CLONASLEE FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

Environmental Impact Assessment Report
Chapter 2: Planning & Policy

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ACRONYM

Term	Meaning
AFA	Areas for Further Assessment
BMEP	Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CFRAM	Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme
DoEHLG	Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government
EU	European Union
FRM	Flood Risk Management
FRS	Flood Relief Scheme
HEFS	High-End Future Scenario
ICW	Integrated Constructed Wetlands
LCC	Louth County Council
NDP	National Development Plan
NSO	National Strategic Objective
NTIG	National Technical Implementation Group
OPW	Office Public Works
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
WFD	Water Framework Directive

2 PLANNING & POLICY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the planning and policy objectives that support the Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme (FRS), hereafter the Proposed Scheme, in the context of international, European and national flooding policy and within regional and local planning policy.

This chapter also provides information on how the Proposed Scheme aligns with and/or contributes to fulfilling the identified policies, objectives, development standards, and guidance.

A detailed project description is provided in **Chapter 5: Project Description** of this EIAR.

2.2 Planning Policy

2.2.1 International Level

The United Nations (UN) published *17 UN Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) in 2015; see Figure 2-1. These SDGs provide a shared blueprint to help ensure sustainability is integrated into policymaking on a national and international scale. The SDGs were formed in recognition that:

> *'(…) ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests'* (United Nations, 2015).

Figure 2-1: UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Proposed Scheme has been assessed using a multi-criteria analysis (MCA) based on the current Office of Public Works (OPW) guidance (OPW, 2018). Four criteria were considered: technical, social, economic and environmental. Table 2-1 presents the relationship between these assessment criteria and the UN's SDGs.

Table 2-1: Clonaslee FRS Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals

Clonaslee FRS Sustainability Goals	Relation to UN Sustainable Development Goals
Technical	
Design a Flood Relief Scheme that utilises local materials to minimise the amount of imported material required. Construction materials will be sought from local quarries within 20km of the Proposed Scheme. Where possible, excavated subsoils will be used to reinstate the top layer of soil on the embankment in Area 3 (Tullamore Rd/ICW). Where possible, removed topsoil from Area 1 (Brittas Wood) will be used as the top layer of soil on the proposed embankment in Area 1.	12. Responsible consumption and production
Prioritise sustainable design from inception through to construction as well as whole-life sustainability and maintenance. Structures are designed to achieve a 100-year design life with minimal requirements for future maintenance.	9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure 11. Sustainable cities and communities 12. Responsible consumption and production 13. Climate action
Low-carbon construction materials such as low-carbon cement alternatives will be used where possible.	9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure 11. Sustainable cities and communities 12. Responsible consumption and production 13. Climate action 14. Life below water 15. Life on land
Social	
Provision of flood relief defences to protect 72 houses, 2 commercial properties. Provision of flood relief defences (debris trap and raised embankment) in Area 1 (Brittas Wood) to prevent the accumulation of debris downstream at Clonaslee Bridge within the centre of the village which can lead to flooding. A secondary benefit of the raised embankment is the prevention of flooding along the existing amenity route within Brittas Wood through the provision of a new pathway along the top of the embankment. Brittas Wood forms part of the Slieve Bloom Mountain Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for bird species and habitats. Flood relief defences in this area protects these qualifying interests in this ecological sensitive area for posterity. The provision a debris trap may also improve visual amenity in this area as this part of the river has been known to collect tree debris and cause blockages to river flow. Construction of a footpath along Chapel St to facilitate pedestrians on the riverside of Chapel St where currently no provision exists.	3. Good health and well-being 10. Reduced inequalities 11. Sustainable cities and communities 13. Climate action 14. Life below water 15. Life on land
Specific timeframes for construction works to minimise potential for impacts on traffic and reduce noise emissions	
Economic	
Reducing flood risk strengthens social and economic cohesion by improving development opportunities along the River Clodiagh.	8. Decent work and economic growth 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure

Clonaslee FRS Sustainability Goals	Relation to UN Sustainable Development Goals
Design also supports the Laois County Council (LCC) role for Clonaslee in performing local residential, retailing, social and leisure functions, having an attractive streetscape, and a strong visual character in a rural environment. Flood relief measures within Brittas Wood (SPA) amenity area will facilitate continuous public use of this walking loop and allow for future expansion/greenway connectivity options in the future, should the opportunity arise. Flood relief measures along Chapel St, the main thoroughfare connecting the village to Tullamore and the only public access route to St Manamans Church, GAA club and Scoil Bhride and a public house facility. Flood relief measures in Area 3 will prevent the exacerbation of potential flooding at the ICW water treatment plant.	16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
Environmental	
Consideration of fish passage and spawning periods in the proposed construction programme by minimising instream works and restricting works during spawning season. Restricting construction during breeding bird season. Provision of flood relief protection to local biodiversity within a Special Protection Area. Inclusion of a Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan to boost local biodiversity. Inclusion of dust and noise suppression measures to minimise potential impacts on biodiversity and human health.	3. Good health and well-being 14. Life below water
Set-back of flood defences to minimise impact on instream habitat Reduce tree removal wherever possible. Provision of a Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan to boost local biodiversity. Specific timeframes for instream works and construction works to minimise potential for impacts on aquatic life, breeding birds, bats.	3. Good health and well-being 13. Climate action 14. Life below water 15. Life on land

2.2.2 European Policy

2.2.2.1 EU Directive 2007/60/EC on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks

Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks (2007/60/EC) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 (hereafter, the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC) was transposed into Irish law by the EU (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations SI 122 of 2010.

The aim of the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC is the "*reduction of the adverse consequences for human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity associated with floods in the Community*." This has been a key objective in the design of the Proposed Scheme, and the effects of the Proposed Scheme on these sensitivities are set out in this EIAR.

The EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC requires Member States to assess the potential flood risk of all watercourses and coastlines, map the flood extent, and determine the risks to human health and properties. The EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC also requires that measures are implemented to protect those areas identified at risk.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is the national authority for the implementation of the Directive through the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. The CFRAM Programme focussed on 300 communities at potentially significant flood risk, referred to as Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs). These were identified through a national screening exercise and included in the order of 80% of properties at risk in Ireland from rivers and seas. The Clodiagh River was identified as an Area for Further Assessment (AFA).

The design, environmental impact assessment and planning application of the Proposed Scheme is a direct response to the requirements of the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC.

2.2.2.2 EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC

The implementation of the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC is being co-ordinated with the *Directive 2000/60/EC Water Framework of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000* (hereafter, the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC)and the current River Basin Management Plans by the OPW.

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) establishes a legislative framework for the protection of all watercourses and waterbodies including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters, and groundwater, and their dependent wildlife and habitats. The objectives of the WFD are to:

- protect/enhance all waters (surface, ground and coastal waters),
- achieve ‘good status’ for all waters by December 2015,
- manage water bodies based on river basins (or catchments),
- involve the public, and
- streamline legislation.

With regard to the above, the Proposed Scheme, along with its design, has been developed and prepared in line with the objectives set out in the is consistent with the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC in the following ways:

- Measures to protect the Clodiagh River have been incorporated into the design of the Proposed Scheme. See **Chapter 5: Project Description**, **Chapter 9: Biodiversity**, **Chapter 10: Land, Soils and Hydrogeology, Chapter 11: Water**, **Chapter 20: Schedule of Environmental Commitments**, as well as the supporting **Construction and Environment Management Plan (CEMP)** and **Appendix 11-1 Water Framework Directive.** The Proposed Scheme also includes a **Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BMEP);** see **Appendix 9-6** of this EIAR.
- By conforming to the requirements of the CFRAM Programme, the Proposed Scheme aligns with the aim of managing water bodies based on river basins.
- The Clodiagh River has a WFD status of ‘Good’ Status and is ‘Not at Risk’ (2016-2021 Third WFD Cycle). The Proposed Scheme will not negatively impact this status. See **Appendix 11-1 WFD Compliance Report** of this EIAR for further details.
- A total of 3 no. Public Information Events were held in relation to the Proposed Scheme:
  - Public Consultation Event 1: Due to COVID-19 restrictions, an online consultation website was established and available to access from February 8th to March 26th, 2021. The website introduced the Proposed Scheme and the need for the development and allowed for public feedback.
  - Public Consultation Event 2: A second consultation event was held on November 2022 from 2pm-7pm in the Clonaslee Heritage Centre, Clonaslee, County Laois. The purpose of this event was to introduce the emerging preferred option for the project and gather feedback. A focus was centred on showcasing the predicted flood extent model and highlighting points of local importance that may constrain the design or viability of the emerging preferred option.
  - Public Consultation Event 3: The third public consultation evening was held on the 12th of December 2023 from 2 pm-7 pm in the Clonaslee Heritage Centre, Clonaslee, County Laois. The purpose of this event was focused on presenting the preliminary design of the

Preferred Option for the Scheme developed by RPS and inviting any feedback or queries from the public. A focus was centred on showcasing the preliminary design of the proposed flood defences, highlighting points of local importance that constrain the design and/or viability of potential flood relief measures and highlighting items for consideration in preparing the Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed works.

In addition to the above, details on the Proposed Scheme are publicly available at the Laois County Council website[1] which includes details on the Proposed Scheme, programme information, a brochure and a questionnaire. See **Chapter 3: Consultation** for details.

2.2.2.3 EU Strategy on Adaption to Climate Change 2021

This *EU Strategy on Adaption to Climate Change 2021* (hereafter, the EU Climate Adaptation Strategy) is an integral part of the European Green Deal, which seeks to address the impacts of climate change and the need to become climate resilient by 2050 by way of smarter, swifter and more systematic adaptation. Flooding is identified as a climate-related risk, and the need for flood protection is recognised. The Strategy has four principal objectives: to make adaptation smarter, swifter and more systemic, and to step up international action on adaptation to climate change.

The Proposed Scheme directly addresses and protects from the effects of flooding, a climate-related risk. As detailed in **Chapter 5: Project Description**, the Proposed Scheme's design mitigates against the current predicted flooding with allowances for adaption to future climate change. As such, both Mid-Range Future Scenario (MRFS) and High-End Future Scenario (HEFS) for climate change were modelled for the three distinct Scheme Areas (Brittas Wood, Chapel St and Tullamore Rd/Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICW). The current design allows for a HEFS.

2.2.3 National Policy

2.2.3.1 National Planning Framework First Revision (2025)

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the *National Planning Framework 2040* (hereafter, the NPF) was published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) in 2018.

A first review of the NPF has been conducted, and the first revision (hereafter, the NPF First Revision) was published in April 2025.

The NPF sets out a framework of policy objectives to help Ireland achieve its long-term sustainable goals. The NPF focuses on integrating Ireland's economic development, spatial planning, infrastructure planning and social considerations. It promotes environmentally focused planning at the local level to tackle climate change and the implementation of appropriate measures to mitigate existing issues.

The NPF aims to align itself with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by ensuring that the decision-making process safeguards the needs of future generations. These objectives are integrated as part of the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in areas such as climate action and planning, sustainable cities, and innovation and infrastructure.

As per the previous NPF, the NPF First Revision notes the need to respond to climate change and its impacts *"(…) such as sea level change, more frequent and sustained rainfall events and greater vulnerability of low-lying areas to flooding."* Flooding is recognised as a cross-sectoral issue that can affect all aspects of life.

The NPF First Revision has the same general policy approach to flooding issues as the previous NPF. We note that some of the National Policy Objectives (NPOs) have been updated and amended with a number of new NPOs added. The NPF First Revision includes NPO 77 and NPO 78 which are relevant to flood risk mitigation and state:

- NPO 77: "*Enhance water quality and resource management by: - Ensuring that River Basin Management Plan objectives are fully considered throughout the physical planning process. -*

[1] https://consult.laois.ie/en/consultation/clonaslee-flood-relief-scheme-public-information-event

Integrating sustainable water management solutions, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), non-porous surfacing and green roofs, and nature based solutions, to create safe places"

- NPO 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 Strategic Outcome 9 (NSO9) is also relevant to flood management. It focuses on the need for investment in water services infrastructure. This strategic outcome particularly recognises the challenges posed by climate change, which is expected to alter water levels in waterbodies such as rivers and lakes. These changes may result in more severe and frequent flooding. Therefore, NSO9 stresses the importance of considering these potential impacts when planning water services and developing strategies to enhance flood resilience. This approach will ensure that future water infrastructure can cope with the increasing risk of flooding, aiding in effective flood relief measures.

The importance of flood relief measures is further highlighted under NPF's Section 9.3 (Protecting Conserving and Enhancing our Natural Capital). Planning is envisioned to play a vital role in mitigating development in inappropriate or vulnerable areas and will aid the delivery and design of necessary infrastructure in our towns and cities.

As discussed in Section 2.2.2, the Proposed Scheme is a direct response to the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC and EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC and the Clodiagh River was selected for further assessment following a CRAFM 2018 study. The Proposed Scheme will deliver flood relief measures designed to address current and future predicted flooding events in Clonaslee Village, thus safeguarding properties, businesses, livelihoods, leisure facilities and cultural heritage. Therefore, it aligns with the NPF's provisions and vision set in NSO9.

2.2.3.2 National Development Plan 2021-2030

This National Development Plan 2021-2023 (hereafter, the NDP) underpins the NPF, and it sets a framework for investment priorities, including expenditure commitments to secure a wider range of strategic strategies, including Flood Risk Management (FRM). It is noted that:

> *"(…) the existing flood capital investment programme, including new schemes being progressed on foot of the Flood Risk Management Plans, launched in 2018 developed under the CFRAM process, are also helping to reduce the vulnerability of the country to the negative effects of climate change through effective adaptation measures.*"

As discussed in Section 2.2.2, the Proposed Scheme directly responds to the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC and EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, selected for further assessment following a CRAFM 2018 study.

It is noted that on 8 April 2025, it was announced that the NDP would commence a review; however, no publications or further details are available at the time of preparing this report.

2.2.3.3 Climate Action Plan 2025

The first climate action plan (CAP) was published by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) in 2019 and was approved by the Government, subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.

The CAP implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government. The CAP has since been updated, with the CAP25 being the most recently adopted plan. It is the third statutory annual update since the publication of the first plan.

The CAP25, like previous CAPs, notes that Ireland has experienced firsthand the consequences of climate change. These changes will cause direct and indirect harm to communities, including predicted impacts arising from coastal, groundwater, and river flooding, requiring action.

The CAP25 acknowledges the rapid effects of climate change, including flooding, which is identified as one of the most immediate risks to Ireland. The CAP25 outlines several actions to gain a deeper understanding

of the impacts of climate change on flooding and mitigate the increased risks through various planning and implementation measures.

The Proposed Scheme directly addresses at a local level the more widespread increased risk of flooding described in CAP25.

2.2.3.4 Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030 (hereafter, the NBAP) prepared by the Government of Ireland, outlines the challenges facing biodiversity within the state. Scientific assessments of the state of nature in Ireland have found that 85% of our EU-protected habitats are in unfavourable status. The NBAP takes account of the wide range of policies, strategies, conventions, laws and targets at the global, EU and national levels that influence our shared environment to scale up biodiversity action.

The NBAP identifies overarching objectives:

- Objective 1 : *"Adopt a Whole-of- Government, Whole- of-Society Approach to Biodiversity"*
- Objective 2: *"Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs"*
- Objective 3: "Secure Nature's Contribution to People"
- Objective 4: *"Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity"*
- Objective 5: *"Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives"*

More detailed outcomes, targets and actions are set out. Outcome 2D is "*Biodiversity and ecosystem services in the marine and freshwater environment are conserved and restored*"

Within this outcome are the following targets and actions:

> *"Target: By 2027, protection and restoration measures detailed in Ireland's third RBMP are implemented to ensure that our natural waters are sustainably managed, that freshwater resources are protected so that there is no further deterioration; and where required, Ireland's rivers, lakes and coastal water bodies are restored to at least good ecological status.'*
>
> *By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes are in place*
>
> *Action No. 2D5*
>
> *Target: OPW will work with relevant authorities to ensure that Flood Risk Management planning and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), EIA and Appropriate Assessment (AA), minimises loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services through policies to promote more catchment-wide and non-structural flood risk management measures*
>
> *Action No. 2D6*
>
> *OPW will ensure that all significant drainage (arterial drainage), including both initial drainage and maintenance drainage will be assessed for its implications for biodiversity, particularly for wetlands*
>
> *Action No. 2D7*
>
> *The OPW, in coordination with other relevant stakeholders, will continue to enhance its knowledge and capacity with regards to Nature-based Solutions for Catchment Management (NBS-CM) and will assess the potential NBS-CM as part of the development of the future flood relief schemes*
>
> *Action No. 2D8*
>
> *OPW will review existing flood relief schemes, identifying opportunities for retrofit of biodiversity enhancement measures, and developing biodiversity good practice from the lessons learned into guidance for new schemes."*

The Proposed Scheme's design evolved through the iterative design process with due regard for the likely impacts on biodiversity, Natura Sites, and their qualifying interests considered through each iteration. In this

regard, the Proposed Scheme has been designed to ensure no significant adverse effects on biodiversity during the construction and operation phases. Furthermore, a construction programme has been developed with oversight from ecologists and consultation with the NPWS.

In addition, the Proposed Scheme includes a Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan (see **Appendix 9-6**. The Plan details the applicant's intention, in agreement with third-party landowners and Coillte, to replace any removed trees and hedgerows as well as provide biodiversity enhancement features such as bat boxes and bird boxes A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP,) accompanies this application and sets out the proposed mitigation, monitoring and best practice measures which will be implemented during the construction phase to ensure no adverse effects on biodiversity, water quality and the surrounding environment. Please see **Chapter 9: Biodiversity**, the BMEP enclosed in **Appendix 9-6**, **Chapter 20: Schedule of Environmental Commitments**, for details on mitigation, monitoring and enhancement measures.

2.2.3.5 Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022-2026

This *Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022-2026* (hereafter, the Biodiversity Action Strategy), published by the OPW, sets out OPW's intention for protecting, promoting and enhancing biodiversity across its operations. The Biodiversity Action Strategy identifies strategic actions to help deliver Government policy through contribution to the delivery of the National Biodiversity Action Plan.

The OPW is the Government's principal engineering agency and coordinates policy and service delivery in flood risk management, flood risk planning, and the delivery of flood risk capital projects.

The strategy sets out actions relating to NBAP objectives; those relating to flood relief works are outlined below:

- *"2.9 Develop biodiversity guidance and manuals for waterway maintenance and flood relief scheme;*
- *3.2 Develop a requirement for contractors to have completed the environmental awareness training as a requirement for OPW- funded work on flood relief schemes or river maintenance;*
- *3.4 Carry out a review of biodiversity measures within flood relief scheme; and*
- *3.8 Develop biodiversity opportunity planning for a range of demonstration flood relief scheme projects and drainage maintenance operations."*

As discussed, biodiversity considerations have informed the Proposed Scheme design. The potential effects on biodiversity and associated mitigation and monitoring measures are set out in **Chapter 9: Biodiversity** of this EIAR. Enhancement measures are detailed in the BMEP (see **Appendix 9-6** of this EIAR), and **Chapter 20: Schedule of Environmental Commitments** details all proposed mitigation and monitoring associated with the Scheme for both the construction and operational phases.

2.2.3.6 Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management 2019-2024

The *Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management 2019-2024* (hereafter, the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan) was published by the OPW and considers the impacts climate change will have on flooding and flood risk as well as the effect it will have on the flood risk management. 21 no. actions are identified that shall ensure effective and sustainable management of flood risk in the future.

The objectives of the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan are as follows:

> *"**Objective1:** Enhancing our knowledge and understanding of the potential impacts of climate change for flooding and flood risk management through research and assessment.*
>
> ***Objective 2:** Adapting flood risk management practice to effectively manage the potential impact of climate change on future flood risk.*
>
> ***Objective 3:** Aligning adaptation to the impact of climate change on flood risk and flood risk management across sectors and wider Government policy."*

The Proposed Scheme at Clonaslee is identified as one of the schemes to be progressed in the first phase of delivery of the future capital programme.

Several objectives/actions within the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for flood risk management relevant to Clonaslee's FRS. These include the following:

> ***"Objective 2:*** *Adapting flood risk management practice to effectively manage the potential impact of climate change on future risk.*
>
> - ***Action 2.B*** *(Responsible: OPW; When: 2019 and Ongoing): The Brief for the detailed development of flood relief schemes to include a requirement for a Scheme Adaptation Plan that will set out how climate change has been taken into account during the design and construction, and what adaptation measures might be needed and when into the future.*
>
> ***Objective 3****: Aligning adaptation to the impact of climate change on flood risk and flood risk management across sectors and wider Government policy.*

As discussed in Section 2.2.2.3, the design of the Proposed Scheme makes allowances for the HEFS. As such, the design can accommodate future potential flooding that may arise from climate change. Please see **Chapter 5: Project Description** for further details.

2.2.3.7 National Flood Policy 2004

This *National Flood Policy 2004* builds on the Arterial Drainage (Amendment) Act 1995, which permits the OPW to implement localised flood relief schemes to coordinate the management of flood risk in Ireland.

The National Flood Policy 2004 provides for:

- A catchment-based context for managing risk.
- More pro-active flood hazard and risk assessment and management, with a view to avoiding or minimising future increases in risk, such as that which might arise from development in floodplains.
- Increased use of non-structural and flood impact mitigation measures.

The National Flood Policy 2004 established that structural (i.e., engineered) flood relief measures would continue to play an important role in flood management.

The Proposed Scheme comprises innovative, structural flood relief measures in accordance with the National Flood Policy 2004.

2.2.3.8 The Planning System and Flood Risk Management 2009

The OPW, in conjunction with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) published a set of guidelines in relation to flood risk management. The *Planning System and Flood Risk Management 2009* (hereafter, the Flood Risk Management Guidelines) advocates a proactive approach to prevent flooding. This includes, for example, adopting general policies for protection, improving or restoring floodplains, and upgrading flood barriers. Under these guidelines, Planning Authorities have a key role in delivering effective measures, policies and infrastructure to minimise the risk of flooding.

In this regard, the Proposed Scheme at Clonaslee accords with the guidelines for enhancing flood barriers and reducing flood risk.

2.2.3.9 National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme

The national CFRAM Programme commenced in Ireland in 2011. The OPW undertook the CFRAM Programme in consultation with the Local Authorities.

The process identified and mapped the existing and potential future flood hazards and flood risk in the areas at potentially significant risk from flooding, called Areas for Further Assessment (AFA). The CFRAM Programme is central to Ireland's medium to long-term strategy for reducing and managing flood risk.

As discussed, the OPW designated 300 AFAs at potentially significant risk from flooding. Clonaslee and environs, located at the Clodiagh River within the River Brosna catchment, were one of these AFAs (ID no. 250420). The Proposed Scheme will implement flood relief measures to address a flooding risk identified in the CFRAM for Clonaslee and its environs.

2.2.3.10 Water Action Plan 2024 A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland for Ireland

The *Water Action Plan 2024 A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland for Ireland* (hereafter, the Water Action Plan 2024) prepared by the Government of Ireland sets out Ireland's approach to protect and restore its rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters over the third cycle of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). The Plan builds upon the previous two cycles of River Basin Management Plans and signals to the international community, Ireland's commitment to implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 to improve water quality, protect and restore water-related ecosystems.

The Water Action Plan 2024 sets out the environmental improvements to be delivered during a river basin planning cycle. The plans contain water quality objectives and a programme of measures to achieve those objectives.

Flooding, flood relief works and the need for protection against flooding are referenced within the Water Action Plan 2024. The increasing prevalence of flooding, due in part to climate change is acknowledged.

Multiple measures to reduce flooding, including flooding protection, appropriate planning control, nature based urban sustainable urban drainage are reference and supported. The Water Action Plan 2024 states the following with regard to structural flood protection is:

> *"the current policy in relation to flood protection is to implement the Floods Directive in full. This includes structural flood protection measures proposed for communities at significant flood risk, aimed at reducing the likelihood and/or degree of flooding, identified through the National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme."*

2.2.3.11 National Adaptation Framework 2024

The *National Adaptation Framework 2024: Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland* (hereafter, the NAF), published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, provides a broad strategic direction for climate change adaptation across various sectors in Ireland, including flood risk management, which is one of the 13 priority sectors under the NAF.

While providing limited guidance on flood relief schemes, the NAF acknowledges the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including projected precipitation that may increase pluvial and fluvial flooding due to climate change and supports capital investment in flood adaptation measures. In this regard, investments in critical infrastructure, such as water management systems, are highlighted to ensure they can withstand severe flooding events. Furthermore, it notes the role of local authorities in developing and implementing local climate adaptation measures, focusing on flood-prone areas and strengthening infrastructure to better cope with increased rainfall. These actions aim to reduce vulnerabilities in terms of flood risk and align with broader national objectives for climate resilience.

Considering the above, the proposed flood relief measures will allow the sustainable management of flood risks associated with the Clodiagh River and for climate change adaptation.

2.3 Regional Policy

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

The *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* (RSES) (hereafter, the RSES) was published by the Eastern and Midland Region Assembly (EMRA) in 2019.

The RSES seeks to enable the implementation of the NPF's vision for the Region.

The RSES is cognisant of the need to address flooding as outlined in the Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) below:

> ***"RPO 7.13**: EMRA will work with local authorities, the OPW and other relevant departments and agencies to implement the recommendations of the CFRAM programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.'*
>
> ***RPO 7.14**: 'Local authorities shall take account of and incorporate into the development of local planning policy and decision making the recommendations of the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk.'*
>
> ***RPO 7.15**: Local authorities shall take opportunities to enhance biodiversity and amenities and to ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive sites and habitats, including where flood risk management measures are planned."*

As noted above, the Clodiagh River was identified through the OPW CFRAM Programme as an AFA. Following additional, detailed flood modelling of the Clodiagh River, Laois County Council (LCC) is bringing forward this application for a FRS centred on Clonaslee Village, which will de-risk a total of 72 properties and 2 commercial properties from future flooding events. The Proposed Scheme also protects the existing leisure and amenity facilities provided via the Brittas Wood amenity loop located in the Slieve Bloom Special Protection Area (SPA), predicted to be impacted by future flood events.

It is to be noted that the Proposed Scheme has been designed to mitigate impacts on the environment particularly water quality and biodiversity. Where appropriate, a suite of relevant mitigation measures proposed are set out within each of the relevant chapters of this EIAR and are summarised in **Chapter 20:Schedule of Environmental Commitments.**

In addition to this, LCC is committed to maintaining and enhancing the natural biodiversity of the Proposed Scheme's area through the implementation of a BMEP, which includes measures such as the provision of bat boxes, bird boxes, replanting schemes etc. Please see **Appendix 9-6** of this EIAR for details.

2.3.2 Flood Risk Management Plan Shannon Upper & Lower River Basin (UOM25-26) 2018

The purpose of this *Flood Risk Management Plan for the Shannon Upper and Lower River Basin*[2] (hereafter, the FRMP), prepared by the OPW, is to set out the strategy, including a set of proposed measures, for the cost-effective and sustainable, long-term management of flood risk in the Shannon Upper & Lower River Basin, including the areas where the flood risk has been determined as being potentially significant.

The FRMP includes non-structural flood risk prevention and preparedness measures and structural flood protection measures proposed for communities at significant flood risk, aimed at reducing the likelihood and/or degree of flooding, identified through the National CFRAM Programme.

A series of measures are proposed in the FRMP, including:

- Sustainable Planning and Development Management
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- Adaptation Planning
- Land Use Management and Natural Flood Risk Management
- Arterial Drainage Schemes
- Maintenance of Channels not part of a Scheme
- Emergency Response Planning
- Promotion of Individual and Community Resilience

[2] **Section 7.4.6** of this report addresses the FRMP in detail.

- Individual Property Protection

The FRMP identified 42 residential and 3 non-residential properties in Clonaslee as being at 'high flood risk' from fluvial events and selected it as an Area for Further Assessment.

The FRMP proposed the following measure: "*Progress the project-level development and assessment of a Flood Relief Scheme for Clonaslee, including environmental assessment as necessary and further public consultation, for refinement and preparation for planning /Exhibition and, if and as appropriate, implementation*."

With regard to the above, it is to be noted that RPS was appointed to identify, design, and submission (for planning consent) a flood relief scheme that is technically, socially, environmentally, and economically acceptable to alleviate the risk of flooding to the community of Clonaslee to a determined standard of protection, and to procure, manage and oversee the construction of that scheme. Further study and modelling have concluded that the total number of properties at risk in AFA in 1% Fluvial AEP Event is 72 residential properties and 2 non-residential properties. The Proposed Scheme provides flood relief protection for these at-risk receptors and local ecological receptors.

2.4 Local Policy

2.4.1 Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

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

2.4.1.1 Development of Clonaslee

Clonaslee is identified as a 'village' from the settlement hierarchy for Laois in Table 2.4 of the Development Plan.

The following policies and objectives of the Development Plan support the growth and development of Clonaslee:

Policy Objectives for Natural Heritage

> *"**NH 3:** Promote and facilitate the continued development of the Slieve Bloom Mountains bike trail as a key tourism asset for the county and as part of the tourism offer on the Slieve Bloom Mountains, in conjunction with Offaly County Council. In addition, it is the Council policy to:*
>
> *… (ii) connect to and develop Clonaslee, Camross, Coolrain and Rosenalis as a service hubs for the area;"*

Slieve Bloom Walking and Cycling Activity Hub Policy Objectives

> *"**Trans 48:** Designate the following graded on-road cycling trails in the Slieve Blooms; install related signage and improve road surfaces along these trails, as resources allow; produce trail maps and market the trails , subject to the Habitats' and Birds Directives;*
>
> *(…)*
>
> *H4. Mountrath-Clonaslee Trail"*

Views and Prospects

The Council recognises the need to protect the character of the county by protecting views and scenic routes. Policy Objective SV 1 is to '*Protect views from designated scenic routes indicated in Table 11.7 and Map 11.8'*, including:

- *"017:R422 in the townlands of Clonaslee - Views over farmland and Slieve Bloom Mountains;"*

As detailed in **Chapter 17: Landscape & Visual**, no designated views and prospects are within the landscape and visual impact study area. The closest designated view and prospect is view *'017: R422 in the*

townlands of Clonaslee Views over farmland and Slieve Bloom Mountains'. The view to the Slieve Bloom Mountains is in a southerly direction away from the proposed change.

Rural Areas Policy Objectives

> *"**CS 30:** Support housing at an appropriate scale and repopulation taking place within villages in a consolidated, sustainable and sequential manner, priority will be given to refurbishment of existing houses or appropriate replacement to current building standards within the existing footprint.*
>
> ***CS 31:** Promote the provision of serviced sites in line with investment opportunities by Irish Water in order to attract people to build their own homes and live in villages.*
>
> ***CS 32:** Facilitate the expansion of villages and small towns to provide for employment, retail and social opportunities at an appropriate scale subject to normal planning requirements.*
>
> ***CS 33:** Support the servicing of rural villages (serviced sites) to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside, in line with RSES Objective RPO 4.78.*
>
> ***CS 34:** Within the designated development limits of the rural villages in Volume 2, development will be permitted where it involves infilling, conversion, single site housing development, or the use of derelict or underused land or premises, subject to siting, design, protection of residential amenities and normal development management criteria."*

The Proposed Scheme at Clonaslee provides flood protection within the village and within Brittas Wood located in the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA. The Proposed Scheme provided flood defences along the existing amenity pathway, securing continuous future use of this amenity provision for the local and wider area. The Proposed Scheme does not impact on any designated views or prospects in the area. The design of the Proposed Scheme also takes into consideration existing Irish Water (Uisce Éireann) infrastructure located within Brittas Wood (Area 1) and provides for a flood wall within the ICW, which is owned and operated by Uisce Éireann.

2.4.1.2 Land Use Zoning

The land use zoning within Clonaslee is set out in Map 6.1 (A) of the Development Plan, as shown in **Figure 2-2**. The figure below shows that the village extends outwards from the eastern and western banks, and northwards along the banks of the River Clodiagh. Along the R422, the village centre is zoned 'Town Centre'.

Other lands adjacent to the Clodiagh River are zoned:

- *"Residential 1. Established*
- *Community-Educational-Institutional*
- *Utilities, and*
- *Open Space/ Amenity"*

Map 6.1-A of the Development Plan also identifies flood 'Zone A and Zone B' i.e., lands with a risk of flooding once every 100 and 1,000 years, respectively.

The Proposed Scheme provides flood protection to lands on the west of the Clodiagh River, which are zoned for:

- Residential . Established; Community-Educational-Institutional; Utilities; and Open Space/Amenity.

In addition to the above, Clonaslee is designated an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and includes several Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) assets within the village, as shown in Figure 2-2**.** There are also protected trees situated along the riverbank.

The Proposed Scheme will provide protection to the ACA and heritage assets recorded within which may be susceptible to structural damage brought about by a flood event. Please see **Chapter 16:Cultural Heritage**, **Chapter 17:Landscape & Visual** and **Appendix 16-8 Architect Conservation Report** for details.

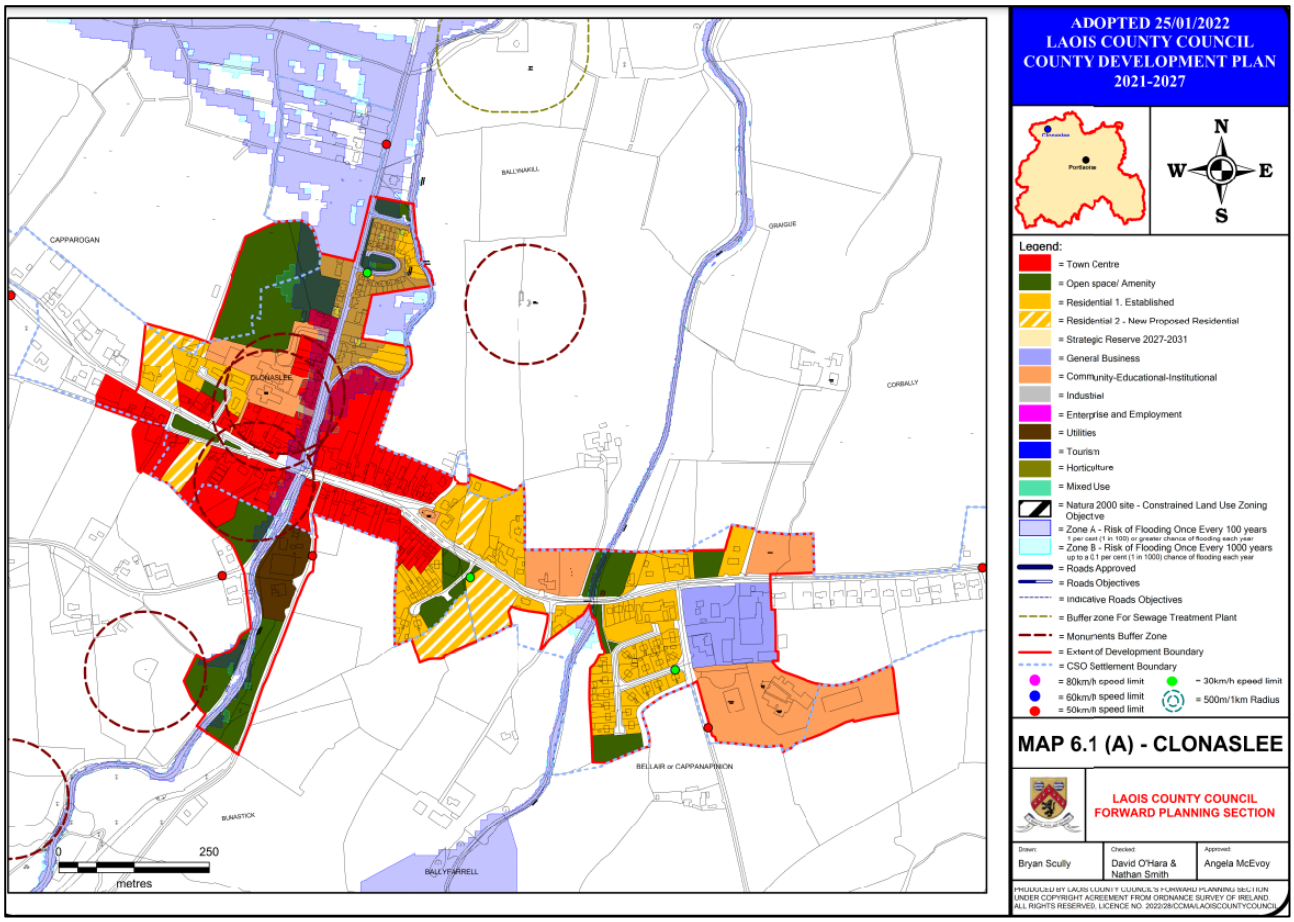

Figure 2-2 Land Use Zoning in Clonaslee ***Source: Map 6.1 (A) from the Development Plan (LCC, 2022)***

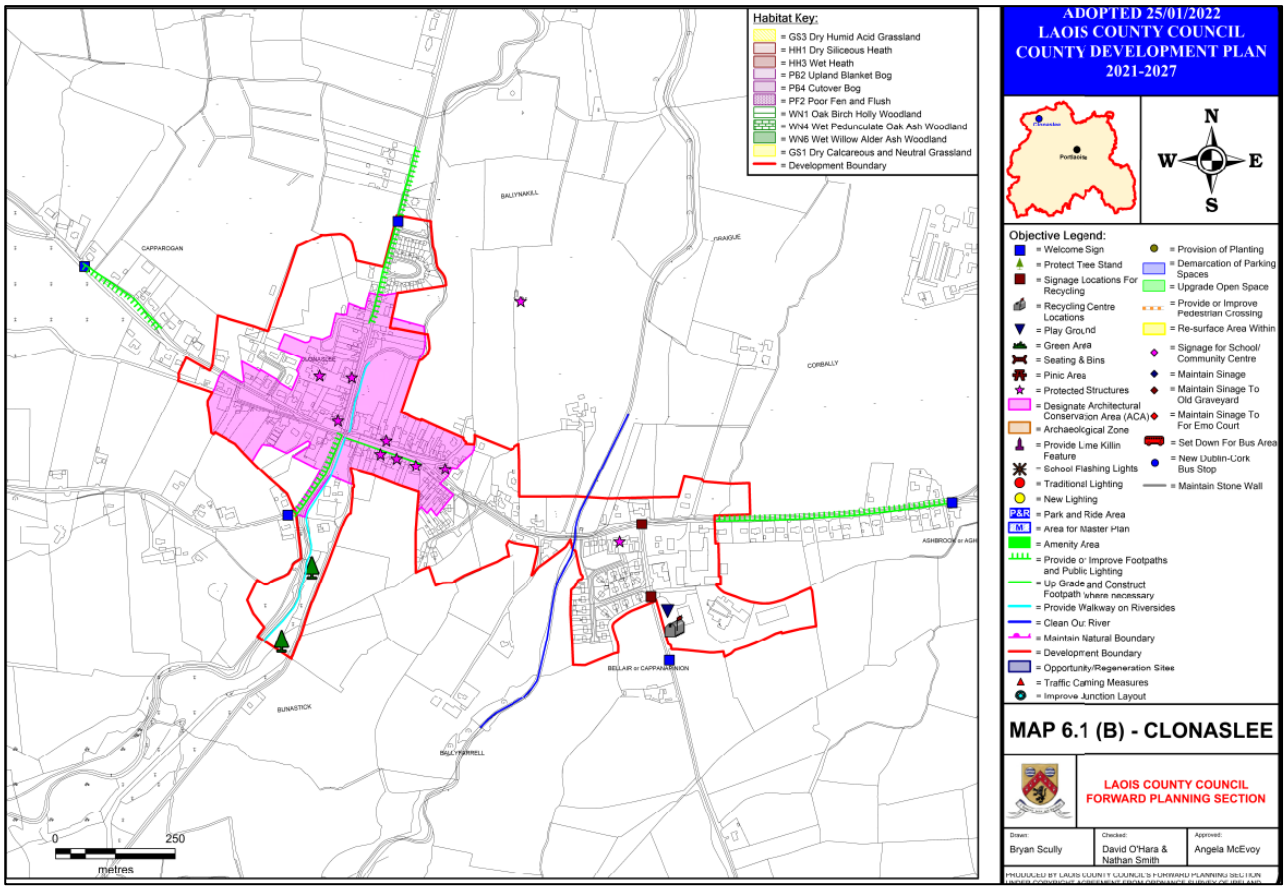

Figure 2-3: Development Plan Map 6.1 (B) Clonaslee

Source: Map 6.1 (B) from the Development Plan (LCC, 2022)

2.4.1.3 Flood Risk Management

The Development Plan outlines that flooding is the most common source of climate related impacts and loss around the country with Clonaslee being an area at a high risk for flooding.

The Development Plan aims to promote efficient flood risk practices in planning and development management and to deliver infrastructural provisions which will reduce flood risk:

Climate Action Policy Objectives

> *"**CA1**: Support and facilitate European and national objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the following documents, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage)."*

The proposed flood relief scheme provides flood relief measures to the village of Clonaslee and is designed to accommodate HEFS for climate change. Please see Chapter 5: Project Description for further details.

Flood Risk Management Policy Objectives

Please see Table 2-2**,** which sets out the accordance of the Proposed Scheme with the Flood Risk Management Policy Objectives.

Table 2-2: Relevant Policy Objectives & Development Management Standards set in the Development Plan

Policy Objective / Development Management Standard	Proposed Scheme
Flood Risk Management Policy Objectives p. 220-221	
FRM 3: Support the implementation of recommendations in the CFRAM Programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.	The accordance of the proposed scheme with the CFRAM Programme is considered in **Section 2.2.3.10**
FRM 4: Support the implementation of recommendations in the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP's), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk.	The accordance of the proposed scheme with the FRMP is considered in **Section 2.2.11**
FRM 5: Consult with the OPW in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible, and to retain a strip on either side of such channels where required, to facilitate maintenance access thereto.	Continuous consultation with the OPW has been undertaken during the lifetime of this project. Please see **Chapter 3: Consultation** for details.
FRM 9: Ensure that the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams, and watercourses are protected and enhanced where flood risk management works take place.	The design of the proposed scheme has been guided by the design principle of minimising impacts on the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams, and watercourses. The effects of the proposed scheme on these sensitivities are considered elsewhere in the EIAR .
FRM 10: Ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.	The accordance of the Proposed Scheme with the *Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan* is outlined in **Section 2.2.3.7.**
FRM 11: Consult, where necessary, with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies in the provision of flood alleviation measures in the County.	Consultation with NPWS and IFI has been undertaken during the course of this project. Please see **Chapter 3**:**Consultation** for details.
FRM 12: Prioritise plans for flood defence works in the towns as indicated in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in order to mitigate against potential flood risk.	The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identifies that part of the Village Centre and Existing Residential lands north of the R422 are within Flood Zone A/B. The SFRA is considered further in **Section 2.3**.
FRM 13: Ensure new development does not increase flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface water runoff.	The implementation of the Proposed Scheme will not result in increased flood risk potential elsewhere.

Town/Village Centre Management Policy Objectives

> ***"TC 5:*** *Assist in site assembly and facilitate appropriate new development in town/village centres by way of alterations and extensions, infill development as well as demolition and redevelopment subject to planning considerations such as architectural heritage and flood risk."*

The Proposed Scheme shall provide flood protection to Clonaslee and underpin the growth and development of Clonaslee consistent with TC 5.

Policy Objectives for Waterways and Wetlands

> *"**BNH 31:** 'Protect waterbodies and watercourses from inappropriate development, to ensure they are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values and to conserve and enhance where possible, the wildlife habitats of the County's rivers and riparian zones, lakes, canals and streams which occur outside of designated areas to provide a network of habitats and biodiversity corridors throughout the county."*

As noted previously, the Proposed Scheme will not result in significant adverse effects on biodiversity and an enhancement proposal (see Appendix 9-6 of this EIAR) which sets out measures to increase local biodiversity is included in this application.

Policy Objectives for River Corridors and Lakes Areas

> *"**LCA 19**: 'Recognise the potential constraints on development created by river flood plains and the value of these flood plains as increasingly rare habitats."*

The Proposed Scheme provides flood relief measures along the Clodiagh River, which current flood modelling indicates has the potential to impact residential and commercial properties and may have indirect negative impacts on areas zoned for future development due to investment concerns. Notwithstanding, the Proposed Scheme aims to minimise any potential effects on biodiversity through careful construction programming, mitigation and monitoring during the construction phase and the provision of a BMEP (see Appendix 9-6 of this EIAR).

2.4.2 County Laois Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

Within the Planning System and Flood Risk Management guidelines, the purpose of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is "*to provide a broad (wide area) assessment of all types of flood risk to inform strategic land-use planning decisions. SFRAs enable the LA to undertake the sequential approach, including the Justification Test, allocate appropriate sites for development and identify how flood risk can be reduced as part of the development plan process*."

The SFRA for County Laois, published in 2022, classifies Clonaslee to be an area for '*Further Assessment.'* The SFRA notes that the River Clodiagh burst through a damaged wall as a result of heavy rainfall in 2017, and in November 2009 Clonaslee flooded as gravel deposits in the River Clodiagh blocked a bridge resulting in water flowing through the village centre.

The SFRA concludes that for Clonaslee, it is considered appropriate to retain the existing zoning, flood zones A and B, and any future development should be subject to a FRA, which should follow the general guidance provided in Section 7 of the SFRA.

The SFRA has three stages and scales, which comprise:

- **Regional Flood Risk Appraisal (RFRA)** – *'a broad overview of flood risk issues across a region to influence spatial allocations for growth in housing and employment and to identify where flood risk management measures may be required at a regional level to support the proposed growth. This should be based on readily derivable information and undertaken to inform the Regional Planning Guidelines.'*
- **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) –** *'an assessment of all types of flood risk informing land use planning decisions. This will enable the Planning Authority to allocate appropriate sites for development, whilst identifying opportunities for reducing flood risk. This SFRA will revisit and develop the flood risk identification undertaken in the RFRA and give consideration to a range of potential sources of flooding. An initial flood risk assessment, based on the identification of Flood Zones, will also be carried out for those areas zoned for development. Where the initial flood risk assessment highlights the potential for a significant level of flood risk, or there is conflict with the proposed vulnerability of development, then a site-specific FRA will be recommended, which will necessitate a detailed flood risk assessment.'*
- **Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)** – *'site or project specific flood risk assessment to consider all types of flood risk associated with the site and propose appropriate site management and mitigation measures to reduce flood risk to and from the site to an acceptable level. If the previous tiers of study have been undertaken to appropriate levels of detail, it is highly likely that the site-specific FRA will require detailed channel and site survey, and hydraulic modelling.'*

2.4.3 Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2021-2026

The *Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2021 – 2026* (the strategy) aims to raise awareness of and promote the conservation of the natural heritage and biodiversity of the county.

The vision for the Strategy is centred on supporting the local Authorities' vision *'that Laois is an excellent place to live in, to work in, to invest in and to visit – for now, and for the future.'*

The Strategy provides a provides a cohesive framework which will guide Annual Action Plans to be devised, implemented, and published each year based on the aims and objectives of the Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy.

The four aims of the Strategy are to:

a) *'Conserve and enhance the heritage and biodiversity of Laois;*

b) *Conserve and enhance the heritage and biodiversity of Laois;*

c) *Integrate our work across built, natural and cultural heritage, where possible; and*

d) *Celebrate and promote the heritage and biodiversity of Laois.'*

To deliver on the aims over the life of the strategy, Laois County Council will target delivery of objectives across eight key action areas as set out in the strategy.

As discussed in Sections 2.4.1.1 and 2.4.1.3, the protection of Laois heritage and biodiversity are paramount to the Proposed Scheme. The Proposed Scheme will provide flood relief measures which will protect the ACA status of Clonaslee and will provide protection to RPS and NIAH recorded with the village. Likewise, the Proposed Scheme will provide flood relief measures in Brittas Wood which falls within the Slieve Bloom Mountain SPA, thus protecting the local biodiversity therein. Additionally, the Scheme includes a BMEP which will provide local biodiversity enhancement measures. Please see **Chapter 9: Biodiversity**, **Chapter 16: Cultural Heritage**, **Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual**, **Appendix 9-6 BMEP** and **Appendix 16-8 Conservation Report** part of this EIAR.

2.4.4 Laois County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

The *Laois County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024* (hereafter, the Climate Change strategy) sets out the measures, responses, and priorities for adaptation within the County over the following five-year period. The Climate Change strategy is based on 6 themes, which are as follows:

1. Local Adoption Governance and Business Operations
2. Infrastructure and Built Environment
3. Land use and Development
4. Drainage and flood management
5. Natural Resources and Cultural Infrastructure; and
6. Community Health and Wellbeing.

Projected climate changes for Ireland include that flood risk will increase between 2019-2024 due to a combination of higher river flows and an increase in extreme precipitation events.

Theme 4, 'Drainage and Flood Management' identifies Goal 4 which is for a *'great understanding of risks and consequences of flooding and successful management of a co-ordinated approach to drainage and flooding.'* In meeting this goal, a number of actions are proposed, including:

1. '*Undertake and implement a surface water management plan for the assessment and management of flood risks with the aim of reducing the adverse consequences of flooding, to prioritise projects to reduce surface water flood risk and provide for detailed mapping of areas prone to surface water and groundwater flood risk.*
2. *Develop a guidance document on the requirement for the design and specification of urban stormwater drainage systems for new development to take account of the potential future impact of climate change.*
3. *Incorporate the requirement for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems where appropriate in local authority projects and private development sites.*
4. *Incorporate considerations of the impact of climate change into the Laois Flood Management Plan*
5. *Incorporate considerations of the impact of climate change into proposals submitted under the Minor Works Programme to ensure that measures proposed are adaptable to future changes.*

6. *Ensure that potential future flood information is obtained/generated by way of a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and used to inform suitable adaptation requirements within the Development Management process in line with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Flood Risk Management*

Further actions proposed in meeting theme no. 5, which are relevant to this flood relief scheme, include:

1. *Develop a strategy to undertake and implement an active Tree Planting programme in the context of climate adaptation in conjunction with an awareness campaign that informs of the benefits to communities in improving air quality, offsetting carbon emissions, promoting biodiversity, limiting flood risk, reducing urban heat, as well as aesthetic value.*

As discussed, the Proposed Scheme addresses the potential flood risk within Clonaslee Village and is designed to accommodate HEFS for climate change. Please see **Chapter 5: Project Description** for further details.

2.4.5 Laois County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

The *Laois Climate Action Plan 2024-2029* (hereafter, the Laois CAP) was published by LCC in 2024.

The Laois CAP notes that "*evidence points to global climate change impacting the weather systems experienced in County Laois."* In this regard, the Laois CAP provides details of the 'climate change risk assessment report', which key results reveal regarding river and pluvial flooding reveal that:

> *"River and pluvial (rain) flooding events have occurred almost annually in recent years (2018, 2020, 2021, and 2022). These events resulted in property flooding, business closures, transportation disruptions, sewage overflows, farmland flooding, and bridge damage. Projected increases in extreme precipitation events suggest a heightened risk of surface water and river flooding in the future."*

Considering the above, 'Strategic Goal E' sets a range of objectives to make the county more resilient through a range of climate adaptation measures. Relevant to the Proposed Scheme are the following:

- **E1**: *"To continue to implement approved flood protection and drainage measures."*
- **E6**: *"To continue to implement approved flood protection and drainage measures."*

Further, Section 5.6 of the Laois CAP sets climate actions. Action no. 37 is relevant to the Proposed Scheme:

> *"Laois County Council will continue to support (subject to statutory processes and adherence to environmental standards) the development of OPW flood protection schemes in the towns of Mountmellick, Portarlington and Clonaslee; these schemes will make these settlements more resilient to flooding."*

The Proposed Scheme is wholly consistent with the central tenets of the Laois CAP. The Proposed Scheme is being progressed in the context of increased flooding arising from climate change.

2.5 Summary

As outlined in previous sections, European, national, regional, and local planning policies and objectives identify increased flood risk arising in part from climate change. Support exists at EU, national, regional, and local levels for appropriately providing flood relief measures to address flooding risk.

A review of the policy context presented in this chapter reveals that increased flood risk will partly arise from climate change. In this regard, there is overall support at all levels of the policy context for the appropriate provision of flood relief measures to address both floor risk and to deliver on climate change adaptation.

The Proposed Scheme's design is scored under technical, social, economic and environmental criteria in accordance with OPW requirements for flood relief design. While scoring high under these criteria, the design also aligns with the UN SDGs for sustainable development, environment protection and climate change resilience.

The design, environmental impact assessment and planning application of the Proposed Scheme is a direct response to the requirements of the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC, which requires all Member States to assess and mitigate for potential flood risk.

The Proposed Scheme is supported at national, regional and local planning levels. Clonaslee FRS is a specifically supported by the OPW's FRMP.

The Proposed Scheme will provide flood protection for 72residential properties and 2 non-residential properties, which are currently at risk from flooding.

The Proposed Scheme will also provide flood relief protection for local ecological receptors within Brittas Wood, which falls within the Slieve Bloom SPA, designated for both red-listed species and sensitive habitats. These flood relief measures will also protect the local amenity loops in the village and facilitate potential future amenity expansion opportunities. In addition to this, the Proposed Scheme will provide protection for RPS and NIAH assets located within Clonaslee village, which is designated as an ACA. The implementation of flood defences at Chapel St will also ensure protection and continuous use of important thoroughfare through the village and encourage commercial expansion along this street. The applicant is committed to protecting and enhancing local biodiversity where possible and, as such, includes a BMEP with the Proposed Scheme.

Furthermore, the Proposed Scheme's design allows for both Mid-Range Future Scenario and High-End Future Scenario for climate change.

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