

# SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

## APPENDIX III – NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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FOR THE

### SLIGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2024-2030

**for: Sligo County Council**

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Riverside  
County Sligo



**by: CAAS Ltd.**

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# Section 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

This is the Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report for the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030, hereafter referred to as the “Plan”. The purpose of the Environmental Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of the Plan. The Environmental Report has been prepared as part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process for the Plan.

## What is SEA?

SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a proposed plan, or other strategic action, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic, social and other considerations.

## Why is SEA needed? The Benefits

SEA is the planning authority’s and the public’s guide to what are generally the best areas for development in the County.

SEA enables the planning authority to direct development towards robust, well-served and connected areas in the County – thereby facilitating the general avoidance of incompatible areas in the most sensitive, least well-served and least well-connected areas.

SEA provides greater certainty to the public and to developers. Plans are more likely to be adopted without delays or challenges and planning applications are more likely to be granted permission. Environmental mitigation is more likely to cost less.

An overlay of environmental sensitivities in County Sligo is shown on Figure 1.1.

The overlay mapping shows that environmental sensitivities are not evenly distributed throughout the County. Most of the County is identified as having low to moderate levels of sensitivity.

The most sensitive areas in the County include:

- Upland areas, such as Knocknarea, the Dartry Mountains and the Ox Mountains in the northern half of the County – on account of landscape designations, landslide susceptibility, ecological designations and groundwater vulnerability;
- Lakes throughout the County, including Lough Gara and Lough Arrow, on account of ecological and landscape designations, water status and flood risk;
- Certain locations and areas within the existing built-up footprint of the County’s settlements, on account of cultural heritage designations, including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, Entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas;
- Coastal areas and areas adjacent to rivers and streams, on account of ecological and visual sensitivities and elevated levels of flood risk; and
- Extensive areas of extreme and high groundwater vulnerability throughout the County.

### **How does the SEA work?**

All of the main environmental issues in the area were assembled and considered by the team who prepared the Plan. This helped them to devise a Plan that contributes towards the protection and management of environmental sensitivities. It also helped to identify wherever potential conflicts between the Plan and the environment exist and enabled these conflicts to be mitigated.

The SEA was scoped in consultation with designated environmental authorities.

### **What is included in the Environmental Report that accompanies the Plan?**

- A description of the environment and the key environmental issues;
- A description and assessment of alternatives for the Plan;
- An assessment of the provisions of the Plan; and,
- Mitigation measures, which will avoid/reduce the environmental effects of implementing the Plan and will contribute towards compliance with important environmental protection legislation.

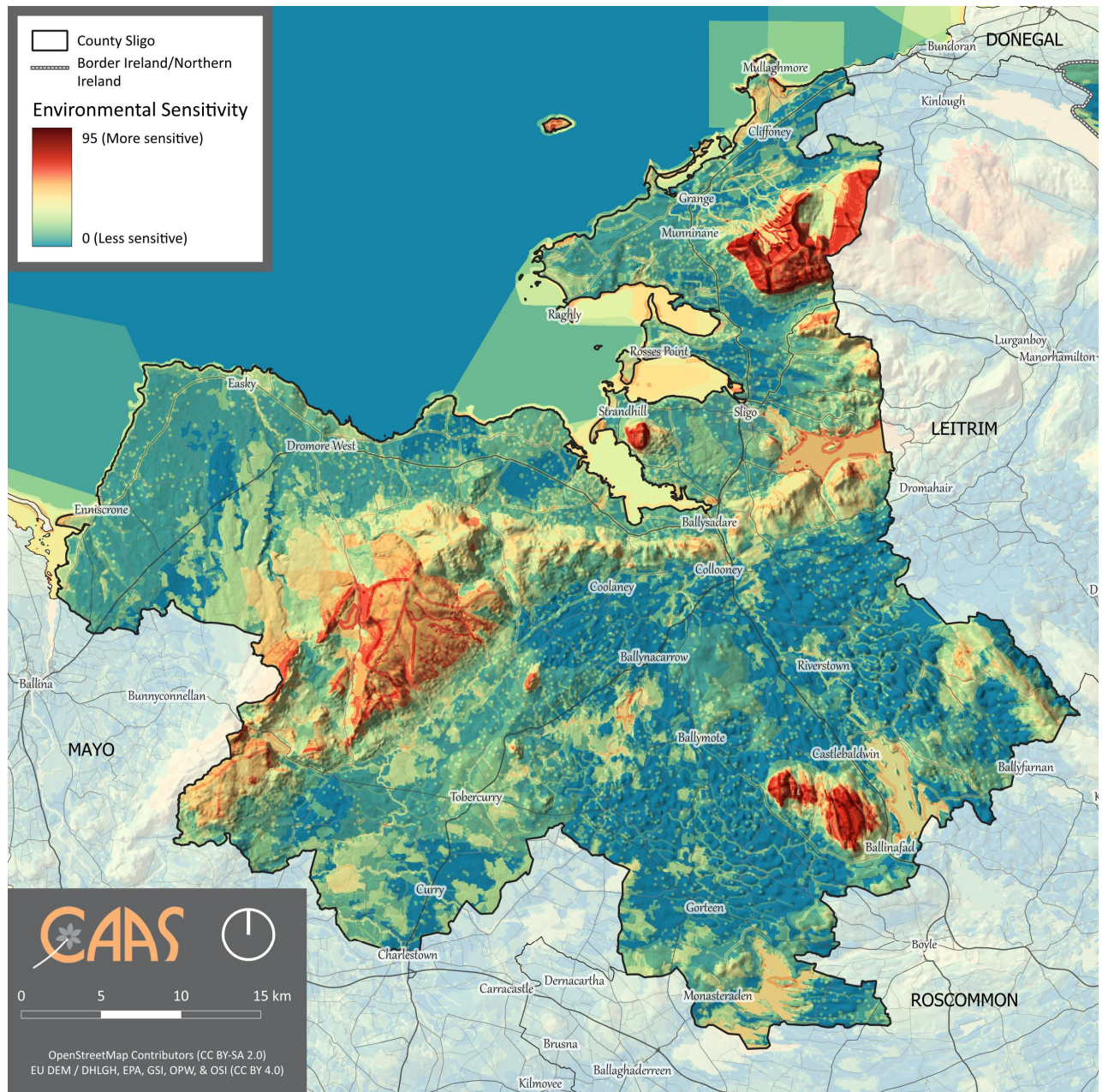
### **Difficulties Encountered during the SEA process**

No significant difficulties have been encountered during the undertaking of the assessment to date. There was limited water services information available for some settlements within the County however objectives requiring the provision of appropriate levels of water services alongside new development have been integrated into the Plan.

There is a data gap relating to WFD surface water status data. There are a number of waterbodies within the Plan area with overall status currently not assigned to them and the term “unassigned status” applies in respect of these waterbodies. The SEA ensured that the Plan contains measures that will contribute towards the maintenance and improvement of status of all water bodies within the zone of influence.

### **What happens at the end of the process?**

An SEA Statement is prepared which summarises, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan.



**Figure 1.1 Overlay of Environmental Sensitivities**

## Section 2 The Plan

### 2.1 Introduction and Content

The Sligo County Development Plan is a land use plan and overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area of County Sligo over the six-year period 2024-2030. The Plan sets out the Council's proposed policies and objectives for the development of the County over the Plan period.

The Plan provides for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Sligo over the period 2024-2030. The Plan has been structured in four volumes, with a number of appendices.

Volume 1 contains the sectoral strategies which, together, make up the Core Strategy of the Development Plan: Settlement, Housing, Economic, Retail and Transport Strategies. Climate Action is located at the forefront of the Plan, setting the framework for the Council's commitments and obligations under the Climate Action Plan.

Volume 2 provides the detailed compact growth designations, zoning and specific objectives for the 12 towns and villages where development will be promoted during the Plan period. Fewer objectives are included in relation to Sligo Town, for which a Local Area Plan must be prepared following the adoption of the Development Plan.

Volume 3 contains all the general policies and objectives designed to guide development in the County, thematically grouped in chapters such as Residential Development, Community and Social Infrastructure, Economic Development, Water infrastructure, Transport Infrastructure, Energy and Telecommunications etc. This volume also sets out the development management standards used by the Planning Authority in the assessment of planning applications.

Volume 4 includes specific objectives for the villages sustaining rural communities, where no significant population or housing growth is envisaged.

Among the documents that accompany the Development Plan, having informed its policies and objectives, the most significant are the Housing Strategy, the Sligo Local Transport Plan and the Wine Street Car Park Master Plan.

### 2.2 Vision and Summary of Settlement Strategy

The Plan identifies the Vision for Sligo in 2030 from the "Sligo 2030: One voice, One vision – Local Economic & Community Plan 2023-2030";

"The Vision is for a smart, sustainable, and socially inclusive Sligo; one that cherishes its vibrant communities, protects and celebrates its unique environment and rich culture, and is a champion of innovative growth and development."

County Sligo's settlement structure and hierarchy have remained largely unaltered for many decades, due to the slow pace of economic and social changes, similar to the entire North-West Region, where development continues to lag behind the EU average.

The National Planning Framework/Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy designation of Sligo Town as a Regional Growth Centre recognises the Town's complex role in the North-West and places it at the top of the County's Settlement Hierarchy.

Consistent with the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the North West, the Core Strategy will continue to focus on developing Sligo Town, while ensuring that the County's lower-tier towns and villages retain their vitality.

The settlement hierarchy and the strategy for each category are summarised below:

- Sligo Town is the County's main urban centre, which provides employment, education, healthcare and other services to people living in its large hinterland, within and beyond the County boundaries. It is the designated Regional Growth Centre of the North-West.
- In terms of size and social-economic role, the second level is occupied by three Support Towns. The market towns of Ballymote and Tobercurry and the tourism-focused Enniscrone are designated for consolidation, regeneration and a quantum of growth proportional to their current population and infrastructural capacity.
- Sligo Town's Satellite Villages - Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange and Strandhill – are home to large numbers of regular commuters who go to work or to school in the main urban centre. These larger villages have relatively good infrastructure and also offer a variety of local services.
- Easky, Mullaghmore and Rosses Point are villages with special coastal tourism functions (a role shared with Enniscrone and Strandhill). The Core Strategy supports the provision of adequate infrastructure for sustainable tourism development in these villages.
- At the lower end of the Settlement Hierarchy, 19 villages sustaining rural communities (small villages with adequate wastewater treatment plants) are supported through the Core Strategy to cater for limited local needs in terms of residential development.
- A substantial population continues to live in dispersed communities throughout the County's rural areas, including small villages without adequate wastewater treatment infrastructure.

## 2.3 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development

Far in advance of the submission of the Chief Executive's Draft Plan to the Elected Members for approval, the placing of the Draft Plan on public display and adoption of the Plan, Sligo County Council undertook various research in order to inform the preparation of the Plan.

The findings of this strategic work have been integrated into the Plan and will contribute towards both environmental protection and management and sustainable development within the County.

Strategic work undertaken by the Council includes background work in relation to Plan Strategies and other provisions, including those relating to:

- Climate Action;
- Core Strategy;
- Sligo Growth Centre;
- Settlement Strategy;
- Housing Strategy;
- Economic Strategy;
- Retail Strategy; and
- Transport Strategy.

The undertaking of this SEA process and the associated AA and SFRA processes contributed towards the integration of environmental considerations into individual Plan provisions as summarised in Section 6 of this report.

## 2.4 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

It is acknowledged that many of the major issues affecting the County's development are contingent on national policy and government funding.

The Plan sits within a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use planning, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management. The Plan must comply with relevant higher-level strategic actions and will, in

turn, guide lower-level strategic actions. These documents include plans and programmes such as those detailed in Appendix of the main SEA Environmental Report. These documents have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant.

The National Planning Framework<sup>1</sup> sets out Ireland's planning policy direction for the years up to 2040. The National Planning Framework is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region sets out objectives for land use planning, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been subject to environmental assessment and must be implemented through the County Development Plan.

As required by the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the County Development Plan is consistent with and conforms with national and regional policies, plans and programmes, including the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region. The County Development Plan will, in turn, guide lower-level strategic actions, such as Local Area Plans that will be subject to their own lower-tier environmental assessments.

In order to be realised, projects included in the County Development Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing this report, a process to provide a First Revision to the National Planning Framework is underway.



## Section 3 The Environmental Baseline

### 3.1 Introduction

The summary of the environmental baseline of the County is described in this section. This baseline together with the Strategic Environmental Objectives, which are identified in Section 3.11, is used in order to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan and in order to determine appropriate monitoring measures.

### 3.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Plan

The 2017 County Development Plan, as varied, has contributed towards environmental protection within County Sligo. If the 2017 Plan was to expire and not be replaced by the 2024-2030 Plan, this would result in a deterioration of the County's planning and environmental protection framework. Although higher level environmental protection objectives – such as those of various EU Directives and transposing Irish Regulations – would still apply, the deterioration of this framework would mean that new development would be less coordinated and controlled.

Such adverse effects could include:

- Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:
  - Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites, Wildlife Sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;
  - Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and
  - Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.
- Potential interactions if effects arising from environmental vectors.
- Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands.
- Potential for riverbank and coastal erosion.
- Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology.
- Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.
- Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Increases in waste levels.
- Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.
- Interactions between agriculture and soil, water, biodiversity and human health – including phosphorous and nitrogen deposition as a result of agricultural activities and the production of secondary inorganic particulate matter.
- Risk of aggregate potential sterilisation.
- Potential conflict between development under the Plan and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives.
- Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality.
- Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors.
- Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.

### 3.3 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

Information on biodiversity and flora and fauna that is relevant to project planning and development and associated environmental assessment and administrative consent of projects includes available information on designated ecological sites and protected species, ecological connectivity (including stepping stones and corridors) and non-designated habitats.

The most ecologically sensitive, heavily designated and protected areas within County Sligo include the coastal areas and marine waters, various rivers, streams and estuaries and associated aquatic ecology, peatlands and upland locations.

Designated sites within the County include Special Areas of Conservation<sup>2</sup> (SACs) and Special Protection Areas<sup>3</sup> (SPAs). These are mapped on Figure 3.1. There are 31 European sites (20 SACs and 11 SPA) are designated within or partially within County Sligo. Other ecological designations occur within and adjacent to the County and these are detailed in the main SEA Environmental Report.

CORINE<sup>4</sup> land cover mapping shows that the most dominant land cover types within the Plan area are pastures and agricultural lands. The most dominant land cover types are pastures and agricultural lands, with significant areas of peatland in the northern half of the County. Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I habitats include: non-irrigated arable land; pastures; complex cultivation patterns; land principally occupied by agriculture with significant areas of natural vegetation; broad-leaved forest; coniferous forest; mixed forest; natural grasslands; moors and heathland; transitional woodland-shrub; inland marshes; peat bogs; water courses; and water bodies.

#### Existing Problems

Ireland's Article 17 report on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (DCHG, 2019) identifies various Irish, EU-protected habitats and species to be of unfavourable status and many to be still declining, although it also identifies that a range of positive actions are underway. Categories for pressures and threats on Ireland's habitats and species identified by the report include: Agriculture; Forestry; Extraction of resources (minerals, peat, non-renewable energy resources); Energy production processes and related infrastructure development; Development and operation of transport systems; Development, construction and use of residential, commercial, industrial and recreational infrastructure and areas; Extraction and cultivation of biological living resources (other than agriculture and forestry); and Climate change.

Ireland's Article 12 Birds Directive Reports and the 6<sup>th</sup> National Report under the Convention of Biological Diversity identify similar issues.

The Plan includes measures to contribute towards the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna and associated ecosystem services. Previous changes in land uses arising from human development have resulted in a loss of biodiversity and flora and fauna however, legislative objectives governing biodiversity and fauna were not identified as being conflicted with.

<sup>2</sup> SACs have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The Habitats Directive seeks to establish Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the EU. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SACs to protect habitats and species, which, together with the SPAs designated under the 1979 Birds Directive, form Natura 2000.

<sup>3</sup> SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the EU.

<sup>4</sup> The CORINE (Coordinated Information on the Environment) land cover data series was devised as a means of compiling geo-spatial environmental information in a standardised and comparable manner. CORINE has become a key data source for informing environmental and planning policy on a national and European level. The main land cover type in Ireland is agricultural land including forestry, which accounts for two-thirds of the national landmass. Most of this is permanent grassland pastures. Peatlands and wetlands are the second most widespread land cover type, covering almost one-fifth of the country. While forested areas cover about one-tenth of the country. Despite rapid development in the past two decades, Ireland's landscape is predominantly rural and agricultural.

### 3.4 Population and Human Health

In the 2022 Census, the total population of County Sligo was identified as being of 70,198 persons, an increase in total population in the County by c. 7% (c. 4,663 persons) since the previous census<sup>5</sup>. The NPF Implementation Roadmap provides a transitional set of population projections to inform city and county development plans for the periods to 2026 and to 2031. The population growth projections for County Sligo indicate population growth up to 71,500 - 72,500 persons by 2026 and up to 74,000 - 75,500 persons by 2031.

Sligo Town is the County's main urban centre, which provides employment, education, healthcare and other services to people living in its large hinterland, within and beyond the County boundaries. It is the designated Regional Growth Centre of the North-West.

The Plan designates a hierarchy of the County's settlements as follows:

- Regional Growth Centre (Sligo Town);
- Support Towns (Ballymote, Tobercurry and Enniscrone);
- Satellite Villages (Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange and Strandhill);
- Villages with special coastal tourism functions (Easky, Mullaghmore and Rosses Point);
- Serviced villages sustaining rural communities (Aclare, Ballinacarrow, Ballinafad, Ballincar, Ballintogher, Bellaghy, Bunnanadden, Carney, Castlebaldwin, Cliffony, Cloonacool, Culfadda, Curry, Dromore West, Drumcliff, Geevagh, Gorteen, Monasteraden and Riverstown); and
- Unserviced villages and dispersed settlement in rural areas (Ballygawley, Banada, Ransboro, Rathcormac, Tourlestrane and rural areas).

The new population provided for by the Plan will interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Increase in demand for wastewater treatment at the municipal level;
- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction from the rivers;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality.

#### Existing Problems

There is historic and predictive evidence of flooding in various locations across the County.

The greatest health risk from radiation in Ireland is caused by radon. The presence of radon gas, a naturally occurring radioactive gas that originates from the decay of uranium in rocks and soils, occurs across the country. The number of homes within the County with radon levels above the reference level is within the normal range experienced in other locations across the country.

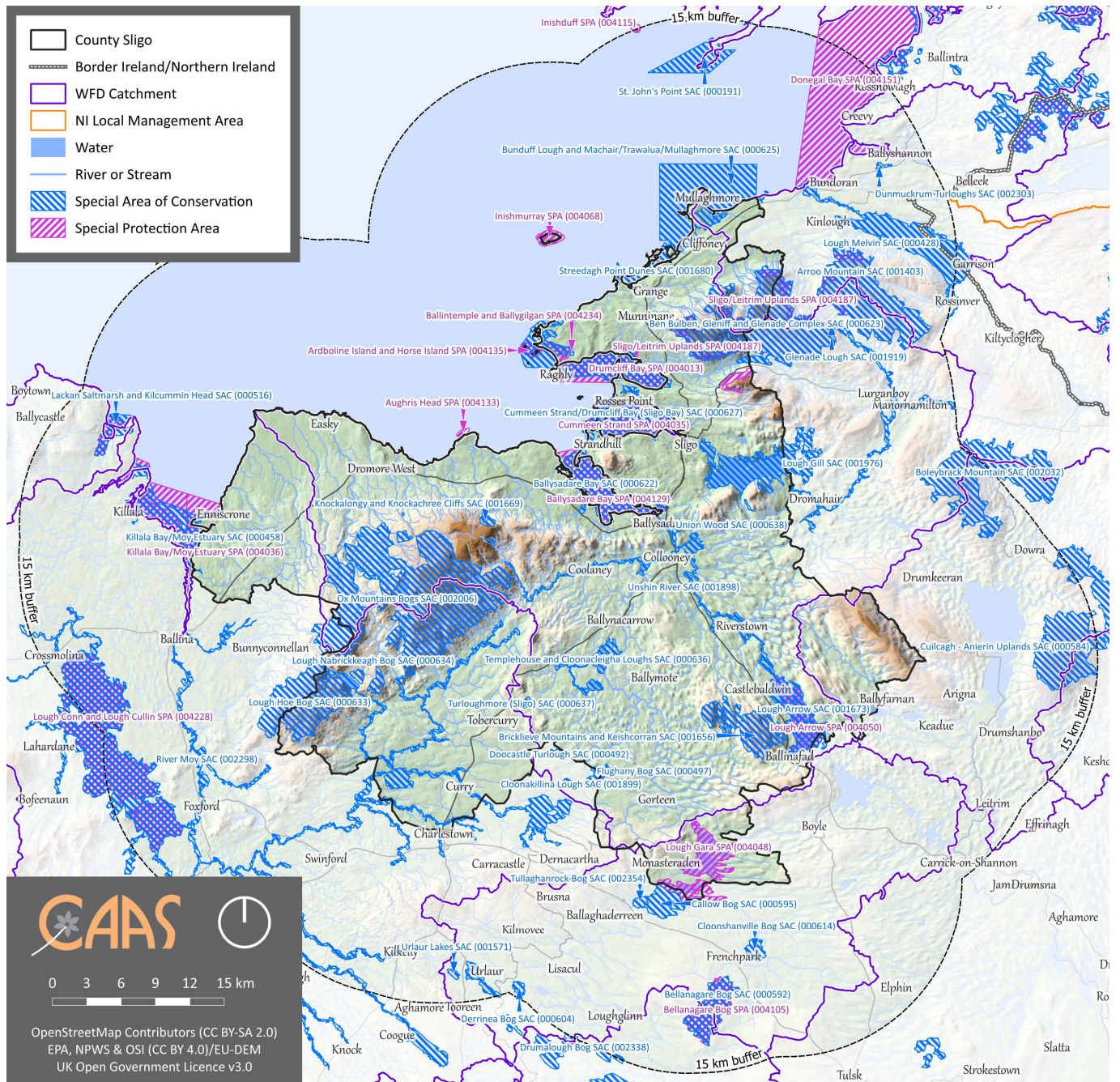
### 3.5 Soil

Surface water gleys<sup>6</sup> (found throughout the County) are the most dominant soil type in County Sligo. Peat soils are found throughout County.

Geological Survey of Ireland coordinates the Irish Geological Heritage Programme, which seeks to identify and select sites of geological interest within each county across the country. The audit of County Geological Sites in County Sligo was completed in 2004 and identified 25 County Geological Sites. Concentrations of these designations can be found in coastal and upland areas of the County.

<sup>5</sup> Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030

<sup>6</sup> Surface water gleys and groundwater gleys are wetland soils with slowly permeable horizons resulting in seasonal waterlogging.



**Figure 3.1 European sites within and within 15 km of the County**

### 3.6 Water

Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The WFD requires that all Member States implement the necessary measures to prevent deterioration of the status of all waters - surface, ground, estuarine and coastal - and protect, enhance and restore all waters with the aim of achieving good status. All public bodies are required to coordinate their policies and operations so as to maintain the good status of water bodies which are currently unpolluted and improve polluted water bodies to good status.

The County is situated within the surface water catchments of: Erne<sup>7</sup>; Sligo Bay and Drowse<sup>8</sup>; Upper Shannon (26A<sup>9</sup> and 26B<sup>10</sup>); and Moy and Killala Bay<sup>11</sup>.

The main waterbodies in the County include: Lough Gill; Lough Arrow; Lough Talt; Lough Gara; Easky Lough; Templehouse Lake; Owenmore River; Unshin River; River Moy; and Easky River.

The WFD surface water status (2016-2021), for rivers, lakes, coastal and transitional waters within and surrounding the County is shown on Figure 3.2.

The WFD status of the rivers and lakes within the area to which the Plan relates is classified as *high*, *good* and *moderate* however, sections of rivers and streams (including: Bunnanaddan Stream; Cartonkillerdoo; Douglas, Sligo; Garavogue; Grange, Sligo; Owenmore, Sligo; Tubbercurry Stream; Tubbercurry; and Gill) are identified as being of *poor* status, while the Templehouse Lake is identified as *bad* due to unsatisfactory ecological/biological and/or physio-chemical status.

The status (2016-2021) of transitional and coastal waterbodies within and adjacent to the area to which the Plan relates ranges from *moderate* to *high* and *good*, including a number of *unassigned* waterbodies.

The WFD status (2016-2021) of groundwater underlying the entire County is identified as being of *good* status.

Certain areas across the County are at risk from flooding from sources including groundwater, pluvial<sup>12</sup>, fluvial<sup>13</sup> and coastal<sup>14</sup>.

#### Existing Problems

Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD, based on available water data, certain surface and groundwater bodies will need improvement in order to comply with the objectives of the WFD.

The Plan includes provisions that will contribute towards improvements in the status of waters.

There is historic and predictive evidence of elevated levels of flood risk from sources including coastal and fluvial at various locations across the County.

<sup>7</sup> This catchment includes the area drained by the River Erne and all streams entering tidal water between Aughrus Point and Kildoney Point, County Donegal. This is a cross border catchment with a surface area of 4,415km<sup>2</sup>, 2,512km<sup>2</sup> of which is located within Ireland (ROI).

<sup>8</sup> This catchment includes all streams entering tidal water in Sligo Bay and between Lenadoon Point and Aughrus Point, County Donegal. The catchment has a surface area of 1,866km<sup>2</sup>. A small part of this catchment, 109km<sup>2</sup>, is located within Northern Ireland.

<sup>9</sup> This catchment covers an area of 604km<sup>2</sup> and is characterised by the Breda upland areas including the karst area of the Geevagh Hills, location of the Arigna Coalfield, the karstic southern slopes of Cuilcagh Mountain and the western flanks of Slieve Anierin, which surround the lowland area containing the large source of the River Shannon (Shannon Pot) and Lough Allen.

<sup>10</sup> This catchment covers an area of 674km<sup>2</sup> and is characterised by old red sandstone uplands running along the northern catchment boundary, the highest of which are the Curlew Mountains and karstified limestone lowlands in the southern half of the catchment.

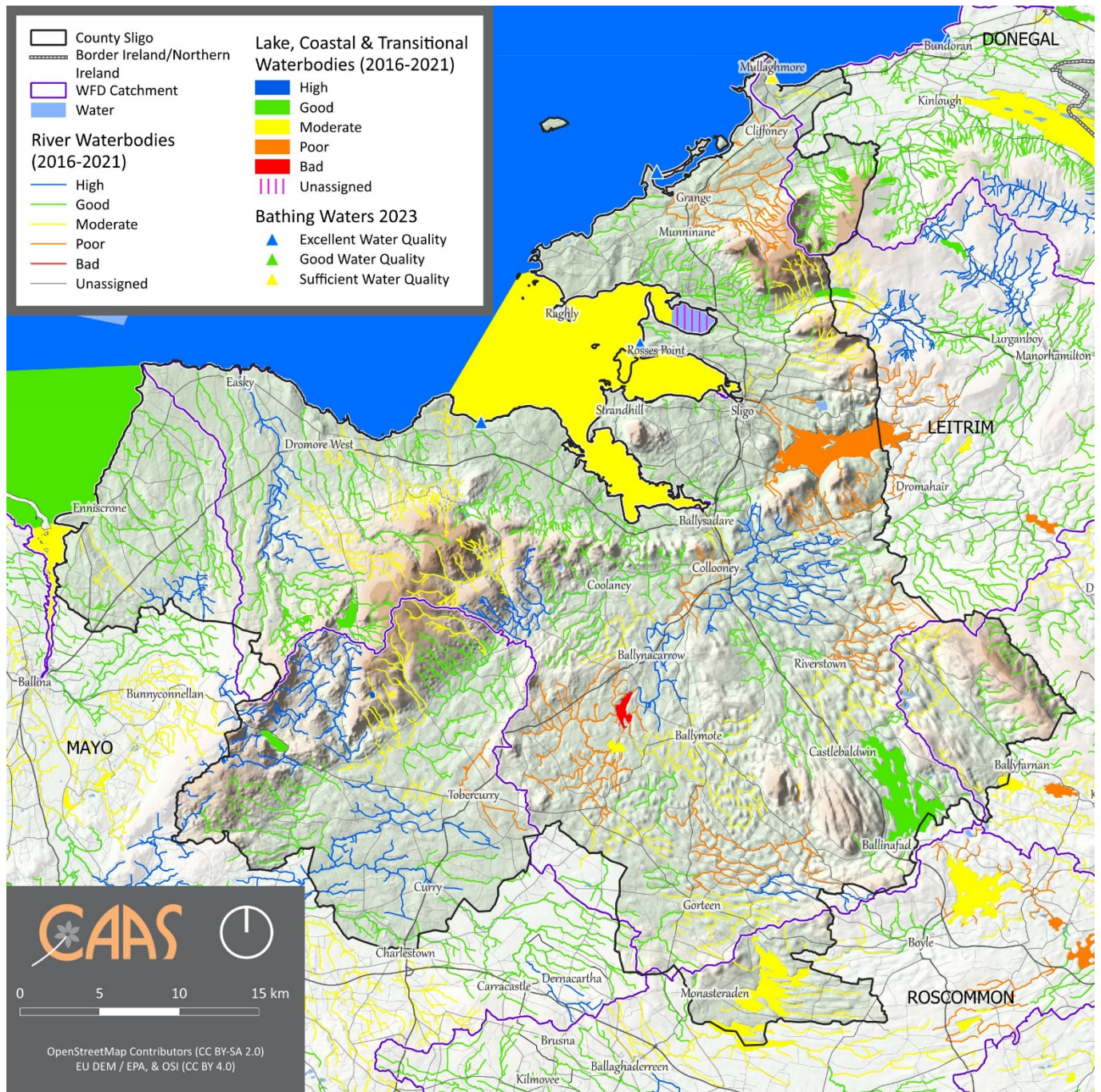
<sup>11</sup> This catchment includes the area drained by the River Moy and all streams entering tidal water in Killala Bay between Benwee Head and Lenadoon Point, County Sligo, draining a total area of 2,345km<sup>2</sup>. The lowland parts of the catchment are underlain by various types of limestones while the upland areas from the Ox Mountains and Croaghmoyle are underlain by a band of igneous and metamorphic rocks. Much of the lowland area south of Lough Conn exhibits a drumlin topography. There are extensive sand and gravel aquifers lying between Swinford and Charlestown to as far south as Knock, to the east of Ballina and southwest of Crossmolina.

<sup>12</sup> Resulting from high intensity rainfall events where run-off volume exceeds capacity of surface water network.

<sup>13</sup> Watercourse capacity is exceeded or the channel is blocked and excess water spills from the channel onto adjacent floodplains.

<sup>14</sup> Resulting from higher sea levels than normal causing the sea to overflow onto land. Such flooding is influenced by high tide level, storm surges and wave action.





**Figure 3.2 Surface Water Status (2016-2021)**

### 3.7 Air and Climatic Factors

Climate mitigation describes the action to reduce the likelihood of climate change occurring or reduce the impact if it does occur. This can include reducing the causes of climate change (e.g. emissions of greenhouse gases) as well as reducing future risks associated with climate change.

The National Climate Action Plan 2024 is the second statutory update to the plan since the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 was signed into law, committing Ireland to 2030 and 2050 targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It builds on Climate Action Plan 2023, outlining how Ireland will accelerate the actions required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development.

Climate adaptation is a change in natural or human systems in response to the impacts of climate change. These changes moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities and can be in response to actual or expected impacts.

The National Adaptation Framework (2024) aims to create a unified approach involving both government and society to adapt to climate change. It outlines how various sectors and local authorities can implement adaptation measures to minimise Ireland's vulnerability to climate change's adverse effects while taking advantage of any beneficial impacts. The Framework emphasises the importance of integrating adaptation strategies into all levels of policy making, infrastructure development, and local planning.

In 2018, four Climate Action Regional Offices were established for the purpose of coordinating climate action at regional and local levels. As specified in its Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly supports the work of the Climate Action Regional Offices.

The Sligo Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 will contribute towards addressing the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, climate change adaptation, and strengthening the alignment between national climate policy and the delivery of local climate action. The local objectives of Sligo County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 address thematic areas including:

- Governance and Leadership
- Built Environment and Transport
- Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure
- Community Resilience and Transition
- Sustainable Resource Management

The EPA's (2024) *Air Quality in Ireland 2023 Report* identifies that:

- Ireland's latest monitoring shows we are in compliance with current EU standards.
- Ireland is not on track to achieve its ambition, set out in the National Clean Air Strategy, to meet the health-based WHO air quality guideline limits in 2026.
- Main pollutants of concern are fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) from solid fuel combustion and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) from vehicle emissions/traffic.
- Air pollution can be a major environmental risk to people's health, with approximately 1,600 premature deaths annually in Ireland due to poor air quality.

The report further identifies the critical role of local authorities in the enforcement and implementation of existing plans and investment in infrastructure to encourage cleaner and healthier air quality choices, including:

- Local authorities must provide more resources to implement the new solid fuel regulations and full implementation of air quality plans.
- Local authorities must prioritise resource allocation of resources to advance enforcement.
- Investment in clean public transport infrastructure across the country must be maintained and increased.
- More safe footpaths and cycle lanes must be created to continue to increase active travel as a viable and safe alternative to car use and associated NO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

In order to apply with European Directives relating to air quality, the EPA manages the National Ambient Air Quality Network and measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants at monitoring stations across the country.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For more detail on current daily air quality data for the Plan refer to: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>.  
CAAS for Sligo County Council

## Existing Problems

In the Climate Change Advisory Council's Annual Review 2024 the findings of an assessment of the degree to which progress is being made solely in the implementation of adaptation policy and increasing resilience during the period April 2023 to March 2024 is provided. The Review details that four sectors (Transport, Flood Risk Management, Built and Archaeological Heritage and Local Government) demonstrated good overall progress, six showed moderate progress (Agriculture, Forestry and Seafood, National Adaptation Framework, Communications Networks, Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure, Health and Electricity and Gas Networks) and one (Biodiversity) showed no progress and supplied insufficient evidence. This was a slight improvement compared with the results in 2023.

Air quality and noise can present challenges, especially in urban areas, as detailed under the relevant sub-sections above. With regard to air quality, air pollution from transport is dominated by NO<sub>x</sub> emissions. Of these, NO<sub>2</sub> is particularly impactful from a health perspective. The Plan will help to facilitate reductions in emissions and a transition from dependence on fossil fuel combustion powered transport.

## 3.8 Material Assets

Other material assets, in addition to those referred to below, covered by the SEA include archaeological and architectural heritage (see Section 3.9) natural resources of economic value, such as water and air (see Sections 3.6 and 3.7).

### Public Assets and Infrastructure

Public assets and infrastructure that have the potential to be impacted upon by the Plan, if unmitigated, include; settlements; resources such as public open spaces, parks and recreational areas; public buildings and services; transport and utility infrastructure (electricity, gas, telecommunications, water supply, wastewater infrastructure etc.); forestry; and natural resources that are covered under other topics such as water and soil.

### Waste Water

The County is served by various Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs). In unserved areas and outside the main settlements, the main method of sewage disposal is by individual septic tanks and other types of wastewater treatment.

Uisce Éireann has provided information on wastewater treatment capacity, constraints and projects planned within the County to improve the existing network, to assist the Council in the preparation of the new County Development Plan. This information indicates where there may be wastewater treatment capacity available to accommodate growth ("headroom") in areas serviced by a public wastewater treatment plant. Spare treatment capacity is identified as being available in all of these settlements except for: Castlebaldwin WWTP; Rosses Point WWTP; Drumcliffe WWTP (limited capacity); and Easky WWTP (limited capacity). The highest levels of headroom are available at Sligo Town WWTP; Ballysadare WWTP; and Dromore West WWTP.<sup>16</sup> There is currently<sup>17</sup> one WWTP in County Sligo located in Ballymote, listed as a priority area, where improvements are required to resolve urgent environmental issues.

Uisce Éireann have identified that there is spare treatment capacity is identified as being available in most key settlements, however; there is currently no spare capacity at Mullaghmore (a project to provide additional license-compliant capacity is at Stage 2- Preliminary Business Case (concept design) and will be progressed during the Plan period, subject to the necessary approvals). Additional information is provided in the County Development Plan, which included objectives requiring new development to be adequately served by water services infrastructure.

The Uisce Éireann Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024 (CIP) sets out the priorities for investing 5.35 billion euro to deliver the most urgently needed improvements in drinking water quality, leakage reduction, water availability, wastewater compliance, efficiencies and customer service. The CIP funds individual projects such as building new or upgrading existing water and wastewater treatment plants, upgrading existing networks, and national programmes such as the Leakage Reduction Programme, the National Disinfection Programme, the Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme, and the National Certification Authorisation

<sup>16</sup> Sligo CDP 2024 - 2030

<sup>17</sup> Updated list of priority urban areas (EPA, May 2023)



Programme. The 2020-2024 CIP includes six projects in County Sligo, some of which have been completed.<sup>18</sup>

### **Water Supply**

There are two main sources of water supplying the Sligo and Environs area, namely Kilsellagh Reservoir and Lough Gill.

Under Section 58 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, the EPA is required to collect and verify monitoring results for all water supplies in Ireland covered by the European Communities (Drinking Water). The EPA publishes their results in annual reports that are supported by Remedial Action Lists (RALs). The RAL identifies water supplies that are not in compliance with the Regulations mentioned above. The most recent EPA Remedial Action List (Q2 of 2024) does not include any water scheme that supplies the Plan area.

Currently, Uisce Éireann is implementing a National Water Resource Plan 2021 outlining how to move to a sustainable, secure and reliable public drinking water supply over a 25-year period while safeguarding the environment. Uisce Éireann have identified that there is capacity available in the Sligo Town and Environs Water Resource Zone and Lough Talt Regional Water Supply Water Resource Zone. Uisce Éireann have identified that there is potential spare capacity, subject to level of service improvements being implemented, in the Lough Easkey Regional Water Supply and North Sligo Regional Water Supply Water Resource Zone.

### **Waste Management**

The National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy (Regional Waste Management Planning Offices, 2024) sets out a framework for the prevention and management of waste in Ireland for the period 2024 to 2030. The Plan seeks to influence sustainable consumption and prevent the generation of waste, improve the capture of materials to optimise circularity and enable compliance with policy and legislation.

### **Transport**

Transport infrastructure in the County has the potential to support reductions in energy demand from the transport sector, including through electrification of modes.

County Sligo occupies a strategic location on the National Road network with the N15, N16, N17, N59 and N4 traversing parts of the County. The national road network in the County provides an essential means of access from the County to Dublin and other regional centres. There are three railway stations in Sligo that are served by the train line to Dublin – Sligo Mac Diarmada Station (Sligo town), Collooney Station and Ballymote Station. Bus Éireann and a number of other private operators provide bus services into and out of the County.

County Sligo is also served by Sligo Airport (Strandhill) and Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) in County Mayo. Harbours, piers and slipways along the Sligo coast provide marine access for the fishing industry and commercial or recreational boat users. Sligo Port is one of seven in the Region, and the most important in the County.

Both regional and local roads provide vital links between the towns and villages to retail, service and employment centres throughout the County and to adjoining counties.

### **Existing Problems**

There are a number of challenges with respect to the provision of water services infrastructure, some of which are summarised above. The provisions of the new County Development Plan will contribute towards protection of the environment with regard to impacts arising from material assets.

## **3.9 Cultural Heritage**

### **Archaeological Heritage**

Archaeological heritage is protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), Natural Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning Acts.

To date there has been over 6,500 known Recorded Monuments identified in County Sligo including many monuments in State Care. Each of the Recorded Monuments is encircled by a Zone of Archaeological

<sup>18</sup> Sligo CDP 2024-2030  
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Notification. Clusters of archaeological heritage are concentrated within and surrounding towns and villages and in lowland rural areas.

Sligo's archaeological heritage includes monuments from the Mesolithic Period (7,000 BC) to the end of the Medieval Period (1,700 AD). These monuments range from megalithic tombs, churches, castles, linear earthwork and ringforts and are found throughout the County. There are also approximately 1,200 industrial heritage sites across the County as identified in the Industrial Archaeology Survey of County Sligo (2005).

Sligo has a number of significant archaeological and historical landscapes, the most notable being the Cuil Irra Peninsula (which includes Knocknarea, Carrowmore and Carns Hill), Carrowkeel and Inishmurray. The cluster of megalithic tombs at Carrowmore represents one of the four major passage tomb cemeteries in Ireland and is the largest such cemetery in the country. Others include Carrowkeel, also in County Sligo, as well as Newgrange and Lough Crew in County Meath. The archaeological landscape of the Cuil Irra (Knocknarea) Peninsula dates from around 4,000 BC, which formed an important ritual centre in the Neolithic period. Queens Maeve's Cairn on Knocknarea is an iconic landscape feature of County Sligo and forms part of Sligo's Neolithic passage tomb tradition.

### **Architectural Heritage**

The term architectural heritage is defined in the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act 1999 as meaning all: structures and buildings together with their settings and attendant grounds, fixtures and fittings; groups of structures and buildings; and, sites which are of technical, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest. Records of Protected Structures are legislated for under Section 12 and Section 51 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Protected structures are defined as amended, as structures, or parts of structures that are of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view.

Similar to the general spatial spread of archaeological heritage, clusters of architectural heritage are indicated within developed urban and suburban locations across the County. There are currently over 700 Protected Structures designated in County Sligo, including churches, houses, bridges, castles, lodges and artisan dwellings. Notable protected structures in County Sligo include: St. Crumnath's Cathedral; Pollachurry Pier; Coastguard Station; Oyster Island Lighthouse; Sligo Gaol; and Markree Demesne.

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of a Protected Structure. An ACA may or may not include Protected Structures. In an ACA, protection is placed on the external appearance of such areas or structures. Five ACAs have been designated in Sligo Town; the town centre of Ballymote has also been designated as an ACA<sup>19</sup>.

### **Existing Problems**

The context of archaeological and architectural heritage has changed over time within County Sligo, however no existing conflicts with legislative objectives governing archaeological and architectural heritage have been identified.

## **3.10 Landscape**

County Sligo is characterised by a variety of mainly rural landscapes, including rough pasture predominantly in the mountains, hills, and peat bogs. On the east, the boundary with County Leitrim runs southward through the coastal lowland to the limestone Dartry Mountains, including Benbulbin Mountain (noted as one of Ireland's most distinctive natural landmarks). The County boundary crosses Glencar and an area of plateau to Lough Gill with the island of Innisfree. West of the Collooney Gap, the ridge forms the Ox Mountains and a peat moorland and, to the north, an area of continuously farmed lowland, from the mouth of the River Moy to the Leitrim border. The coastal areas of the County include Sligo Bay with three long estuaries, leading to the towns of Drumcliff, Sligo, and Ballysadare, which receive the waters of the Rivers Drumcliff, Garravogue, and Owenmore.

<sup>19</sup> Sligo CDP 2024 - 2030  
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A landscape characterisation and appraisal study for Sligo County Council was completed in 1996. This resulted in a map that was the basis for the Landscape Characterisation Map, which classified the areas in the County according to its visual sensitivity and capacity to absorb new development without compromising the scenic character of certain areas. It identified the following:

- Normal Rural Landscapes (generally have the capacity to absorb a wide range of new development forms);
- Sensitive Rural Landscapes (low capacity to absorb new development); and
- Visually Vulnerable Areas (extremely low capacity to absorb new development) and Scenic Routes.

Areas, which are of exceptional value and of international importance, such as the Cuil Irra Peninsula, Carrowkeel and Inishmurray and are highly sensitive to development.

### 3.11 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies that generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives that have been transposed into Irish law and that are required to be implemented. The SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Plan and the alternatives are evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects - unmitigated.

**Table 3.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives**

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objectives
<b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</b>	BFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To preserve, protect, maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species</li> <li>• Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function</li> <li>• Safeguard national, regional and local designated sites and supporting features which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species</li> <li>• Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets</li> <li>• To protect, maintain and conserve the County's natural capital</li> </ul>
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	PHH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management</li> <li>• Ensure that existing population and planned growth is matched with the required public infrastructure and the required services</li> <li>• Safeguard the County's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being</li> </ul>
<b>Soil (and Land)</b>	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource</li> <li>• Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield within the County</li> <li>• Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites</li> </ul>
<b>Water</b>	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive</li> <li>• Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and wastewater capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments</li> <li>• Avoid inappropriate zoning and development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion, including coastal areas</li> <li>• Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals</li> </ul>
<b>Material Assets</b>	MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals in the County</li> <li>• Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all which encourages a broad energy generation mix to ensure security of supply – wind, solar, hydro, biomass, energy from waste and traditional fossil fuels</li> <li>• Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies</li> <li>• Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development</li> <li>• Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of road and rail transport modes</li> <li>• Encourage the transition to a zero-carbon economy by facilitating the development of a grid infrastructure to support renewables and international connectivity. Reduce the average energy consumption per capita including promoting energy efficient buildings, retrofitting, smart- buildings, cities and grids</li> </ul>
<b>Air</b>	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole resulting from emissions to air from all sectors with particular reference to emissions from transport, residential heating, industry and agriculture</li> <li>• Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and</li> </ul>

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objectives
		<p>promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote continuing improvement in air quality</li> <li>• Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution</li> <li>• Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health — Air Quality Directive</li> <li>• Significantly decrease noise pollution by 2020 and move closer to WHO recommended levels</li> </ul>
<b>Climatic Factors</b>	<b>C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To minimise emissions of greenhouse gasses</li> <li>• Integrate sustainable design solutions into the County's infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure)</li> <li>• Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets</li> <li>• Promote development resilient to the effects of climate change</li> <li>• Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<b>CH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape</b>	<b>L</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To implement the Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention</li> </ul>

## Section 4 Alternatives

### 4.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme) are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment. Available reasonable alternatives for the County Development Plan are identified in this section which also summarises the environmental assessment provided in the main SEA Environmental Report.

### 4.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The Plan is required to be prepared by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which specifies various types of objectives that must be provided for by the Plan. The alternatives available for the Plan are limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, including those of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Plan including on topics such as settlement typology, land use zoning and the sustainable development of rural areas. In addition, the Development Plan Guidelines (2022) contain a detailed methodology (in Section 4 and Appendix A) for implementing the NPF requirement regarding Infrastructural Assessment (IA) of existing and proposed zoned lands. The Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA), based on the IA, must be the basis of Core Strategy formulations and corresponding zoning decisions for residential development.

### 4.3 Type 1: Alternatives for positioning in the Settlement Hierarchy

**Alternative A** would retain the Support Towns designations for Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry, despite relatively low population growth in these towns, compared to Satellite Villages.

Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry are urban centres with multiple functions, capable of providing local employment and a good variety of services not just to their residents, but also to rural communities in their large rural hinterlands. These towns, located in the south, south-west and extreme west of the County, are closer and are more accessible to large numbers of rural dwellers than Sligo Town.

Consolidation of these towns, supporting their economic development and improving their social/community infrastructure would help create additional local jobs and services, thereby reducing their residents' need to commute to Sligo Town for work, school, shopping etc.

**Alternative B** would retain the Support Town designation for Tobercurry and instead designate Ballysadare, Collooney and Strandhill Support Towns, since their population is higher than that of Ballymote and Enniscrone.

Ballysadare, Collooney and Strandhill have seen substantial growth between 2002 and 2022, doubling or even nearly tripling their population – 104%, 190% and 97% respectively.

However, they continue to lack jobs, services and community infrastructure, and function largely as “dormitories” for people who work elsewhere, mostly in Sligo Town. While their designation as Support Towns might help in the provision of suitable community and recreational facilities, it would not be likely to stimulate local jobs creation, given the proximity and competition of Sligo Town.

There are also physical constraints to the further development of these settlements, especially Ballysadare and Strandhill, which are adjoining highly sensitive European sites.

#### **Selected Type 1 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.**

## 4.4 Type 2: Alternatives for Population Allocations

**Alternative A** comprises "Support "Towns-only" growth", i.e. allocate significant proportions of future housing and corresponding additional population to Sligo Town/Regional Growth Centre and to the Support Towns (Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry), and strictly limit growth in Satellite Villages and lower levels.

Under this option, future population and housing would be directed into Sligo Town, Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry, where employment and services can be provided more efficiently.

The existing residential and mixed-use zoning in Ballymote and Enniscrone would be largely retained. Up to 20-23 ha would be zoned in Tobercurry (as per the Draft LAP 2015). All zoning would be subject to infrastructural assessment.

In order to ensure that sufficient housing land is available in the four towns, no sites would be designated for residential development (or mix of uses including residential) outside these urban areas.

Undeveloped lands previously zoned for residential and mixed uses in serviced villages would be zoned "RV" (Rural Village) instead. The flexible "RV" (Rural Village) zoning objective would allow for local housing need to be catered for in villages with adequate service infrastructure, while unserved settlements would not be zoned.

**Alternative B** comprises "Driving growth through the Sligo Regional Growth Centre", i.e. allocate the majority of future housing and corresponding additional population to Sligo Town, and a small proportion to the Satellite Villages located within the RGC Strategic Plan Area (as specified in the NWRA RSES).

This approach would be the most closely aligned with the RSES, which promotes development in the Sligo Regional Growth Centre and requires a Local Transport Plan for the Sligo RGC Strategic Plan Area. Population and housing growth would be promoted in the area where land-use can be best integrated with public transport and active travel.

While the focus remains on Sligo RGC, there would be reasonable population and housing allocations for the three Support Towns (Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tobercurry), recognising their roles in the Settlement Strategy.

Similar to Alternative A, the flexible "RV" (Rural Village) zoning objective would allow for locally-needed housing and minimal population growth in other villages with adequate service infrastructure, while unserved settlements would not be supported for growth.

**Selected Type 2 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative B.**

## 4.5 Type 3: Alternatives for Rural Settlements

**Alternative A** would include specific objectives for serviced villages to support their economic, social and community infrastructure, thereby offering a more attractive alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside.

Objectives would be provided in Village Plans for small settlements with adequate wastewater treatment system but no specific housing or population allocations.

Objectives would relate to the design of any new village-centre development, the provision or improvement of local infrastructure (e.g. school extensions, parks, walkways etc.), and the protection of significant natural and built heritage.

A flexible RV ("Rural Village") zoning objective would allow for the construction of locally-needed houses, thereby providing an alternative to the construction of isolated rural dwellings served by on-site wastewater treatment systems.

**Alternative B** would designate only development limits for villages, without any provisions targeting economic, social and community infrastructure.

The purpose of designating development limits would be to encourage the clustering of one-off houses in compact areas, to take advantage of existing wastewater treatment infrastructure or to facilitate their future servicing by Uisce Éireann. However, this alternative would not include specific objectives to support the villages in developing community and recreational facilities, or to protect the natural/built heritage and amenities. As a consequence, these villages would not become more attractive as places to live, and would not be seen as viable alternatives to the open countryside in terms of building individual houses.

**Selected Type 3 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative A.**

## 4.6 Type 4: Alternatives for Residential Densities

**Alternative A** would apply standard residential densities to lands zoned for housing across the entire County, set at the levels recommended in Chapters 5 and 6 of the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines (2009) for larger towns, smaller towns and villages.

A key objective of the NPF and RSES is to promote the compact growth of towns and villages by increasing the density of development in existing built-up areas and in new developments, particularly in town centres. This would lead to more efficient use of existing physical infrastructure and services, thereby reducing the need for motorised travel. It is also likely to decrease the amount of open space and residential amenities available to local people.

**Alternative B** would involve adopting a tailored approach to residential development by specifying locally appropriate residential densities, to ensure that new development responds to the character, scale and setting of the town or village (as specified in the Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021).

Adapting the scale, design and layout of housing in towns and villages would ensure that suburban or high-density urban approaches are not applied to small villages or to settlements where the natural and built heritage would be negatively affected by dense development.

Reducing the attractiveness of small towns and villages by imposing out-of-character, high-density development is likely to stimulate more house-building in the open countryside.

Having regard to the NPF, the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines (2009) and subsequent Circular Letter (2021), the Planning Authority would determine the appropriate average residential density in each town and village subject to land-use zoning.

**Selected Type 4 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative B.**

## 4.7 Type 5: Alternatives for Land-Use Zoning (residential and mixed uses, including residential)

The provisions for land-use zoning introduced by the NPF and Development Plan Guidelines 2022, particularly for residential and mixed uses, including residential, have severely limited the options previously available to the Planning Authority when preparing town and village plans.

Fixed housing targets (calculated in accordance with the Housing Supply Targets Methodology) and increased density requirements indicate clearly that the amount of land currently (2023) zoned for housing and mixed uses needs to be substantially reduced. Two realistic alternatives have been examined in this regard.

**Alternative A** would retain unchanged the extent of land zoned for residential and mixed uses including residential, but introduce a phasing policy, whereby only a specified proportion/area of each zoned site can be developed during the Plan period.

Under this approach, lands which have been zoned for residential and mixed uses for more than two iterations of the Development Plan (2011 to present), and which could not be developed because of the economic crisis, Covid-19 pandemic, recent steep rise in energy prices etc., would be given an opportunity to fulfil their potential for development by 2030.

**Alternative B** would zone lands for residential and mixed uses based on a scoring system designed e.g., to promote the sequential and compact growth of settlements (using the methodology recommended in the Development Plan Guidelines 2022).

This approach would entail an Infrastructural Assessment (IA) and a Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA) for each town or village where land is proposed to be zoned.

The IA would consider the availability of transport infrastructure (roads, footpaths, cycleways) and service infrastructure (watermains, foul sewers, surface drainage systems) that would allow the development of lands immediately or during the Plan period.

“Tier 1” (fully serviced) sites resulting from the IA would be subject to a further assessment as part of the SCA. This further evaluation would assign numerical scores to sites, based on criteria grouped under two main headings:

- “Spatially sequential” test – where the main consideration was proximity to the town/village centre (defined as the walking distance to a specified landmark); and
- Availability of social/community/recreational infrastructure in the surrounding area (e.g. primary school, grocery shop, pharmacy, public open space).

Further points would be awarded to sites where planning permission had been previously granted or a Local Authority housing scheme had been approved (“Part 8” development).

In Sligo Town, additional points would also be given to sites that are highlighted in the RSES for their high potential to contribute to the development of the Regional Growth Centre.

**Selected Type 5 Alternative for the Plan: Alternative B.**

## **4.8 Reasons for Choosing the Selected Alternatives in light of Other Reasonable Alternatives Considered**

Selected alternatives for the Plan from each of the tiers of alternatives that emerged from the planning/SEA process are summarised above.

These alternatives have been incorporated into the Plan having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects which are identified by the SEA and are detailed above; and
2. Planning - including social and economic - effects that also were considered.



## **Section 5      Summary of Effects arising from Plan**

### **5.1      Overall Effects**

Table 5.1 summarises the overall environmental effects arising from Plan provisions. The effects encompass all in-combination/cumulative effects arising from implementation of the Plan. The potentially significant adverse environmental effects (if unmitigated) arising from implementation of the Plan are detailed as are residual effects, taking into account mitigation through both provisions integrated into the Plan – see summary at Section 6.

**Table 5.1 Overall Evaluation – Effects arising from the Plan**

<b>Environmental Component</b>	<b>Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework</b>		
	Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the National Planning Framework and associated National Development Plan, the Northern and Western RSES, adjacent Development Plans and other plans and programmes		
	<b>Positive/Neutral Effects, likely to occur</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated</b>	<b>Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects, following mitigation</b>
<b>Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution towards protection of ecology (including designated sites, ecological connectivity, habitats) by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere.</li> <li>• Contribution towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and associated ecosystem services, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats.</li> <li>• Contribution towards protection and/or maintenance of biodiversity and flora and fauna by contributing towards the protection of natural capital including the environmental vectors of air, water and soil. Biodiversity and flora and fauna includes biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species (including birds and bats), listed/protected species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats (including terrestrial and aquatic habitats), and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna – including terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and flora and fauna.</li> <li>• Sustains existing sustainable rural management practices – and the communities who support them – to ensure the continuation of long-established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain.</li> </ul>	<p>Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites, Wildlife Sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;</li> <li>• Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and</li> <li>• Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of an extent of non-protected habitats and species arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces.</li> <li>• Losses or damage to ecology (these would be in compliance with relevant legislation).</li> </ul>

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework		
	Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the National Planning Framework and associated National Development Plan, the Northern and Western RSES, adjacent Development Plans and other plans and programmes		
	Positive/Neutral Effects, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated	Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects, following mitigation
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management.</li> <li>• Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere.</li> <li>• Contribution towards the protection of human health by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere.</li> <li>• Contributes towards protection of human health as a result of contributing towards the protection of natural capital including environmental vectors, including air and water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential adverse effects arising from flood events.</li> <li>• Potential interactions if effects arising from environmental vectors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential interactions with residual effects on environmental vectors – please refer to residual adverse effects under "Soil", "Water" and "Air and Climatic Factors" below.</li> </ul>
<b>Soil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution towards the protection of soils (including those used for agriculture) and designated sites of geological heritage by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere.</li> <li>• Contribution towards the protection of the environment from contamination the highest standards of remediation, and where appropriate to consultations with the EPA and other relevant bodies, will be required to resolve any instances of environmental pollution created by contaminated land.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands.</li> <li>• Potential for riverbank and coastal erosion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces.</li> <li>• Riverbank erosion will continue to occur naturally over time and is likely to be enhanced by climate change.</li> </ul>

<b>Environmental Component</b>	<b>Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework</b>		
	Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the National Planning Framework and associated National Development Plan, the Northern and Western RSES, adjacent Development Plans and other plans and programmes		
	<b>Positive/Neutral Effects, likely to occur</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated</b>	<b>Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects, following mitigation</b>
<b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution towards the protection of water by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere.</li> <li>• Contributions towards the protection of water resources including the status of surface and groundwaters and water-based designations.</li> <li>• Contribution towards flood risk management and appropriate drainage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology.</li> <li>• Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any increased loadings as a result of development to comply with the River Basin Management Plan.</li> <li>• Flood related risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to extreme weather events – however such risks will be mitigated by measures that have been integrated into the Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Material Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere.</li> <li>• Contribution towards compliance with national and regional water services and waste management policies.</li> <li>• Contribution towards increase in renewable energy use by facilitating renewable energy and electricity transmission infrastructure developments.</li> <li>• Contribution towards limits in increases in energy demand from the transport sector by facilitating sustainable compact growth.</li> <li>• Contribution towards reductions in average energy consumption per capita including promoting sustainable compact growth, sustainable mobility, sustainable design and energy efficiency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).</li> <li>• Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).</li> <li>• Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).</li> <li>• Increases in waste levels.</li> <li>• Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.</li> <li>• Interactions between agriculture and soil, water, biodiversity and human health - including phosphorous and nitrogen deposition as a result of agricultural activities and the production of secondary inorganic particulate matter.</li> <li>• Risk of aggregate potential sterilisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exceedance of capacity in critical infrastructure risks remain, including due to uncertainty with regard to climate – however, such risks will be mitigated by: measures, including those requiring the timely provision of critical infrastructure, and compliance with the Water Framework Directive and associated River Basin Management Plan.</li> <li>• Residual wastes to be disposed of in line with higher-level waste management policies.</li> <li>• Any impacts upon public assets and infrastructure to comply with statutory planning/consent-granting framework.</li> </ul>

Environmental Component	<b>Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework</b>		
	Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the National Planning Framework and associated National Development Plan, the Northern and Western RSES, adjacent Development Plans and other plans and programmes		
	<b>Positive/Neutral Effects, likely to occur</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated</b>	<b>Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects, following mitigation</b>
<b>Air and Climatic Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution towards climate mitigation and adaptation by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere.</li> <li>• In combination with other plans, programmes etc., contribution towards the objectives of the wide policy framework relating to climate mitigation and adaptation, and associated contribution towards maintaining and improving air quality and managing noise levels, including through measures relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sustainable compact growth;</li> <li>○ Sustainable mobility, including walking, cycling and public transport;</li> <li>○ Drainage, flood risk management and resilience;</li> <li>○ Sectors including agriculture, forestry, energy and buildings; and</li> <li>○ Sustainable design, energy efficiency and green infrastructure.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential conflict between development under the Plan and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives.</li> <li>• Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality.</li> <li>• Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors.</li> <li>• Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An extent of travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air. This has been mitigated by provisions which have been integrated into the Plan, including those relating to sustainable compact growth and sustainable mobility.</li> <li>• Interactions between noise emissions and sensitive receptors. Various provisions have been integrated into the Plan to ensure that noise levels at sensitive receptors will be minimised.</li> </ul>

Environmental Component	<b>Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework</b>		
	Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the National Planning Framework and associated National Development Plan, the Northern and Western RSES, adjacent Development Plans and other plans and programmes		
	<b>Positive/Neutral Effects, likely to occur</b>		<b>Positive/Neutral Effects, likely to occur</b>
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage elsewhere in the County by facilitating development within existing settlements.</li> <li>• Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage within existing settlements by facilitating brownfield development and regeneration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology<sup>20</sup> and protected architecture<sup>21</sup> arising from construction and operation activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential effects on known architectural and archaeological heritage and unknown archaeology however, these will occur in compliance with legislation.</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes towards protection of wider landscape and landscape designations by facilitating development within existing settlements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes will change overtime as a result of natural changes in vegetation cover combined with new developments that will occur in compliance with the Plan's landscape protection measures.</li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> Archaeological heritage encompasses designated and unknown archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and underwater archaeology. Also encompassed are intervisibility and interrelationships between archaeological heritage within the wider landscape, including cross-border intervisibility and interrelationships.

<sup>21</sup> Architectural heritage encompasses that which is designated or included within the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), NIAH Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes and Records of Protected Structures. Also encompassed are intervisibility and interrelationships between architectural heritage within the wider landscape, including cross-border intervisibility and interrelationships.

## 5.2 Instances whereby Environmental Considerations were not integrated into the Plan

The Plan, considered as a whole, contributes towards environmental protection and management and sustainable development and complies with various legislative requirements. This is identified throughout the SEA documentation.

Various Plan provisions that would contribute towards the sustainable development of the County would, at the same time, have the potential to conflict with the environment, were mitigation measures not taken into account. This is normal and mitigation measures have been integrated into the Plan to deal with these potential effects.

However, a number of alterations were adopted by the Elected Members as part of the Plan that are somewhat inconsistent with the overall approach provided for by the Plan, including those which are identified on Table 5.2. Also included on this table is the advice that was provided by the SEA for consideration in advance of adoption of the Plan.

**Table 5.2 Alterations Advised Against but Adopted**

<b>Proposed Amendment No's.</b>	<b>Commentary provided in advance of Plan Adoption, including</b>
PA-50 PAZ-9 PAZ-10 PAZ-11 PAZ-12 PAZ-13 PAZ-14 PAZ-16 PAZ-21 PAZ-22 PAZ-31 PAZ-32 PAZ-33 PAZ-35 PAZ-40 PAZ-41 PAZ-42 PAZ-43 PAZ-44 PAZ-45 PAZ-46 PAZ-55 PAZ-56 PAZ-57 PAZ-58 PAZ-60 PAZ-64 PAZ-66 PAZ-73 PAZ-81 PAZ-84 PAZ-85	This Proposed Amendment would not provide the most evidence-based framework for development and would have the potential to undermine sustainable development and proper planning - with potential for associated unnecessary adverse environmental effects on various environmental components, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict with efforts to maximise sustainable compact growth, sustainable mobility and a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon carbon emission reduction targets in line with local, national and European environmental objectives (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon the economic viability of providing for public assets and infrastructure (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Effects on ecology, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats and species (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Occurrence of visual impacts (residual effects would occur); and</li> <li>• Increased loadings on water bodies.</li> </ul>

<b>Proposed Amendment No's.</b>	<b>Commentary provided in advance of Plan Adoption, including</b>
PAZ-15 PAZ-34 PAZ-62 PAZ-76	<p>This Proposed Amendment would not provide the most evidence-based framework for development and would have the potential to undermine sustainable development and proper planning - with potential for associated unnecessary adverse environmental effects on various environmental components, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict with efforts to maximise sustainable compact growth, sustainable mobility and a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon carbon emission reduction targets in line with local, national and European environmental objectives (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon the economic viability of providing for public assets and infrastructure (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Effects on ecology, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats and species (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces (residual effects would occur);</li> <li>• Occurrence of visual impacts (residual effects would occur); and</li> <li>• Increased loadings on water bodies.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, part of the undeveloped lands proposed to be zoned by this Proposed Amendment overlaps with Flood Zones A/B and would fail the Justification Test under the Flood Risk Management Ministerial Guidelines. However, the "Limitations related to Flood Risk Zones" at Chapter 10.5.4 "Land-use Zoning Matrix" of the Draft Plan would ensure that development is limited in these areas.</p>
PAZ-18 PAZ-63 PAZ-79 PAZ-80	<p>Part of the undeveloped lands proposed to be zoned by this Proposed Amendment overlaps with Flood Zones A/B and would fail the Justification Test under the Flood Risk Management Ministerial Guidelines. However, the "Limitations related to Flood Risk Zones" at Chapter 10.5.4 "Land-use Zoning Matrix" of the Draft Plan would ensure that development is limited in these areas.</p>



## Section 6 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

### 6.1 Mitigation

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Plan. Various environmental sensitivities and issues have been communicated to the Council through the SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes. By integrating all related recommendations into the Plan, the Council have ensured that both the beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan have been and will be maximised and that potential adverse effects have been and will be avoided, reduced or offset.

Mitigation was achieved through the:

- Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development<sup>22</sup>;
- Considering alternatives for the Plan<sup>23</sup>;
- Integration of environmental considerations into zoning provisions of the Plan<sup>24</sup>; and
- Integration of individual SEA, AA and SFRA provisions into the text of the Plan.

### 6.2 Monitoring

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. Monitoring is based around indicators that allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives identified at Table 3.1 and used in the evaluation. Monitoring indicators, targets, sources and remedial action is provided at Table 6.1 overleaf.

<sup>22</sup> Far in advance of the submission of the Chief Executive's Draft Plan to the Elected Members for approval, the placing of the Draft Plan on public display and adoption of the Plan, Sligo County Council undertook various research in order to inform the preparation of the Plan. The findings of this strategic work have been integrated into the Plan and will contribute towards both environmental protection and management and sustainable development within the County. Strategic work undertaken by the Council includes background work in relation to Plan Strategies and other provisions, including those relating to:

- Climate Action;
- Core Strategy;
- Sligo Growth Centre;
- Settlement Strategy;
- Housing Strategy;
- Economic Strategy;
- Retail Strategy; and
- Transport Strategy.

<sup>23</sup> Although strategic alternatives in relation to the content of the Plan were significantly limited for the Plan (see Section 4), as part of the Plan preparation/SEA process, the Planning Department considered a number of alternatives for the Plan. These alternatives were assessed by the SEA process and the findings of this assessment informed the selection of preferred alternatives, facilitating an informed choice with respect to the type of Plan that was prepared and placed on public display.

<sup>24</sup> Environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan's zoning through an interdisciplinary approach. Zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Northern and Western RSES. The detailed Plan preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department combined with specialist input seeks to facilitate zoning that will, in general, help to avoid inappropriate development being permitted in areas of elevated sensitivity, such as in areas at risk of flooding or ecological sensitivity. Various provisions have been integrated into the Plan that provide for flood risk management and ecological protection and management at project level. Also considered were environmental sensitivities relating to ecology, cultural heritage, landscape and water, as well as the overlay mapping of environmental sensitivities.

**Table 6.1 Indicators, Targets, Sources and Remedial Action**

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
<b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Condition of European sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions in their land use plans and as a minimum, to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species</li> <li>Implement and review, as relevant, County Sligo Local Biodiversity Action Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DHLGH report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years)<sup>25</sup></li> <li>DHLGH National Birds Directive Monitoring Report for the under Article 12 (every 3 years)<sup>26</sup></li> <li>Consultations with the NPWS<sup>27</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where condition of European sites is found to be deteriorating this will be investigated with the Regional Assembly and the DHLGH to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of spatial plans that have included ecosystem services content, mapping and policy to protect ecosystem services when their relevant plans are either revised or drafted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions in their land use plans and as a minimum, to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species</li> <li>Implement and review, as relevant, County Sligo Local Biodiversity Action Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal review of local land use plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SEAs and AAs as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Screen for and undertake SEA and AA as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of preparation of local land use plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Status of water quality in the County's water bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included under Water below</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included under Water below</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included under Water below</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compliance of planning permissions with Plan measures providing for the protection of Biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 24 "Natural Heritage"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that they comply with all Plan measures providing for the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 24 "Natural Heritage"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems</li> </ul>
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 7 "Economic Strategy" and Chapter 28 "Economic Development"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 7 "Economic Strategy" and Chapter 28 "Economic Development"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives</li> <li>Consultations with DECC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems</li> <li>Consultations with DECC</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors resulting from development permitted under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultations with the Health Service Executive and EPA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultations with the Health Service Executive and EPA</li> </ul>

<sup>25</sup> Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on Natura 2000 sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

<sup>26</sup> Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on Natura 2000 sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

<sup>27</sup> Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on Natura 2000 sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

SEA Environmental Report Appendix III: Non-Technical Summary

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSO data</li> <li>Monitoring of Sligo County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above Previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DECC and NTA to develop a tailored response.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of spatial plans that include specific green infrastructure mapping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require all local level land use plans to include specific green infrastructure mapping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal review of local land use plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems</li> </ul>
<b>Soil (and Land)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of population growth occurring on infill and brownfield lands compared to greenfield (also relevant to Material Assets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4% as per the NPF</li> <li>In accordance with National Policy Objectives 3c of the National Planning Framework, a minimum of 30% of the housing growth targeted in any settlement is to be delivered within the existing built-up footprint of the settlement</li> <li>To map brownfield and infill land parcels across the County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA Geoportal</li> <li>Compilation of greenfield and brownfield development for the DHLGH</li> <li>AA/Screening for AA for each application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where the proportion of growth on infill and brownfield sites is not keeping pace with the targets set in the NPF and the RSES, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and coordinate actions to address constraints to doing so.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instances where contaminated material generated from brownfield and infill must be disposed of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dispose of contaminated material in compliance with EPA guidance and waste management requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal review of grants of permission where contaminated material must be disposed of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultations with the EPA and Development Management</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental assessments and AAs as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Screen for and undertake environmental assessments and AA as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of grants of permission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems</li> </ul>
<b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Status of water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the WFD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status'</li> <li>Implementation of the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA Monitoring Programme for WFD compliance<sup>28</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHLGH Water Section, the EPA Catchment Unit, the Regional Assembly and, as relevant, Uisce Éireann to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.</li> <li>Where planning applications are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the WWTP or failure of the WWTP to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will consider whether it is necessary to coordinate a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Uisce Éireann to achieve the necessary capacity.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where planning applications are being permitted on flood zones, the Council will ensure that such grants are in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and include appropriate flood risk mitigation and management measures.</li> </ul>
<b>Material Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programmed delivery of Uisce Éireann infrastructure for all key growth towns in line with Uisce Éireann Investment Plan and prioritisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission</li> <li>Consultations with the Uisce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where planning applications are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the WWTP or failure of the WWTP to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will consider whether it is necessary to coordinate a</li> </ul>

<sup>28</sup> Including monitoring of water quality and nitrogen deposition due to bioenergy and agricultural projects where available.

SEA Environmental Report Appendix III: Non-Technical Summary

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
	<p>programme to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where septic tanks are proposed, for planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that the outfall from the septic tank will not – in- combination with other septic tanks– contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive</li> <li>Facilitate, as appropriate, Uisce Éireann in developing water and wastewater infrastructure</li> <li>See also targets relating to greenfield and brownfield development of land under Soil and broadband under Population and Human Health</li> </ul>	<p>Éireann</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DHLGH in conjunction with Local Authorities</li> </ul>	<p>response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Uisce Éireann to achieve the necessary capacity.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSO data</li> <li>Monitoring of Sligo County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above Previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DECC and NTA to develop a tailored response.</li> </ul>
<b>Air</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous National Travel Survey levels</li> <li>NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>x</sub>, PM10 and PM2.5 as part of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous National Travel Survey levels</li> <li>Improvement in Air Quality trends, particularly in relation to transport related emissions of NO<sub>x</sub> and particulate matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSO data</li> <li>Data from the National Travel Survey</li> <li>EPA Air Quality Monitoring</li> <li>Consultations with Department of Transport and DECC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above Previous CSO figures, Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHLGH, DECC and NTA to develop a tailored response. See also entry under Population and human health above</li> </ul>
<b>Climatic Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of Plan measures relating to climate reduction targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to climate reduction targets – including the legally binding targets of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended, for Ireland to reach a target of net-zero emissions no later than 2050, and a cut of 51% by 2030 (compared to 2018 levels).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute towards transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of Sligo County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where targets are not achieved, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly and the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office to establish</li> </ul>

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Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share of renewable energy in transport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute towards the target of the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC), for all Member States to reach a 10% share of renewable energy in transport by facilitating the development of electricity charging and transmission infrastructure, in compliance with the provisions of the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2024</li> <li>EPA Annual National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory reporting</li> <li>Climate Action Regional Office</li> <li>Consultations with DECC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reasons and develop solutions.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Energy consumption, the uptake of renewable options and solid fuels for residential heating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To promote reduced energy consumption and support the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in the proportion of journeys made by residents of the County using private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSO data</li> <li>Monitoring of Sligo County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where trends toward carbon reduction are not recorded, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly and the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office to establish reasons and develop solutions.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSO data</li> <li>Monitoring of Sligo County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above Previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DECC and NTA to develop a tailored response.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, protected from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context of these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where monitoring reveals visitor pressure is causing negative effects on key tourist features along these routes, the Council will work with Regional Assembly, Fáilte Ireland and other stakeholders to address the pressures through additional mitigation tailored to the plans.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation with DHLGH</li> </ul>	
<b>Landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of developments permitted that result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where monitoring reveals developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, the Council will re-examine Plan provisions and the effectiveness of their implementation</li> </ul>