

PLANNING REPORT

CLONASLEE FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME



CLONASLEE FLOOD RISK SCHEME

Document status					
Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Approved by	Review date
A01	Approval	CLG/BC	MH	BC	9 June 2025

Approval for Issue	
BC	9 June 2025

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Contents

1	I INTRODUCTION			1
	1.1	Plannir	ng Application Route	1
	1.2	Purpos	e of this Report	1
	1.3	Structu	re of this Report	1
2	NEE	NEED FOR THE PROPOSED SCHEME		
3	THE	PROPO	SED SCHEME LOCATION	4
	3.1	Clonas	lee Village	4
	3.2	Descrip	otion of the Proposed Scheme Context	4
4	PLAN	NNING H	IISTORY	6
5	PRE-	PLANN	ING CONSULTATION	9
	5.1	Public (Consultation	9
	5.2	Stakeh	older Consultation	9
6	DESC	CRIPTIO	N OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME	10
	6.1	Overvie	ew	10
	6.2	Descrip	otion of Proposed Flood Relief Works	10
		6.2.1	Area 1: Brittas Wood	11
		6.2.2	Area 2: Chapel Street	17
		6.2.3	Area 3: Tullamore Road & Integrated Constructed Wetland (ICW)	20
		6.2.4	Temporary Construction Compounds	23
		0.2.5		24
7	POLI	CYCON		25
	7.1	Interna	tional & European Policy Context	25
		7.1.1	UN Sustainable Development Goals	25
		7.1.2	EU Directive 2007/60/EC on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks	25
		7.1.3	EU Vialei Flamework Dilective 2000/00/EC	20
		7.1.4	Regulation (FLI) 2024/1991 Nature Restoration	27
	72	Nationa	al Policy Context	27
		7.2.1	Project Ireland 2040	27
		7.2.2	Climate Action Plan 2025	28
		7.2.3	Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030	29
		7.2.4	Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022-2026	30
		7.2.5	Flood Risk Management: Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan	31
		7.2.6	National Flood Policy 2004	31
		7.2.7	Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland	32
		7.2.8	National Adaptation Framework 2024	32
	7.3	Region	al Policy Context	33
	7 4	7.3.1	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031	33
	7.4		Policy Context	33
		7.4.1	County Loois Strategic Flood Pick Assessment	
		7/3	Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2021-2026	45
		744	Laois County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy	46
		7.4.5	Laois County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029	
		7.4.6	Flood Risk Management Plan Shannon Upper & Lower River Basin	47
8	FN\/I			40
0	8 1	Annron	riate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement	49 ДQ
	8.2	Enviror	nmental Impact Assessment.	49
			1	

CLONASLEE FLOOD RISK SCHEME

9	CONCLUSION	1
10	LIST OF REFERENCES	2

Tables

Table 6-1: Summary of Proposed Scheme	11
Table 7-1: Relevant Policy Objectives & Development Management Standards set in the Development	
Plan	37

Figures

Figure 3-1: Proposed Scheme's Location	4
Figure 3-2: Proposed Scheme's Location and Immediate Context	5
Figure 6-1: Model Predicted Flooding and Scheme Benefitting Area 1% AEP Flood Event	10
Figure 6-2: Proposed Scheme – Areas of Proposed Works	11
Figure 6-3: Area 1: Brittas Wood (Site Layout Plan)	12
Figure 6-4: Embankment at Area 1: Brittas Wood (Plan & Long Section)	13
Figure 6-5: Embankment at Area 1: Brittas Wood (Cross Sections)	14
Figure 6-6: Debris Trap & Slipway within Area 1: Brittas Wood (Cross Section)	15
Figure 6-7: Typical Culvert's Headwall (Cross Section)	17
Figure 6-8: Area 2: Chapel Street (Site Layout Plan)	18
Figure 6-9: Flood Defence Wall at Area 2: Chapel Street (Plan and Long Section)	19
Figure 6-10: Flood Defence Wall at Area 2: Chapel Street (Cross Sections)	20
Figure 6-11: Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW (Site Layout Plan)	21
Figure 6-12: Embankment & Flood Defence Wall at Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW (Cross Sections)	22
Figure 6-13: Temporary Construction Compound A	23
Figure 6-14: Temporary Construction Compound B	24
Figure 7-1: UN Sustainable Development Goals	25
Figure 7-2: Core Strategy Map	34
Figure 7-3: Land Use Zoning in Clonaslee	35
Figure 7-4: Development Plan Map 6.1 (B) Clonaslee	36

1 INTRODUCTION

RPS Group Limited (RPS) has prepared this Planning Report (the report) to accompany an application by Laois County Council (LCC) for approval to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) to carry out the proposed Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme (hereafter, the Proposed Scheme) in the townlands of Brittas, Bunastick, Clonaslee, Ballynakill and Brockagh, in County Laois.

The Proposed Scheme will consist of flood relief works along, adjacent to, and in the vicinity of the Clodiagh River. The key components include:

- Construction of a flood defence embankment c. 145 m long, replacing a section of the existing amenity pathway in Brittas Wood, and remediation works for the existing culvert within Brittas Wood, along with installing a debris trap in the Clodiagh River's channel and an associated access slipway.
- Construction of a reinforced flood defence wall c. 235 m long, adjoining to the existing wall along Chapel Street, along with the addition of a public footpath along the length of the new wall.
- Construction of a flood defence embankment c. 130 m long northeast of Chapel Street, and a flood defence wall c. 70 m long on the eastern bank of the Clodiagh River within the grounds of Clonaslee's Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICW).
- Provision of associated and ancillary development works to facilitate the project, including clearance and vegetation removal, temporary construction compounds with associated facilities, lighting, landscaping, and installation of fencing and gates.

The statutory public notices fully describe the proposed works in connection with the Proposed Scheme.

A full suite of drawings and photomontages (refer to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)) is enclosed, which provides details of the proposed works and visual representations of the proposal once built and should be considered when reviewing this report.

1.1 Planning Application Route

The application is made to ABP under Sections 175 and 177AE of the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended) and the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001* (as amended). A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) have been prepared for the Proposed Scheme and are enclosed with the application.

The plans and particulars submitted with this planning application provide details of the proposed works, which should be read in conjunction with this report.

1.2 Purpose of this Report

This report sets out how the Proposed Scheme has regard to the relevant policy objectives and development standards set in the *Laois Council Development Plan 2021-2027* (the Development Plan) (refer to **Section 7.4.** of this report), as well as relevant policies and objectives set at European, national and regional levels. Please refer to **Sections 7.1** and **7.2** of this report.

Other sections of this report detail the location and context, description of proposed works and relevant planning history.

This report should be read in conjunction with the plans and particulars enclosed with the application, particularly **Chapter 5: Development Description** of the EIAR, which provides a complete description of the works as part of the Proposed Scheme.

1.3 Structure of this Report

This report is arranged under the following headings:

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Need for the Proposed Scheme

- Section 3: The Proposed Scheme Location
- Section 4: Planning History
- Section 5: Pre-Planning Consultation
- Section 6: Description of the Proposed Scheme
- Section 7: Policy Context
- Section 8: Environmental Considerations
- Section 9: Conclusion
- Section 10: List of References

2 NEED FOR THE PROPOSED SCHEME

The Office of Public Works (OPW), working in partnership with LCC and other local authorities, completed the *Flood Risk Management Plan for the Shannon Upper and Lower River Basin*¹ (hereafter, the FRMP) in 2018.

The FRMP identified Clonaslee as an Area for Further Assessment (AFA). In 2020, LCC employed RPS to carry out a detailed analysis of flooding mechanisms in the area and thereby identify and design a Scheme that is technically, socially, environmentally, and economically acceptable to alleviate the risk of flooding to the Community of Clonaslee. Detailed hydraulic modelling analysis and mapping have identified 74 properties (72 residential and 2 non-residential properties) in Clonaslee as being at risk of fluvial flooding events.

Regarding flooding events, Clonaslee Village has a history of fluvial flooding due to high water levels in the Clodiagh River, which flows through the village from its source in the Slieve Bloom Mountains. A flood event of note occurred in November 2017, when Chapel Street and the adjacent properties were subject to flooding. This coincided with a breach in the existing wall along the river. Anecdotal evidence indicates water seeps through this wall and bubbles up through the road along Chapel Street at times of high-water levels.

The Proposed Scheme will address the above-mentioned weaknesses in the Chapel Street wall. It will also address the risk of blockage to the Clonaslee Bridge and reinforce an existing embankment protecting properties north of the village. The scheme design takes anticipated future increases in flooding risk into account. All proposed flood relief works are planned along and/or adjacent to the Clodiagh River.

The need for the Proposed Scheme and the alternatives considered are described in more detail in **Chapter 1: Introduction** and **Chapter 4: Assessment of Alternatives** of the EIAR enclosed with the planning application.

¹ Section 7.4.6 of this report addresses the FRMP in detail.

3 THE PROPOSED SCHEME LOCATION

3.1 Clonaslee Village

The Proposed Scheme is situated on lands within and/or adjacent to Clonaslee Village. **Figure 3-1** illustrates the location of Clonaslee Village and its surroundings.





Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

Clonaslee Village is located c. 23km northwest of Portlaoise. The regional road R422 traverses Clonaslee Village from east to west, forming its Main Street and connecting it with neighbouring towns and villages eastwards, like Rosenallis, roughly 8km away, and Mountmellick, approximately 13km away. Further east, the R422 intersects with the national road N80, leading north to Tullamore and south to Portlaoise.

Two rivers flow through Clonaslee Village: the Clodiagh River is to the west, and the Gorragh River is to the east. Brittas Forest is located to the south of Clonaslee Village.

Clonaslee Village is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). There are a number of Protected Structures within the ACA, including the Visitor's Centre (formerly the Church of Ireland). Further details are provided in **Section 7.4.1** of this report.

3.2 Description of the Proposed Scheme Context

The location of the Proposed Scheme within Clonaslee Village is illustrated in **3-2** below. As shown in the figure, the Proposed Scheme comprises three areas. For further details of the location and extent of each of the Proposed Scheme's areas, please refer to the *Site Location Map* and the series of *Site Layout Plan* drawings enclosed with the application package.



Figure 3-2: Proposed Scheme's Location and Immediate Context

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

The layout of Clonaslee Village streets comprises a crossroads arrangement, with two streets intersecting at right angles. The R422 runs through Clonaslee Village from east to west, forming its Main Street. The local road L2006 traverses the village from north to south, forming Chapel Street and linking to Tullamore Road north and Brittas Forest south.

The street architecture in the Main Street is generally uniform in scale and built form. This is mainly comprised of terraced Georgian and/or Victorian-styled houses with vertically proportioned windows, slated roofs, and generally two-storey heights. Some houses have been converted to retail by inserting frame shop fronts at street level and widening windows. In addition to the homes and shops, there are a number of public buildings, notably the Visitor's Centre (formerly the Church of Ireland) and Garda Station, as well as community, administrative and services buildings, like the Clonaslee Parochial Hall and the post office.

The architecture on the western side of Chapel Street features terraced houses comprising a mix of one and two-storey buildings. As the street extends away from Main Street, the architectural style transitions to bungalows set back from the road and have larger footprints, reflecting a shift from an urban to a rural character.

The Clodiagh River flows parallel to Chapel Street. An existing wall on the riverbank provides some protection to the street from high water levels. This wall extends into private properties as it follows the river's curve.

To the south of the village, the L2006 leads to Brittas Wood. The wood stretches south and west of Clonaslee Village, providing different looped walking and hiking trails.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

RPS has completed a planning history search using LCC's online planning portal and the ABP case search online tool.

The search considered all planning applications within the Proposed Scheme's red line (application site). For completeness, it also considered planning applications directly adjacent to the Proposed Scheme's red line using a 50m buffer.

The results of the planning application search are summarised in **Table 4-1** below. **Figure 4-1** shows the locations of the planning applications mentioned.

Most of the applications are small and modest in scale and nature, i.e., associated with proposed modifications and alterations to existing dwellings. Also, none of the identified planning applications are contained or directly adjacent to the Proposed Scheme's red line, but within the 50m buffer area.

Table 4-1: Planning	Applications within the Redline Bour	dary or within 50m of the Redline Boundary

Application Reference	Submitted	Summary Development Description	Decision (Final grant)
LCC 16220	12 May 2016	"Upgrade to the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) site in	14 Jan 2017
		Clonaslee and will comprise the following: refurbishment of the existing two storey masonry WTP building, gross floor area 392 sqm approximately new extension with gross floor area 45sqm approximately, to the existing WTP building, construction of a new Water Treatment Plant (WTP) process building, gross floor area 490sqm approximately, removal of existing roofs and construction of new portal frame roofs to existing reservoir structures, construction of a new Sludge Treatment building, gross floor area 200sqm approximately, demolition of existing pumphouse and replace with new sub-station and pumphouse building, gross floor area 48sqm. demolition of existing tanks and construction of new tank and storage structures, together with underground watermains and service connections, improvements to existing boundaries, landscaping and all associated site works"	* Granted with Conditions – Final Contribution Appealed (see below)
ABP 247390	10 Oct 2016	"Amend condition number 17"	10 Jan 2017 Condition Modified
LCC 18372	22 Jun 2018	"(1) demolish existing extension to side of dwelling house	25 Oct 2018
		(2) build new extension to side and rear of dwelling house including modifications to existing dwelling house and (3) build new domestic garage/garden shed"	
LCC 18504	14 Aug 2018	"Demolish a rear extension, construction of modifications	05 Nov 2018
		and extension to existing dwelling (Protected Structure RPS 963) and installation of new pedestrian access gate."	Granted with Conditions
LCC 19193	04 Apr 2019	"Modify the previous grant of permission to the Water	26 Jun 2019
		Registration Number: 16/220) and comprises of the following: modifications to the proposed pumphouse building gross floor area 10.5sqm, revised location of the ESB substation gross area 14sqm, reduced footprint to the Water Treatment Plan Process Building gross area 210sqm and revisions to the site layout"	Granted with Conditions
LCC 19679	09 Dec 2019	"Construct an extension to side and rear of existing	10 Jul 2020
		awelling house together with all ancillary services"	Granted with Conditions

Application Reference	Submitted	Summary Development Description	Decision (Final grant)
LCC 20554	23 Oct 2020	"Retain 2 rear facing pitched roof extensions (24.1 sq. m), a steel clad shed (29.7 sq. m), a change of use of a domestic garage into residential accommodation (41.9 Sq. m), the removal of a steel clad car port (19.9 sq. m) and permit to construct a single storey extension (17.3 sq. m) to the side of the existing dwelling to connect the former garage to the existing dwelling and all associated site works"	20 Jan 2021 Granted with Conditions
LCC 20656	09 Dec 2020	"(A) Demolish existing buildings, while keeping part of their external walls to form boundary walls, (B) form new car park, including new roadside boundary and entrance gate, (C) construct new pitched roof and carry out alterations to existing credit union office building, and all associated site works"	01 Mar 2021 Granted with Conditions
LCC 23284	29 Nov 2023	"Retain the demolition of the existing office building and full planning permission for the construction of a new replacement office building and all associated site works"	04 Mar 2024 Granted with Conditions
LCC 2460216	24 Apr 2024	"The proposed new signage to the front elevation and retention of the alterations to the front elevation to that of previously granted planning reference 23284 "	Incomplete Application
LCC 2460233	30 Apr 2024	"Erect new signage to the front elevation and retention of the alterations to the front elevation to that of previously granted planning reference 23284 "	26 Jul 2024 Granted with Conditions
LCC 2460713	27 Nov 2024	"Retain an extension to an existing dwelling."	30 Jan 2025 Granted with Conditions
LCC 2560045	30 Jan 2025	"A. The conversion of The Swan Public House into hostel accommodation, comprising of 29 bed capacity over 7 bedrooms with associated common room, dining room, self-catering kitchen, and associated office and ancillary spaces for administration of the development, and all associated site works. B. The provision of a new shopfront, additional windows and 1 no. rooflight to the East Elevation and additional windows to the South Elevation C. The construction of 3 no. new masonry outbuildings with flat roofs within the existing external courtyard, to provide a bin store, general storage and a secure bike shed."	Incomplete Application
LCC 2560074	14 Feb 2025	"A. The conversion of The Swan Public House into hostel accommodation, comprising of 29 bed capacity over 7 bedrooms with associated common room, dining room, self-catering kitchen, and associated office and ancillary spaces for administration of the development, and all associated site works. B. The provision of a new shopfront, additional windows and 1 no. rooflight to the East Elevation and additional windows to the South Elevation C. The construction of 3 no. new masonry outbuildings with flat roofs within the existing external courtyard, to provide a bin store, general storage and a secure bike shed."	27 May 2025 Granted with Conditions





MDW0867 | PLANNING REPORT | A01 | 9 June 2025 rpsgroup.com

5 PRE-PLANNING CONSULTATION

As part of the design of the proposed relief works and preparing the planning application, the public, stakeholders, and landowners were consulted to gather input and address concerns, as detailed in **Chapter 3: Consultation** of the enclosed EIAR. The following section provides a summary of the mentioned consultations.

5.1 Public Consultation

In developing the Proposed Scheme, the project team, including members from RPS and LCC, facilitated three Public Information Events or Days (PID). These were scheduled at key stages of the project with specific objectives:

- PID 1 To make local residents aware of the commencement of the project and to gather any relevant information from the public on previous flooding events, future concerns and any other item of interest in the area;
- PID 2 To present the emerging options for the scheme, and invite feedback from the public that may guide the optioneering decision;
- PID 3 To present the preferred scheme design and gather information that might inform the Environmental Impact Assessment of the scheme.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, a traditional public information day (PID) could not be held for the first public consultation event (PID 1). As an alternative, RPS collaborated with LCC to organise an online consultation period, running from February 8th to March 26th, 2021.

The second and third public consultation events (PID 2 and PID 3) were held on the 22nd of November 2022 and on the 12th of December 2023, respectively. These have been augmented by project newsletters and a project website.

Overall, there was general support for the Proposed Scheme. As the design developed, feedback and communication from the residents of Clonaslee were central to informing the optioneering and final design selection. Further details on items raised and how they have been addressed in the design are included in **Chapter 3: Consultation** of the enclosed EIAR.

5.2 Stakeholder Consultation

Four stakeholder consultations were undertaken between February 2021 and May 2024. A number of key stakeholders were identified and contacted via formal email.

These consultations were as follows:

- February 2021: Introduce the Proposed Scheme (Presenting PID 1 material)
- November 2022: Present the emerging options (PID 2 material)
- **December 2023:** Provide EIA Scoping Report for review and allow stakeholders to provide comments and insights into the design stage
- May 2024: Reissue of EIA Scoping Report requesting feedback from stakeholders who had not yet responded

Stakeholder meetings occurred with the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), Coillte, and Uisce Éireann (UÉ).

The items raised were mainly focused on environmental issues. Further details are included in **Chapter 3: Consultation** of the EIAR and addressed throughout the EIAR as appropriate.

6 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

6.1 Overview

The Proposed Scheme consists of flood relief measures for Clonaslee Village, specifically in connection with flooding from the Clodiagh River. Thus, it aims to protect the Clonaslee communities from flooding.

The Proposed Scheme has been developed following a detailed hydrological and hydraulic study of the catchment. All selected defences are required to deliver a Target Standard of Protection (SoP) for the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) rainfall event. The scheme's design life is 100 years. The scheme's adaptability to climate change has also been considered.

The significance of the location, encompassing natural, built, and cultural heritage, alongside the SPA and SAC areas upstream on the Clodiagh River, as well as the value of nearby Brittas Wood for the town of Clonaslee, has been acknowledged as part of the development of the Proposed Scheme. Opportunities for enhancing the amenity value within Clonaslee Village have also been identified, where possible.

Flood modelling undertaken by RPS shows the potential for flooding in Clonaslee from the Clodiagh River. The implementation of the Proposed Scheme will result in the creation of a *Benefitting Area*, as shown in **Figure 6-1**.



Figure 6-1: Model Predicted Flooding and Scheme Benefitting Area 1% AEP Flood Event

Source: RPS

6.2 Description of Proposed Flood Relief Works

The following sections provide an overview of the proposed flood relief works associated with the Proposed Scheme.

As illustrated in **Figure 6-2** and referenced in this report, the proposed flood relief works have been grouped into three areas: **Area 1**, **Area 2**, and **Area 3**. **Table 6-1** below outlines the key works within each area.



Figure 6-2: Proposed Scheme – Areas of Proposed Works

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

Table 6-1: Summary	of Proposed Scheme
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Area	Location	Summary of Main Flood Relief Works	
Area 1	Brittas Wood	 Embankment Debris trap with associated access slipway Culvert remediation 	
Area 2	Chapel Street	Flood defence wall	
Area 3	Tullamore Rd and Integrated Constructed Wetland (ICW)	Flood defence wallEmbankment	

6.2.1 Area 1: Brittas Wood

Area 1: Brittas Wood is situated to the south of the village and overlaps with the publicly accessible amenity trail.

The proposed flood relief works in this area (i.e., installation of a debris trap and slipway, construction of an embankment, and culvert remediation works) are designed to achieve three essential flood defence objectives:

- Catch fallen trees and other large debris that cause a blockage risk to the Clodiagh Bridge in Clonaslee Village
- Ensure that increased water levels due to debris trap blockages will not create a flood risk

• Facilitate ongoing maintenance and cleaning of the existing Brittas Lake Stream crossing culvert (600 mm diameter)

As obstructions to flow will be introduced to the channel, measures will be taken to ensure this does not lead to excessive scour or erosion on the adjacent banks. Soft engineering methods such as willow spiling will be used for bank erosion protection.



Figure 6-3: Area 1: Brittas Wood (Site Layout Plan)

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

6.2.1.1 Embankment

The Proposed Scheme includes the construction of a flood defence embankment within **Area 1: Brittas Wood**. This embankment will be built along a section of the existing Brittas Wood's amenity pathway track (publicly accessible amenity trail) that runs west of the Clodiagh River. See **Figures 6-4** and **6-5**.

The proposed embankment will prevent increased water levels, due to debris trap blockages, from creating a flood risk.



Figure 6-4: Embankment at Area 1: Brittas Wood (Plan & Long Section)

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).



Figure 6-5: Embankment at Area 1: Brittas Wood (Cross Sections)

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

A tree survey has been completed to inform the design of the embankment and to minimise tree removal. All trees that will be removed to accommodate the construction phase of the Proposed Scheme will be replaced once construction works are completed. Please refer to the *Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan* (RPS) for further details, included in Appendix 9-10 of the enclosed EIAR.

The proposed embankment comprises the following elements:

- **Main Structure**: The embankment will be a trapezoidal structure constructed from non-porous clay material. It will measure c. 145 m in length, with a maximum height of 0.9 m above the existing ground level and a maximum width of c. 6 m. Its footprint will be confined to the existing amenity pathway to minimise disturbance to the surrounding woodland vegetation.
- **Impermeable Barrier**: To prevent water seepage through and beneath the embankment, an impermeable barrier will be integrated into it. This will be achieved by constructing a concrete core that will be excavated below the existing ground level.
- **Pipelines**: Pipelines associated with UÉ water supply boreholes are located within the embankment's footprint. These pipelines will be excavated and backfilled with concrete to provide necessary cut-off and protection during construction. A ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey has been completed to provide the location of water mains in the amenity pathway. These will be further verified by slit trenching before detailed design.
- **Crest Design**: The embankment's crest will be paved, allowing vehicular access (Coillte, UÉ, and relevant private landowners) and walkers and cyclists to continue using the amenity trail. The crest will be c. 3.00 m wide, with side slopes of 1:3, merging seamlessly into the existing ground level at both ends to ensure no noticeable step or ramp-up.
- **Reinstatement**: The shoulder and side slopes of the embankment will be reinstated using the topsoil removed during preparation, allowing for natural regrowth.

For further details of the proposed embankment and associated works at **Area 1: Brittas Wood**, please refer to the suite of drawings, including site layout plans, sections and details enclosed with the application package.

6.2.1.2 Debris Trap

The risk to blockage of the Clodiagh Bridge comes from large fallen trees in Brittas Wood. To capture this type of debris, a coarse debris trap is required in the form of 'tree poles'. This is the only in-stream work proposed as part of the Proposed Scheme.

The proposed debris trap comprises the following elements:

- **Concrete Base.** A concrete base extending the full width of the Clodiagh River's channel. The top of the concrete base will be set c. 500 mm below the riverbed level to allow the re-naturalisation of the riverbed material above.
- **Concrete Poles.** 6 no. concrete poles cast into the concrete base. The poles will measure c. 3 m in height from the riverbed and c. 300 mm in diameter.
- **Erosion Protection.** Erosion protection on the adjacent riverbanks.

Water flow management will be required to construct the foundation and associated poles.

Maintenance access will be provided via a proposed slipway extending from the Brittas Wood trail pathway to the edge of the Clodiagh River. A locked gate and fence will be installed across the slipway, to facilitate machinery access only during maintenance activities.

Figure 6-6 below illustrates a cross section of the proposed debris trap within the Clodiagh River, including the associated concrete base and poles, as well as the proposed Slipway and access gate.



Figure 6-6: Debris Trap & Slipway within Area 1: Brittas Wood (Cross Section)

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

For further details of the proposed debris trap, slipway and associated works at **Area 1: Brittas Wood**, please refer to the suite of drawings, including site layout plans, sections and details enclosed with the application package.

6.2.1.3 Culvert Remediation

Brittas Wood's amenity trail crosses the Brittas Lake Tributary, where it joins the Clodiagh River via a c. 600 mm-diameter and c. 6.5 m-long culvert.

The existing culvert entrance has a history of blocking, which can cause water to back up and overflow onto public road before flowing down into Clonaslee village. To facilitate future maintenance and prevent vegetation from encroaching on the culvert inlet, the Proposed Scheme includes the installation of a culvert headwall on the upstream side.

The main elements associated with the proposed culvert remediation works include:

- **Headwall Installation**: To facilitate future cleaning and maintenance, a new precast concrete headwall will be installed at the culvert's inlet. Details are in **Figure 6-7**.
- Edge Protection: To ensure safety and maintain the area's character, a timber post and rail fence will be installed as edge protection around the culvert's headwall.
- Vegetation Removal—Maintenance Access: Localised vegetation removal will provide access to the culvert's upstream inlet, ensuring ease of maintenance.

The existing c. 600 mm-diameter pipeline associated with the culvert will be retained to avoid disturbing the Clodiagh riverbank.



Figure 6-7: Typical Culvert's Headwall (Cross Section)

For further details of the proposed culvert's headwall and associated works at **Area 1: Brittas Wood**, please refer to the suite of drawings, including site layout plans, sections and details enclosed with the application package.

6.2.2 Area 2: Chapel Street

Area 2: Chapel Street comprises the eastern side of Chapel Street, where there is an existing wall (c. 135 m), as well as lands to the northeast of Chapel Street, where the existing wall (c. 100 m) curves to the east, away from Chapel Street, as it follows the river bend. The existing wall acts as a flood defence, but its vulnerability is evident through records of past flood events in this location.

The proposed flood relief works in this area (i.e., constructing a reinforced wall adjoining to the existing wall and associated works) are designed to formalise the wall as a flood defence.

Figure 6-8 illustrates the extent of Area 2: Chapel Street.



Figure 6-8: Area 2: Chapel Street (Site Layout Plan)

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

6.2.2.1 Flood Defence Wall

The Proposed Scheme includes the construction of a reinforced concrete flood defence wall adjoining to the existing wall on the road side.

The key features of the proposed flood defence wall are as follows:

- **Existing Wall Retention**: The existing wall will be retained, and remediation work, including repointing, will be performed to ensure its structural integrity.
- New Wall: The new wall (c. 235 m in length) is proposed to be built adjoining to the existing wall. It will be constructed from reinforced concrete and clad in stone to match with the appearance of the existing wall. In effect, the existing wall will be widened by c. 0.5 m.
- **Height**: The existing wall's height ranges from 0.8 m to 1.2m from the existing adjacent ground level. This is sufficient for flood defence purposes; therefore, the proposed reinforced flood defence wall height will match the existing.
- Water Seepage Prevention: To mitigate the risk of water seeping underneath the wall, a trench will be excavated below the bed level and backfilled with non-porous concrete.

Associated with the construction of the flood defence wall, the proposed development also includes the provision of a public footpath (c. 140 m long and 1.8 m wide) along the Chapel Street section, and all associated works, including reinstating public lighting.

Figures 6-9 and 6-10 illustrate the extent of the proposed flood defence wall and details of its integration within the existing wall.



Figure 6-9: Flood Defence Wall at Area 2: Chapel Street (Plan and Long Section)

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).



Figure 6-10: Flood Defence Wall at Area 2: Chapel Street (Cross Sections)

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

For further details of the proposed flood defence wall at **Area 2: Chapel Street**, please refer to the suite of drawings, including site layout plans, sections and details enclosed with the application package.

6.2.3 Area 3: Tullamore Road & Integrated Constructed Wetland (ICW)

Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW comprises lands along the western and eastern banks of the Clodiagh River, downstream from Clonaslee Village, where an existing agricultural field and the ICW are located, respectively.

Figure 6-11 illustrates the extent of Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW.



Figure 6-11: Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW (Site Layout Plan)

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

6.2.3.1 Embankment

The Proposed Scheme includes the construction of an embankment at **Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW**. This will be parallel to the Clodiagh River and Tullamore Road, west of an existing embankment. It has been strategically positioned to avoid disrupting the existing mature treeline along the riverbank.

The key elements of the proposed embankment are as follows:

- **Offset Positioning**: The embankment will be offset from the existing embankment and the treeline on the left bank of the Clodiagh River, providing a secondary line of defence against flooding.
- **Dimensions**: The embankment will measure c. 130 m in length, with a maximum width of c. 7.5 m, and a maximum height of 0.9 m.
- **Inlet Pipe**: The inlet pipe to the ICW passed beneath the embankment footprint at right angles. It will be projected during and post-construction.
- Tie-in with Road: The embankment will tie into the side slope of the road to the north of Area 3.
- **Design Level**: The embankment's design level will be set c. 0.5 m above the predicted flood water level for the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) event, resulting in an average height of c. 0.8 m above the existing ground level.
- **Core Material**: The core of the embankment will consist of non-porous clay material, extending c. 1 m below ground level to prevent any flow path beneath the embankment.
- **Crest and Side Slopes**: The embankment will feature a crest width of c. 2 m and side slopes with a ratio of 1:3.

• **Surface Treatment**: The embankment will be topped with topsoil and grass-seeded, and it will be fenced off on its western side to prevent erosion from livestock.



Figure 6-12 illustrates a cross section of the proposed embankment.

Figure 6-12: Embankment & Flood Defence Wall at Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW (Cross Sections)

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

For further details of the proposed embankment at **Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW**, please refer to the suite of drawings, including site layout plans, sections and details enclosed with the application package.

6.2.3.2 Flood Defence Wall

The Proposed Scheme includes the construction of a flood defence wall at **Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW**, specifically, within ICW's grounds.

The key elements of the proposed flood defence wall are as follows:

- **Main Structure**: The wall will be made of reinforced concrete, measuring c. 70 m in length and c. 0.6 m in height. It will have an L-shaped configuration and will feature a c. 1 m wide footing.
- Base: The wall will extend 0.6 m below ground level to prevent any flow path underneath.
- Finishes: The proposed wall will have a shuttered concrete finish.

Figure 6-12 illustrates a cross section of the proposed flood defence wall.

For further details of the proposed flood defence wall at **Area 3: Tullamore Road & ICW**, please refer to the suite of drawings, including site layout plans, sections and details enclosed with the application package.

6.2.4 Temporary Construction Compounds

The Proposed Scheme includes establishing 2 no. temporary construction compounds (A and B) to facilitate the construction of the proposed flood relief works and measures outlined in previous sections.

These typical temporary construction compounds will comprise site offices, welfare facilities, bunded fuel storage areas, designated storage areas, and construction parking, all of which will be securely fenced.

Regarding wastewater management, it is anticipated that the compounds will connect to foul sewer networks where available. In locations where such connections are not feasible, the contractor will be required to provide welfare facilities in accordance with best practice guidelines.

The locations of the temporary construction compounds are as follows:

- An existing field to the north of the entrance to Brittas Wood, in close proximity to Area 1: Brittas Wood of the Proposed Scheme
- An agricultural field adjacent to a narrow straight section of Tullamore Road, in close proximity to Area
 2: Chapel Street of the Proposed Scheme

Once construction is completed, the site where the proposed temporary construction compounds will be reinstated.

Figure 6-13 and 6-14 illustrate the extent and location of the temporary construction compounds.

For further details of the proposed temporary construction compounds, please refer to the suite of drawings, including site layout plans, sections, and details enclosed in the application package.



Figure 6-13: Temporary Construction Compound A

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).



Figure 6-14: Temporary Construction Compound B

Source: RPS (Fully scaled drawing enclosed with the application documentation).

6.2.5 Other Ancillary Works

The proposed development also includes all associated and ancillary works to facilitate the proposed relief works, including clearance and vegetation removal; temporary construction signage, fencing and gates; replacement of public lighting; installation of fencing and gates; planting and landscaping, reseeding, and biodiversity enhancement measures.

7 POLICY CONTEXT

This section presents an overview of the policy context at international, European, national, regional, and local levels relevant to the Proposed Scheme. Further, it includes details of how the Proposed Scheme aligns with and/or contributes to the fulfilment of relevant policies, objectives, and guidance that have been identified.

7.1 International & European Policy Context

7.1.1 UN Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations (UN) published *17 UN Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) in 2015; see **Figure 7-1**. 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."



Figure 7-1: UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Proposed Scheme has been assessed using a multi-criteria analysis (MCA) based on the current OPW guidance. Four criteria were considered: technical, social, economic, and environmental. Chapter 2: Planning & Policy of the EIAR, enclosed with the application documentation, presents details of the assessment against the four criteria.

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

The 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."

The EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC requires Member States to assess the potential flood risk of all watercourses and coastlines, to map the flood extent and to 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 EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC 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 one such Area for Further Assessment (AFA).

With regard to the above, it is submitted that the Proposed Scheme, along with its design, has been developed and prepared specifically to meet the aims of the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC. The Proposed Scheme will implement flood relief measures that will reduce flood risks and protect human health, the environment, cultural heritage, and the economy associated with it in accordance with the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC.

7.1.3 EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC

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) 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 implementation of the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC is being coordinated with the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC and the current River Basin Management Plans by the OPW.

The objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC 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, it is to be noted that the Proposed Scheme will implement flood relief measures to protect Clodiagh River and, thus, not cause a deterioration in this waterbody. In this regard, it is submitted that the Proposed Scheme, along with its design, has been developed and prepared in line with the objectives set out in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, as follows:

- The Proposed Scheme includes protective and mitigation measures, as well as measures integrated into its design, to protect the Clodiagh River, as described in the EIAR submitted with the application documentation.
- The Clodiagh River has a 'Good' Status and is 'Not at Risk' (2016-2021 Third WFD Cycle). The Proposed Scheme will not negatively impact this status. Please refer to Chapter 11: Water and the associated Appendix 11-1 of the EIAR, which is enclosed with the application documentation, for further details.
- The Proposed Scheme will allow for managing water bodies based on river basins.
- As part of the design of the Proposed Scheme, 3 no. public information events were held. Please refer to Chapter 2: Planning & Policy and Chapter 3: Consultation of the EIAR, enclosed with the application documentation, for further details. In addition, information on the Proposed Scheme is made publicly available at LCC's website² Which includes details on the Proposed Scheme, programme information, a brochure and a questionnaire.

² <u>https://consult.laois.ie/en/consultation/clonaslee-flood-relief-scheme-public-information-event.</u>

7.1.4 EU Climate Change Strategy 2021

The European Commission adopted *a Climate Adaptation Strategy on 24 February 2021* (hereafter, the EU Climate Adaptation Strategy). It sets out how the EU can adapt to climate change impacts and become resilient by 2050. The EU Climate Adaptation 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 Strategy identifies flooding as a climate-related risk, and the need for flood protection is recognised.

With regard to the above, it is submitted that the Proposed Scheme will protect from the effects of flooding, which the EU Climate Adaptation Strategy identifies as a climate-related risk. The Proposed Scheme's design will provide for current predicted flooding, with allowance for adaptation for future climate change. Please refer to Chapter 5: Project Description of the EIAR, enclosed with the application documentation. Further, please see **Section 6: The Proposed Scheme** of this report for further details of the design of the Proposed Scheme.

7.1.5 Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 Nature Restoration

Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration *(hereafter, the Nature Restoration Law) is a regulation of the European Union to protect the EU's environments and restore* nature to a good ecological state through renaturation. The law is a core element of the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy and makes the targets set therein for the "restoration of nature" binding.

EU member states are required to prepare Nature Restoration Plans (NRPS) by 2026. An independent Advisory Committee on Nature Restoration has been established to support the development of Ireland's NRP.

The Proposed Scheme is considered to be in no way prejudicial to the overarching objectives of the Nature Restoration Law or the preparation of a national NRP.

7.2 National Policy Context

The following sections set the relevant national planning policy context.

7.2.1 Project Ireland 2040

7.2.1.1 National Planning Framework First Revision

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. In this regard, 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. -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.

The Proposed Scheme will implement flood relief measures that address current and anticipated flooding events in Clonaslee Village, derived from the Clodiagh River. Thus, the implementation of the Proposed Scheme will safeguard Clonaslee and its communities from flood risks, providing infrastructure to address climate change and manage the impacts of flooding events caused by changing climate patterns. Thus, it aligns with the provisions and vision set out in NSO9 of the NPF.

7.2.1.2 National Development Plan 2021-2030

This *National Development Plan 2021-2030* (hereafter, the NDP) underpins the NPF. It was published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) in 2021.

Under NSO9, which relates to the sustainable management of water and other environmental resources, it sets out strategic investment priorities, including delivering commitments under the River Basin Management Plan.

Furthermore, NSO8, which addresses the transition to a climate-neutral and climate-resilient society, notes the role of flood relief schemes identified in the flood risk management plans. These flood relief schemes provide protection to properties and economic benefits in damage and losses avoided, but also help reduce the country's vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change.

In line with NSO9 of the NDP, the proposed flood relief measures will allow for the sustainable management of flood risks associated with the Clodiagh River. Furthermore, consistent with NSO8 of the NDP, the proposed flood relief infrastructure will allow for climate change adaptation, safeguarding Clonaslee from the impacts of increased rainfall events.

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.

7.2.2 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 CAP 2025 being the most recently adopted plan. It is the third statutory annual update since the publication of the first plan.

The CAP25 builds upon the previous CAP24, refining and updating measures and actions required to deliver carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. It 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 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 will provide flood relief measures that allow for the sustainable management of flood risks associated with the Clodiagh River, thus addressing the climate change-related risk of flooding identified in the CAP25.

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

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030 (hereafter, the NBAP) published in 2024, has been prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The NBAP sets the national biodiversity agenda for 2023-2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required in the ways in which we value and protect nature. Thus, it 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 has five 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"

The NBAP set out a range of actions and outcomes within the framework of the above objectives. Within the context of the Proposed Scheme, 'Outcome 2D', which reads as *"Biodiversity and ecosystem services in the marine and freshwater environment are conserved and restored"*, is to be noted.

The following targets and actions are set under 'Outcome 2D':

- 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."
 - Action number 2D1
 - Action: "Relevant bodies such as DHLGH, DAFM, Local Authorities and partners will deliver a RBMP to better protect, enhance and monitor the ecological status of water during the third cycle of the RBMP."
- Target: "By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes are in place."
 - Action number 2D5
 - Action: "OPW will work with relevant authorities to ensure that Flood Risk Management planning and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), EIA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) minimise loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services through policies to promote more catchmentwide and non-structural flood risk management measures."

- Target: "By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes will be in place."
 - Action number 2D6
 - Action: "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."
- Target. "By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes are in place."
 - Action number 2D7
 - Action: "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."
- Target. "By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes are in place."
 - Action number 2D8
 - Action: "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."

With regard to the above, it is to be noted that the Proposed Scheme has been designed as part of an evolving design process, given due consideration to potential impacts on the receiving natural and ecological environment. Thus, the Proposed Scheme has been designed to ensure no significant effects on biodiversity during the construction and operational phases. In this regard, please refer to Chapter 9: Biodiversity and the Natura Impact Statement submitted with the application documentation. The assessment of the likely significant impacts on biodiversity concludes that no significant effects on the receiving environment arise from the Proposed Scheme, subject to implementing mitigation and monitoring measures.

It is also worth noting that a Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan has been prepared and submitted with the application documentation (see Appendix 9-10 of the EIAR). This plan includes measures such as the provision of bat boxes, bird boxes, replanting schemes, etc., which will ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment.

7.2.4 Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022-2026

This Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022-2026 was prepared by the OPW.

The Biodiversity Action Strategy (BAS) sets out OPW's approach to 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 NBAP.

It is noted that the OPW is an Irish government office whose primary function is to support the implementation of government policy. The OPW advises the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the Minister of State in that department, principally in the disciplines of property (including heritage properties) and flood risk management.

The BAS sets out actions relating to NBAP objectives. Within the context of the Proposed Scheme, actions relating to flood relief works are as follows:

- 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."
- 3.8: "Develop biodiversity opportunity planning for a range of demonstration flood relief scheme projects and drainage maintenance operations."

Regarding the above, we note that biodiversity considerations have informed the Proposed Scheme design. In this regard, Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the EIAR assesses likely significant effects on biodiversity and concludes that no significant effects on the receiving environment arise, subject to implementing mitigation and monitoring measures (see Chapter 21: Schedule of Environmental Commitments of the EIAR).

It is also worth noting that a Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan has been prepared and submitted with the application documentation (see Appendix 9-10 of the EIAR). This includes measures such as the provision of bat boxes, bird boxes, replanting schemes, etc., which will ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment.

7.2.5 Flood Risk Management: Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan

The *Flood Risk Management: Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan* (hereafter, the Climate Change SAP), prepared under the NAF (see section 7.2.8 below) by the OPW, concerns climate change and flooding. It has been prepared for the 2019-2024 period.

The Climate Change SAP sets out 21 no. actions that shall ensure the effective and sustainable flood risk management in the future. Within the context of the Proposed Scheme and flood risk management, the following actions are considered relevant:

• 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."

Regarding the above, it is to be noted that the Proposed Scheme's design will provide for current predicted flooding, with allowance for adaptation for future climate change. Chapter 5: Project Description of the EIAR, submitted with the application documentation, and **Section 6**: **The Proposed Scheme** of this report provides details of the design of the Proposed Scheme.

7.2.6 National Flood Policy 2004

In 2004, the Government of Ireland conducted a review of the national flood policy. This resulted in the 2004 *Report of the Flood Policy Review Group*, which established key points:

- The OPW is tasked with leading and coordinating the implementation of national flood risk management policy.
- While structural flood relief measures remain important, there is a shift towards prioritising non-structural measures such as flood forecasting and planning guidelines.
- The OPW, with input from other relevant State bodies as needed, is to develop a programme to implement the report's recommendations.

Implementation of the recommendations in the report has included, *inter alia*, the publication by the OPW and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) of the *Planning System and Flood Risk Management* guidelines in 2009 (hereafter, the Flood Risk Management Guidelines).

Subsequently, the *National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme* (hereafter, the CFRAM Programme), prepared by the Government of Ireland in 2021, was introduced.

The following sections provide information on the Proposed Scheme's consistency and/or fulfilment of the policies, objectives, principles and/or guidance in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and the CFRAM Programme.

7.2.6.1 The Planning System & Flood Risk Management 2009

The Flood Risk Management Guidelines were prepared by the OPW and DEHLG in response to the recommendations in the 2004 Report of the Flood Policy Review Group (refer to section above). Their publication is also linked to the mandate set out in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, which requires EU Member States to prepare flood risk management plans.

The Flood Risk Management Guidelines advocate a proactive approach to preventing flooding. This includes, for example, adopting general policies for protection, improving or restoring floodplains, and upgrading flood barriers.

Regarding flood zones and flood risk management, the Flood Risk Management Guidelines note that "the provision of flood protection measures in appropriate locations, such as in or adjacent to town centres, can significantly reduce flood risk" and that "Minimising risk can be achieved through structural measures that block or restrict the pathways of floodwater".

With regard to the above, it is submitted that the Proposed Scheme shall significantly reduce the risk of flooding in an established town centre, i.e., Clonaslee Village.

7.2.6.2 National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme

The CFRAM Programme was introduced following the 2004 Report Flood Policy Review Group's recommendations. The CFRAM Programme reflects the mandate in the EU Flood Directive 2007/60/EC.

The CFRAM Programme is central to Ireland's medium to long-term strategy for reducing and managing flood risk.

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).

It is to be noted that Clonaslee and environs, located at the Clodiagh River within the River Brosna catchment, were identified as one of the AFAs (ID no. 250420).

Further, the CFRAM Programme led to developing 29 Flood Risk Management Plans, including the FRMP, which identifies Clonaslee as an Area for Further Assessment (AFA) and concludes that an FRS will be progressed for Clonaslee.

Regarding the above, the Proposed Scheme will implement flood relief measures to address a flooding risk identified in the CFRAM for Clonaslee and its environs.

7.2.7 Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland

The Water Action Plan 2024 A River Basin Management Plan 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 Plan 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 RBMP. 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:

"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."

7.2.8 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.

7.3 Regional Policy Context

7.3.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031* (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 eastern and midland region.

The RSES is cognisant of the need to address flooding. This is directly reflected in the following Regional Policy Objectives (RPO):

- 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 previously (see **Section 7.2.6.2** of this report), Clonaslee and environs located at the Clodiagh River within the River Brosna catchment were identified as one of the AFAs (ID no. 250420).

Following additional detailed flood modelling of the Clodiagh River, the Proposed Scheme, a flood risk scheme, was prepared to provide flood relief measures that will de-risk 72 properties and 2 commercial properties from future flooding events. The Proposed Scheme will also protect leisure and amenity facilities, such as the GAA grounds.

It is to be noted that biodiversity considerations have informed the Proposed Scheme design. In this regard, Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the EIAR comprises an assessment of potential effects on biodiversity and concludes that no significant effects on the receiving environment arise, subject to the implementation of mitigation and monitoring measures (see Chapter 21: Schedule of Environmental Commitments of the EIAR).

It is also worth noting that a Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan has been prepared and submitted with the application documentation (see Appendix 9-10 of the EIAR). This plan includes measures such as the provision of bat boxes, bird boxes, replanting schemes, etc., which will ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment.

Regarding the above, the Proposed Scheme, along with its design, is submitted to be consistent with the RPOs set in the RSES regarding flood-risk protection and management.

7.4 Local Policy Context

The following sections set relevant local planning policy context.

7.4.1 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 flood relief defences.

The following sections outline the relevant planning policy set out in the Development Plan and the consistency of the Proposed Scheme with it.

7.4.1.1 Core & Settlement Hierarchy

In Table 2.4 of the Development Plan, Clonaslee is identified as a 'village' in the core hierarchy for Laois. See **Figure 7-1**.



Figure 7-2: Core Strategy Map

Source: Map 2.2 from the Development Plan (LCC, 2022)

7.4.1.2 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 7-3**. This map also shows that Clonaslee Village extends outwards from the eastern and western banks and northwards along the banks of the Clodiagh River.

The centre of Clonaslee Village, including lands adjacent and/or proximate to the intersection between Main Street (R422) and Chapel Street (L2006), is designated with a 'Town Centre' objective.

Lands within and/or adjacent to the Proposed Scheme are designated with the following land use zoning objective.

• 'Residential 1. Established,'

- 'Community-Educational-Institutional,'
- 'Utilities,' and
- 'Open Space/ Amenity'.

Uses considered appropriate, either 'Permitted in Principle' or 'Open for Consideration', on the zoning mentioned above objective lands include 'utility structures/infrastructure'. The Proposed Scheme will provide the necessary flood relief infrastructure and, therefore, is in line with the principle of land-use zoning for the lands part of the Proposed Scheme.



Figure 7-3: Land Use Zoning in Clonaslee Source: Map 6.1 (A) from the Development Plan (LCC, 2022)



Figure 7-4: Development Plan Map 6.1 (B) Clonaslee

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

Figure 7-3 also shows that various lands (depicted in light purple and blue) form part of the flooding risk areas. This is particularly the case of lands immediately adjacent to and/or proximate to the Clodiagh River.

Figure 7-4 (see above) identifies the areas surrounding the banks of the Clodiagh River in the village centre as having been designated as 'Architectural Conservation Area' (ACA).

As the above figures illustrate, there are a number of Protected Structures and Monuments in the locality. Most of the PRS are contained within the ACA, while Monuments can also be found outside Clonaslee Village's boundary.

In connection with the above, a landscape & visual and cultural heritage assessments have been carried out to consider the potential significant effects on landscape and cultural heritage arising from the Proposed Scheme. Details are provided in **Chapters 16: Cultural Heritage**, and **Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual** of the EIAR, enclosed with this application.

7.4.1.3 Relevant Policy Objectives and Development Management Standards

The Development Plan includes a comprehensive suite of development policy objectives and standards, covering topics like urban and rural development, infrastructure, water management, climate action, etc. Considering this, we have prepared **Table 7-1** below, which outlines specific policies and objectives from the Development Plan that are deemed pertinent to the Proposed Scheme.

Additionally, as policies and objectives form the basis of the Planning Authority's assessment of any planning application, **Table 7-1** also illustrates how the Proposed Scheme aligns with and/or contributes to the fulfilment of these identified policy objectives.

Policy Objective / Development Management Standard			Proposed Scheme	
Rural Areas Policy Objectives (Section 2.10.5, p. 50)	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.	•	The Proposed Scheme will deliver flood relief measures, allowing for the sustainable management of flood risks associated with the Clodiagh River. Implementing the Proposed Scheme will safeguard Clonaslee and its communities and facilitate future growth.	
Ecosystems Approach Policy Objectives (Section 2.11, p. 52)	CS 36: Contribute, as practicable towards achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which came into force in 2016.	•	Please see Section 7.1.1: UN Sustainable Development Goals of this report.	
Climate Action Policy Objectives (Section 3.2.3.5, p. 58)	CA 1: 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): • Climate Action Plan (2019 and any subsequent versions); • National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions); • Any Regional Decarbonisation Plan prepared on foot of commitments included in the emerging Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region; • Relevant provisions of any Sectoral Adaptation Plans prepared to comply the requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, including those seeking to contribute towards the National Transition Objective, to pursue, and achieve, the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the end of the year 2050; and • Laois Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024.	•	The proposed flood relief infrastructure will allow for climate change and adaptation, safeguarding Clonaslee from the impacts of increased rainfall events. The Proposed Scheme and its design have been developed to achieve objectives for climate adaptation set in the documents outlined in Climate Action Policy CA 1 of the Development Plan. This is demonstrated across the different sections part of Section 7: Policy Context of this Report.	
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.	
Transportation Development Management Standard (Section 10.1.2.4, p. 196)	DM TRANS 5: Where a development requires that the existing roads / footpaths and public lighting be improved / extended, or any other works carried out to facilitate a development, the developer may be required to provide these as a condition of planning permission	•	The Proposed Scheme includes the reinstatement of roads, footpaths and public lighting impacted during construction.	
Flood Risk Management Policy Objectives Section, 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.	•	See Section 7.2.6.2: National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme of this report.	

Table 7-1: Relevant Policy Objectives & Development Management Standards set in the Development Plan

Policy Objective / Development Management Standard		Proposed Scheme	
	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.	•	See Section 7.4.6: Flood Risk Management Plan Shannon Upper & Lower River Basin of this report.
	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.	•	The Proposed Scheme has been progressed in consultation and partnership with the OPW.
	FRM 8: Protect the integrity of any formal (OPW or Laois County Council) flood risk management infrastructure, thereby ensuring that any new development does not negatively impact any existing defence. infrastructure or compromise any proposed new infrastructure.	•	The Proposed Scheme will deliver flood relief measures and infrastructure in Clonaslee. These have been designed to integrate with the existing receiving infrastructure.
	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 principle of minimising impacts on the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams, and watercourses has guided the design of the Proposed Scheme.
		•	The likely significant effects of the Proposed Scheme on these sensitivities are considered in the EIAR enclosed with the application documentation.
	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.	•	See Section 7.2.5: Flood Risk Management-Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan of this report.
	FRM 11: Consult, where necessary, with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies in the provision of flood alleviation measures in the County.	•	Consultation with NPWS and IFI has been undertaken during the course of this project. In this regard, Chapter 3: Consultation of the EIAR, enclosed with the application documentation, provides details of the consultations.
	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 County Laois 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 County Laois Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is considered further in Section 7.4.2: County Laois Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of this report.
	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.
Policy Objectives for Biodiversity and Designated Sites (Section 11.4, p. 260-261)	BNH 2: Conserve and protect habitats and species listed in the Annexes of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) (as amended) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Wildlife Acts 1976 and	•	Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the enclosed EIAR identifies, describes, and presents an assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Scheme on terrestrial and aquatic ecology and takes account of the EU Habitats Directive, the

Policy Objective / Deve	lopment Management Standard	Pro	oposed Scheme
	2010 (as amended) and the Flora Protection Orders.		Birds Directive, the Wildlife Act and the Flora Protection Order. The residual effects at construction and operational phases, following the implementation of mitigation and monitoring measures, are predicted to be temporary and not significant.
	BNH 5: Projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 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 shall not be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)[1]. Screening for AAs and AAs undertaken shall take into account invasive species as relevant.	•	An NIS has been prepared for the Proposed Scheme. It concludes that subject to the implementation of bespoke mitigation measures and monitoring, as detailed above, it can be objectively concluded that the Proposed Scheme, on its own and in combination with other plans and projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of these European Sites, having regard to site-specific conservation objectives.
	BNH 6 : Assess, in accordance with the relevant legislation, all proposed developments which are likely to have a significant effect (directly or through indirect or cumulative impact) on designated natural heritage sites, sites proposed for designation and protected species.	•	The enclosed EIAR considers the impact of the Proposed Scheme on designated natural heritage sites, sites proposed for designation, and protected species. Chapter 9: Biodiversity concludes that with all mitigation and monitoring measures in place during the construction and operational phase, the residual effects on biodiversity are predicted to be temporary and not significant.
		•	Chapter 16: Cultural Heritage includes an assessment of impacts on cultural heritage associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Scheme.
	BNH 7: Protect Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) from developments that would adversely affect their special interests.	•	Connectivity between the Proposed Scheme and NHAs is considered in Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the EIAR. Chapter 9: Biodiversity concludes that with all mitigation and monitoring measures in
			place during the construction and operational phase, the residual effects on biodiversity are predicted to be temporary and not significant.
	BNH 13: It is a policy objective of the Council to require new developments to identify, protect and enhance ecological features by making provision for local biodiversity (for example, through provision of swift boxes or bricks, bat roost boxes, green roofs, etc.) and improve the ecological coherence of wider green infrastructure.	•	The Proposed Scheme has been designed to ensure no significant effects on biodiversity during the construction and operational phases. In this regard, refer to Chapter 9: Biodiversity and the Natura Impact Statement submitted with the application documentation. The result of the assessment of likely significant effects on biodiversity concludes that no significant effects on the receiving environment arise from the Proposed Scheme, subject to the implementation of mitigation measures.
		•	It is also worth noting that a Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan has been prepared and submitted with the

Policy Objective / Deve	lopment Management Standard	Pro	oposed Scheme
			application documentation (see Appendix 9-10 of the EIAR). This includes measures such as the provision of bat boxes, bird boxes, replanting schemes, etc., which will ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment.
	BNH 14: It is an objective of the Council to protect existing swift roosts as identified in the County Swift Survey and ensure existing nest sites are not lost through inappropriate renovation or destruction.	•	Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the EIAR, enclosed with the application documentation, assesses the impact of the proposed scheme on biodiversity, including bats.
		•	Chapter 9: Biodiversity concludes that with all mitigation and monitoring measures in place during the construction and operational phase, the residual effects on biodiversity are predicted to be temporary and not significant.
Development Management Standard for Designated Sites (Section 11.4, p. 264)	DM BNH 1: DEVELOPMENTS IN PROXIMITY TO PNHA: Where a development is of a significant scale or in close proximity to a pNHA, the Council will require an Ecological Impact Assessment to determine the impact of the proposed development on the designated site or natural heritage.	•	Assessment of the likely significant effects on biodiversity, including pNHA, has been considered in Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the EIAR.
		•	Chapter 9: Biodiversity concludes that with all mitigation and monitoring measures in place during the construction and operational phase, the residual effects on biodiversity are predicted to be temporary and not significant.
		•	An NIS has been prepared for the Proposed Scheme and is enclosed under separate cover. It concludes that subject to the implementation of bespoke mitigation measures and monitoring, as detailed above, it can be objectively concluded that the Proposed Scheme, on its own and in combination with other plans and projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of these European Sites, having regard to site-specific conservation objectives.
	DM BNH 2: APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT: Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive requires an Appropriate Assessment of any plan or project whether within or outside a designated Natura 2000 site, which does not directly relate to the management of the site but may impact upon its conservation objectives. All planning applications shall be screened for Appropriate Assessment and a Phase II Appropriate Assessment carried out if necessary. Where full Appropriate Assessment is required, the assessment shall be based on best scientific knowledge, by a person with ecological expertise. It shall address the potential impacts of the plan or project on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site. The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of approving the plan or project, considered with any current	•	An NIS has been prepared for the Proposed Scheme and is enclosed under separate cover. It concludes that subject to the implementation of bespoke mitigation measures and monitoring, as detailed above, it can be objectively concluded that the Proposed Scheme, on its own and in combination with other plans and projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of these European Sites, having regard to site-specific conservation objectives.

Policy Objective / Development Management Standard		Pro	oposed Scheme
	policies impacting on the site. The potential impacts of policies outside Natura 2000 sites but potentially impacting upon them (known as 'ex situ' impacts) must also be included in the assessment. (Refer to: Appropriate Assessment of Plans and projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities, DEHLG (2009).		
Policy Objectives for Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows (Section 11.6, p. 269)	BNH 26: Protect individual trees, groups of trees and woodland in the interests of landscape conservation (including townscapes) and nature conservation as part of the development management process.	•	The Proposed Scheme has been designed to minimise tree and hedgerow removal. Refer to Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the EIAR submitted with the application and the accompanying Arborist's Report. It is also worth noting that the Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan has been prepared and submitted with the application documentation (see Appendix 9-10 of the EIAR), which includes measures to increase local biodiversity.
	BNH 28: Ensure that hedgerow removal to facilitate development is kept to an absolute minimum and, where unavoidable, a requirement for mitigation planting will be required comprising a hedge of similar length and species composition to the original, established as close as is practicable to the original and where possible linking in to existing adjacent hedges. Native plants of a local provenance should be used for any such planting.	•	See response to policy objective BNH 26.
	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.	•	Assessment of the likely significant effects on biodiversity has been considered in Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the EIAR. Chapter 9: Biodiversity concludes that with all mitigation and monitoring measures in place during the construction and operational phase, the residual effects on biodiversity are predicted to be temporary and not significant.
Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows Development Management Standards (Section 11.6, p. 269)	DM BNH 4: MATURE TREES: Where there are trees within an application site, or on land adjacent to it that could influence or be affected by proposed development (including street trees), the planning application must include a detailed submission prepared by a suitably qualified Arboriculturist in accordance with British Standard 5837: 2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations'. A Tree Management Plan shall be provided to ensure that trees are adequately protected during development and incorporated into the design of new developments.	•	See response to policy objective BNH 26.
	DM BNH 5: HEDGEROWS: In dealing with applications for new developments, the Planning Authority will have regard to the	•	See response to policy objective BNH 26.

Policy Objective / Development Management Standard		Proposed Scheme		
	following: a. Retention of a connected network of good quality hedgerows; b. The value of hedgerows as green infrastructure (landscape, biodiversity, shelter, supporting services to agriculture/horticulture; c. The avoidance of the unnecessary removal of hedgerows; d. If it is necessary to remove a hedgerow, developers should be reminded of their obligations under the Wildlife Acts not to remove or interfere with them during the bird nesting season, between March 13t and 31st August. Also, replacement or compensatory planting of hedgerows using indigenous species such as whitethorn or blackthorn only will be required; e. Proposals to integrate hedgerows into the layout of a new linear feature such as a road/ pedestrian/cycle track; f. Depending on the potential risks of anti-social activity o requirements for a more garden look the margins of these new hedgerows/woodlands/new shrubberies could be planted with colourful non natives (for amenity) or spiny shrubs to deter vandals. g. By occasionally mowing the grass margin of hedgerows (or part of it), they will look managed. As litter will accumulate in long grass along their margins arrangements will have to be made to carry out regular clean ups; h. Encouragement should be given to develop a new linear feature of biodiversity value such as a hedgerow or dry stone wall, particularly if this type of habitat is found adjacent to the development site; i. The use of native tree and shrub species similar to those found in adjacent hedgerows in new or replacement hedgerows; j. The wholesale removal of hedgerows to facilitate the achievement of adequate sightline visibility for one-off houses in the countryside will no be encouraged.	r P P P P		
Policy Objectives for Waterways and Wetlands (Section 11.7, p. 271)	BNH 31: Protect waterbodies and watercourses from inappropriate development, to ensure they are retained fo 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.	 Assessment of the likely significant effects on biodiversity, including pNHA, has been considered in Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the EIAR. Chapter 9: Biodiversity concludes that with all mitigation and monitoring measures in place during the construction and operational phase, the residual effects on biodiversity are predicted to be temporary and not significant. 		
Policy Objectives for Public Rights of Way (Section 11.9, p. 271)	BNH 49: Development will not be permitted where a public right of way will be affected unless the level of amenity loss is minimised by: • the footpath/bridleway being diverted is by the minimal practical distance • the route continuing to be segregated from vehicular traffic • Appropriate legal procedures have been undertaken to extinguish the existing	 All public rights of way will be maintained. Wayleaves through Brittas Wood will be temporarily impacted during construction but alternative access routes will be provided. 		

Policy Objective / Development Management Standard		Proposed Scheme		
	right of way and to establish the new right of way to replace it.			
Policy Objectives for Landscape Character Areas (Section 11.10, p. 279)	LCA 3: Seek to ensure that local landscape features, including historic features and buildings, hedgerows, shelter belts and stone walls, are retained, protected and enhanced where appropriate, so as to preserve the local landscape and character of an area, whilst providing for future development.	•	This design of the scheme maintains the Character of the area. The most significant works area is the required work to the Chapel Street wall. A new reinforced concrete wall needs to be built, but it will be faced with a stone wall to match the pre-existing wall	
Policy Objectives for River Corridors and Lakes Areas (Section 11.10, p. 281)	LCA 16: Recognise the importance of river corridors for scenic value, ecology, history, culture and for recreational purposes such as walking, cycling and various on-water activities.	•	The design of the Proposed Scheme has sought to maintain the scenic value, ecology, history, culture and recreational value of the Clodiagh River.	
	LCA 17: Maintain the rivers throughout the county whilst ensuring that all works are carried out subject to appropriate environmental assessment in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, in respect of any proposed development likely to have an impact on a designated natural heritage site, site proposed to be designated and any additional sites that may be designated during the period of this Plan.	•	An NIS has been prepared for the Proposed Scheme. It concludes that, subject to the implementation of bespoke mitigation measures and monitoring, as detailed above, it can be objectively concluded that the Proposed Scheme, on its own and in combination with other plans and projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of these European Sites, having regard to site-specific conservation objectives.	
	LCA 18: Preserve riverside historic features and their landscape settings and Conserve valuable habitats focused on and around river corridors and estuaries including European and national designations	•	The design of the Proposed Scheme has sought to maintain the riverside landscape and settings.	
Policy Objectives for Views and Prospects (Section 11.11.1, p. 283)	SV 1: Protect views from designated scenic routes indicated in Table 11.7 and Map 11.8 (Scenic Views and Prospects in County Laois) of the Plan, by avoiding any development that could disrupt the vistas or disproportionately impact on the landscape character of the area, thereby affecting the scenic and amenity value of the views. Note: Table 11.7 contains Scenic View 017: R422 in the townlands of Clonaslee: Views over farmland and Slieve Bloom Mountains and Road No. L5757 in the townlands of Clonaslee - Views of Cullahill Castle and	•	As detailed in Chapter 17: Landscape & Visual, there are no designated views and prospects 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 southerly away from the Proposed Scheme. Chapter 17: Landscape & Visual concludes that during construction, the effects on landscape and visual amenity will vary in intensity through the	
	Knockmannon Hill.		construction period. As these effects are largely temporary, short term and reversible, these were not considered to be significant. During the long-term operation of the Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme, effects on the townscape of Clonaslee and the designated ACA were assessed to be minor to moderate and not significant.	
Protected Structures Development Management Standards (Section 12.3, p. 292)	DM PS 1: DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CURTILAGE OF A PROTECTED STRUCTURE: In considering applications for development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds of a protected structure, the Council shall have regard to the	•	No works are proposed within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds of a protected structure.	

Policy Objective / Development Management Standard		Proposed Scheme		
	following: • The various elements of the structure which give the protected structure its special character and how these would be impacted on by the proposed development. • The proximity of any new development to the main protected structure and any other buildings of heritage value. • The design of the new development that should relate to and complement the special character of the protected structure. • Outward and inward views from the protected structure are to be protected. High quality design will be a foremost consideration when assessing proposals for development within the curtilage of a protected structure, with particular emphasis on siting, building lines, proportions, scale, massing, height, roof treatment and materials. This does not preclude innovative contemporary buildings. High quality contemporary interventions will be encouraged over historic pastiche. Development proposals should include appraisal of the wider context of the site and structure including its demesne landscape, where applicable			
Policy Objectives for ACA (Section 12.3.2, p. 293)	ACA 1: Ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions within an ACA are sited and designed appropriately, and are not detrimental to the character of the structure or to its setting or the general character of the ACA and are in keeping with any Architectural Conservation Area Statement of Character Guidance Documents prepared for the relevant ACA.	 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. The scheme has been assessed by a Grade 1 Conservation Architect who will also inform the detailed design 		
Policy Objectives for Archaeological Heritage (Section 12.4.2, p. 299)	AH 1: Manage development in a manner that protects and conserves the integrity and character of the archaeological heritage of the county which avoids adverse impacts on sites, monuments, settings, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest and secure the preservation in-situ or by record of all sites and features of historical and archaeological interest	 Chapter 16: Cultural Heritage includes an assessment of impacts on cultural heritage associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Scheme. The design has been chosen to avoid areas of cultural heritage interest. Archaeological non-intrusive surveys have been carried out. Pre-construction test trenching is also proposed. 		
	AH 4: In areas of archaeological potential, where groundworks are proposed, ensure that all works are undertaken to the highest standard and the resultant information made publicly available. Developers will be required to have regard to Archaeology and Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers (ICOMOS, 2000) in planning and executing development in sensitive areas. The Council favours the preservation in-situ of archaeological remains, where areas of archaeological potential are located in town centres or villages, preservation of archaeological remains by record will be considered.	See response to Policy Objective AH 1.		

Policy Objective / Devel	opment Management Standard	Pro	oposed Scheme
Development Management Standard for Archaeological Heritage (Section 12.4.2, p. 300)	DM AH 1: ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL: In areas of archaeological potential, where groundworks are proposed, the Council favours the preservation in-situ of archaeological remains, where areas of archaeological potential are located in town centres or villages, preservation of archaeological remains by record will be considered. Where it is proposed to undertake groundworks to lands within an area of archaeological potential or in the vicinity of Recorded Monuments or Zones of Archaeological Potential, the Council will require the preparation of an archaeological field evaluation by a licensed archaeologist, the details of which will be submitted with a planning application. Such development shall be assessed in the context of the following documents:- • Accord with the Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (DoAHG, 1999). • The National Monuments Acts 1934-1994. • Heritage Council's Archaeology and Archaeology and Development Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers (2000).	•	See response to Policy Objective AH 1.

7.4.2 County Laois Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The *County Laois Strategic Flood Risk Assessment* (hereafter, County Laois SFRA) was published in 2022 to accompany the Development Plan.

Under the Flood Risk Management Guidelines, the purpose of the SFRAs 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 County Laois SFRA classifies Clonaslee as an area for '*Further Assessment*.' The County Laois SFRA notes that the Clodiagh River burst through a damaged wall as a result of heavy rainfall in 2017. In November 2009, Clonaslee flooded as gravel deposits in the Clodiagh River blocked a bridge, resulting in water flowing through the village centre.

The County Laois 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 County Laois 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, as well as hydraulic modelling."

With regard to the above, it is submitted that the Proposed Scheme will address an identified flood risk within Clonaslee.

7.4.3 Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2021-2026

The *Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2021-2026* (hereafter, the LHBS), prepared by LCC and the National Heritage Council, was adopted in December 2021.

The purpose of the LHBS is:

"(...) to provide a common framework through which appropriate agencies, organisations and other stakeholders can work together with Laois County Council and the people and communities across Laois in conserving, enhancing, celebrating and commemorating our county's heritage."

Further, it sets out four overarching aims, including preserving and promoting Laois's heritage and biodiversity while also honouring its historically significant individuals and events and fostering integration across its built natural and cultural heritage. In order to deliver on those aims, eight key actions are set. Within the context of the Proposed Scheme, it is worth noting action '2', which reads:

 "2 Investment in Key Sites and Programmes Objective: Build on investment in conservation and biodiversity undertaken to sustain and enhance key built, natural and cultural heritage assets in Laois."

The LHBS is implemented and monitored through the preparation of annual action plans. No action plan has been published for 2024.

Regarding the above, the Proposed Scheme, which will provide for flood relief measures and infrastructure, has been designed to protect Laois's heritage and biodiversity.

Regarding the interaction between the Proposed Scheme and biodiversity, Chapter 9: Biodiversity of the EIAR, enclosed with the application documentation, demonstrates that with all mitigation and monitoring measures in place during the construction and operational phase, the residual effects on biodiversity are predicted to be temporary and not significant.

Further, Chapter 16: Cultural Heritage of the EIAR, enclosed with the application documentation, includes an assessment of the likely significant effects on cultural heritage associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Scheme.

7.4.4 Laois County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

The *Laois County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy* (hereafter, the LCC Climate Change Strategy) was prepared by LCC's Environment Department for 2019-2024.

The LCC Climate Change Strategy sets out the measures, responses, and priorities for adaptation within the County over its lifetime. The strategy is based on six themes, including theme 4, which concerns drainage and flood management.

It is noted that projected climate changes for Ireland include an increase in flood risk between 2019 and 2024 due to a combination of higher river flows and an increase in extreme precipitation events.

Furthermore, under 'theme 4' is set 'goal 4', which reads: "great understanding of risks and consequences of flooding and successful management of a coordinated approach to drainage and flooding."

To meet 'goal 4' the LCC Climate Change Strategy sets a number of actions, 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 the LCC Climate Change Strategy regarding flood risk management 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."

The Proposed Scheme will address the potential flood risk within Clonaslee Village and is designed to accommodate climate change adaptation. Please see Chapter 5: Project Description of the EIAR enclosed with the application documentation, and **Section 6: The Proposed Scheme** for further details.

7.4.5 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 impact 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 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 various 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 set 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."

Having regard to the above, the Proposed Scheme, along with its design, is consistent with the objectives set in the Laois CAP to make the county more resilient. Thus, the proposed flood relief measures and infrastructure will allow for the sustainable management of flood risks and provide climate change adaptation.

7.4.6 Flood Risk Management Plan Shannon Upper & Lower River Basin

The purpose of 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 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. These measures aim to reduce 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
- Individual Property Protection

Clonaslee is identified as an AFA. In this study, the total number of properties identified as being at risk in in 1% Fluvial AEP Event is 42 no. residential properties and 3 no. non-residential properties.

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 noted that RPS was appointed to identify, design an FRS that is technically, socially, environmentally, and economically acceptable to alleviate the risk of flooding to the community of Clonaslee. Further study and modelling have concluded that the total number of properties at risk in the 1% Fluvial AEP Event is 72 no. residential properties and 2 no. non-residential properties. The Proposed Scheme provides flood relief measures for these at-risk receptors.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement

The *Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report* provides an overview of the potential impacts and effects on Qualifying Interests (QIs) and Special Conservation species (SCIs) of River Barrow and River Nore SAC, Charleville Wood SAC, Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA, River Shannon Callows SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA, River Nore SPA, Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC, Bricklieve Mountains and Keishcorran SAC, Glenade Lough SAC, Kilroosky Lough Cluster SAC, Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC, Lough Corrib SAC, Lough Gill SAC, Lough Lene SAC, Lough Owel SAC, Lower River Suir SAC, River Moy SAC, White Lough Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC, Lough Hoe Bog SAC and Lough Nageage SAC.

The AA Screening Report concluded that the Proposed Scheme has potential for Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) on 16 European Sites; Charleville Wood SAC (000571), River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162), Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (002170), Bricklieve Mountains and Keishcorran SAC (001656), Glenade Lough SAC (001919), Kilroosky Lough Cluster SAC (001786), Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC (002120), Lough Corrib SAC (000297), Lough Gill SAC (001976), Lough Lene SAC (002121), Lough Owel SAC (000688), Lower River Suir SAC (002137), River Moy SAC (002298), White Lough Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC (001810), Lough Hoe Bog SAC (000633) and Lough Nageage SAC (002135) due to the activities associated with the construction phase and/or the operational and maintenance phase of the Proposed Scheme.

There is also potential for in-combination effects with projects within Clonaslee village and licenced forestry activities on Charleville Wood SAC through water quality deterioration, and potential future maintenance activities on the Clodiagh River ADS channel.

The AA Screening Report concluded:

"The Proposed Scheme must therefore be brought forward to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment for consideration of adverse effects on integrity of European Sites and the need for mitigation of these effects."

Proposed Mitigation Measures have been provided in the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) lodged with this document. The mitigation measures that are included set out clear commitments for surface water management, aquatic protection measures, noise and vibration protection measures and measures to prevent environmental incidents and accidents, amongst others, during construction of the Proposed Scheme in Clonaslee. NIS has assessed the potential for direct, indirect, and in-combination effects on the relevant QIs of 16 European Sites.

The NIS concluded that:

"It is the opinion of RPS that in view of best scientific knowledge and applying the precautionary principle, and in light of the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites, the Proposed Scheme, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have adverse effects on the integrity of any European site(s), given the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in this NIS."

8.2 Environmental Impact Assessment

The application for approval includes an EIAR prepared in accordance with the requirements of EU and Irish National law, policy and practice.

The EIAR has considered the effects of the proposed scheme across a range of sensitivities, including:

- Traffic & Transportation;
- Population;
- Human Health;
- Biodiversity;
- Land, Soil, Geology and Hydrogeology;
- Water;

- Air Quality;
- Climate;
- Noise & Vibrations;
- Material Assets: Waste/ Utilities;
- Material Assets: Landtake;
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage; and
- Landscape & Visual.

Full details and a Non-Technical Summary are included in the application for approval. From the inception of the design and environmental assessment processes of the Proposed Scheme, the project team has strived to avoid, prevent, and reduce adverse effects, which are incorporated into the design drawings and specifications for the Proposed Scheme that have been assessed as part of the EIAR and NIS.

Where likely significant environmental effects have been identified during the EIA process, measures will be implemented to mitigate these effects as much as reasonably possible, with any residual effects identified in the relevant chapters of this EIAR.

9 CONCLUSION

The Proposed Scheme will consist of flood relief works along and adjacent to the Clodiagh River.

The Proposed Scheme aims to implement effective flood risk measures and defence infrastructure to address the identified flood risks in Clonaslee associated with the Clodiagh River.

Additionally, this report details how the Proposed Scheme aligns with the relevant policy objectives and development standards outlined in the *Laois Council Development Plan 2021-2027*, as well as with broader European, national, and regional statutory policies.

Having regard to the contents of this report and the enclosed plans and particulars submitted with the planning application, it is considered that the Proposed Scheme will provide essential flood relief for the community of Clonaslee, adhering to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

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