

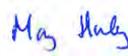
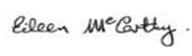
Appendix Q

Plan Level Environmental Protection Policies and Objectives

Q.1 Plan Level Environmental Protection Policies and Objectives

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This appendix lists the overarching Plan level environmental protection policies from the Galway City Council Development Plan 2023-2029, Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the referred to in this report. It also sets out how these relate to protecting European Sites through those policies and objectives.

Environmental protection policies from the Galway City Council Development Plan 2023-2029 and how these relate to protecting European Sites from potential impacts

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
Policy 5.1 Green Network and Biodiversity		General protection of European sites via any potential impact pathways
1	Support sustainable use and management of areas of ecological importance, parks and recreation amenity areas and facilities through an integrated green network policy approach in line with the Galway Recreation and Amenity Needs Study and where superseded by the Green Space Strategy, where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impacts on the integrity of European sites.	
3	Support the retention and enrichment of biodiversity throughout the city in recognition of the need to protect and restore biodiversity to increase the resilience of natural and human systems to climate change	
4	Support the implementation of the National Biodiversity Action Plan (2017- 2021) and the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (2021-2025) and support the actions of the City Council’s Heritage Plan 2016-2021 and Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2024 relating to the promotion of ecological awareness and biodiversity	
5	Support climate action through implementation of nature-based solutions that enhance biodiversity in the green network, including measures such as tree planting, SUDS, use of green infrastructure. Such measures will be informed by the Greenspace strategy.	
6	Promote the integration of nature-based solutions in all new developments as appropriate to contribute to the city’s climate resilience and require large scale development proposals to include a green infrastructure and biodiversity plan.	
23	Continue to implement measures to increase and restore biodiversity in open spaces and road verges through the no mow grass management initiative, and ornamental pollinator projects such as the perennial bulb planting scheme.	
24	The Council will pursue a range of funding sources, by way of development contributions and other Council income, along with Exchequer and EU funding to support the implementation of the plan. Where appropriate, the City Council Annual Service Delivery Plans will be focused on the delivery of the Plan objectives.	
Policy 5.2 Protected Spaces: Sites of European, National and Local Ecological Importance		Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects
1	Protect European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network (including Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) in accordance with the requirements in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and associated national legislation.	
2	Ensure that all plans or projects within the Plan area will only be authorised and /or supported after the competent authority has ascertained based on scientific evidence, screening for appropriate assessment and /or a Habitats Directive Assessment that : i. The plan or project will not give rise to an adverse direct, indirect or secondary effect on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or	

Environmental Protection Policies	Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
<p>ii. The plan or project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type/and or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions, and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or</p> <p>iii. The plan or project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons for overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000</p>	
<p>4. Protect, conserve and support the development of an ecological network throughout the city which will improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p>	
<p>5 Continue to recognise sites of County Geological Interest in the city identified by the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) and protect such sites from inappropriate development and protect geological NHAs should they become designated and notified to the Local Authority, during the lifetime of the Plan.</p>	
<p>7 Encourage, in liaison with the NPWS, the sustainable management of features which are important for the ecological coherence of the network of European sites and essential, by their linear or continuous nature or as stepping stones for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species</p>	
<p>8 Support the actions of the Galway City Council Heritage Plan 2016-2021 and any update and Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2024 relating to the promotion of ecological awareness and biodiversity, the protection of wildlife corridors and the prevention of wildlife habitat fragmentation</p>	
<p>9 Co-operate with the NPWS, landowners and stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of management plans for designated sites.</p>	
<p>10 Protect and conserve rare and threatened habitats and their key habitats, (wherever they occur) listed on Annex I and Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43EEC) and listed for protection under the Wildlife Acts 1976-2000.</p>	
<p>11 Ensure that plans and projects with the potential to have a significant impact on European sites (SAC or SPA) whether directly, indirectly or in combination with other plans or projects are subject to Appropriate Assessment, under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43EEC) and associated legislation and guidelines, to inform decision making.</p>	
<p>13 Support the inclusion of natural features, such as trees, hedgerows, stone walls, ponds and the use of green design features and the incorporation of biodiversity measures in developments layouts.</p>	
<p>14 Support and implement measures to control and manage alien/invasive species.</p>	
<p>15 Protect the ecological integrity of statutory Nature Reserves, refuges for fauna and Annex 1 Habitats.</p>	

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways	
Policy 5.3 Blue Spaces: Coast, Canals and Waterways		Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater	
1	Protect and maintain the integrity of the coastal environment and waterways by avoiding significant impacts and meeting the requirements of statutory bodies, national and European legislation and standards.		
2	Conserve and protect natural conservation areas within the coastal area and along waterways and ensure that the range and quality of associated habitats and the range and populations of species are maintained.		
5	Support the implementation of the recommendations of the River Basin Management Plan in relation to the protection of water quality of surface waters, groundwater and coastal waters.		
6	Ensure development and uses adhere to the principles of sustainable development and restrict any development or use which negatively impact on water quality.		
7	Have regard to European and national best practice when assessing development in or near coastal areas which is likely to have significant effects on the integrity, defined by the structure and function, of any designated European sites, protected coastal and marine fauna and flora.		
9	Work with stakeholders, including IW, OPW, EPA, Inland Fisheries and Corrib Navigation Trust in the management of the river and canal systems.		
11	Ensure that developments located adjacent to the River Corrib do not adversely affect the safe and accessible navigation of the river.		
12	Ensure the protection of the River Corrib as a Salmonid River, where appropriate.		
13	Restrict the location of structures other than structures with essential links to the waterway and public utilities within 10 metres of the River Corrib in agricultural zoned lands.		
16	Ensure any development within the aquatic environment shall be carried out in consultation with prescribed bodies and with adherence to their guidelines.		
17	Protect and maintain, where feasible, undeveloped riparian zones and natural floodplains along the River Corrib and its tributaries.		
18	Ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory mitigation, on protected species.		
Policy 5.5 Community Spaces: Greenways, Boreens and Public Rights of Way			Any potential impact pathways in the context of the protection of European sites and developing/managing access and connectivity between public areas, natural heritage areas and waterways
1	Provide controlled access and linkages into all parks/public open spaces, areas of natural heritage, including along waterways, where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impacts on the integrity of European sites.		
Policy 9.1 Flood Risk			Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathway in the context of the
4	Protect and promote sustainable management and uses of water bodies and watercourses from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains		

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
8	Protect and maintain, where feasible, undeveloped riparian zones and natural floodplains along the River Corrib and its tributaries.	River Corrib and its hydrological regime/functioning
Policy 9.2 Water Quality		Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater
1	Support the actions of the River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 and future River Basin Management Plan in order to promote and achieve a restoration of good status, reduce chemical pollution and prevent deterioration of surface, coastal and groundwater quality, where appropriate.	
3	Ensure development adheres to prevailing environmental standards and guidelines and accords with emerging legislation and strategy on the marine environment.	
4	Maintain and extend the Blue Flag Beaches status in regard to water quality, infrastructure and amenity provision for beaches in the city.	
5	Protect the city's groundwater resource in accordance with the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC and the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations, 2010 (SI No. 9 of 2010) or any updated legislation and limit any development which has potential to impact the objectives for protection, enhancement and/or restoration.	
6	Minimise and control discharges to inland surface water bodies, groundwater and coastal waters to prevent water pollution and protect the environment.	
Policy 9.3 Water Services		Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater
5	Support and liaise with Irish Water in the provision of a sustainable and effective wastewater drainage collection and treatment system capable of meeting the existing and future needs of the city and MASP area	
7	Support the decommissioning of existing individual effluent treatment systems which include septic tanks, where there is a feasible option to connect to the public sewer network. Galway City Council will collaborate with Irish Water in this regard.	
Policy 9.4 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs)		Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater
1	Ensure the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and sustainable surface water drainage management, wherever practical in the design of development to enable surface water run-off to be managed as near its source as possible and achieve wider benefits such as sustainable development, water quality, biodiversity local amenity and climate adaptation	
Policy 9.6 Air Quality and Noise		Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects from air and noise
1	Maintain air quality to a satisfactory standard by regulating and monitoring atmospheric emissions in accordance with EU policy directives on air quality and Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC) by promoting and supporting initiatives to reduce air pollution and by increasing the use of sustainable transport modes and developing urban woodlands, encouraging tree planting, conserving and creating green open space.	
Land Use Zoning Objectives and Development Standards		

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	Proposed developments, which include the storage and/or run-off of potential polluting substances, such as oil and chemicals shall be accompanied with details and specifications, which indicate how risk of pollution will be minimised by using best available practices. This shall also apply to the construction stage.”	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater
11.28	<p>Extract Industries/Quarries</p> <p>The operation of quarries can give rise to land use and environmental issues which require to be mitigated and controlled in the planning process. The protection of residential dwellings, residential amenities, natural amenities, the prevention of pollution, noise/vibration, traffic and the safeguarding of groundwater will be given serious consideration. The Council will have regard to the DEHLG’s Quarries and Ancillary Activities, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2004 when assessing all quarry related proposals, in order to achieve more sustainable aggregates development and to avoid and minimise adverse impacts on the environment. Particular constraint will be exercised for sites in the vicinity of/in areas of residential settlements, areas of archaeological importance, recorded monuments, European Sites and other environmentally sensitive (designated) areas, unless it can clearly be demonstrated that such quarries would not have significant adverse impacts on residential dwellings, amenities or the environment. All developments should have regard to and comply with the EPA publication Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (Non-Scheduled Minerals), (2006) and Compliance with Section 261 and Section 261 A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and any subsequent national guidance and changes to legislation. Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIARs) will be required with a planning application, where the defined thresholds outlined in the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) are exceeded for certain types of development. In cases where thresholds are not exceeded, the Planning Authority may still exercise its powers under Article 103(1) of the Regulation (2001) and require an EIAR for subthreshold development, where it considers the effect of the proposed development on the environment is likely to be significant.</p>	Any potential impact pathways in the context of the protection of European sites and consenting proposed plans or projects related to the extractives/quarrying industry
11.33	<p>Appropriate Assessment / Natura Impact Statement</p> <p>Under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive there is a requirement to establish whether, in relation to plans and projects, appropriate assessment (AA) is required. If, following screening, it is considered that AA is required then the proponent of the plan or project must prepare a Natura Impact Report/Natura Impact Statement. A plan or project will only be authorised after the competent authority has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, screening for Appropriate Assessment, and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or · The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European Site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest -including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or · The plan or project will have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European Site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative 	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest- restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.	
11.34	Invasive Alien Species On development sites, where invasive species are present, a control and management program for the protection against the particular invasive species, will be required as part of the planning process.	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects
11.35	Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) will be required to be undertaken for developments proposed in areas that support, or have the potential to support, protected species or features of biodiversity importance, and that appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are incorporated into all development proposals where the requirements of section 11.32 do not apply	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects

Environmental protection policies from the Galway County Council Development Plan 2022-2028 and how these relate to protecting European Sites from potential impacts

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	Policy Objective Priority Roads Projects	
PRP1	Proposed Roads Projects Galway County Council will facilitate the progression of the necessary infrastructure improvements including new roads/projects listed in Table 6.1: Priority Transportation Infrastructure Projects for County Galway 2022-2028 and those listed within Table 6.2: Regional/Local Projects Proposed for 2022-2028 subject to relevant Irish planning and European environmental legislation including Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and/or other environmental assessment, where appropriate.	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects
	Policy Objectives for Water Supply	
WS3	River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021: Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the relevant River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, and associated Programme of Measures, or any such plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of this plan.	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater
WS7	Water Quality: Require that new development proposals would ensure that there would not be an unacceptable impact on water quality and quantity including surface water, ground water, designated source protection areas, river corridors and associated wetlands.	

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
WS8	Proliferation of Septic Tanks: Encourage the use of high standard treatment plants to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution.	
Policy Objectives Wastewater		
WW4	Requirement to Liaise with Irish Water – Wastewater Ensure that new developments will only be permitted which are adequately serviced with sufficient capacity for appropriate collection, treatment and disposal (in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan) to the public sewer unless provided for otherwise by the plan. Developers shall liaise with Irish Water with regard to the wastewater (and water) infrastructure to ensure sufficient capacity is available prior to the submission of a planning application.	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater
WW7	To require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of SuDS measures be incorporated in all new development (including extensions to existing developments). All development proposals shall be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment including run-off quantity, run off quality and impacts on habitat and water quality.	
WW10	To require all new developments to provide a separate foul and surface water drainage system and to incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems where appropriate in new development and the public realm.	
Policy Objectives Air Quality		
AQ2	To require developments which would have the potential to have adverse impacts on air quality to carry out assessments of the impact of the development on air quality.	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects from noise
AQ3	To require the use of appropriate mitigation measures such as dust dampeners to minimise the potential impacts of developments on air quality.	
NP3	To require an assessment of impact of the development on noise levels, having regard to the provisions of the Environmental Protection Agency Acts 1992 and 2003 and the EPA Noise Regulations 1994 when assessing planning application.	
NP5	Require activities likely to give rise to excessive noise to install noise mitigation measures and monitors. The provision of a noise audit may be required where appropriate.	
Policy Objectives Light Pollution		
LP1	To require that all developments shall ensure lighting schemes are designed so that excessive light spillage is minimised to ensure light pollution in the surrounding environment including residential amenity, wildlife and near public roads is limited. Such lighting schemes shall be submitted and agreed with the Planning Authority.	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects from light
Lp3	To encourage the maintenance of dark skies in rural areas and to limit light pollution in urban and rural areas.	
Policy Objectives Marine and Coastal Management		
MCC1	Environmental Values of the Coast	General protection of European sites along the

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	Protect the amenity, character, visual, recreational, economic potential and environmental values of the coast. Ensure that natural coastal defences including sand dunes, beaches and coastal wetlands are not compromised by inappropriate development.	coastline and waterways plus protection from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on water quality
MCC2	To strictly control the nature and pattern of development within coastal areas and ensure that it is designed and landscaped to the highest standards and sited appropriately so as not to detract from the visual amenity of the area. (a) Development shall be prohibited where the development poses a significant or potential threat to coastal habitats or features, and/or where the development is likely to result in altered patterns of erosion or deposition elsewhere along the coast; (b) To prohibit development along the coast outside existing towns and villages where such development is not adequately safeguarded over the lifetime of the development without the need to construct additional coastal defences.	
MCC3	Protection of Coastal Habitats To strictly control the nature and pattern of development within coastal areas and ensure that it is designed and landscaped to the highest standards and sited appropriately so as not to detract from the visual amenity of the area. (a) Development shall be prohibited where the development poses a significant or potential threat to coastal habitats or features, and/or where the development is likely to result in altered patterns of erosion or deposition elsewhere along the coast; (b) To prohibit development along the coast outside existing towns and villages where such development is not adequately safeguarded over the lifetime of the development without the need to construct additional coastal defences.	
Policy Objectives Natural Heritage and Biodiversity		
NHB1	Natural Heritage and Biodiversity of Designated Sites, Habitats and Species Protect and where possible enhance the natural heritage sites designated under EU Legislation and National Legislation (Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and Wildlife Acts) and extend to any additions or alterations to sites that may occur during the lifetime of this plan. Protect and, where possible, enhance the plant and animal species and their habitats that have been identified under European legislation (Habitats and Birds Directive) and protected under national Legislation (European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011), Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 and the Flora Protection Order (SI 94 of 1999). Support the protection, conservation and enhancement of natural heritage and biodiversity, including the protection of the integrity of European sites, that form part of the Natura 2000 network, the protection of Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Ramsar Sites, Nature Reserves, Wild Fowl Sanctuaries (and other designated sites including any future designations) and the promotion of the development of a green/ ecological network.	Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects
NHB2	European Sites and Appropriate Assessment	Protection of European sites from any potential impact

Environmental Protection Policies	Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
<p>To implement Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and to ensure that Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to works, plans and projects likely to impact on European sites (SACs and SPAs), whether directly or indirectly or in combination with any other plan(s) or project(s). All assessments must be in compliance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. All such projects and plans will also be required to comply with statutory Environmental Impact Assessment requirements where relevant.</p>	<p>pathways associated with the project types listed</p>
<p>NHB3 Protection of European Sites No plans, programmes, or projects etc. giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects.*</p>	<p>Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with the project types listed</p>
<p>NHB4 Ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites. Where appropriate require an ecological appraisal, for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European Sites, or a proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively.</p>	<p>Any potential impact pathways in the context of the general consideration of European sites and existing/proposed development</p>
<p>NHB5 Ecological Connectivity and Corridors Support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity in non-designated sites, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, stonewalls, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features and associated wildlife areas where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p>	<p>Any potential impact pathways in the context of the protection of European sites and developing/managing access and connectivity that form part of the ecological network</p>
<p>NHB7 Mitigation Measures Require mitigating measures in certain cases where it is evident that biodiversity is likely to be affected. These measures may, in association with other specified requirements, include establishment of wildlife areas/corridors/parks, hedgerow, tree planting, wildflower meadows/marshes and other areas. With regard to residential development, in certain cases, these measures may be carried out in conjunction with the provision of open space and/or play areas.</p>	<p>Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects</p>
<p>NHB11 Increases in Visitor Numbers to Semi-Natural Areas, Visitor and Habitat Management Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that any new projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones. Where relevant, the Planning Authority and those receiving permission for development under the Plan shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a</p>	<p>Any potential impact pathways in the context of the protection of European sites and developing/managing access</p>

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.	
Policy Objectives: Water Resources		
WR1	Water Resources Protect the water resources in the plan area, including rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, springs, turloughs, surface water and groundwater quality, as well as surface waters, aquatic and wetland habitats and freshwater and water dependant species in accordance with the requirements and guidance in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/EC), the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the River Basin District Management Plan 2018 - 2021 and other relevant EU Directives, including associated national legislation and policy guidance (including any superseding versions of same) and also have regard to the Freshwater Pearl Mussel Sub-Basin Management Plans.	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater
WR2	River Basin Management Plans It is a policy objective of the Planning Authority to implement the programme of measures developed by the River Basin District Projects under the Water Framework Directive in relation to: Surface and groundwater interaction, Dangerous substances, Hydro-morphology, Forestry, On site wastewater treatment systems, Municipal and industrial discharges, Urban pressures, Abstractions.	
Policy Objective Wetlands, Turloughs, Watercourses and Fens		
WTWF1	Wetland Sites Protect and conserve the ecological and biodiversity heritage of the wetland sites in the County. Ensure that an appropriate level of assessment is completed in relation to wetland habitats that are subject to proposals which would involve drainage or reclamation that might destroy, fragment or degrade any wetland in the county. This includes lakes and ponds, turloughs, watercourses, springs and swamps, marshes, fens, heath, peatlands, some woodlands as well as some coastal and marine habitats. Protect Ramsar sites under The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (especially as Waterfowl Habitat).	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects
Policy Objectives Peatlands		
P1	Protection of Peatlands Ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological, climate regulation, education and culture, archaeological potential including any ancient walkways (toghers) through bogs	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects
P2	Work in partnership with relevant stakeholders on all suitable peatland sites to demonstrate best practice in sustainable peatland conservation, management and restoration techniques and to promote their heritage and educational value subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment Screening, as appropriate.	
Policy Objectives Invasive Species		
IS2	Invasive Species Management Plan Ensure that proposals for development do not lead to the spread or introduction of invasive species. If developments are proposed on sites where invasive species are currently or were previously present, an invasive species management plan	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species

Environmental Protection Policies	Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
<p>will be required. A landscaping plan will be required for developments near water bodies and such plans must not include alien invasive species.</p>	<p>impacts, as a result of effects from invasive species</p>
<p>Chapter 15: Development Management Standards</p>	
<p>DM Standard 18: Extractive Development a) Guidelines Compliance with the provisions and guidance, as appropriate, contained within Section 261 of the <i>Planning and Development Act, 2000</i> (as amended), by Section 74 and Section 75 of the <i>Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010</i>, the DoEHLG <i>Quarries and Ancillary Facilities Guidelines 2004</i> and the <i>EPA Guidelines for Environmental Management in the Extractive Sector 2006</i>. Where extractive developments may impact on archaeological or architectural heritage, regard shall be had to the <i>DAHG Architectural Conservation Guidelines 2011</i> and the <i>Archaeological Code of Practice 2009</i> (including any updated/superseding documents) in the assessment of planning applications. Reference should also be made to the <i>Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry 2008</i> (including any updated/superseding documents) and the Guidance on Biodiversity in the Extractive Industry (NPWS).</p>	<p>Any potential impact pathways in the context of the protection of European sites and consenting proposed plans or projects related to the extractives/quarrying industry</p>
<p>DM Standard 36: Public Water Supply and Wastewater Collection All new developments will be required to utilise and connect to the public water and wastewater network, where practicable. Applicants who need to get a new or modified connection to public water supply or wastewater collection infrastructure must liaise with Irish Water. In the first instance, the applicant should make a pre-connection enquiry to Irish Water in order to establish the feasibility of a connection in advance of seeking planning permission. Irish Water is not responsible for the management or disposal of storm water or ground waters.</p>	<p>Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects</p>
<p>DM Standard 50: Environmental Assessments a) Appropriate Assessment Screening for Appropriate Assessment and/or Appropriate Assessment will be required with all applications where it is considered that the proposed development may impact (directly and indirectly), or in combination with other projects, on a Natura 2000 designated site i.e., a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or a Special Protection Area (SPA), to inform decision making. The appropriate assessment shall be carried out in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive the <i>European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), as relevant.</i></p> <p>b) Ecological Assessment An Ecological Assessment may be required for small scale projects in other areas e.g. (proposed) Natural Heritage Areas, Ramsar Sites, Nature Reserves, National Parks) that may be considered environmentally sensitive and may have direct/indirect impacts on the natural heritage value of the area. The need for an ecological assessment should be discussed</p>	<p>Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects</p>

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	<p>with the Planning Section prior to the submission of an application. The assessment should include consideration of impacts in relation to biodiversity, ecological linkages, water quality and drainage.</p> <p>c) Environmental Impact Statement/Assessment Under the EIA Directive the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment is required. The thresholds for such an assessment are listed in the <i>Planning and Development Regulations 2001</i> (as amended). An EIS may also be required for development proposals below the statutory thresholds; <i>EIA Guidance for Consent Authorities on Sub Threshold Development (2003)</i> is available in this regard. The Planning Authority may require the submission of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the provisions of Part 10 of <i>Assessment the Planning and Development Regulations 2001</i> (as amended).</p>	

Environmental protection policies from the Clare County Council Development Plan 2023-2029 and how these relate to protecting European Sites from potential impacts

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	Development Plan Objective: Transport Planning	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects
CDP 11.2	It is an objective of Clare County Council: j) To ensure development (transport planning) is being delivered in compliance with the environmental requirements of objectives CDP 11.17 and CDP 3.3	
	Development Plan Objective: Water Resources	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater
WS3	It is an objective of Clare County Council: b) To ensure that developments that would have an unacceptable impact on water resources, including surface water and groundwater quality and quantity, designated sources protection areas, estuarine, coastal transitional waters, river corridors and associated wetlands will not be permitted; e) To protect groundwater resources, in accordance with statutory requirements and specific measures as set out in the National River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027; River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021: Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the relevant River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, and associated Programme of Measures, or any such plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of this plan.	

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
WS7	Water Quality: Require that new development proposals would ensure that there would not be an unacceptable impact on water quality and quantity including surface water, ground water, designated source protection areas, river corridors and associated wetlands.	
WS8	Proliferation of Septic Tanks: Encourage the use of high standard treatment plants to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution.	
Development Plan Objective: Wastewater Treatment and Disposal		
11.2	<p>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>(h) Where settlements have no public wastewater treatment infrastructure, and in settlements which have limited or insufficient capacity to facilitate development, to consider alternative developer led/provided shared use wastewater treatment infrastructure, including those incorporating nature-based solutions, to serve development where it can be clearly demonstrated that the system is in compliance with relevant EPA Guidelines on design standards and which will allow connection to a public system when it is provided. Any such consideration will be subject to the following criteria:</p> <p>v. Adherence to the environmental assessment criteria set out in section 11.4.3.1 of this plan.</p> <p>11.4.3.1 Environmental Assessment Criteria includes (but not limited to):</p> <p>The assessment must determine whether the ICW discharges, either via surface or ground, to any SAC, SPA or NHA.</p>	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on surface water or groundwater
Policy Objectives Noise, Air and Light Pollution		
11.40	<p>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>a) To promote the proactive management of noise where it is likely to have significant adverse impacts on health and the environment;</p> <p>b) To require developments which would have the potential to have adverse impacts on air quality to carry out assessments of the impact of the development on air quality.</p>	
11.41	<p>a) To achieve and maintain good air quality and help prevent harmful effects on human health and the environment in our urban and rural areas;</p> <p>c) To implement the provisions of national policy and air pollution legislation, in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate.</p>	Protection of European sites from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects from noise, air and light pollution
11.42	<p>a) To require proposals for development that include the provision of external lighting, to clearly demonstrate that the lighting scheme is the minimum needed for security and working purposes;</p> <p>b) To ensure that external lighting and lighting schemes are designed so that the incidence of light spillage is minimised ensuring that the amenities of adjoining properties, wildlife and the surrounding environment are protected; and,</p> <p>c) To require that external lighting is designed taking the Bat Conservation Ireland Guidance Notes, Bats and Lighting Guidance Notes for Planners, Engineers, Architects and Developers, into consideration, together with EUROBATS Guidelines for consideration of bats in lighting projects.</p>	
Development Plan Objectives: Building on the Shannon Estuary as an Environmental Asset		

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
12.15	<p>a) To facilitate appropriate development which is compatible with the areas of the Estuary which are designated under the Habitats and Birds Directives, whilst ensuring that the environment is protected, conserved and maintained and where possible restored, ensuring the dual goals of economic development and environmental conservation can be achieved</p> <p>b) To ensure that all proposed developments shall be in accordance the Birds and Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EC Directives;</p> <p>c) To ensure that all proposed developments do not compromise the achievement of the objectives of the River Basin Management Plans, prepared in accordance with the Water Framework Directive and the Flood Risk Management Plans prepared in accordance with the Floods Directive;</p> <p>d) To work in partnership with all relevant statutory and other bodies to support and facilitate the preparation of an Integrated Environmental Management Plan for the Shannon Estuary; and e) To work in partnership with all relevant authorities to support the preparation of a site-specific conservation management plan for the Lower River Shannon cSAC taking into consideration the status of the Shannon Estuary as a Marine Protected Area.</p>	General protection of European sites at the Shannon Estuary plus protection from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts.
12.16	To facilitate the sustainable development of marinas and associated amenities at appropriate locations along the Shannon Estuary ensuring that all such developments shall not adversely affect species and habitats designated by the Birds and Habitats Directives and is in compliance with all relevant environmental objectives.	
Development Plan Objectives: Environmental Designations in Coastal Areas		
13.1	c) To require proposals for development which may impact on a European site to undertake and submit a Natura Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Assessment Report should it be deemed necessary as part of any planning application in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats and EIA Directives.	General protection of European sites along the coastline and waterways plus protection from habitat degradation, and any associated species impacts, as a result of effects on water quality
13.8	To work with local communities, relevant stakeholders and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to ensure the proper and successful implementation of the Shellfish Waters Directive on the County Clare coastline.	
13.10	It is an objective of Clare County Council: To facilitate the sustainable development of marinas and associated amenities at appropriate locations along the Atlantic coastline, ensuring that such developments shall not adversely affect species and habitats designated by the Birds and Habitats Directives and is in compliance with all relevant environmental legislation as outlined in Objective CDP3.1 of this plan.	
Policy Objectives Biodiversity, Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure		
15.3	<p>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>a) To afford the highest level of protection to all designated European sites in accordance with the relevant Directives and legislation on such matters;</p> <p>b) To require all planning applications for development that may have (or cannot rule out) likely significant effects on European Sites in view of the site's Conservation Objectives, either in isolation or in combination with other plans or projects, to submit a Natura Impact Statement in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended); and</p>	Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	c) To recognise and afford appropriate protection to any new or modified SPAs or SACs that are identified during the lifetime of this Development Plan through the planning application process bearing in mind proposals for development outside of a European site may also have an indirect effect.	
15.4	It is an objective of Clare County Council: a) To implement Article 6(3) and where necessary 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and to ensure that Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to works, plans and projects likely to impact on European sites (SACs and SPAs), whether directly or indirectly or in combination with any other plan(s) or project(s); and b) To have regard to Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009 or any updated version.	Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with the project types listed
Policy Objectives Alien and Invasive Species		
15.29	d) To implement the requirements of EU Regulations 1143/2014 on the Prevention and Management of the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Alien Species and to manage invasive hydrological connectivity issues to European Sites to prevent the spread of invasive species to sensitive sites; an	Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with Invasive species
15.30	Green Infrastructure and Climate Change g) To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications associated with amenity and/or recreational uses under the heading of green infrastructure to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report contained in Volume 10 of this Plan;	
Development Management Guidelines		
A1.3.1	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) The requirement to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment derives from EU Directives 2014/52/EU (The new EIA Directive) which amends the preceding Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. The original EIA Directive (85/337/EEC) has been amended four times since its entry into force, progressively updating and expanding the breadth of its application. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is required with a planning application where the defined thresholds outlined in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) are exceeded for certain types of development. If the proposed development is sub-threshold, and the Planning Authority considers that the proposal is likely to have significant effects on the environment, then an EIAR must be submitted to the Planning Authority. The Planning Authority will have regard to Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) in deciding whether a proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and also the supporting Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (August 2018) regarding Sub-Threshold Development. This would occur where it is considered that the effects of the proposed development may have a significant impact on the receiving environment. Since the implementation of the new EIA Directive which came into force on the 23rd of May 2017 there have also been a number of additions such as the facility whereby a potential developer can request a Screening Determination and also a Scoping opinion from the planning authority. A person who is making an EIA application may ask the relevant planning authority to state in writing their	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	opinion as to the scope and level of detail of the information to be provided in the environmental statement (a ‘scoping opinion’). In addition, developers must ensure that the EIA report is prepared by competent experts. Recital (33) provides that experts involved in the preparation of EIA reports should be qualified and competent	
A1.3.2	<p>Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Habitat Directive Assessment</p> <p>In accordance with the EU Habitats Directive any plan or project with the potential to impact on the integrity of a European site must be Screened for Appropriate Assessment to determine if an appropriate assessment of the site is required. In the event that the screening indicates that the plan or project will, either directly or indirectly, on its own or in combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a European site(s), a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) or Natura Impact Report (NIR) must be prepared.</p>	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects

Environmental protection policies from the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 and how these relate to protecting European Sites from potential impacts

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
Economic Development Objectives		Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with home based employment related development
EDO9	To encourage and facilitate home-based start up enterprises of appropriate type, size and scale, subject to compliance with the criteria outlined in 5.10 of Volume 2 (Development Management Standards) of the Plan, and where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, residential amenity or visual amenity	
Rural Economy Policies		Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with agricultural development
EDO 54	To facilitate rural enterprises, and resource development (such as agriculture, agrifood sector, agri-tourism, commercial fishing, aquaculture, rural tourism, forestry, bio- energy, the extractive industry, recreation, cultural heritage, marine enterprise sector, research and analysis) and renewable energy resources (such as wind/ solar/ocean energy) that are dependent on their locality in rural locations, where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, residential amenity or visual amenity. Where proposals demonstrate measures to promote environmental enhancement through improved ecological connectivity, such as measures in the Pollinator Plan, additional native species planting or blue and green infrastructure measures, these will be favourably considered.	
Extractive Industry Objectives		Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with
EDO 62	To ensure that the development of aggregate resources (stone and sand/gravel deposits) is carried out in a manner which minimises effects on the environment, including the Natura 2000 network and its sustaining habitats (including water	

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
	dependent habitats and species), amenities, infrastructure and the community, and can demonstrate environmental enhancement through habitat management plans/ecological restoration.	development linked to the extractives industry
Marine Economy Policies		Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with developing marine aquaculture and the fishing industry
EDP 31	To support the sustainable development of marine aquaculture and fishing industries having regard to best environmental practices, so as to maximise their contribution to jobs and growth in coastal communities where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, residential amenity or visual amenity	
General Tourism Policies		Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with tourism development
TRP 2	To support and promote sustainable tourism development, accessible to all throughout the county and work in partnership with tourism organisations and adjoining Local Authorities, where necessary, in securing the development of tourism enterprises and infrastructure, subject to suitable locations where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, residential amenity or visual amenity.	
TRO 16	To ensure that tourism related accommodation such as holiday homes, hotels, caravan/camping parks, glamping etc. are primarily located within existing settlements where there is existing infrastructure provision to service the development and where they can contribute to maintenance of essential rural services. Certain forms of low-impact tourist accommodation such as Camping and Glamping/Pod sites may also be considered outside of existing settlements where it is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed to incorporate the reuse an existing structure as an integral part of the development. Adjacent to, and capable of availing of, an existing appropriate commercial enterprise or community facility or located on an existing farm In all cases the facility shall be of an appropriate scale for the location and shall have a high standard of design, layout, landscape, including Sections 6.2 and 6.3 of the Development Management Standards (Volume 2), and environmental protection so as not to impact negatively on the visual and residential amenity of the area or have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.	
Public Rights of Way Objectives		Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with public rights of way
	The Council, within the lifetime of this plan, aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify, preserve and enhance existing accesses and public rights of way to recreational areas including the coast, upland areas, lakeshores, river-bank areas and heritage sites. b. Where necessary, establish new accesses and public rights of way to recreational areas including the coast, upland areas, lakeshores, river-bank areas, and heritage sites in co-operation with landowners and the local community. When public rights of way are identified, the owners of the public rights of way shall be notified in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). c. Map public rights of way in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). (a) and (b) shall be carried out in accordance with best sustainable management practices, any guidance from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.	

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
Movement & Transport Objectives		Protection of European sites from any potential impact pathways associated with movement and transport
MTO 12	To continue the development of a network of Greenways in the county in accordance with best practice and where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network	
MTO 13	To investigate the potential of providing looped Greenways / Walkways for the Tier I, II and III Settlements of the county, where it can be demonstrated that such schemes will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.	
MTP 19	To support and encourage the provision of a high-quality rail network and service (including commuter services) and ancillary works for passenger and freight carriage to, from and within the county, where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.	
MTO 24	To seek to progress the National Road projects, listed in Table 6.5 subject, to required environmental assessments.	
MTP 27	The Council, in co-operation with the NTA, TII, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and other stakeholders, will continue with the strengthening and improvement of the local road network including links, by-passes and relief roads, with priority given to those serving the Key Towns and interconnection between such settlements, where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment or Natura 2000 network.	
MTO 34	To ensure any development associated with light aircraft/helicopter activity is approximately located in areas that avoid significant adverse effects on the environment, the integrity of the Natura 2000 network and residential amenity	
MTP 31	To support the development and improvements of ports, harbours, piers, slipways, associated shore facilities and access, where appropriate, where it can be demonstrated that the development aligns with the marine spatial plan and will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network	
Biodiversity, Designated and Non-Designated Sites Policies		Protection, enhancement and conservation of European sites from any potential impact pathways
NEP 1	To support the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage and biodiversity of County Mayo, including the protection of the integrity of European sites, that form part of the Natura 2000 network, the protection of Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas Ramsar Sites, Nature Reserves and Wild Fowl Sanctuaries (and other designated sites including any future designations).	
NEO 6	To protect surface waters, aquatic and wetland habitats and freshwater and water dependent species through the implementation of all appropriate and relevant Directives and transposed legislation and seek to protect and conserve the quality, character and features of inland waterways by controlling developments close to navigable and non-navigable waterways.	
NEO 11	To ensure that the impact of development within or adjacent to national designated sites, Natural Heritage Areas, Ramsar Sites and Nature Reserves likely to result in significant adverse effects on the designated site is assessed by requiring the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment report (EcIA), Environmental Report (ER), an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), if deemed necessary, and/ or a Natura Impact Assessment (NIS), if deemed necessary, prepared by a suitably qualified professional, which should accompany planning applications.	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects

Environmental Protection Policies		Protection of European sites and Potential Impact Pathways
NEO 14	To protect and enhance the ecological network throughout the county to improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.	Protection, enhancement and conservation of European sites from any potential impact pathways
NEO 16	To ensure that where the presence of invasive species is identified at the site of any proposed development or where the proposed activity has an elevated risk of resulting in the presence of these species, details of how these species will be appropriately managed and controlled will be required.	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects
NEO 18	As part of the implementation of Climate Ready Mayo, Climate Adaption Strategy, to develop and implement a Peatland Management Strategy for County Mayo that will: a. To identify damaged Peatlands in the county and those at risk from climate change and becoming carbon emitters. b. To initiate conservation and management of Mayo’s peatlands, particularly those sites nominated for designation as Special Areas of Conservation and Natural Heritage Areas, to preserve the habitat and their unique ecosystems, managing flood risk and other environmental benefits.	Protection, enhancement and conservation of European sites from any potential impact pathways
Development Management Guidelines		
12.1.1	<p>Environmental Assessments</p> <p>The following measures shall be applied in respect of designated environmental sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate Assessment: Screening for Appropriate Assessment and/or Appropriate Assessment will be required with all applications where it is considered that the proposed development may impact (directly and indirectly), or in combination with other projects, on a Natura 2000 designated site i.e., a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or a Special Protection Area (SPA), to inform decision making. The appropriate assessment shall be carried out in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and shall identify and evaluate the direct and indirect effects, which the development would be likely to have upon the designated site. See Section See Section 13.1 for further Guidance on the requirements of an Appropriate Assessment. • Ecological Assessment: An Ecological Assessment may be required for small scale projects in other areas e.g. (proposed) Natural Heritage Areas, Ramsar Sites, Nature Reserves, National Parks) that may be considered environmentally sensitive and may have direct/indirect impacts on the natural heritage value of the area. The need for an ecological assessment should be discussed with the Planning Section prior to the submission of an application. The assessment should include consideration of impacts in relation to biodiversity, ecological linkages, water quality and drainage. See Section 13.6 for further Guidance on the requirements of an Ecological Assessment • Environmental Impact Assessment: Under the EIA Directive the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment is required. The thresholds for such an assessment are listed in the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). An EIAR may also be required for development proposals below the statutory thresholds; EIA Guidance for Consent Authorities on Sub Threshold Development (2003) is available in this regard. The Planning Authority may require the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) in accordance with the provisions of Part 10 of Assessment the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). 	Protection of European sites in considering and consenting proposed plans or projects

