of the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands experience. The Waterfront Park Project will enhance access to Lough Ree providing for enhanced access to a range of recreational activities including water sports within the region, thereby attracting increased numbers of visitors and providing for enhanced economic opportunities through increased employment in the tourism sector.

2.4.3.2 Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027 (the Strategy) sets out a framework for the development of the tourism industry in the Irish Midlands. The key aim of the Strategy is the creation of a sustainable tourism economy while conserving and protecting the natural environment. The overarching vision focuses on the development of eco-tourism and the regenerative potential of tourism in the region that provides net positive outcomes for local communities and the wider environment.

The Strategy outlines a number of strategic objectives that underpin the vision for tourism in the region. The Proposed Development directly contributes to a number of these objectives including:

Strategic Objective 2:

“Enhance the range and quality of our visitor experiences to underpin the Hidden Heartlands brand proposition, leveraging the natural and cultural assets of the region in a sustainable way with a focus on eco-tourism.”

This strategy also emphasises on establishing a strong reputation for the region around ecotourism, the outdoor offering, getting ‘active in nature’ and the opportunity to explore hidden cultural and heritage gems, by developing compelling visitor experiences around these propositions.

In that regard, the River Shannon with its natural assets is positioned to capitalise on the growing tourism trend for outdoor activities vis-à-vis walking, cycling, kayaking, boating, fishing, camping and glamping – encouraging visitors to be ‘active in nature’.

Strategic Objective 3:

“Grow the economic impact of tourism and create jobs in local tourism by supporting the tourism industry (private, public and community sectors) to develop its capacity and capability while reducing its carbon footprint.”

Strategic Objective 4:

“Establish the region as one of the leading regenerative tourism destinations in Europe in which tourism results in net positive outcomes for communities and nature.”

The Strategy recognises recent trends in the tourism sector and the need to ensure new tourism experiences in the Midlands align with these trends. In particular, the Strategy emphasises the growing trend of green tourism, active adventure, health and wellness and alternative accommodation types. The

Proposed Development will provide for enhanced water sports and marina facilities, which allow for increased use of the natural amenities at Hodson Bay in a sustainable manner. Enhancements to active travel facilities in the area will additionally encourage visitors to travel by sustainable means to this destination.

2.4.3.3 Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon Region 2020-2030

A Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon Region was developed by Waterways Ireland in partnership with Fáilte Ireland, with the objective to revitalise the combined Shannon Navigation and Shannon Erne Waterway as a key destination within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. This masterplan is designed to achieve a better regional spread of tourism and visitor activity, that will allow coordinated development and maximise beneficial outcomes derived from both public and private investment.

The masterplan considers the strategic tourism development opportunities for the entire length of the Shannon Navigation and the Shannon Erne Waterway, from Cavan, Leitrim southwards to Limerick City. It sets out a strategy that will develop tourism in the region with the aim of driving sustainable economic and social benefits, while protecting environmental sensitivities. A thematic and experiential framework was developed as part of the masterplan, to underpin proposals for experiences and activities:



Figure 2-4 Three inter-weaving Shannon Themes (Source: Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon Region 2020-2030)

Each theme is supported by differentiating Shannon Inspirers which facilitates visitors to explore / experience the Shannon in many ways. Aligning with this are the three Shannon Discovery Zones which characterise the distinctive geographies and assets of the Shannon with specific experience development recommendations. The Proposed Development is located within Discovery Zone 2 Mid Shannon and will deliver on the following priority project:

DZ2.4 Expanding the Lough Ree Experience: *Continue to develop Athlone's waterfront amenities to **build a critical mass of attractions** and activities, linking the Glasson-Coosan-Wineport-Killinure-Hodson Bay activity-food nexus;*

An integrated development approach was developed using the thematic framework and key issues identified for the whole Shannon, to define seven strategic initiatives. This is set out to act as a catalyst in establishing the Shannon as a world class sustainable tourism destination:



Figure 2-5 Seven Strategic Initiatives for the Shannon (Source: Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon Region 2020-2030).

The seven interlinking initiatives aim to forge long-term impacts by creating sustainable conditions for experience development, building on the inherent strengths of the Shannon.

This includes supporting the delivery of 'Strategic Initiative 2: Enhancing the On-Water Visitor Experience', and 'Strategic Initiative 3: Enhancing the Waterside Visitor Experience' which the Proposed Development seeks to achieve, with specific focus on:

SI2.3 Marina Development: Technical Assessment of Marina capacity to establish requirements for additional jetty space; consider options of Carrick on Shannon; **Hodson Bay;** Connaught Harbour; and new Marina in Parteen/Clariford.

SI2.4 Water-Based Activities & Adventure: Provide timely visitor information on range of 'soft adventure' activities (swimming, rowing, sailing, kayaking, waterskiing etc), where to go and amenities within each of the Discovery Zones. Develop improved networking and promotion of family-friendly activity zones (in association with the 'Shannon 100' network).

SI3.1 Reimagining Harbour Facilities through Sustained Investment Programme:

- A programme of investment in harbour infrastructure will be developed to include the upgrade of some harbours, the opening of new destinations and the possible restoration of some waterways.
- Enhancements of waterfront public realm, amenities and provision of onshore services, charging, pump out and power facilities; use smart technologies.
- Use existing public infrastructure to stimulate enterprises and community activity
- Enhanced BBQ, picnic and playground amenities at harboursides on public lands.;
- Create walk/cycle recreational linkages to settlements, attractions and things to see and do. Provision of serviced camping/ pod/ RV parking at harboursides.
- Sustained investment in the harbour infrastructure to facilitate growth in tourism.

2.4.3.4 Summary of Compliance with Regional Planning Policy Framework

Table 2-4 Summary of Compliance with Regional Planning Policy Framework

Compliance with Regional Planning Policy Framework
The Proposed Development responds to several regional policies, frameworks and strategies by supporting the growth of Athlone and its hinterland as a key tourism destination within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. The development aligns with the RSES, including RPOs 3.7.4 and 3.7.8, which promote Athlone as a tourism hub centred on the River Shannon and Lough Ree, as well as RPOs 4.1-4.3, which support enhanced access to waterways, recreational infrastructure and visitor experience development. The proposal will improve access to Lough Ree, expand water-based recreational opportunities and strengthen tourism infrastructure, thereby contributing to regional economic growth and employment. It is also consistent with the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Tourism Strategy 2023-2027, supporting eco-tourism, visitor experience enhancement and regenerative tourism, and with the Shannon Tourism Masterplan 2020-2030, which promotes marina development, waterfront enhancement and investment in harbour infrastructure. Overall, the development represents a coordinated and policy-aligned intervention that enhances the region's tourism offering while supporting the sustainable use of natural assets.

2.4.4 Local Planning Policy

2.4.4.1 Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028

The current statutory planning document for the site is the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 (RCDP), which was enacted on the 19th of April 2022. This document guides the sustainable economic, social and cultural development of the county up to 2028. The following strategic aims set out in the RCDP are of relevance to the Proposed Development:

“Strategic Aim 11:

Protect and enhance the natural assets of County Roscommon, including clean water, biodiversity, landscape, green infrastructure, heritage and agricultural land.

Strategic Aim 12:

Foster the creation of an attractive and competitive business environment by supporting economic development, job creation, tourism and prosperity for all.

Strategic Aim 13:

Ensure that the county is served by adequate community facilities and amenities, which add to the quality of life of residents of the county.

Strategic Aim 14:

To protect, conserve and enhance the built and natural heritage and the landscape of County Roscommon for future generations; and reinforce the distinctive character of the county through ensuring that recognised sites and species of environmental importance are conserved and managed appropriately.”

The RCDP seeks to encourage the development of new employment opportunities and to diversify existing employment sectors within the county in a co-ordinated approach with population growth. It notes the central location of the County within Ireland and its strategic location in close proximity to the Regional Growth centre of Athlone and its strategic transport connections to other Regional Growth Centres, Metropolitan Areas and international airports.

The RCDP notes the opportunities presented by the county's natural landscape, history and heritage which provide opportunities to attract tourists to the county. The Council have outlined their support for growing tourism in the County. It notes the increasing demand for walking and cycling tourism related experiences and investment in these facilities would benefit local communities access to local amenities. The following Policy Objectives are relevant to the Proposed Development:

Policy Objective ED 6.22:

Promote tourism as an integral part of County Roscommon's economic profile, supporting urban and rural enterprise, and recognising the key strategic location of the county and access to tourist sites and attractions

Policy Objective ED 6.25:

Promote the development of sustainable tourism as part of our economy, that recognises our landscapes, our cultural heritage and our environment.

Policy Objective ED 6.29:

Facilitate the creation of a network of cycling/walking routes (including existing footpaths and walking routes, off road routes, local walks, tourist walks, medium and long distance walking routes) within the county.

The Proposed Development will provide for an enhanced tourism offering at Hodson Bay, providing for a more attractive destination for prospective tourists. This would support the diversification of the local economy through the provision of additional employment in the tourism sector. The design has carefully considered local environmental factors and complements the natural landscape of the surrounding area. The development provides for high quality and safe walking and cycling routes within Hodson Bay, for use by locals and tourist alike. This ensures local residents have easy access to the enhanced water sport facilities and public realm facilities to be provided.

The RCDP notes the opportunities provided by walking and cycling as modes of transport which can reduce the use of private vehicles and which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and promotes a healthier lifestyle. RCC supports the delivery of additional pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in line with the following Policy Objectives:

Policy Objective ITC 7.25:

Promote walking and cycling as efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transport by securing the development of a network of direct, comfortable, convenient and safe cycle routes and footpaths, particularly in urban areas and in the vicinity of schools.

Policy Objective ITC 7.26:

Identify and implement a strategic, coherent and high-quality cycling and walking network across the county that is integrated with public transport and interconnected with cultural, recreational, retail, educational and employment destinations and attractions.

Policy Objective ITC 7.27:

Design pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the National Cycle Manual, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, the TII publication 'The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads' and any subsequent revisions with a focus on a high level of service and encourage a modal shift from the private car to cycling and walking.

Policy Objective ITC 7.28:

Improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with special mobility needs by providing facilities to enhance safety and convenience, including separation for pedestrian infrastructure from vehicular traffic.

Policy Objective ITC 7.30:

To support the retrospective provision of walking and cycling infrastructure in existing settlements, where feasible, to achieve growth in sustainable mobility and strengthen and improve the walking and cycling network.

The Proposed Development includes the provision of enhanced walking and cycling facilities along the L2020 Local Road between Hodson Bay and the junction with the N61 National Road and the provision of enhanced pedestrian infrastructure at Hodson Bay.

In cognisance of the risks posed by flooding, the RCDP sets out the following Policy Objectives to prevent the inappropriate development in areas prone to flooding and to mitigate against the risk of flooding in the existing built environment:

Policy Objective ITC 7.51:

Have regard to the EU Flood Risk Directive, the Flood Risk Regulations (S.I. No. 122 of 2010) and the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management and Circular PL2/2014, through the use of the sequential approach and application of the Justification Tests in Development Management.

Policy Objective ITC 7.52:

Ensure that a flood risk assessment is carried out for development proposals impacting on flood risk areas, in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management. This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to the potential development.

Policy Objective ITC 7.53:

Protect and enhance the county's turloughs, lake/river floodplains and wetlands as strategically important green infrastructure which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater and enables flood risk to be more effectively managed, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.

A Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment is submitted with this application (see Appendix 8-1).

The RCDP outlines the importance of protecting the county's environmental quality and biodiversity and the range of economic and social benefits arising from this. The impact of landscape on the sense of place is outlined as a means for landscape preservation. The following Policy Objectives outline measures to protect the county's natural heritage, through the protection of ecological assets, biodiversity, geology and landscape features including woodlands, hedgerows, peatlands and wetlands and to develop green infrastructure:

"Policy Objective NH 10.4:

Proposals where woodland, tree or hedgerow removal is proposed will be required to demonstrate a sufficient level of protection to Annex IV species, such as Bats and Otter, in accordance with the Habitats Directive.

Policy Objective NH 10.6:

Require all new developments in the early pre-planning stage of the planning process to identify, protect and enhance ecological features by making provision for local biodiversity (e.g. through provision of swift boxes, bat roost sites, green roofs, etc.) having regard to the recommendations

outlined in the Habitat Mapping in Co. Roscommon, 2011 and the County Roscommon Swift Survey, 2020

Policy Objective NH 10.7:

Implement Article 6(3) and where necessary Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and to ensure that Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to works, plans and projects likely to impact on European sites (SACs and SPAs), whether directly or indirectly or in combination with any other plan(s) or project(s). All assessments must be in compliance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

Policy Objective NH 10.8:

Ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects are permitted that give rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of European Sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects, (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects).

Policy Objective NH 10.9:

Ensure that any plan or project that could have a significant adverse impact (either alone or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site or would result in the deterioration of any habitat or any species reliant on that habitat will not be permitted unless in exceptional circumstances.

Policy Objective NH 10.10:

Actively promote the conservation and protection of areas designated as an NHA (including proposed sites) and to only consider proposals for development within or affecting an NHA where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposed development will not have a significant adverse effect on the NHA or pNHA.

Policy Objective NH 10.19:

Ensure that the county's watercourses are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values and to conserve and enhance where possible, the wildlife habitats of the County's rivers and riparian zones, lakes, canals and streams which occur outside of designated areas to provide a network of habitats and biodiversity corridors throughout the county. The Council shall be available to engage with the NPWS with the objective of facilitating the monitoring and surveying of wetland sites in Roscommon.

Policy Objective NH 10.20:

Protect waterbodies and watercourses from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains. To this effect, consideration should be given to Inland Fisheries Ireland's guidance document Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment (2020).

Policy Objective NH 10.29:

Facilitate the on-going development and improvement of green infrastructure in the Plan area, including green networks, green amenities and linked green corridors which ensure the provision of recreational amenities, natural areas for the growth of wildlife and biodiversity, and a network of infrastructure which results in a better quality of life for visitors and inhabitants alike."

2.4.4.2 Volume 2: Hodson Bay / Barrymore Area Plan

The Hodson Bay / Barrymore Area Plan, hereafter referred to as the ‘Area Plan’, has been prepared as part of the RCDP to guide the future development of this area, in recognition of the opportunity to further develop tourism and recreational facilities and to consolidate the existing low density residential developments.

The area is noted for being a primary tourism destination in County Roscommon. RCC aims to further develop tourism facilities within Hodson Bay while ensuring the protection of the sensitive lake and lakeside environment in line with the following Policy Objectives:

“Policy Objective HB 1:

Facilitate suitable leisure, tourism and amenity developments on lands zoned Leisure Tourism / Amenity in order to strengthen the significance of Hodson Bay / Barrymore as one of the main tourism/recreational attractions in County Roscommon and regionally.

Policy Objective HB 2:

Support the future expansion of existing tourism and leisure facilities, while ensuring that access to facilities continues to be provided for the general public, so that Hodson Bay continues to function as a valuable amenity resource for Roscommon.”

Policy Objective HB 3:

Encourage developments which are quality driven and of high architectural merit, which will enhance their surroundings and respect this visually and environmentally sensitive area.

Policy Objective HB 4:

Facilitate low intensity tourism and amenity development only (for example, camping or glamping facilities, walking / cycling routes) in currently undeveloped areas within the Leisure Tourism / Amenity zone which is in proximity to Natura 2000 designated sites. Proposals should utilise existing servicing infrastructure.

Policy Objective HB 5:

Support the provision of low intensity green infrastructure which will be accessible by all users.

Policy Objective HB 6:

Require all new permanent facilities to be designed to high architectural standards, and to visually complement the area.

The area is additionally noted for being of a high landscape and environmental sensitivity due to its location on the shore of Lough Ree, an SPA, SAC and pNHA. Greenbelt lands are therefore set out in the Hodson Bay / Barrymore Area Plan and the development of these lands are guided by the following policy objectives:

“Policy Objective HB 7:

Protect the existing Natura 2000 sites and pNHAs and any sites which become designated and notified to Roscommon County Council during the lifetime of this Plan.

Policy Objective HB 8:

Maintain greenbelt lands as a visual and environmental buffer to preserve the natural amenity of the area such as alongside waterways, rivers and floodplains.

Policy Objective HB 9:

Protect greenbelt lands from inappropriate developments which would give rise to an adverse impact upon the receiving environment and/or undermine the biodiversity/ landscape or amenity value of the area.

Policy Objective HB 10:

Ensure the protection of lands liable to flooding from development which would give rise to adverse impacts upon the receiving environment."

The Hodson Bay / Barrymore Area Plan identifies lands as either under 'Leisure, Tourism and Amenity' or 'Green Belt' land use zonings, as shown in Figure 2-6. These land use zonings are not accompanied by specific Land Use Zoning Objectives or a Land Use Zoning matrix setting out permissible uses. Therefore, the development of the 'Leisure, Tourism and Amenity' land use zoning is guided by Policy Objectives HB 1-6, and the development of the 'Green Belt' land use zoning is largely set out by Policy Objectives HB 7-10 as set out above.

The land use zoning of the site of the Proposed Development is shown in Figure 2-6. It noted that the areas of the site where all the development works, except some of the works to the L2020 Local Road corridor are located within the 'Greenbelt' and 'Leisure Tourism / Amenity' land use zonings.

The more intensive works associated with the Proposed Development including the development of a Water Sports Pavilion and active travel facilities along the L2020 and part of the proposed public realm enhancements and car park amendments are concentrated in the 'Leisure Tourism / Amenity'. Meanwhile the less intensive works including the remaining public realm works and amendments to car parking are taking place in the 'Greenbelt' zone. The location of these developments is in line with the policies guiding the development of Hodson Bay set out in Volume 2 of the RCDP.

The Proposed Development will further develop Hodson Bay as a tourism destination in County Roscommon through the enhancement of tourism facilities. The Proposed Development has been designed in consideration of the policy objectives for the protection of the role of the greenbelt in Hodson Bay and protect the areas subject to environmental protections. The new facilities to be provided are to be developed to high architectural standards in line with national and local building design standards.

2.4.4.3 Roscommon County Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029

The Roscommon County Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029 (LECP) sets out objectives and actions to promote and support the economic development of the County. This Plan has been developed with input from community members and stakeholders within the county and provides a framework that aims to make County Roscommon “a location of choice to live, visit, learn, work, and play”.

The LECP notes that the County’s employment landscape is changing with an increase in employment in certain sectors including tourism. The County also faces several challenges including the transition away from traditional extractive industries which have supported the local economy and employment. This Plan is guided by six high-level goals which inform sustainable community and economic development objectives and actions. The six goals are:

- Goal 1: A welcoming, supportive County that celebrates its communities and unique sense of place.
- Goal 2: A county that attracts, retains and promotes ongoing employment and economic growth.
- Goal 3: A vibrant County that values its culture, arts and heritage.
- Goal 4: A collaborative County where people are encouraged to work together towards common aims.
- Goal 5: A county where people’s health and wellbeing are supported.
- Goal 6: An environmentally-conscious and resilient County that prioritises sustainability.

The LECP notes that there is a variety of tourism attractions existing within County Roscommon and outlines a regional tourism policy that support the creation of key visitor experiences and unique tourism offerings. Goal 3 sets out the following objective in relation to the development of tourism in County Roscommon:

“SEDO 3.4 Develop and support tourism initiatives, assets and secondary supporting industries”.

The Proposed Development which seeks to enhance the existing tourism facilities at Hodson Bay and develop new facilities in line with the provisions of the County Roscommon Tourism Strategy 2025-2030 will contribute to the realisation of the following action:

“Action 3.4.4:

Facilitate the development and implementation of Roscommon’s Tourism Strategy”

The Proposed Development will support the growth of employment in the tourism sector at Hodson Bay in line with Goal 2 of the LECP. This provides for a diversification of the local economy and supports the transition away from extractive industries in the County. The provision of enhanced facilities will also support the creation of a distinct sense of place in Roscommon benefitting both the local community and tourists in line with Goal 1 of the LECP. Overall, the Proposed Development will support the economic and community development of County Roscommon.

2.4.4.4 The Roscommon Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2028

The Roscommon Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2028, hereafter referred to as the Outdoor Recreation Strategy, provides a framework to seize the opportunities presented by County Roscommon’s existing natural amenities and enhance outdoor recreation facilities. This will provide easier access to outdoor recreational amenities for local residents and tourists.

The variety of landscapes present within the County including rivers, loughs, canals, forests, woodlands and bogs are noted along with the county’s rich heritage and archaeology. The following outdoor recreation activities were identified as taking place within the county:

- > Walking
- > Hill walking
- > Leisure cycling
- > Trail running
- > Orienteering
- > Horse riding
- > Paddle sports
- > Angling
- > Sailing
- > Wind surfing
- > Open water swimming
- > Rowing

Hodson Bay is identified as the county's second most popular outdoor recreation site, after Lough Key Forest Park in the north of the county. It is noted in the Outdoor Recreation Strategy that Hodson Bay welcomed 91,000 visitors in 2021.

The Outdoor Recreation Strategy outlines the difficulty for County Roscommon in attracting visitors who pass through the county when travelling to more established tourism attractions on the west coast. Gaps in access to outdoor recreational activities have been identified, with particular note given to the limited access to the River Shannon.

The Outdoor Recreation Strategy sets out several priorities which include planning development of high quality, accessible and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities across the county to develop recreational facilities in a hierarchical manner and ensure an appropriate geographic spread. Hodson Bay has been identified as a signature destination. This is the second highest tier in the hierarchy of the Product Development Framework.

The Proposed Development will promote participation in outdoor recreation at Hodson Bay, through the enhancement of existing facilities and development of new facilities. This will provide access to a variety of land and water-based sports and enhance access to Lough Ree, promoting tourism activities and a view to attracting increased visitor footfall.

2.4.4.5 County Roscommon Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

The County Roscommon Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, hereafter referred to as the LACAP, has been prepared under the Climate Action and Low-carbon development (Amendment) Act 2021. This document considers international and national climate policy and sets out local based actions which enable the County to adapt to climate change and reduce local emissions. A Framework of Climate Actions are set out under the following five themes:

- > Governance and leadership
- > Built Environment and Transport
- > Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure
- > Communities; Resilience and Transition
- > Sustainable resource management

The Proposed Development will align with the following Strategic Objectives:

Built Environment and Transport Objectives:

“BET (vi): Focus ancillary tourism facilities in established destinations to promote sustainable travel choices, rationalise investment in services and utilities, consolidate destination benefits and protect amenity assets in accordance with appropriate guidance including the National Investment framework for Transport”

Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure Objectives:

“NEGI (ii): Engage with local stakeholders to progress projects under the regenerative tourism element of the JTF

NEGI (vi): Maintain, augment and enhance green infrastructural resources to provide ecosystem services and amenity benefits.”

Community Resilience and Transition Objectives:

“CRT (iii): Align with the Just Transition process to ensure that those communities most affected by the transition to a low carbon society have access to enhanced social, economic and environmental opportunities.”

Sustainable Resource Management Objectives:

“SRM (v) Ensure that existing, planned and proposed infrastructure is protected from the future potential effects of Climate Change.”

The Proposed Development will support the just transition of the Midlands communities in the vicinity of Hodson Bay by providing for enhanced employment and economic opportunities in the tourism sector. The enhancement of water sports facilities aims to draw more tourist thus providing more employment opportunities within these facilities. The design of the Proposed Development has aimed to reduce negative environmental impacts on the surrounding environment. The proposed water sports facility is of a design standard, providing a function space that also integrates into the surrounding natural environment. The public realm development provides for improvements to green infrastructure, which has been developed in line with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009).

2.4.4.6 County Roscommon Tourism Strategy 2025-2030

The Roscommon Tourism Strategy 2025-2030, hereafter referred to as the Tourism Strategy, sets out an overall objective *“to develop and promote County Roscommon as a year round immersive tourist destination that offers high quality visitor experiences”*. The Tourism Strategy notes that Fáilte Ireland reported that in 2023 202,179 visitors visited the county’s 12 paid tourist attractions. It is noted that a ‘Visit Roscommon’ brand has been established and this will expand to include the creation of a new ‘Visit Roscommon’ website. The Tourism Strategy adopts a sustainable tourism approach to ensure the long-term viability of the tourism sector which benefits local communities and conserves natural and cultural resources.

The Tourism Strategy sets out five Key Strategic Pillars to grow the county’s tourism sector:

- Strategic Pillar 1: Destination Management
- Strategic Pillar 2: Visitor Experience Development
- Strategic Pillar 3: Marketing and Communications
- Strategic Pillar 4: Industry Support and Collaboration
- Strategic Pillar 5: Accessible Outdoor Recreation

As the Proposed Development primarily consists of the enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities at Hodson Bay, the following actions set out under Strategic Pillar 5 are relevant to the Proposed Development:

Action 1: Develop and Promote Signature Trails and Greenways Enhance existing walking, cycling, and greenway trails, promote signature routes, and support TII-led greenway development to attract active tourism.

Action 2: Expand Water-Based Tourism Experiences Develop a dedicated water trail, support water-based activities on the River Shannon and River Suck, and implement the Lough Key and Hodson Bay Waterfront Park masterplans.

Action 3: Improve Trail and Outdoor Accessibility Upgrade trail infrastructure to ensure accessibility for all, and support the introduction of bike rental services at key locations.

Action 4: Enhance Wildlife and Nature-Based Tourism Promote wildlife watching and nature experiences in key natural areas to appeal to eco-conscious visitors.

Action 5: Invest in Recreational Infrastructure Develop public amenities like rest areas, changing rooms, picnic spots, and shelters at popular outdoor and waterside locations.

Action 6: Support the River Shannon Discovery Points Initiative Roll out and promote Discovery Points along the Shannon to strengthen its role as a central tourism asset.

The 'Hodson Bay Waterfront Park Just Transition Fund Project' is outlined as a Strategic Vision Project under Strategic Pillar 5. The following main elements of the project are set out:

- Water Sports Pavilion
- Marina Enhancement
- Sun Deck and Lagoon
- Marina Square and Gardens
- Events Space
- Enabling Public Realm

This application represents a realisation of the 'Hodson Bay Waterfront Park Just Transition Fund Project' as outlined as a Strategic Vision Project in the Tourism Strategy. This will deliver the modernisation and enhancement of existing facilities at Hodson Bay to increase the attractiveness of the location to tourists and act as a gateway to other tourist attractions in County Roscommon.

2.4.4.7 Roscommon Heritage Strategy 2025-2029

The Roscommon Heritage Strategy 2025-2029 sets out a high-level vision for the management and protection of heritage in County Roscommon. The Strategy utilises the Heritage Act 1995 definition for heritage as outlined in the following extract from the Strategy:

"The Heritage Act, 1995 defines heritage as including monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, inland waterways and heritage gardens and parks."

This vision informs local actions which protect and promote the preservation of heritage in County Roscommon. The Strategy vision is set out:

"Conserve our past and inspire our future, protect and celebrate the built, natural, cultural and intangible heritage of County Roscommon."

This vision is broken down into the following strategic objectives:

1. Champion Best Practices
2. Foster Collaborative Partnerships
3. Promote the Value of Heritage
4. Integrate Climate Change and Biodiversity
5. Support Research

The Proposed Development has been designed with consideration of the local heritage assets of Hodson Bay including known built, cultural and natural heritage. The Proposed Development will enhance access to heritage, in particular to the lakeshore landscape at Hodson Bay through the development of walking trails along the lakeshore. The proposed Water Sports Pavilion has been designed to integrate into the surrounding landscape, protecting the landscape heritage of this site.

2.4.4.8 Summary of Compliance with Local Planning Policy Framework

Table 2-5 Summary of Compliance with Local Planning Policy Framework

Compliance with Local Planning Policy Framework
The Proposed Development addresses several local policies, frameworks and strategies by supporting the sustainable development of tourism, recreation and environmental protection within County Roscommon. The development aligns with the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 by contributing to economic growth, tourism development and community amenity (Strategic Aims 11-14; ED 6.22, ED 6.25) while promoting sustainable mobility and recreational connectivity (ITC 7.25-7.30). It also incorporates environmental safeguards in accordance with policies relating to flood risk management, biodiversity protection and water resource management (ITC 7.51-7.53; NH objectives). The Proposed Development additionally supports the generation of employment supporting the local economy and the creation of a sense of place for the local community in line with the LECP. The proposal is strongly supported by the Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan, which promotes the expansion of tourism and amenity uses in the area, and the Roscommon Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2028, which identifies Hodson Bay as as the county's second most popular outdoor recreation site. The development further aligns with the Roscommon Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 by promoting tourism development in an established location and supporting green infrastructure, and with the County Roscommon Tourism Strategy 2025-2030, which promotes water-based tourism, improved recreational infrastructure and enhanced visitor experiences. Overall, the development represents a policy-compliant intervention that strengthens Hodson Bay as a key tourism and recreation asset while supporting environmental sustainability and community benefit.

2.5 Scoping and Consultations

2.5.1 Scoping Document

Scoping is the process of determining the content, depth, and extent of topics to be covered in the environmental information to be submitted to a competent authority for projects that are subject to an EIA. This process is conducted by contacting the relevant authorities and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) with interest in the specific aspects of the environment likely to be affected by the proposal. These organisations are invited to submit comments on the scope of the EIA and EIAR and the specific standards of information they require. Consultees are invited to contribute to the EIA process by suggesting baseline data, survey techniques and potential impacts that should be considered as part of the EIA process and in its preparation. Comprehensive and timely scoping helps ensure that the EIAR refers to all relevant aspects of the Proposed Development and its potential effects on the environment. In this way, scoping not only informs the content and scope of the EIAR, but provides a feedback mechanism for the proposed design itself.

A scoping letter providing details of the EIAR Study Area and the Proposed Development, was prepared by MKO and circulated on 27th June 2025 in relation to this EIAR. Where responses were not received by consultees, a follow-up letter was issued on 22nd April 2026. These letters were sent to the agencies, NGOs and other relevant parties listed in Table 2-6.

MKO requested the comments of the relevant personnel/bodies in their respective capacities as consultees with regards to the EIA process.

2.5.2 Scoping Responses

Table 2-6 lists the responses received to the scoping document circulated on 27th June 2025, as well as additional responses received from the HSE and Garrett O'Neill. Copies of all scoping responses received are included in Appendix 2-2 of this EIAR. The recommendations of the consultees have

informed the EIA process and the contents of the EIAR. Please refer to Table 2-6 below for the summarised list of consultees and responses received.

Table 2-6 EIAR Consultees and Responses

No.	Consultee	Response
1	An Taisce	No Response
2	Bat Conservation Ireland	No Response
3	Bird Watch Ireland	No Response
4	Commission for Regulation of Utilities, Water and Energy	No Response
5	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	No Response
6	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	No Response
7	Department of Transport	No Response
8	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media	No Response
9	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Development Applications Unit (DAU)	The DAU reiterated that the EIAR Scoping document noted two known monuments in the vicinity of Proposed Development: the causeway of Barrymore townland (RO049-0050002), and an enclosure (RO049-010). They outlined the cultural heritage documented in Lough Ree. The following assessments are advised: Desk based assessment, Field survey including non-intrusive geophysical survey where works proposed, Archaeological test excavation, Underwater Archaeological Impact Assessment (UAIA), assessment of impacts on the setting of archaeological and built heritage monuments, structures and the historic landscape, Identification of opportunities to enhance the setting and interpretation of heritage. It was also advised that all intrusive advance investigations carried out as part of the EIA or design process should be subject to advance archaeological screening and a programme of archaeological monitoring by a suitably qualified Archaeologist. Site Specific considerations were provided with regards to nature conservation, in particular regarding European and National nature conservation sites. General ecological requirements were set out for Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.
10	Department of Rural and Community Development	No Response
11	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (NMS)	No Response

No.	Consultee	Response
12	EirGrid	No Response
13	Gas Networks Ireland	GNI has no recorded Gas Network in project area of interest.
14	Geological Survey of Ireland	No Response
15	Health Service Executive	No Response
16	Irish Rail	No Response
17	Inland Fisheries Ireland	No Response
18	Uisce Éireann	The response outlined that Uisce Éireann (UÉ) operate numerous downstream abstractions points that serves much of the country, and as such these proposals cannot give rise to any deterioration of Lough Ree or River Shannon water sources. Uisce Éireann operates several assets within and around the project area of this proposal. A 150mm UPVC (Unplasticized Polyvinyl Chloride) watermain runs parallel to the L2020 road, which feeds a number of subsidiary pipes throughout the redevelopment area and there is a wastewater pump station serving the area is in operation north of Cushlea Estate.
19	Irish Wildlife Trust	No Response
20	Office of Public Works	No Response
21	Sport Ireland	No Response
22	Transport Infrastructure Ireland	No Response
23	The Heritage Council	The response sets out recommendations to provide general guidance for the preparation of an EIAR which may affect the national road network.
24	An Comhairle Ealaíon (The Arts Council)	No Response
25	National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)	See response from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DAU) above.
26	Local Authorities Waters Programme (LAWPRO)	No Response
27	Breeding Waders EIP Project	No Response
28	Road Safety Authority	No Response
29	Friends of the Earth	No Response
30	Westmeath County Council - Environment	No Response

No.	Consultee	Response
31	Westmeath County Council - Heritage	Acknowledgement of receipt
32	Westmeath County Council - Roads	No comments or observations at this time - be aware of Phase 3 N55 Ballykeeran Bypass approx. 7 km from Proposed Development.
33	Longford County Council - Environment	No Response
34	Longford County Council - Heritage	No Response
35	Longford County Council - Roads	No Response
36	Health Service Executive	General guidance on the preparation of an EIAR was received.
37	Garrett O'Neill	The response sets out an objection to the Proposed Development addressing the four elements of the project: marina extension, water sports facility, car park and road improvements.

2.5.3 Community Engagement

Two public consultation events were held to provide the local community and relevant stakeholders an opportunity to engage with the design of the Proposed Development.

The first in-person public consultation event took place on the 23rd of October 2025 at the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone. This provided the public with an opportunity to engage with members of the project team who were also in attendance. A Community Survey was also launched on the 23rd of October 2025 to provide an opportunity for people to engage with the process and express their views on the Proposed Development. The community survey was open for feedback for a period of 3 weeks between 23rd October and 14th of November 2025.

Following the first public consultation event, the project team reviewed the responses to the community survey, with the feedback influencing the emerging preferred design for the project. A second in-person public consultation event was held on the 22nd of April 2026 at the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone. As with the first public consultation, the event was attended by representatives from the project team. A second Community Survey was also launched on the 22nd of April 2026 to provide an opportunity for people to further engage with the process and provide feedback on the emerging design. This community survey was open for feedback for a period of 2 weeks between the 22nd of April and the 6th of May.

A number of methods were utilised to inform the local community of these public consultation events. Advertisements were placed in newspapers and flyers were distributed to local residents, businesses and schools prior to each event. An electronic copy of the flyer was additionally emailed to relevant local businesses, local schools and relevant community groups and organisations. RCC also published press releases, prior to the day of, on the day of and after the event, to encourage public participation and feedback in addition to providing updates about the process and progress of the public consultation event.

Feedback received during the consultations related to:

- Impact on ecology and the environment
- Impact on the Athlone Golf Club
- The provision of facilities for swimmers
- Active travel facilities
- Parking facilities
- Design of the Water Sports Pavilion
- The provision of infrastructure for fishing

➤ Construction phasing plan

Public Consultation Reports prepared following the first and second public consultation outlining the full details of the consultation, its format and the responses received from the community on the Proposed Development can be found in Appendix 2-3 and Appendix 2-4 of the EIAR respectively.

2.6 Cumulative Impact Assessment

The EIA Directive and associated guidance documents state that as well as considering any direct, indirect, secondary, transboundary, short-, medium-, and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the project (all of which are considered in the various chapters of this EIAR), the description of likely significant effects should include an assessment of cumulative impacts that may arise. This description should take into account the environmental protection objectives established at Union or Member State level which are relevant to the project. The factors to be considered in relation to cumulative effects include population and human health, biodiversity, land, soil, water, air, climate, material assets, landscape, and cultural heritage as well as the interactions between these factors.

To gather a comprehensive view of cumulative impacts on these environmental considerations and to inform the EIA process being undertaken by the consenting authority, each relevant chapter within this EIAR includes a cumulative impact assessment where appropriate.

The potential for cumulative impacts arising from other projects has therefore been fully considered within this EIAR.

2.6.1 Methodology for the Cumulative Assessment

To gather a comprehensive view of cumulative impacts on these above environmental considerations and to inform the EIA process being undertaken by the consenting authority, each relevant chapter within the EIAR addresses the potential for cumulative effects where appropriate.

The potential cumulative impact of the Proposed Development and other relevant developments has been carried out with the purpose of identifying what influence the Proposed Development will have on the surrounding environment when considered cumulatively and in combination with relevant approved, existing, and planned projects in the vicinity of the site.

The cumulative impact assessment of projects has three principle aims:

- To establish the range and nature of existing and approved projects within the Cumulative Impact Study Area of the Proposed Development.
- To summarise the relevant projects which have a potential to create cumulative impacts.
- To establish anticipated cumulative impact findings from expert opinions within each relevant field. Detailed cumulative impact assessments are included in each relevant chapter of the EIAR.
- To identify the projects that hold the potential for cumulative interaction within the context of the Proposed Development and discard projects that will neither directly nor indirectly contribute to cumulative impacts.

Assessment material for this Cumulative Impact Assessment was compiled in relation to the relevant developments within the various zones of sensitivity of and to the Proposed Development from which there may be potential for cumulative impacts to arise. The material was gathered through a search of relevant online Planning Registers, reviews of relevant EIAR (or historical EIS) documents, planning application details and planning drawings, and served to identify past and future projects, their activities and their environmental impacts.

2.6.2 Cumulative Study Area

The geographical boundaries of the various zones of sensitivity of and to the Proposed Development from which there may be potential for cumulative impacts to arise relative to each individual EIAR topic,

i.e. each chapter, is presented below in Table 2-7. Following consultation with the EIAR team on each individual topic, the maximum geographical extent and justification for this extent was established and is presented overleaf.

Table 2-7 Cumulative Assessment Study Areas

Topic	Maximum Extent	Justification
Land, Soils and Geology	Within the Site Boundary	For Land, Soils and Geology, the Cumulative Study Area is within the EIAR site boundary as only direct effects are expected.
Water	Developments within the Shannon[Upper]_SC_090 WFD Sub Catchment	Developments within the Shannon[Upper]_SC_090 WFD Sub Catchment
Noise	500 km	Noise emissions during the construction phase are likely to be of greater potential significance than emissions from the operational development. Construction plant may be of audible significance out to 500m.
Cultural Heritage	1 km	Rubicon recommend a 1 km buffer from the red line boundary based on this being the same as the Study Area as well as wide enough to pick up any large-scale project that could have a cumulative effect
Ecology	Various - See Justification	Please see cumulative assessment boundaries for Hodson Bay: ➤ 1 km around the red line boundary for terrestrial ecology. ➤ The cumulative boundary for aquatic receptors and hydrological effects reflect that outlined in the water chapter. ➤ The cumulative assessment boundary for ornithological receptors includes all of Lough Ree SPA, including a 500m buffer of Lough Ree shoreline.
Landscape	1.8 km	The LVIA Study Area will be 1.8km surrounding the red line boundary —this is to ensure that Yew Point and all its trail amenities are included, see initial map linked below. This will also be the cumulative search boundary for LVIA.
Air (dust)	250m	In line with the Air Quality Management in the UK (IAQM) guidance document ‘Guidance on the Assessment of Dust from Demolition and Construction’ (2024), a distance of 250m is used for dust soiling and PM10 emissions from construction activities, earthworks and trackout to assess impacts on humans and sensitive ecological receptors.

Climate	The Climate assessment has been considered on a national basis and not confined to a specific Study Area.	The Climate assessment has considered the cumulative effects of the Proposed Developments with other developments on a national basis and within the context of the national Carbon Budget and relevant sectoral emissions ceiling.
Material Assets	Traffic: Length of the L2020 Local Road from its junction with the N61 National Road through to the end of the L2020 Local Road at Yew Point Other Material Assets- Utilities, Telecoms, Waste Management	CIVIC Engineers have advised that any developments to be accessed along the entirety of the L2020 Local Road from its junction with the N61 National Road through to the end of the L2020 Local Road at Yew Point should be considered for the cumulative assessment. Development footprint for direct and indirect effects on existing infrastructure during construction and operation. A study area of 30km has been considered for waste management.

2.6.3 Projects Considered in the Cumulative Assessment

The projects considered in relation to the potential for cumulative impacts arising from the construction, and operation of the Proposed Development and for which all relevant data was reviewed within the Cumulative Study Area are set out in Appendix 2-5 of this EIAR.

The list of projects considered have been categorised into three groups;

- Large-scale projects, plans, and schemes within the Cumulative Study Area;
- Projects identified in a detailed planning history search of all applications within set boundaries specified in Section 2.5 over the last 5 years (2020-2025);
- Projects, plans, applications and schemes relevant to each individual topic within their maximum extent buffer.

This EIAR therefore considers the full range of projects that could potentially have a cumulative effect with the current Proposed Development within the identified Cumulative Study Area. As detailed in Section 2.5 above, the planning register has been reviewed and all relevant general development planning applications/permissions and projects in the vicinity of the Proposed Development have been noted and considered, as well as other existing projects. A search was also undertaken of the Environmental Protection Agency's licensing facilities to examine if there were any facilities located within the set study areas. An additional search was undertaken to examine An Coimisiún Pleanála's mapped planning applications for comprehensive examination of existing and permitted developments.

The Cumulative Impact Assessments carried out in each of the subsequent chapters of this EIAR consider all potential significant cumulative effects arising from relevant projects and land uses within the Cumulative Study Area and within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

Overall, the Proposed Development has been designed to mitigate impacts on the environment, and a suite of mitigation measures is set out within the EIAR. The mitigation measures set out in this EIAR have been developed to ensure that significant cumulative effects do not arise during the construction or operation of the Proposed Development. Additional detail in relation to the potential significant cumulative effects arising and, where appropriate, the specific suite of relevant mitigation measures proposed are set out within each of the relevant chapters of this EIAR.

2.7

Summary

The Proposed Development at Hodson Bay aligns with European, national, regional and local planning policies. RCC and Waterways Ireland have received funding from Fáilte Ireland under the EU JTF, to take the project to the Design & Environmental Evaluation and Statutory Consent Stages. The Proposed Development complies with the NPF, RSES and the relevant Regional Tourism Policies which promote the enhancement of tourism facilities to promote sustainable tourism and to capitalise on the employment opportunities in the tourism sector in the Midlands Region. The development would be of a high-quality design in line with national policies and plans.

The Proposed Development is in line with the RCDP which promotes the development of enhanced tourism facilities at Hodson Bay, to attract further visitors to this location. The design has considered opportunities for the development of enhanced active travel facilities for use by tourists and locals alike and the design of the project has carefully considered potential impacts on the surrounding environment with mitigation measures set out in this EIAR in response.