

AA CONCLUSION STATEMENT

FOR THE BLESSINGTON LOCAL AREA PLAN 2025

for: Wicklow County Council



by: CAAS Ltd.



JULY 2025

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Section 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for the Blessington Local Area Plan. The obligation to undertake AA derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC as transposed into Irish legislation by, inter alia, the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action (such as a plan or programme) or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of any European Site in view of its conservation objectives. This AA Conclusion Statement should be read in conjunction with the Plan and associated documents including the AA Natura Impact Report (NIR).

1.2 Legislative Requirements in relation to AA

In carrying out the AA for the Plan, Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, requires, inter alia, that the Council considers the matters arrayed in the first column on Table 1.1 below. The second column identifies how these issues have been addressed.

Table 1.1 Matters taken into account by the AA

Matter specified by the Regulations	How addressed by AA
(a) the Natura Impact Report	An AA NIR accompanies this AA Conclusion Statement and the Plan.
(b) any supplemental information furnished in relation to any such report	This AA Conclusion Statement accompanies the NIR that provides additional detail on European Sites.
(c) if appropriate, any additional information sought by the authority and furnished by the applicant in relation to a Natura Impact Report	
(d) any information or advice obtained by the public authority	Submissions made during the Plan preparation/AA process were taken into account in the preparation of the final, consolidated AA NIR.
(e) if appropriate, any written submissions or observations made to the public authority in relation to the application for consent for proposed plan or project	
(f) any other relevant information	Proposed Material Alterations were screened for the need to undertake Stage 2 AA (Stage 2 AA was not required for the Alterations).

In addition to the above, the Regulations require that the Council makes available for inspection a determination regarding the outcome of the assessment with respect to whether or not the Plan would adversely affect the integrity of a European site (a copy of this determination is provided at Section 4).

1.3 AA Conclusion Statement

Non-Statutory AA guidance (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009) states that (Section 4.14) it *"is recommended that planning authorities include a clear and discrete AA Conclusion Statement as a distinct section in the written statement of the plan separate to the SEA statement."* This guidance recommends that the following issues are addressed by the AA Conclusion Statement:

- Summary of how the findings of the AA were factored into the Plan (see Section 2);
- Reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered as part of the AA process (see Section 3);
- A declaration that the Plan as adopted will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of European Sites (provided at Section 4); and
- The NIR (the AA NIR is accompanied by this AA Conclusion Statement and has informed the AA Determination – see Section 4).

Furthermore, as stated in the Draft "Development Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2021):

"....There is a similar requirement to publish a determination relating to the AA that may have been undertaken. Under Article 6.3 of the Habitats Directive the determination (often termed an 'AA Conclusion Statement') must state as to whether or not the Draft Plan would adversely affect the integrity of a European site. However as stated in Section 3.5, this determination must have been made prior to the adoption of the Draft Plan."

This AA Conclusion Statement addresses the above issues, including the signed AA Determination included at Section 4.

Section 2 How the findings of the AA were factored into the Plan

The SEA and AA team worked with the Plan-preparation team at the Council in order to integrate requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan.

The Plan was prepared in an iterative manner whereby the Plan and AA documents have informed subsequent versions of the other. The findings of the AA were integrated into the Plan through mitigation measures. These mitigation measures ensure that the Plan will not affect the integrity of the European Sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.¹ The mitigation measures included in the Local Area Plan that most relevant to the protection of European sites are identified in Table 2.1 below.

Furthermore, the detailed Plan preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department for the higher-level County Development Plan, combined with specialist input from the SEA and AA processes, resulted in the integration of mitigation into that Plan that must be complied with in the Plan area. These measures are also identified on Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Measures that will protect European sites and their sustaining resources integrated into the Plan

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
Alignment with County Development Plan	<p>Part A.1 Introduction "In particular, development standards, retail strategies, housing strategies etc that are included in the County Development Plan shall not be repeated, and shall be complied with throughout the implementation of this Local Area Plan. Any specific policies / objectives or development standards required for this area will be stated as precisely that, and in all cases will be consistent with the County Development Plan. Thus development standards will therefore be the same across the entire County, and any differences for specific settlements would be clear and transparent, to both those adopting the plans, and the general public alike."</p> <p>Part A2.7 Built Heritage & Natural Environment - Heritage Objectives To protect natural, architectural and archaeological heritage, in accordance with the objectives set out in the County Development Plan</p> <p>Part B. 6 Heritage, Biodiversity & Green Infrastructure The purpose of this chapter is to set out the specific objectives with regard to the heritage of the settlement and should be read in conjunction with the County Development Plan - the heritage strategies, objectives, schedules and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan will apply directly in the settlement. In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Archaeology & National Monuments - Architectural heritage, including the Record of Protected Structures, vernacular structures, and Architectural Conservation Areas - Historical & Cultural Heritage - Protected habitats - Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows - Water systems & wetlands - Soils & Geology - Landscape, including Views & Prospects - Green Infrastructure - Recreational Use of Natural Resources - Public Rights of Way <p>Part B.7 Infrastructure The infrastructure strategies, objectives and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan will apply directly in the plan area. In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable Transportation - Water Supply & Demand; - Wastewater Infrastructure; - Storm and Surface Water Infrastructure - Flood Risk Management - Waste and Environmental Emissions - Energy and Information Infrastructure <p>BLESS15 To facilitate and encourage the exploration and exploitation of aggregates and minerals, in a manner which is consistent with the principle of sustainability, the protection of residential, environmental and tourism amenities within the plan area and the objectives relating to the Extractive Industry in Chapter 9 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.</p> <p>There is a vast array of County Development Plan provisions that would have the potential to contribute towards the mitigation of effects on European sites. These are reproduced as follow: SCO6 Natural Heritage & Biodiversity - Natural heritage and biodiversity is the cornerstone of Wicklow's identity – 'The Garden of Ireland'. It is essential that we conserve and enhance the County's rich natural heritage and biodiversity for the benefit or current and future generations.</p>

¹ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

² The measures generally benefit multiple environmental components i.e., a measure providing for the protection of water could beneficially impact upon the protection of biodiversity, flora and fauna, for example. All of the measures included in this table would benefit the protection of European site in relation to the sources and pathways for effect identified in this report.

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>County Policy Objective (CPO) 4.14 To ensure that key assets in rural areas such as water quality and natural and cultural heritage are protected to support quality of life and economic vitality.</p> <p>CPO 4.15 To protect and promote the quality, character and distinctiveness of the rural landscape.</p> <p>CPO 9.36 To facilitate the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural activities, whereby watercourses, wildlife habitats, areas of ecological importance and other environmental assets are protected from the threat of pollution, and where development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside. Developments shall not be detrimental to archaeological and heritage features of importance.</p> <p>CPO 9.39 To ensure that agricultural developments do not cause increased pollution to watercourses. Developments will be required to adhere to the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EC), the Nitrates National Action Programme and the EC (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2009 (as amended), with regard to storage facilities, concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources. Developments will be required to comply with relevant measures, which operate to protect water quality from pollution by agricultural sources. The disposal and storage of agricultural waste shall comply with the standards required by Council.</p> <p>Forestry Strategic Objective To promote state and private afforestation, to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to the County's economic and social well being on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment.</p> <p>CPO 9.43 To facilitate afforestation in appropriate locations, in accordance with the 'Wicklow Indicative Forestry Strategy' (Wicklow County Council, 2002), and in co-operation with forestry operators and the Forest Service. The Wicklow Indicative Forestry Strategy was produced by the Council in 2002, in consultation with the Forest Service. The Strategy is intended to be a tool of assistance to planners in dealing with proposals for forestry applications. The Strategy includes a list of areas that are preferred for afforestation and a list of areas where afforestation would be inappropriate by virtue of landscape, soil type, settlement or environmental grounds. The Strategy also includes a series of objectives which are intended to guide planning decisions. The Council will have particular regard to developments that are located in the areas included in 'Table 3: Areas Sensitive to Afforestation', and as per the Strategy, should be consulted on all forestry grant applications in these areas.</p> <p>CPO 9.44 To promote afforestation in co-operation with relevant agencies, including the Forest Service (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) and forestry operators and to ensure that afforestation is undertaken in a manner that is consistent with the principle of 'sustainable forest management'. The Council will only permit development that complies with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development is compatible with the protection of the environment, and does not cause pollution or degradation of wildlife habitats, natural waters or areas of ecological importance; the development does not have a negative visual impact on the scenic quality of the countryside, and is of an appropriate nature and scale to the surrounding area; the development is not detrimental to archaeological or other historic/heritage features; and the Council will permit forestry development where it is considered that the roads infrastructure (in terms of design, width, surfacing etc.), which is to serve the development, can accommodate the proposed development. No development will be permitted that will result in damage to roads infrastructure or undue nuisance to other road users. The Council may apply a special financial levy to certain developments for works that are required to be undertaken to the road network. <p>CPO 9.45 To promote the use of forests for appropriate recreation purposes and to facilitate the development of appropriate recreation facilities at suitable locations. The recreational use of forests will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the recreational use is compatible with the other forest objectives, functions and values of the forest, such as timber production, sensitive habitats and important archaeology. Developments will only be permitted that are acceptable in terms of other planning considerations, including the provision of acceptable infrastructure such as roads, car parking, water and sewerage infrastructure.</p> <p>Fishing Strategic Objective - To promote the development of the County's sea and river fishing industry, to a scale and in a manner, which maximises its contribution to the County's economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment.</p> <p>CPO 9.49 To support the sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture industry in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Inland Fisheries Ireland. The Council will not permit development that has a detrimental impact on the environment. In particular, development that has a detrimental impact on the environmental/ ecological/ water quality of seas, rivers and streams, will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 9.50 To facilitate the provision of infrastructure, which is necessary for the development of the fishing and aquaculture industry. Infrastructure and buildings in coastal or riverbank locations should be located in proximity to existing landing facilities and shall be of a design that is compatible with the area. Any development, which by reason of its nature or scale is detrimental to the character or amenity of an area, will not be permitted. Any development in the coastal zone shall comply with the objectives of this plan, as set out in Chapter 19.</p> <p>CPO11.1 To promote, encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism and recreation sectors in a sustainable manner.</p> <p>CPO 11.4 To only permit the development of a tourism or recreational facility in a rural area in cases where the product or activity is dependent on its location in a rural situation and where it can be demonstrated that the proposed development does not adversely affect the character, environmental quality and amenity of the rural area or the vitality of any settlement and the provision of infrastructure therein. The natural resource / tourist product / tourist attraction that is essential to the activity shall be located at the site or in close proximity to the site, of the proposed development. The need to locate in a particular area must be balanced against the environmental impact of the development and benefits to the local community.</p> <p>CPO 11.4 To only permit the development of a tourism or recreational facility in a rural area in cases where the product or activity is dependent on its location in a rural situation and where it can be demonstrated that the proposed development does not adversely affect the character, environmental quality and amenity of the rural area or the vitality of any settlement and the provision of infrastructure therein. The natural resource / tourist product / tourist attraction that is essential to the activity shall be located at the site or in close proximity to the site, of the proposed development. The need to locate in a particular area must be balanced against the environmental impact of the development and benefits to the local community.</p> <p>CPO 11.6 To ensure that tourism and recreation related developments are appropriately located in the County. Subject to the following exceptions, all tourist and recreation related developments are 'open for consideration' in all landscape areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The following tourist uses will not be permitted within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (both the Mountain Uplands Area and the Coastal Area): Static caravans and mobile homes; Holiday homes will not be permitted in any landscape category other than urban zones except where they comply with objectives CPO 11.13, CPO 11.14, CPO 11.15 and CPO 11.16. <p>CPO 11.29 To encourage eco-tourism projects or those tourism projects with a strong environmentally sustainable design and operational ethos.</p> <p>CPO 11.42 To promote and encourage the recreational use of coastline, rivers and lakes and the development of 'blowways' in the County subject to normal environmental protection and management criteria. Where such recreational uses involve the development of structures or facilities, the Planning Authority will ensure that the proposals will respect the natural amenity and character of the area, listed views and prospects onto and from the area in question. Where possible, such structures</p>

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>should be set back an appropriate distance from the actual amenity itself and should not adversely affect the unique sustainable quality of these resources.</p> <p>CPO 11.47 Where relevant, the Council and those receiving permission for development under the plan, shall manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant environmental effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities; visitor/habitat management plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 11.48 Ensure the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.</p> <p>CPO 11.49 Where projects for new tourism projects identified in this chapter are not already provided for by existing plans / programmes or are not already permitted, then the feasibility of progressing these projects shall be examined, taking into account planning need, environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the objectives of the plan relating to sustainable development.</p> <p>CPO 12.7 To facilitate the development of services and utilities for electric vehicles and alternative fuel vehicles types, including the roll-out of additional electric charging points in collaboration with relevant agencies at appropriate locations.</p> <p>CPO 12.9 To seek to ensure all new or upgraded transport infrastructure is climate resilient.</p> <p>CPO 12.10 Where projects for new infrastructure identified in this chapter are not already provided for by existing plans / programmes or are not already permitted, then the feasibility of progressing these projects shall be examined, taking into account planning need, environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the objectives of the plan relating to sustainable mobility. A Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken where appropriate, for relevant new road infrastructure in two stages: Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection and Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection.</p> <p>CPO 13.1 To ensure and support the implementation of the EU Groundwater Directive and the EU Water Framework Directive and associated River Basin and Sub-Basin Management Plans and Blue Dot Catchment Programme, to ensure the protection, improvement and sustainable use of all waters in the County, including rivers, lakes, ground water, coastal and estuarine waters, and to restrict development likely to lead to a deterioration in water quality. The Council will also have cognisance of, where relevant, the EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Document No. 20 and 36 which provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>CPO13.2 To prevent development that would pollute water bodies and in particular, to regulate the installation of effluent storage and disposal systems in the vicinity of natural water bodies or development that would exacerbate existing underlying water contamination.</p> <p>CPO13.3 To minimise alterations or interference with river / stream beds, banks and channels, except for reasons of overriding public health and safety (e.g. to reduce risk of flooding); a buffer of generally 25m along watercourses should be provided (or other width, as determined by the Planning Authority having particular regard to 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment' by Inland Fisheries Ireland for urban location) free from inappropriate development, with undeveloped riparian vegetation strips, wetlands and floodplains generally being retained in as natural a state as possible.</p> <p>CPO13.4 To ensure that any development or activity with the potential to impact on ground water has regard to the GSI Groundwater Protection Scheme (see Map 17.06 Groundwater Vulnerability).</p> <p>CPO 13.5 To ensure compliance with and to implement the provisions of the Nitrates Directive in so far as it falls within the remit of the Council to do so.</p> <p>CPO 13.6 To encourage and promote the use of catchment-sensitive farming practices, in order to meet Water Framework Directive targets and comply with the River Basin Management Plan.</p> <p>CPO13.7 To support and facilitate projects and programmes that aim to improve scientific knowledge and public awareness of the importance of natural water quality, and in particular to support the LAWPRO programme in County Wicklow and adjoining counties as appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 13.9 To protect existing and potential water resources of the County, in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive, the River Basin Management Plans, the Groundwater Protection Scheme and source protection plans for public water supplies.</p> <p>CPO 13.10 To require new developments to connect to public water supplies where services are adequate or where they will be provided in the near future, or where extension of an adjacent water supply system is technically and environmentally feasible.</p> <p>CPO 13.11 Where connection to an existing public water supply is not possible, or the existing supply system does not have sufficient capacity, the provision of a private water supply will be only permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposed water supply meets the standards set out in EU and national legislation and guidance, would not be prejudicial to public health, would not impact on the source or yield of an existing supply, particularly a public supply or would not adversely affect the ability of water bodies to meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive. Private water supplies for multi-house developments will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 13.15 In order to fulfil the objectives of the Core Strategy, Wicklow County Council will work alongside and facilitate the delivery of Irish Water's Water Services Investment Programme, to ensure that all lands zoned or identified for development are serviced by an adequate wastewater collection and treatment system and in particular, to endeavour to secure the delivery of regional and strategic wastewater schemes.</p> <p>In particular, to support and facilitate the delivery of new / improved wastewater treatment plants in the following settlements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arklow - Blessington - Aughrim - Tinahely - Avoca - Laragh - Glendalough <p>CPO 13.16 Permission will be considered for private wastewater treatment plants for single rural houses where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the specific ground conditions have been shown to be suitable for the construction of a treatment plant and any associated percolation area; • the system will not give rise to unacceptable adverse impacts on ground waters / aquifers and the type of treatment proposed has been drawn up in accordance with the appropriate groundwater protection response set out in the Wicklow Groundwater Protection Scheme (2003); • the proposed method of treatment and disposal complies with Wicklow County Council's Policy for Wastewater Treatment & Disposal Systems for Single Houses (PE ≤ 10) and the Environmental Protection Agency "Waste Water Treatment Manuals"; and • in all cases the protection of ground and surface water quality shall remain the overriding priority and proposals must definitively demonstrate that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on water quality standards and requirements set out in EU and national legislation and guidance documents. <p>CPO 13.17 Private wastewater treatment plants for multi-house developments will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 13.18 Private wastewater treatment plants for commercial / employment generating development will only be considered where:</p> <p>Irish Water has confirmed the site is due to be connected to a future public system in the area or Irish Water has confirmed there are no plans for a public system in the area;</p>

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>It can clearly demonstrated that the proposed system can meet all EPA / Local Authority environmental criteria; and An annually renewed contract for the management and maintenance of the system is contracted with a reputable company / person, details of which shall be provided to the Local Authority.</p> <p>CPO 13.19 Where any application for a private treatment plant would require a discharge licence under the Water Pollution Acts, a simultaneous application for same shall be required to be made when submitting the planning application.</p> <p>CPO 13.20 Ensure the separation of foul and surface water discharges in new developments through the provision of separate networks.</p> <p>CPO 13.21 Ensure the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in accordance with the Wicklow County Council SuDS Policy to ensure surface water runoff is managed for maximum benefit. In particular to require proposed developments to meet the design criteria of each of the four pillars of SuDS design; Water Quality, Water Quantity, Amenity and Biodiversity.</p> <p>CPO 13.22 To promote the use of green infrastructure, such as swales and wetlands, where feasible as landscape features in new development to provide storm / surface runoff storage and reduce pollutants, as well as habitat, recreation and aesthetic functions.</p> <p>CPO 14.14 Underground tanks and storage systems shall be permitted as a last resort only where it can be demonstrated the other more sustainable SuDS infrastructure measures are not feasible. In any case underground tanks and storage systems shall not be permitted under public open space, unless there is no other feasible alternative.</p> <p>CPO 14.15 To promote the use of green infrastructure, such as swales and wetlands, where feasible as landscape features in new development to provide storm / surface runoff storage and reduce pollutants, as well as habitat, recreation and aesthetic functions.</p> <p>CPO 14.16 For developments adjacent to all watercourses of a significant conveyance capacity or where it is necessary to maintain the ecological or environmental quality of the watercourse, any structures (including hard landscaping) must be set back from the edge of the watercourse in accordance with the guidelines in 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment' by Inland Fisheries Ireland.</p> <p>CPO 15.9 To regulate and control activities likely to give rise to emissions to air (other than those activities which are regulated by the EPA).</p> <p>CPO 15.10 To require proposals for new developments with the potential for the accidental release of chemicals or dust generation, to submit and have approved by the Local Authority construction and/or operation management plans to control such emissions.</p> <p>CPO 15.11 To require activities likely to give rise to air emissions to implement measures to control such emissions, to undertake air quality monitoring and to provide an annual air quality audit.</p> <p>CPO 15.12 To implement the Wicklow County Council Noise Action Plan 2018-2023 (and any subsequent Plan) in order to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to environmental noise exposure</p> <p>CPO 15.13 To enforce, where applicable, the provisions of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Acts 1992 and 2003, and EPA Noise Regulations 2006.</p> <p>CPO 15.14 To regulate and control activities likely to give rise to excessive noise (other than those activities which are regulated by the EPA).</p> <p>CPO 15.15 To require proposals for new developments with the potential to create excessive noise to prepare a construction and/or operation management plans to control such emissions.</p> <p>CPO 15.16 To require activities likely to give rise to excessive noise to install noise mitigation measures to undertake noise monitoring and to provide an annual monitoring audit.</p> <p>CPO 15.17 To ensure that all external lighting whether free standing or attached to a building shall be designed and constructed so as not to cause excessive light spillage, glare, or dazzle motorists, and thereby limiting light pollution into the surrounding environment and protecting the amenities of nearby properties, traffic and wildlife.</p> <p>CPO 15.18 To require proposals for new developments with the potential to create light pollution or light impacts on adjacent residences to mitigate impacts, in accordance with the Development & Design Standards set out in this plan.</p> <p>CPO 15.19 To promote the use of low energy LED (or equivalent) lighting.</p> <p>CPO 15.20 To require the design and implementation of a hierarchy of light intensity zones in development schemes to ensure that environmental impact is minimised as far as possible particularly in areas proximate to ecological corridors.</p> <p>CPO 17.1 To protect, sustainably manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, geological heritage, landscape and environment of County Wicklow in recognition of its importance for nature conservation and biodiversity and as a non renewable resource.</p> <p>CPO 17.2 Ensure the protection of ecosystems and ecosystem services by integrating full consideration of these into all decision making.</p> <p>CPO 17.3 To support and promote the implementation of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan and the County Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>CPO 17.4 To contribute, as appropriate, towards the protection of designated ecological sites including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs); Wildlife Sites (including proposed Natural Heritage Areas); Salmonid Waters; Flora Protection Order sites; Wildfowl Sanctuaries (see S.I. 192 of 1979); Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchments; and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).</p> <p>To contribute towards compliance with relevant EU Environmental Directives and applicable National Legislation, Policies, Plans and Guidelines, including but not limited to the following and any updated/superseding documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Directives, including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended) , the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) , the Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC) , the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU, as amended), the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), EU Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC); EU 'Guidance on integrating ecosystems and their services into decision-making' (European Commission 2019) • National legislation, including the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2010 (as amended) , European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018, the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011), the European Communities (Environmental Liability) Regulations 2008 (as amended) and the Flora Protection order 2015. • National policy guidelines (including any clarifying circulars or superseding versions of same), including 'Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment' (2018), 'Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-Threshold Development' (2003), 'Tree Preservation Guidelines', 'Landscape and Landscape Assessment' (draft 2000), 'Appropriate Assessment Guidance' (2010); • Catchment and water resource management plans, including the National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 (including any superseding versions of same), • Biodiversity plans and guidelines, including National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 (including any superseding versions of same) and the County Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan; • Ireland's Environment – An Integrated Assessment 2020 (EPA), including any superseding versions of same), and to make provision where appropriate to address the report's goals and challenges.

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>CPO 17.5 Projects giving rise to adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (cumulatively, directly or indirectly) arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall not be permitted on the basis of this plan .</p> <p>CPO 17.6 Ensure that development proposals, contribute as appropriate towards the protection and where possible enhancement of the ecological coherence of the European Site network and encourage the retention and management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as per Article 10 of the EU Habitats directive. All projects and plans arising from this Plan will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>CPO 17.7 To maintain the conservation value of all proposed and future Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and to protect other designated ecological sites in Wicklow.</p> <p>CPO 17.8 Ensure ecological impact assessment is carried out for any proposed development likely to have a significant impact on proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs), Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Statutory Nature Reserves, Refuges for Fauna, Annex I habitats, or rare and threatened species including those species protected by law and their habitats. Ensure appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are incorporated into development proposals as part of any ecological impact assessment.</p> <p>CPO 17.9 The Council recognises the natural heritage and amenity value of the Wicklow Mountains National Park and shall consult at all times with National Park management regarding any developments likely to impact upon the conservation value of the park, or on issues regarding visitor areas.</p> <p>CPO 17.10 To support the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the development of site specific conservation objectives (SSCOs) for designated sites.</p> <p>CPO 17.11 To preserve lands at 'The Rocks', Kilcoole (as shown on Map 17.13) in its existing state; to allow no development of these lands; to protect the lands as a natural habitat and biodiversity area; to protect the open nature and landscape quality of the lands.</p> <p>CPO 17.12 To protect non-designated sites from inappropriate development, ensuring that ecological impact assessment is carried out for any proposed development likely to have a significant impact on locally important natural habitats, species or wildlife corridors. Ensure appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are incorporated into development proposals as part of any ecological impact assessment.</p> <p>CPO 17.13 To facilitate, in co-operation with relevant stakeholders, the ongoing identification and recording of locally important biodiversity areas and species in County Wicklow, not otherwise protected by legislation and ensure that consideration is given to these in the development management process.</p> <p>CPO 17.14 Ensure that development proposals support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity within the plan area in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, including linear landscape features like watercourses(rivers, streams, canals, ponds, drainage channels, etc), woodlands, trees, hedgerows, road and railway margins, semi-natural grasslands, natural springs, wetlands, stonewalls, geological and geo-morphological systems, features which act as stepping stones, such as marshes and woodlands, other landscape features and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones that taken as a whole help to improve the coherence of the European network in Wicklow.</p> <p>CPO 17.15 To protect and enhance wetland sites that are listed as being of C+ or higher importance in the County Wicklow wetlands survey and any subsequent updates or revisions thereof and to implement the recommendations of the County Wicklow wetlands survey.</p> <p>CPO 17.16 Require pollinator friendly landscape management and planting within new developments and on Council owned land.</p> <p>CPO 17.17 Work with statutory authorities to prevent and control the spread of invasive plant and animal species and require, where appropriate Invasive Species Management Plans to be prepared as part of the development management process where necessary.</p> <p>CPO 17.18 To promote the preservation of trees, groups of trees or woodlands in particular native tree species, and those trees associated with demesne planting, in the interest of long-term sustainability of a stable ecosystem amenity or the environmental, as set out in Schedule 10.08 and Map 10.08 A, B & C of this plan.</p> <p>CPO 17.19 To consider the making of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) to protect trees and woodlands of high amenity value generally and in particular where it appears that they are in danger of being felled and in response to requests from local communities.</p> <p>CPO 17.20 Development that requires the felling of mature trees of environmental and/or amenity value, even though they may not have a TPO in place, will be discouraged.</p> <p>CPO 17.21 To strongly discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development and encourage tree surgery rather than felling if such is essential to enable development to proceed.</p> <p>CPO 17.22 To require and ensure the preservation and enhancement of native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees, as part of the development management process, and require the planting of native broad leaved species, and species of local provenance in all new developments.</p> <p>CPO 17.23 To require the retention, wherever possible, of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatment in the County. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, provision of the same type of boundary will be required of similar length and set back within the site in advance of the commencement of construction works on the site (unless otherwise agreed by the Planning Authority).</p> <p>CPO 17.24 To ensure and support the implementation of the EU Groundwater Directive and the EU Water Framework Directive and associated River Basin and Sub-Basin Management Plans and Blue Dot Catchment Programme, to ensure the protection, improvement and sustainable use of all waters in the County, including rivers, lakes, ground water, coastal and estuarine waters, and to restrict development likely to lead to a deterioration in water quality. The Council will also have cognisance of, where relevant, the EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Document No. 20 and 36 which provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>CPO 17.25 Ensure that floodplains and wetlands are retained for their biodiversity and ecosystems services value and resist development and activities that would interfere with the natural water cycle to a degree that would interfere with the survival and stability of these natural habitats.</p> <p>CPO 17.26 Protect rivers, streams and other water courses by avoiding interference with river / stream beds, banks and channels and maintaining a core riparian buffer zone of generally 25m along watercourses (or other width, as determined by the Planning Authority having particular regard to 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment' by Inland Fisheries Ireland for urban location) free from inappropriate development, with undeveloped riparian vegetation strips, wetlands and floodplains generally being retained in as natural a state as possible. Structures such as bridges should be clear span, and designed and built in accordance with Inland Fisheries Ireland guidance.</p> <p>CPO 17.33 To have regard to the National Peatlands Strategy (NPWS 2015) as may be applicable.</p> <p>CPO 17.34 Developments sited on peatlands have the potential to increase overall carbon losses, potentially undermining expected carbon savings (in the case of renewable energy developments) and damaging rare habitats of European importance. Project proposals for developments on peatlands shall ensure no adverse impacts arise in relation to: Peatland stability; Carbon emissions balance; and Hydrology and ecology.</p>

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>CPO 17.35 All development proposals shall have regard to the County landscape classification hierarchy in particular the key landscape features and characteristics identified in the Wicklow Landscape Assessment (set in Volume 3 of the 2016 County Development Plan) and the 'Key Development Considerations' set out for each landscape area set out in Section 5 of the Wicklow Landscape Assessment</p> <p>CPO 17.36 Any application for permission in the AONB which may have the potential to significantly adversely impact the landscape area shall be accompanied by a Landscape / Visual Impact Assessment, which shall include, inter alia, an evaluation of visibility and prominence of the proposed development in its immediate environs and in the wider landscape, a series of photos or photomontages of the site / development from clearly identified vantage points, an evaluation of impacts on any listed views / prospects and an assessment of vegetation / land cover type in the area (with particular regard to commercial forestry plantations which may be felled thus altering character / visibility). The Assessment shall demonstrate that landscape impacts have been anticipated and avoided to a level consistent with the sensitivity of the landscape and the nature of the designation.</p> <p>CPO 17.37 To resist development that would significantly or unnecessarily alter the natural landscape and topography, including land infilling / reclamation projects or projects involving significant landscape remodelling, unless it can be demonstrated that the development would enhance the landscape and / or not give rise to adverse impacts</p> <p>CPO 17.38 To protect listed views and prospects from development that would either obstruct the view / prospect from the identified vantage point or form an obtrusive or incongruous feature in that view / prospect. Due regard will be paid in assessing development applications to the span and scope of the view / prospect and the location of the development within that view / prospect.</p> <p>CPO 18.3 New development and redevelopment proposals shall wherever possible, integrate nature based solutions to the design, layout and landscaping of development proposals, and in particular to the delivery of linear parks and connected open spaces along watercourses in order to enhance the existing green infrastructure of the local area. All such proposals will be subject to ecological impact assessment.</p> <p>CPO 18.4 To facilitate the development and enhancement of suitable access to and connectivity between areas of interest for residents, wildlife and biodiversity, with focus on promoting river corridors, Natura 2000 sites, nature reserves and other distinctive landscapes as focal features for linkages between natural, semi natural and formalised green spaces where feasible and ensuring that there is no adverse impact (directly, indirectly or cumulatively) on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>CPO 18.5 To identify and facilitate the provision of linkages along and between green / river corridors within the county and adjoining counties to create inter connected routes and develop riverside parks and create linkages between them to form 'necklace' effect routes including development of walkways, cycleways, bridleways and wildlife corridors where feasible and ensuring that there is no adverse impact (directly, indirectly or cumulatively) on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>CPO 18.16 To protect the quality of bathing waters and to endeavour to ensure that bathing waters achieve "sufficient or better status" and increase the number of bathing waters classified as "good" or "excellent", in accordance with the Bathing Water Directive (Directive 2006/7/EC).</p> <p>CPO 18.17 Where projects for significant green infrastructure identified in this chapter are not already provided for by existing plans / programmes or are not already permitted, then the feasibility of progressing these projects shall be examined, taking into account planning need, environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the objectives of the plan relating to sustainable mobility. A Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken where appropriate, for relevant new green infrastructure in two stages: Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection and Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection.</p> <p>CPO 19.13 Projects giving rise to adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (cumulatively, directly or indirectly) arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall not be permitted on the basis of this plan³.</p> <p>Ensure that development proposals, contribute as appropriate towards the protection and where possible enhancement of the ecological coherence of the European Site network and encourage the retention and management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as per Article 10 of the EU Habitats directive. All projects and plans arising from this Plan will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.</p>
Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	<p>Part A2.7 Built Heritage & Natural Environment - Heritage Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To protect natural, architectural and archaeological heritage, in accordance with the objectives set out in the County Development Plan; - To enhance the quality of the natural and built environment, to enhance the unique character of the town and environs as a place to live, visit and work; - To promote greater appreciation of, and access to, local heritage assets; - To ensure the protection and enhancement of natural habitats, cultural heritage, ecological resources and biodiversity and in particular, to safeguard the integrity of European Sites, watercourses and rivers in the area. <p>Part B. 6 Heritage, Biodiversity & Green Infrastructure</p> <p>The purpose of this chapter is to set out the specific objectives with regard to the heritage of the settlement and should be read in conjunction with the County Development Plan - the heritage strategies, objectives, schedules and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan will apply directly in the settlement.</p> <p>In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Archaeology & National Monuments - Architectural heritage, including the Record of Protected Structures, vernacular structures, and Architectural Conservation Areas - Historical & Cultural Heritage - Protected habitats - Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows - Water systems & wetlands - Soils & Geology - Landscape, including Views & Prospects - Green Infrastructure - Recreational Use of Natural Resources - Public Rights of Way <p>BLESS34 Protect and enhance the character, setting and environmental quality of natural, architectural and archaeological heritage assets, and in particular those features of the natural landscape and built structures that contribute to their special interest. The natural, architectural and archaeological heritage of the area shall be protected in accordance with the objectives set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan. In particular, the heritage assets of the Poulaphouca Reservoir and Glen Ding Forest shall be rigorously protected.</p>

³ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>BLESS39 To require development proposals to have regard to existing green infrastructure assets (as identified within this local area plan or otherwise), including trees and hedgerows, that may exist within a subject site, and to consider how the biodiversity value and ecological connectivity of such assets may be maintained. Where existing GI assets or green corridors within a site have been identified on Map No. 3 'Key Green Infrastructure' or the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit, proposals should include measures to preserve and, where necessary, improve ecological connectivity and biodiversity value across said assets/corridors.</p> <p>BLESS40 To facilitate the development of new green corridors within the plan area where opportunities may be identified, and barriers in ecological connectivity rectified, via the development management process. In particular, the following additional green corridors will be facilitated: - The creation of green corridors through Quarry Lands, and where relevant SLO3, to link the Deerpark watercourse and Glen Ding Forest with the plan boundary in the direction of the Red Bog SAC. - The creation of green corridors linking the Deerpark Watercourse to Local Biodiversity Areas and existing wooded areas on the eastern boundary of SLO3 (refer to SLO3 below). - The creation of a green corridor through the grounds of St. Mary's Senior National School to improve the connectivity between existing green corridors along Oak Drive/Blessington Business Park and Blessington Main Street. This link may in turn improve ecological connectivity to the lakeshore via boundary hedging on the grounds of the Church of Our Lady and the 'Priest's Walk' through the Rectory residential development.</p> <p>European Sites Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To protect European Sites and a suitable buffer area from inappropriate development. - Projects giving rise to adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites (cumulatively, directly or indirectly) arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall not be permitted on the basis of this plan⁴. - Ensure that development proposals, contribute as appropriate towards the protection and where possible enhancement of the ecological coherence of the European Site network and encourage the retention and management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as per Article 10 of the EU Habitats directive. All projects and plans arising from this Plan will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. - In order to ensure the protection of the integrity of European Sites, the planning authority is not limited to the implementation of the above objectives, and shall implement all other relevant objectives of the CDP and LAP as it sees fit. <p>Objectives integrated into BLESS OP9</p> <p>Hedgerows and mature trees should be retained on the site to the north/northwestern, eastern, and southern boundaries. Vehicular access to the site should be via the western boundary, unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority. The potential of the site should be maximised through use of the sloping topography of the lands. Strong urban and active frontages should be provided on the northern and eastern frontages subject to maximum retention of mature trees.</p>
<p>Peatlands, wetlands and surface water courses</p>	<p>Part A2.7 Built Heritage & Natural Environment - Heritage Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To protect natural, architectural and archaeological heritage, in accordance with the objectives set out in the County Development Plan <p>Part B.6 HERITAGE, BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, Water Systems</p> <p>In line with the County Development Plan, riparian zones of generally 25m on either side will be maintained free from appropriate development, and such lands will be zoned with an appropriate open space zoning where the land is largely undeveloped.</p> <p>BLESS41 To enforce a general presumption against the culverting of watercourses within the plan area, except where absolutely necessary. Where development is proposed within sites that contain culverted watercourses, proposals should be included to restore or 'daylight' said watercourses with an appropriate riparian zoned in line with CPO 17.26 of the Wicklow County Development Plan. 59 Similarly, where development includes significant works to existing roads with culverted crossings of watercourses, proposals should be included, where practical, to improve the ecological connectivity of these crossings, e.g. the replacement of culverts with clear span bridges, box culverts with wildlife ledges, etc.</p> <p>BLESS42 Where relevant, applications for development must demonstrate that the proposal for development would not, individually or cumulatively, affect a water body's ability to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive.</p>
<p>Water services, groundwater, water quality and SuDS⁵</p>	<p>Part A2.8 Service Infrastructure - Service Infrastructure Objective</p> <p>Facilitate and promote the delivery of reliable and effective water, drainage, energy, waste management and communications infrastructure to service the existing and future development needs of the settlement. In particular: - to support and facilitate the improvement and increased resilience of the water distribution, supply and storage systems; - to support and facilitate any necessary upgrades to the wastewater collection and pumping systems (where required); - ensure the separation of foul and surface water discharges in new developments through the provision of separate networks. Ensure the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and in particular, to ensure that all surface water generated in a new development is disposed of on-site or is attenuated and treated prior to discharge to an approved surface water system.</p> <p>Part A3.2 Physical Context - Services & Infrastructure</p> <p>Consultation with Uisce Éireann has indicated that there is water supply capacity available over the plan period, based on the Wicklow County Development Plan population targets. In terms of waste water, Uisce Éireann have recently completed an upgrade to Blessington Waste Water Treatment Plant to c. 9,000 population equivalent, which would serve the level of growth envisioned by the Wicklow County Development Plan Core Strategy over the plan period.</p> <p>BLESS42 Where relevant, applications for development must demonstrate that the proposal for development would not, individually or cumulatively, affect a water body's ability to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>Water Supply & Demand, Storm and Surface Water Infrastructure and Wastewater Infrastructure</p> <p>See "Alignment with County Development Plan" component above</p> <p>Water Protection</p> <p>The Poulaphouca Reservoir is a critical source of raw water supply to the populations of Dublin, Kildare and parts of Wicklow. Significant measures are required to be taken to protect the water quality in the reservoir, including the management of surface water runoff in adjacent towns and villages.</p> <p>Uisce Éireann recommends the use of the hierarchy of discharge outlined in the guidance document "Implementation of Urban Nature-based Solutions: Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents" to complement the approach to surface water management set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan.</p> <p>In particular, Uisce Éireann encourages a specific focus on the water quality of surface water runoff collected in Blessington town and discharged either directly to the reservoir or to watercourses which drain to the reservoir. This is applicable to both new developments and to any planned improvements to existing urban spaces.</p>

⁴ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. there must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

⁵ Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>BLESS-54 To protect both ground and surface water sources, to avoid water quality deterioration and reduce the level of treatment required in the production of drinking water, in accordance with Drinking Water and Water Framework Directives. New developments which could pose an unacceptable risk to drinking water sources will not be permitted.</p> <p>BLESS-55 To support and facilitate the improvement of the quality of surface water runoff that directly (or indirectly) will reach Poulaphouca Reservoir. This shall be applied to both new/expanded developments and to any planned improvements to existing urban spaces. In this regard, developments shall be designed in accordance with the guidance document "Implementation of Urban Nature-based Solutions: Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents" LAWPRO 2024.</p>
Tourism	<p>Part A2.7 Built Heritage & Natural Environment - Heritage Objectives</p> <p>- To protect natural, architectural and archaeological heritage, in accordance with the objectives set out in the County Development Plan</p> <p>BLESS23 To promote and encourage the sustainable recreational use of the lakeshore of the Poulaphouca Reservoir for eco-tourism activities. Where such recreational uses involve the development of structures or facilities, the Council will ensure that the proposals will respect the natural amenity and scenic character of the area.</p> <p>BLESS34 Protect and enhance the character, setting and environmental quality of natural, architectural and archaeological heritage assets, and in particular those features of the natural landscape and built structures that contribute to their special interest. The natural, architectural and archaeological heritage of the area shall be protected in accordance with the objectives set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan. In particular, the heritage assets of the Poulaphouca Reservoir and Glen Ding Forest shall be rigorously protected.</p> <p>BLESS38 To promote and support the development of enhanced or new greenways and amenity walks at the following locations and require development in the vicinity of same to enhance existing routes and / or provide new links: - Poulaphouca Reservoir (Blessington Greenway/future tourism projects in the Lakeside area) - Glen Ding Forest - Wooded areas at Doran's Pit - Blessington Demesne (Town Park) The enhancement of existing, and development of new, recreational facilities along the lakeshore area, such as walking routes, car parking areas, signage, changing / toilet facilities and water based clubs/facilities, will be considered subject to compliance with the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive and other planning considerations.</p>
Green / Blue Infrastructure	<p>Part A2.7 Built Heritage & Natural Environment - Heritage Objectives</p> <p>- To protect natural, architectural and archaeological heritage, in accordance with the objectives set out in the County Development Plan</p> <p>BLESS34 Protect and enhance the character, setting and environmental quality of natural, architectural and archaeological heritage assets, and in particular those features of the natural landscape and built structures that contribute to their special interest. The natural, architectural and archaeological heritage of the area shall be protected in accordance with the objectives set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan. In particular, the heritage assets of the Poulaphouca Reservoir and Glen Ding Forest shall be rigorously protected.</p> <p>BLESS39 To require development proposals to have regard to existing green infrastructure assets (as identified within this local area plan or otherwise), including trees and hedgerows, that may exist within a subject site, and to consider how the biodiversity value and ecological connectivity of such assets may be maintained. Where existing GI assets or green corridors within a site have been identified on Map No. 3 'Key Green Infrastructure' or the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit, proposals should include measures to preserve and, where necessary, improve ecological connectivity and biodiversity value across said assets/corridors.</p> <p>Blessington greenway</p> <p>The Blessington Greenway, a 6km walking and cycling trail, was opened in 2014. The existing Greenway passes along the lakeshore between the Avon, Burgage Castle, and towards Russborough House, terminating at Russelstown. The trail is well used by both residents and visitors alike.</p> <p>While An Bord Pleanála refused permission in 2024 for an extension of the existing greenway to a route of 33km, linking the settlements of Ballyknockan, Vallemount, Lackan, as well as other attractions and tourist facilities at Russborough and Tulfarris, Wicklow County Council is committed to enhancing tourism infrastructure and attractions in the Blessington area, particularly those related to the Blessington Lakes and those that bring benefit to the villages surrounding the lakes, subject to the utmost protection of the environment, including water quality and natural habitats. Options for alternative projects around the Blessington Lakes that capitalise on, but appropriately protect, this asset are currently being reviewed.</p> <p>On this basis, the priority tourism issue in the settlement is the provision of adequate tourist facilities to cater future tourism projects in the Blessington lakeside area including facilitating tourist accommodation within the settlement.</p> <p>Wicklow County Council has purchased the former HSE building on Kilbride Road to act as a hub for future tourism projects in the Blessington Lakes area which in turn would draw visitors into the town centre. Furthermore, this local area plan has identified a range of supporting infrastructure that would aid in the possible expansion of the existing greenway and lakeside tourism within the settlement. This infrastructure includes feeder routes for active travel users and additional Park&Ride locations for those accessing the lakes area by private vehicle. See Map No. 7 'Lakeside Tourism Supporting Infrastructure'.</p>
Built environment	<p>Part A3.2 Physical Context - Natural Environment</p> <p>In general, the largest quantum of intensive development will be directed away from areas in proximity to Poulaphouca Reservoir, towards the west of the settlement, although a limited level of development may be possible to the south east of the settlement with mitigating objectives and appropriate buffer zones.</p> <p>Approach to zoning</p> <p>The approach to land use zoning contained within the Plan contributes towards the protection of European sites. Development objectives / zoning for lands designated as European sites is not provided for by the Plan, thereby avoiding direct 'land-take' within European sites. Furthermore, land directly adjacent to European sites is zoned so as to form a buffer zone. In a number of locations, there are lands adjoining European Sites, which while not being included in the legally designated site, are linked to the site in terms of similar or supporting habitats, water flows or other characteristics which render them important to protect from inappropriate development which may have a direct or indirect effect on the designated site itself. The approach to zoning is explained as follows in the Plan:</p> <p>Land use zoning - European Sites</p> <p>The approach to zoning lands adjoining European Sites has been as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No lands within the actual European Site have been zoned. - Where there is existing developed areas, the lands have been zoned for their existing use, which will essentially allow for the continuation of the existing use and its enhancement. In accordance with the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive 1992 and the Planning & Development Act, any proposed development with potential to impact upon the integrity of a European Site shall be subject to an Appropriate Assessment; - Where there is existing undeveloped lands, the lands have only been zoned for new development where it can be justified that such zoning and development arising therefrom is essential for the town to achieve its development vision and strategic objectives. In accordance with the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive 1992 and the Planning & Development Act, any proposed development with potential to impact upon the integrity of a European Site shall be subject to an Appropriate Assessment; - Where there is existing undeveloped lands, and the development of these lands is not essential for the achievement of the development vision and strategic objectives for the town, the land will be zoned 'OS2' – natural areas. The only developments that will be considered in such areas are those which contribute to the objective of the natural areas

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>zone (detailed in this plan) and that can be shown to not diminish the role and function of such areas, will not result in adverse impacts on the integrity of any EU protected site and will not diminish the biodiversity value of the lands or the ability of plants and animals to thrive and move through the area.</p> <p>Land use zoning – Specific Local Objective 1 – Lands at Naas Road Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The restoration of the culverted watercourses within the SLO to open watercourses with associated riparian zones corresponding to lands zoned OS2 'Natural Areas'. This must not increase flood risk in adjacent areas, e.g. Glen Ding estate. - The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value. <p>The delivery of the road objective linking the Naas Road to the Blessington GAA grounds, as located within SLO1. The design of this road objective should aim to minimise the loss of trees and existing hedgerows. The road objective may only cross watercourses in line with CPO 17.26 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022- 2028.</p> <p>Land use zoning – Specific Local Objective 2 – Blessington Demesne (West) Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No dwelling units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 (Parcel A) zoning may be occupied until the new town park, which shall include a dog park, located on lands zoned OS1, is completed in full. The development of the town park should have regard to and integrate demesne features and other heritage elements associated with the former Blessington Demesne, and should include appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures in relation to habitats of biodiversity value (including areas identified as Local Biodiversity Areas). - The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value including area identified as LBAs. <p>Land use zoning – Specific Local Objective 3 – Quarry Employment Lands Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value including Local Biodiversity Areas. A management plan for the phased regeneration of plantation woodland into native woodland within the SLO shall be included as part of any planning application <p>Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 4 – Doran's Pit Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value, including Local Biodiversity Areas - A management plan for the phased regeneration of plantation woodland into native woodland in this area shall be included as part of any planning application. <p>Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 5 – Burgage More (North) Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value. In particular, lands zoned for tourism purposes should be developed for low density and 'low impact' uses without a substantial number of structures, e.g. campsites, aires parks, etc, with the following mitigation measures at a minimum: - Limitation on the size of development versus retained green space, with no more of 50% of the zone occupied at full use. - Ancillary buildings and service structures for the tourism uses shall re-use or be clustered around the existing farmhouse and outbuildings on lands zoned T 'Tourism' and RE 'Existing Residential'. - Minimal landscaping of undeveloped areas within the development, other than low impact access paths to site facilities. - Connectivity must be fully retained (corridors through any physical barriers) - Lighting must be bat friendly as per Dark Sky guidelines - Mature trees retained; compensatory tree planting programme for ash trees lost due to die-back - Biodiversity plan developed (for example, ponds, pollinator friendly planting) <p>Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 6 – Burgage More (Central) Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Lands to the east of north-south hedgerow / tree line: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All mature trees and hedgerows on the lands shall be maintained other than where strictly required to facilitate appropriate development and detailed compensatory landscaping and tree planting to account for any loss due to the development and natural die back shall be provided - No uses will be considered that require floodlighting; street lighting and residential lighting must be bat friendly as per Dark Sky guidelines <p>Any development shall be designed following detailed ecological evaluation to ensure no adverse impacts, either directly or indirect, on biodiversity, protected species, European Sites or ecological corridors arise</p> <p>Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 7 – Burgage More (South) Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development within this SLO shall maintain the hedgerows and rural character of Burgage More lane to the west and provide an appropriate buffer to this lane for such purposes. <p>Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 9 – Blessington Demesne (East) This SLO is located in the townland of Blessington Demesne and measures c. 5.6ha. The SLO comprises lands zoned 'RN1 – New Residential (Priority 1)' and 'OS2 – Natural Areas'</p> <p>Any development proposals on these lands shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any residential development proposals for the RN1 lands shall be accompanied by proposals for the concurrent development of a community building on the lands of not less than 300sqm GFA; - No residential units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 zoning may be occupied until this community facility is fully developed suitable for a range of community uses (e.g. community meeting / activity rooms, youth clubs, scouts, mens' / womens' shed) and is available for community use; - Lands identified as OS2 shall be retained and maintained in a natural condition; no development proposed on foot of this plan shall interfere with river / stream beds, banks and channels.
Flood Risk Management	<p>Part A2.8 Service Infrastructure - Service Infrastructure Objective To ensure that only appropriate land uses are provided on lands identified as being at risk of flooding.</p> <p>BLESS52 Applications for new developments or significant alterations/extension to existing developments in an area identified as at risk of flooding (Flood Zones A and B) as set out in the SFRA and flood maps appended to this plan OR in Flood Zone C but within an area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that is deemed by the Local Authority at any time to be at possible risk of flooding having regard to new information with respect to flood risk in the area that has come to light; or

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> that is identified as at possible future risk of flooding having regard to climate change scenarios either on Maps 4C/4D attached to this plan or on any future maps prepared by the OPW during the lifetime of the plan; shall comply with the 'Justification Test for Development Management', as set out in Box 5.1 of 'the Planning System and Flood Risk Management' Guidelines 2009 (as may be amended, supplemented or replaced during the lifetime of this plan) and shall be accompanied by a site specific Flood Risk Assessment. Site Specific Flood Risk Assessments shall be in accordance with the requirements set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and the plan SFRA. <p>Flood Risk Management See "Alignment with County Development Plan" component above</p>
Invasive species	Part A2.7 Built Heritage & Natural Environment - Heritage Objectives - To protect natural, architectural and archaeological heritage, in accordance with the objectives set out in the County Development Plan ⁶
Agriculture	Land use zoning AG: Agriculture To provide for the sustainable development of agriculture, forestry and essential rural development. Subject to the protection and enhancement of natural biodiversity, the rural landscape, and built and cultural heritage, to facilitate the further development and improvement of agriculture, forestry and essential rural development including rural-related enterprise and amenity / utility related infrastructure, in accordance with the County Development Plan policies and objectives relating to rural areas. Part A2.7 Built Heritage & Natural Environment - Heritage Objectives - To protect natural, architectural and archaeological heritage, in accordance with the objectives set out in the County Development Plan ⁷ .
Forestry	Land use zoning AG: Agriculture To provide for the sustainable development of agriculture, forestry and essential rural development. Subject to the protection and enhancement of natural biodiversity, the rural landscape, and built and cultural heritage, to facilitate the further development and improvement of agriculture, forestry and essential rural development including rural-related enterprise and amenity / utility related infrastructure, in accordance with the County Development Plan policies and objectives relating to rural areas ⁸ .
Light pollution	Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 5 – Burgage More (North) Lighting must be bat friendly as per Dark Sky guidelines Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 6 – Burgage More (Central) (b) No uses will be considered that require floodlighting / street-lighting and residential lighting must be bat friendly as per Dark Sky guidelines Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 7 – Burgage More (South) Lighting must be bat friendly as per Dark Sky guidelines
Air and Noise Pollution	Part B.8 ZONING Whilst the land-use zoning will give an indication of the acceptability or otherwise of particular uses in particular areas, proposed development will also be assessed in terms of compatibility with the development control guidelines and standards outlined in the Wicklow County Development Plan and this plan. Factors such as density, height, massing, traffic generation, public health regulations, design criteria, visual amenity, availability of services and potential nuisance by way of noise, odour and air pollution are also of importance in establishing whether or not a development proposal conforms to the proper planning and sustainable development of an area.
Extractive Industry	BLESS15 To facilitate and encourage the exploration and exploitation of aggregates and minerals, in a manner which is consistent with the principle of sustainability, the protection of residential, environmental and tourism amenities within the plan area and the objectives relating to the Extractive Industry in Chapter 9 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.

⁶ County Development Plan CPO 17.17 "Work with statutory authorities to prevent and control the spread of invasive plant and animal species and require, where appropriate Invasive Species Management Plans to be prepared as part of the development management process where necessary."

⁷ County Development Plan:

Strategic Objective: To encourage the continued operation of farming and its associated uses where it already exists, and to facilitate the diversification of the agricultural economy through the support of appropriate alternative farm enterprise sources.

CPO 9.37 To facilitate the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural activities, whereby watercourses, wildlife habitats, areas of ecological importance and other environmental assets are protected from the threat of pollution, and where development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside. Developments shall not be detrimental to archaeological and heritage features of importance.

CPO 9.40 To ensure that agricultural developments do not cause increased pollution to watercourses. Developments will be required to adhere to the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EC), the Nitrates National Action Programme and the EC (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2009 (as amended), with regard to storage facilities, concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources. Developments will be required to comply with relevant measures, which operate to protect water quality from pollution by agricultural sources. The disposal and storage of agricultural waste shall comply with the standards required by Council.

⁸ County Development Plan:

Forestry Strategic Objective To promote state and private afforestation, to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to the County's economic and social well being on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment.

CPO 9.43 To facilitate afforestation in appropriate locations, in accordance with the 'Wicklow Indicative Forestry Strategy' (Wicklow County Council, 2002), and in co-operation with forestry operators and the Forest Service. The Wicklow Indicative Forestry Strategy was produced by the Council in 2002, in consultation with the Forest Service. The Strategy is intended to be a tool of assistance to planners in dealing with proposals for forestry applications. The Strategy includes a list of areas that are preferred for afforestation and a list of areas where afforestation would be inappropriate by virtue of landscape, soil type, settlement or environmental grounds. The Strategy also includes a series of objectives which are intended to guide planning decisions. The Council will have particular regard to developments that are located in the areas included in 'Table 3: Areas Sensitive to Afforestation', and as per the Strategy, should be consulted on all forestry grant applications in these areas.

CPO 9.44 To promote afforestation in co-operation with relevant agencies, including the Forest Service (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) and forestry operators and to ensure that afforestation is undertaken in a manner that is consistent with the principle of 'sustainable forest management'. The Council will only permit development that complies with the following:

- the development is compatible with the protection of the environment, and does not cause pollution or degradation of wildlife habitats, natural waters or areas of ecological importance;
- the development does not have a negative visual impact on the scenic quality of the countryside, and is of an appropriate nature and scale to the surrounding area;
- the development is not detrimental to archaeological or other historic/heritage features; and
- the Council will permit forestry development where it is considered that the roads infrastructure (in terms of design, width, surfacing etc.), which is to serve the development, can accommodate the proposed development. No development will be permitted that will result in damage to roads infrastructure or undue nuisance to other road users. The Council may apply a special financial levy to certain developments for works that are required to be undertaken to the road network.

CPO 9.45 To promote the use of forests for appropriate recreation purposes and to facilitate the development of appropriate recreation facilities at suitable locations. The recreational use of forests will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the recreational use is compatible with the other forest objectives, functions and values of the forest, such as timber production, sensitive habitats and important archaeology. Developments will only be permitted that are acceptable in terms of other planning considerations, including the provision of acceptable infrastructure such as roads, car parking, water and sewerage infrastructure.

Component ²	Development Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)
	<p>Alignment with the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 regarding extractive industry and European sites:</p> <p>Several policies of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, to which this LAP is subject, ensure the protection of ecologically sensitive sites alongside the development of the extractive industry, such as:</p> <p>Strategic Objective To support and facilitate the exploitation of County Wicklow's natural aggregate resources in a manner, which does not unduly impinge on the environmental quality, and the visual and residential amenity of an area</p> <p>CPO 9.52 To facilitate and encourage the exploration and exploitation of minerals in the County in a manner, which is consistent with the principle of sustainability and protection of residential, environmental and tourism amenities.</p> <p>CPO 9.54 To support and facilitate the development of related and spin-off industries of the extractive industry such as craft and monumental stone industries and the development of the mining and industrial tourism heritage. Consideration will be given to the development of such related industries within or in association with existing operations of worked out mines or quarries, at locations such as the disused granite quarries at Ballyknockan, where this does not conflict with other objectives and objectives of the plan.</p> <p>CPO 9.55 To have regard to the following guidance documents (as may be amended, replaced or supplemented) in the assessment of planning applications for quarries and ancillary facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Quarries and Ancillary Activities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2004, DoEHLG); - 'Environmental Management Guidelines – Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (Non Scheduled Minerals)', EPA 2006; - 'Archaeological Code of Practice between the DoEHLG and the Irish Concrete Federation' 2009; - 'Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry', 2008; and, - 'Wildlife, Habitats and the Extractive Industry – Guidelines for the protection of biodiversity within the extractive industry', NPWS 2009.
Climate and Renewable Energy	<p>Part A2.8 Service Infrastructure</p> <p>Facilitate and promote the delivery of reliable and effective water, drainage, energy, waste management and communications infrastructure to service the existing and future development needs of the settlement. In particular: to promote energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy projects.</p> <p>Energy and Information Infrastructure</p> <p>See "Alignment with County Development Plan" component above</p>
Waste Management	<p>BLESS53 To support the continued upgrade of Blessington Waste Water Treatment Plant and/or additional Waste Water Treatment Plants serving the plan area, subject to the full environmental protection of the Poulaphouca Reservoir and associated watercourses.</p> <p>Waste and Environmental Emissions</p> <p>See "Alignment with County Development Plan" component above</p>

Section 3 Consideration of Alternatives

This section summarises the alternatives considered for the Plan during the preparation process. These alternatives have been incorporated into the Plan having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects (including those related to ecology and European sites) which are identified by the SEA (informed by the AA) and are summarised below; and
2. Planning - including social and economic - effects that also were considered by the Council.

3.1 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. Summaries of the alternatives for the Plan and their assessment are provided below.

Six alternatives for the Local Area Plan are identified and considered under a number of different future development scenarios, as follow:

1. Maximum Environmental Protection
2. Sustainable Transportation
3. Compact Growth
4. Housing Market Driven
5. Community Driven
6. Extractive Industry and Economy Driven

Alternatives were assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs). 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 which are required to be implemented. The SEOs are set out under a range of topics (see Table 3.1) 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	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	BFF	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To preserve, protect, maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species • Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function • Safeguard national, regional and local designated sites and supporting features which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species • Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets • To protect, maintain and conserve natural capital
Population and Human Health	PHH	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management • Ensure that existing population and planned growth is matched with the required public infrastructure and the required services • Safeguard citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being
Soil (and Land)	S	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource • Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield • Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Water	W	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive • 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 • Avoid inappropriate zoning and development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion • Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals
Material Assets	MA	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals - this includes transport infrastructure • 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 • Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies • Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development • Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of road and rail transport modes • 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
Air	A	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency • Promote continuing improvement in air quality • 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 • Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health — Air Quality Directive • Significantly decrease noise pollution and move closer to WHO recommended levels
Climatic Factors	C	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To minimise emissions of greenhouse gasses • Integrate sustainable design solutions into infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure) • Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets • Promote development resilient to the effects of climate change • Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport
Cultural Heritage	CH	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage
Landscape	L	Protect and enhance the landscape character	To implement the Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention

3.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The Plan is required to be consistent with the existing, already in force, Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and 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 significantly limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, which are not wholly consistent with each other, including those of the National Planning Framework, the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, Minister Guidelines and the County Plan. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Plan, including on topics such as population, land use zoning and proper planning and sustainable development.

3.3 Alternatives Description and Assessment Summary

An overall comparative assessment of the alternatives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Table 3.1) is provided on Table 3.2. The basis of this assessment is provided under subsections 3.3.1 to 3.3.6 below.

3.3.1 Alternative 1: Maximum Environmental Protection

By limiting development within parts of the Plan area, including those that are most sensitive to development, this alternative would reduce the potential for adverse environmental effects to occur from development within the Plan area⁹ (although this potential would remain, albeit to a reduced degree) and benefit the protection and management of following environmental components within the Plan area¹⁰:

- Biodiversity and flora and fauna (including through: applying a buffer around designated sites; restricting any significant development outward from the existing built-up area in the direction of the Poulaphouca Reservoir; rezoning all lands identified as 'Local Biodiversity Areas' as Natural Areas or Open Space; facilitating the rehabilitation of quarry lands adjacent to the settlement; and protecting all mature trees and hedgerows)
- Population and human health (limiting development in certain locations would reduce potential for interactions with human health)
- Soil (as a result of: limiting greenfield development in certain locations; facilitating the rehabilitation of quarry lands adjacent to the settlement; and maximising the protection of County Geological Sites)
- Air (limits in increases in traffic as a result of limiting development in certain locations)
- Water (including as a result of: limiting development in certain locations; and zoning all lands within 50m of watercourses for Natural Areas only)
- Cultural heritage (through: restricting additional development to Protected Structures; and restricting development at all designated archaeological sites)
- Landscape (including as a result of: designating lands visible from the Poulaphouca Reservoir, and lacking in adequate tree cover/screening, as Greenbelt; restricting significant development between the existing sections of the Blessington Inner Relief Road and Glen Ding to preserve views between the existing built-up area and the surrounding landscape to the west; protecting views and prospects with restricted development within the view/ prospect; and facilitating the rehabilitation of quarry lands adjacent to the settlement).

This alternative would allow for development targets to be met within the Plan area, reducing demand and associated potential for dispersed adverse environmental effects to occur as a result of development occurring outside of the Plan area, in areas that are potentially more sensitive, less well-served and less-well connected¹¹. As a result, the protection and management of environmental components beyond the Plan area would be benefited¹².

By allowing for development targets to be met within the Plan area, this alternative would benefit efforts to maximise sustainable mobility (including associated interactions with air, climate mitigation and human health) and infrastructural and services efficiencies (including associated interactions with population) to a moderate degree¹³. New development would have to be accompanied by appropriate levels of infrastructure and services¹⁴.

⁹ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** • SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

¹⁰ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** • SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

¹¹ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** ■ SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

¹² See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **A C S BFF W PHH MA L CH** ■ SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

¹³ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

¹⁴ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **MA A C PHH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

3.3.2 Alternative 2: Sustainable Transportation

By focusing on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to the more sustainable modes of walking, cycling and using public transport, and by providing for higher densities, this alternative would benefit efforts to maximise sustainable mobility (including associated interactions with air, climate mitigation and human health) and infrastructural and services efficiencies (including associated interactions with population) to a greater degree¹⁵ and conflict with these efforts to a lesser degree¹⁶.

Dezoning undeveloped greenfield lands, including parts of the Strategic Land Bank (SLB) that is not within 12-minute walking distance of public transport would reduce the potential for adverse environmental effects to occur from development at these locations¹⁷ (although the potential would remain elsewhere, including as a result of new and enhanced transport infrastructure) and benefit the protection and management of environmental components such as biodiversity and flora and fauna, soil and landscape¹⁸.

This alternative would allow for development targets to be met within the Plan area, reducing demand and associated potential for dispersed adverse environmental effects to occur as a result of development occurring outside of the Plan area, in areas that are potentially more sensitive, less well-served and less-well connected¹⁹. As a result, the protection and management of environmental components beyond the Plan area would be benefited²⁰.

3.3.3 Alternative 3: Compact Growth

By allowing for development targets to be met within the Plan area, this alternative would benefit efforts to maximise sustainable mobility (including associated interactions with air, climate mitigation and human health) and infrastructural and services efficiencies (including associated interactions with population) to a moderate degree²¹. New development would have to be accompanied by appropriate levels of infrastructure and services²².

Dezoning all undeveloped greenfield lands would reduce the potential for adverse environmental effects to occur from development at these locations²³ (although the potential would remain elsewhere, including as a result of town and village centre development and mixed use, high density residential development on infill sites previously zoned for employment uses within the built-up area) and benefit the protection and management of environmental components such as biodiversity and flora and fauna, soil and landscape²⁴.

This alternative would allow for development targets to be met within the Plan area, reducing demand and associated potential for dispersed adverse environmental effects to occur as a result of development occurring outside of the Plan area, in areas that are potentially more sensitive, less well-served and less-well connected²⁵. As a result, the protection and management of environmental components beyond the Plan area would be benefited²⁶.

¹⁵ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

¹⁶ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

¹⁷ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** • SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

¹⁸ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** • SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

¹⁹ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** ■ SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

²⁰ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **A C S BFF W PHH MA L CH** ■ SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

²¹ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

²² See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

²³ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** • SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

²⁴ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** • SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

²⁵ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** ■ SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

²⁶ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **A C S BFF W PHH MA L CH** ■ SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

3.3.4 Alternative 4: Housing Market Driven

As a plan developed from this alternative would be in effect for ten as opposed to six years, a fully comparative evaluation cannot be provided.

By providing for

- a. excesses in zoned land (above current targets) and lower densities of housing development
- b. facilitating increases in car dependency and
- c. providing for community and education, employment and active open space uses on the periphery of the residential zoned land,

this alternative would:

- benefit efforts to maximise sustainable mobility (including associated interactions with air, climate mitigation and human health) and infrastructural and services efficiencies (including associated interactions with population) to a lesser degree²⁷; and
- conflict with these efforts to a greater degree²⁸.

This alternative would provide zoning for ten years of housing needs, unlike the other alternatives that would make provisions over a six-year lifespan and be reviewed towards the end of this six-year period. Furthermore, demand would be met through lower densities, requiring a greater extent of lands to be zoned for development. The extent of greenfield development provided and the lack of a focus on infill/regeneration development would present a greater potential for adverse environmental effects to occur from such development within the Plan area under this alternative²⁹ and consequently benefit the protection and management of environmental components such as biodiversity and flora and fauna, soil and landscape, in the Plan area to a lesser degree³⁰.

This alternative would allow for development targets to be met within the Plan area, reducing demand and associated potential for dispersed adverse environmental effects to occur as a result of development occurring outside of the Plan area, in areas that are potentially more sensitive, less well-served and less-well connected³¹. As a result, the protection and management of environmental components beyond the Plan area would be benefited³².

3.3.5 Alternative 5: Community Driven

By focusing on healthy communities, where residents have all necessary facilities and services within short walking/cycling distance of their homes, this alternative would benefit efforts to maximise sustainable mobility (including associated interactions with air, climate mitigation and human health) and infrastructural and services efficiencies (including associated interactions with population) to a greater degree³³ and conflict with these efforts to a lesser degree³⁴.

Providing for a strengthened town centre and more opportunity sites for the redevelopment of brownfield sites would help to reduce demand for greenfield development within the Plan area and associated potential for adverse environmental effects to occur from such development³⁵ (although the potential would remain) and benefit the protection and management of environmental components such as biodiversity and flora and fauna, soil and landscape, especially in peripheral parts of the Plan area³⁶.

This alternative would allow for development targets to be met within the Plan area, reducing demand and associated potential for dispersed adverse environmental effects to occur as a result of development occurring outside of the Plan area, in areas that are potentially more sensitive, less well-served and less-

²⁷ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

²⁸ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

²⁹ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** - SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

³⁰ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** - SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

³¹ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** - SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

³² See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **A C S BFF W PHH MA L CH** - SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

³³ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

³⁴ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

³⁵ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** - SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

³⁶ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** - SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

well connected³⁷. As a result, the protection and management of environmental components beyond the Plan area would be benefited³⁸.

3.3.6 Assessment of Alternative 6: Extractive Industry & Economy Driven

By maximising the potential for growth of jobs locally (including prioritising lands in proximity to public transport for employment use to facilitate the sustainable commuting), where workers and resident workers would have all necessary facilities and services within short walking/cycling distance of their workplaces and homes, this alternative would benefit efforts to maximise sustainable mobility (including associated interactions with air, climate mitigation and human health) and infrastructural and services efficiencies (including associated interactions with population) to a moderate degree³⁹ and conflict with these efforts to a moderate degree⁴⁰. Zoning all quarry lands for extractive industry uses would hinder the sustainable development of other mixed uses at some of these sites, such as Doran's Pit, while the loss of local road objectives through quarry lands, such as the link between Blessington Bridge and the N81, could hinder efforts to improve sustainable mobility.

Although there are environmentally sensitive locations within and adjacent to the Plan area, providing for the economic development of lands within the Plan area, including those associated with existing industries (tourism and quarrying), would help to reduce demand for greenfield development elsewhere and associated potential for adverse environmental effects to occur from such development⁴¹ (including effects that could arise in previously undeveloped areas that are more sensitive, less well-served and less-well connected⁴²). As a result, the protection and management of environmental components beyond the Plan area would be benefited⁴³.

³⁷ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

³⁸ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **A C S BFF W PHH MA L CH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

³⁹ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **MA A C PPH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.













⁴⁰ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **MA A C PHH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

⁴¹ See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.

⁴² See potentially significant adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated: **BFF PHH S A W L CH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.


⁴³ See significant positive environmental effects, likely to occur: **A C S BFF W PHH MA L CH** SEO interactions in Table 3.2.


Table 3.2 Overall Comparative Assessment of Alternatives against SEOs⁴⁴

Alternative	Likely to Improve status of SEOs +			Potential Conflict with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated -		
	to a Greater degree	to a Moderate degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Moderate degree	to a Greater degree
Alternative 1: Maximum Environmental Protection	BFF PHH S W L CH - 	MA A C PPH		BFF PHH S W L CH - 	MA A C PPH	
Alternative 2: Sustainable Transportation	MA A C PPH 	BFF PHH S W L CH -		MA A C PPH 	BFF PHH S W L CH -	
Alternative 3: Compact Growth	BFF PHH S W L CH 	MA A C PPH BFF PHH S W L CH -		BFF PHH S W L CH 	MA A C PPH BFF PHH S W L CH -	
Alternative 4: Housing Market Driven	BFF PHH S W L CH 		MA A C PPH BFF PHH S W L CH -	BFF PHH S W L CH 		MA A C PPH BFF PHH S W L CH -
Alternative 5: Community Driven	MA A C PPH BFF PHH S W L CH 	BFF PHH S W L CH -		MA A C PPH BFF PHH S W L CH 	BFF PHH S W L CH -	
Alternative 6: Extractive Industry and Economy Driven	BFF PHH S W L CH 	MA A C PPH	BFF PHH S W L CH -	BFF PHH S W L CH 	MA A C PPH	BFF PHH S W L CH -

■ = These interactions relate to positive effects on the protection and management of the environment within the Plan area (as a result of directing incompatible development away from the most sensitive areas within the Plan area and focusing on directing compact, sustainable development within the proposed envelope of the Plan area)

■ = These interactions relate to the potential for direct adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated (arising from development within the Plan area)

 = These interactions relate to positive effects on the protection and management of the environment beyond the Plan area (as a result of providing development within the Plan area)

 = These interactions relate to adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated, (arising from development occurring beyond the Plan area)

⁴⁴ For more detail on Strategic Environmental Objectives refer to Table 3.1.

3.4 Reasons for Choosing the Selected Alternative in light of Other Reasonable Alternatives Considered

The 'Selected Alternative' for the Plan integrates the following components from the six above evaluated alternative scenarios for the Plan:

- from "Alternative 1: Maximum Environmental Protection"
 - The protection to European Sites (SAC and SPA) and NHAs. Include a significant conservation buffer surrounding all sites to enhance the protection of SAC, SPA and NHA sites;
 - Restrict development outward from the existing built-up area in the direction of the Poulaphouca Reservoir;
 - Protect mature trees and hedgerows where they are not on the TPO list;
 - Protection of watercourses in accordance with Inland Fisheries Ireland 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment' 2020;
 - Protection of landscape;
 - Enhance the protection of views and prospects with restricted development within the view/prospect; and
 - Rezone the majority of lands identified as 'Local Biodiversity Areas' as Natural Areas (OS2) or Open Space (OS1).
- from "Alternative 2: Sustainable Transportation"
 - The Plan facilitates the significant reduction, or removal, of through traffic through the town centre;
 - The Plan facilitates a reallocation of road space in the town centre from car parking to pedestrians and cyclists;
 - The Plan facilitates enhanced pedestrian connections throughout the settlement;
 - The Plan facilitates new pedestrian/cycling links between the existing built-up area and Glen Ding Forest;
 - The Plan facilitates the expansion of the Blessington Greenway around Poulaphouca Reservoir;
 - The Plan facilitates an increase in pedestrian/cyclist permeability between Blessington Main Street and adjacent areas of the built-up area and other areas of zoned land (e.g. Kilbride Road, existing residential areas to west, Doran's Pit, etc.);
 - The Plan facilitates enhanced cycle routes and connections throughout the settlement in line with the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network 2022, and where required elsewhere; and
 - The Plan facilitates a 'Park and Ride' site adjacent to Blessington Waste Water Treatment Plant.
- from "Alternative 3: Compact Growth"
 - Zone those lands between Newtown Square and the under-construction town park, to the immediate west of the town centre development, for residential development; and
 - All Town Centre sites are zoned for high density mixed use.
- from "Alternative 4: Housing Market Driven"
 - Provide for extra housing units above that of the Core Strategy as 'Priority 2' on the next best lands.

- from “Alternative 5: Community Driven”
 - Extra lands, above the minimum requirement for new schools are zoned close to residential areas;
 - Extra lands are zoned for Community Education (CE) and Active Open Space (AOS) (e.g. for playing pitches, leisure centres/swimming pools, community halls, theatres, cultural facilities, running tracks, landscaped parks, dog parks, all other recreation/sports etc.);
 - New walking routes / cycling routes are designated throughout the settlement, along with routes around the Poulaphouca Reservoir, routes to Glen Ding Forest; and
 - Extra lands are zoned for employment to facilitate people working locally.
- from “Alternative 6: Extractive Industry and Economy Driven”
 - Extra lands, above the minimum requirement to meet a 0.7 jobs ratio, are zoned for employment purposes to maximise the potential for resident workers to work in the settlement, maximise the potential for strategic employment uses to relocate to the settlement, and thus reduce commuting times and unemployment; and
 - Land between the existing built-up area and the Poulaphouca Reservoir are zoned for ‘T – Tourism’ uses, with a buffer from the SPA boundary, to capitalise on the attraction provided by the Blessington Greenway, and to provide accommodation for tourists in an area of lakeside high amenity.

These components emerged from the planning/SEA process having regard to both:

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

An assessment of the ‘Selected Alternative’ against SEOs is provided at **Table 3.3**. The ‘Selected Alternative’ will help to:

- Maximise the provision of land use zoning and the deliverance of associated travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to the more sustainable modes of walking, cycling and using public transport (including associated interactions with air, climate mitigation and human health) and infrastructural and services efficiencies to a greater degree (improving SEO interactions for **MA A C PPH**), conflicting with these to a lesser degree (potentially conflicting SEO interactions for **MA A C PPH**);
- Maximise positive effects on the protection and management of the environment beyond the Plan area as a result of providing development within the Plan area (improving SEO interactions for **BFF PHH S W L CH**), while helping to minimise adverse environmental effects (if unmitigated) arising from development occurring beyond the Plan area (potentially conflicting SEO interactions for **BFF PHH S W L CH**); and
- Maximise positive effects on the protection and management of the environment within the Plan area as a result of directing incompatible development away from the most sensitive areas within the Plan area and focusing on directing compact, sustainable development within the proposed envelope of the Plan area (improving SEO interactions for **BFF PHH S W L CH**), while helping to minimise adverse environmental effects (if unmitigated) arising from development occurring within the Plan area (potentially conflicting SEO interactions for **BFF PHH S W L CH**).

Table 3.3 Assessment of 'Selected Alternative' against SEOs⁴⁵

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs +			Potential Conflict with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated -		
	to a Greater degree	to a Moderate degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Moderate degree	to a Greater degree
Selected Alternative for the Plan	MA A C PPH BFF PHH S W L CH - BFF PHH S W L CH			MA A C PPH BFF PHH S W L CH - BFF PHH S W L CH		

■ = These interactions relate to positive effects on the protection and management of the environment within the Plan area (directing incompatible development away from the most sensitive areas within the Plan area and focusing on directing compact, sustainable development within the proposed envelope of the Plan area)

■ = These interactions relate to the potential for direct adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated (arising from development within the Plan area)

■ = These interactions relate to positive effects on the protection and management of the environment beyond the Plan area (as a result of providing development within the Plan area)

■ = These interactions relate to adverse environmental effects, if unmitigated, (arising from development occurring beyond the Plan area)

⁴⁵ For more detail on Strategic Environmental Objectives refer to Table 3.1.

Section 4 AA Determination



Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin Wicklow County Council

Pleanáil, Forbairt Eacnamaíochta agus Tuaithe Planning, Economic and Rural Development

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Appropriate Assessment Determination under

Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended,
for the

Blessington Local Area Plan 2025

In order to comply with the requirements of Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether or not a plan or project would affect the integrity of any European site(s), this Appropriate Assessment determination is being made by Wicklow County Council relating to the potential for the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025 that is being adopted¹ to have effects on the integrity of European sites.

In carrying out this Appropriate Assessment (AA), the Council is taking into account the matters specified under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), including the following:

- The Consolidated AA Natura Impact Report;
- The AA Natura Impact Report prepared for the Draft Blessington LAP 2025 (an earlier version of the consolidated document);
- Addendum I to the AA Natura Impact Report for the Draft Blessington LAP 2025 (considering Proposed Material Amendments)
- Written submissions made during the Plan preparation process; and
- Ongoing advice on AA from the Council's agents.

As part of the AA, it was identified that the Plan may, if unmitigated, have likely significant effects on 3 (no.) European sites. Plan elements that could present sources with pathways for likely significant effects to European sites are:

- The Plan's provisions, including those relating to town centre regeneration, housing, development, economic development, tourism development, community development, heritage, biodiversity and green infrastructure development and infrastructure development, which introduce sources for potential effects through construction phase such as habitat loss, light pollution, disturbance effects and hydrological interactions through surface hydrological connectivity and/or shared groundwater sources;
- Loading pressures from the operational phase of developments – these sources could result in habitat loss/fragmentation, light pollution, disturbance effects and interactions with water quality (surface and/or groundwater); and
- Increases in visitor numbers to ecologically sensitive areas during the operational phase of developments which have potential to introduce sources for significant effects, such as recreational and tourism developments.

¹ Incorporating the Draft Plan and material amendments and associated modifications considered by the AA process.



Tá an doiciméad seo ar fáil i bhformáidí eile ar iarratas.
This document is available in alternative formats on request.
Ba chóir gach comhfhreagras a sheoladh chuig an Stiúrthóir Seirbhísí, Pleanáil, Forbairt Eacnamaíochta agus Tuaithe.
All correspondence should be addressed to the Director of Services, Planning, Economic and Rural Development.



The undersigned, having carefully considered the information referred to above agrees with and adopts the reasoning and conclusions presented and determines that:

- Upon the inclusion of suitable mitigation measures², the Plan to be adopted³ will not result in any adverse effects to the ecological integrity of any European site (directly, indirectly or cumulatively)⁴.
- The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the Qualifying Interests, Special Conservation Interests and Conservation Objectives of the European sites identified have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures into the Plan (including alignment with the mitigation measures integrated into the existing County Development Plan, as varied) that will prioritise the avoidance of effects in the first place and mitigate against the identified potential significant effects where these cannot be avoided. In addition, all lower-level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Plan will themselves be subject to AA/screening for AA when further details of design and location are known.
- In-combination effects from interactions with other plans and projects are considered and the mitigation measures incorporated into the Plan are seen to be robust to ensure that there will be no effect on the integrity of any European site as a result of the implementation of the Plan either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects⁵.
- Having incorporated mitigation measures (including alignment with the mitigation measures integrated into the existing County Development Plan, as varied) into the Plan to be adopted⁶ it is demonstrated that the Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any effect on the integrity of any designated European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects⁷. This demonstration has been made in view of the Conservation Objectives of the habitats and/or species, for which these sites have been designated.

Signatory:



Wicklow County Council

Date

16/6/2025

² Local Area Plan provisions at Part A.1 Introduction, Part A.2.7 Built Heritage & Natural Environment - Heritage Objectives, Part A.2.8 Service Infrastructure - Service Infrastructure Objective, Part A.3.2 Physical Context - Services & Infrastructure, Part A.3.2 Physical Context - Natural Environment, Part B. 6 Heritage, Biodiversity & Green Infrastructure, Part B.7 Infrastructure, Part B.8 ZONING, Approach to zoning, Land use zoning - European Sites, Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 1 - Lands at Naas Road, Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 2 (note that Specific Local Objective 2 and 8 are to be merged as per the Proposed Material Alterations) - Blessington Demesne (West), Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 3 - Quarry Employment Lands, Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 4 - Doran's Pit, Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 5 - Burgage More (North), Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 6 - Burgage More (Central), Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 7 - Burgage More (South), Land use zoning - Specific Local Objective 8 (note that Specific Local Objective 2 and 8 are to be merged as per the Proposed Material Alterations) - Blessington Demesne (East), Land use zoning - 'Specific Local Objectives' at Blessington Demesne - SLO-Y Blessington Demesne (East), Land use zoning AG: Agriculture and European Sites Objectives, Objectives integrated into BLESS OP9, Text under Water Protection and two Bless-XX objectives (to be numbered during formatting of final Plan), Text under Blessington greenway, BLESS15, BLESS23, BLESS34, BLESS39, BLESS40, BLESS41, BLESS42, BLESS42, BLESS34, BLESS38, BLESS34, BLESS39, BLESS51 and BLESS52.

Note that non-material changes to individual Local Area Plan provisions referenced in this determination and described in the Consolidated Natura Impact Report may be updated during the finalisation of the Plan, including numbering, formatting and graphic design.

Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied) measures SCO6, CPO 4.15, CPO 9.36, CPO 9.39, CPO 9.43, CPO 9.44, CPO 9.45, CPO 9.49, CPO 9.50, CPO11.1, CPO 11.4, CPO 11.4, CPO 11.6, CPO 11.29, CPO 11.42, CPO 11.47, CPO 11.48, CPO 11.49, CPO 12.7, CPO 12.9, CPO 12.10, CPO 13.1, CPO13.2, CPO13.3, CPO13.4, CPO 13.5, CPO 13.6, CPO13.7, CPO 13.9, CPO 13.10, CPO 13.11, CPO 13.15, CPO 13.16, CPO 13.17, CPO 13.18, CPO 13.19, CPO 13.20, CPO 13.21, CPO 13.22, CPO 14.14, CPO 14.15, CPO 14.16, CPO 15.1, CPO 15.2, CPO 15.3, CPO 15.4, CPO 15.5, CPO 15.6, CPO 15.7, CPO 15.9, CPO 15.10, CPO 15.11, CPO 15.12, CPO 15.13, CPO 15.14, CPO 15.15, CPO 15.16, CPO 15.17, CPO 15.18, CPO 15.19, CPO 15.20, CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.3, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.7, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.10, CPO 17.12, CPO 17.13, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.16, CPO 17.17, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.23, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26, CPO 17.33, CPO 17.34, CPO 17.35, CPO 17.36, CPO 17.37, CPO 17.38, CPO 18.3, CPO 18.4, CPO 18.5, CPO 18.6, CPO 18.11, CPO 18.13, CPO 18.16, CPO 18.17 and CPO 19.13.

³ Incorporating the Draft Plan and material amendments and associated modifications considered by the AA process.

⁴ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

⁵ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

⁶ Incorporating the Draft Plan and material amendments and associated modifications considered by the AA process.

⁷ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.