



Variation No.6 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report



December 2025
Wicklow County Council

AA SCREENING REPORT

PROPOSED VARIATION NO. 6 TO
WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 (AS VARIED)

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1.0 Introduction & Background to Appropriate Assessment (AA)

1.1 Introduction

This is the Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report for Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied). The purpose of this report is to inform whether or not to undertake AA on Proposed Variation No. 6. This report should be read in conjunction with the documents cited within, including the Proposed Variation and the Screening for SEA Report.

1.2 Background

The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied) provides for sustainable and proper planning and development within the administrative area of Wicklow County Council. The Plan has already been varied in 2022 with Variation No. 1; and in 2025 with Variation No. 2 and 3. Proposed Variation No's. 4 and 5 were published in 2025.

The aim of Proposed Variation No. 6 is:

To revise the Wicklow Core Strategy and associated housing targets, and a number of related housing objectives set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 Written Statement.

The reason for the proposed variation is:

To take account of 'NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements' - Guidelines for Planning Authorities, issued under Section 28 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) (July 2025).

More specifically, the Proposed Variation proposes to increase the housing targets for a number of settlements in County Wicklow. As outlined in the Proposed Variation's written statement, the increase in housing can be accommodated on land that is already zoned for housing (both Phase 1 / Priority 1 and Phase 2 / Priority 2 lands, and mixed use zonings), or is proposed to be zoned as part of Proposed Variations No. 4 and No. 5. Therefore the targeted growth in housing can be accommodated within the County's existing settlement boundaries and on land that is already serviced, or is serviceable, by infrastructure.

To achieve the new targets, the Proposed Variation would alter a number of housing related objectives and specifically to:

- Provide policy support for the delivery of additional housing during the lifetime of the plan via support for the development of both Phase 1 / Priority 1 and Phase 2 / Priority 2 lands during the lifetime of this plan, subject to the sustainable development objectives set out in the plan.
- Provide policy support for the institution of new mechanisms and structures to support immediate term housing development including, but not limited, assisting in the unblocking of impediments where feasible and proactively working with infrastructure / utilities providers to ensure any service related impediments to the granting or permission for housing on zoned lands or to the delivery of permitted housing development are addressed.
- Provide policy support for increased densities on zoned and serviced lands, at appropriate locations, in accordance with the provisions of the 'Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities' DHLGH 2024.

Accordingly, the increase in housing as a result of the NPF Housing Growth Requirements will not require the zoning of new land or the extension of settlement boundaries in the Wicklow County Development Plan or subsidiary local plans.

The Proposed Variation will also update references to other national planning policies that have been published since the County Development Plan was made. These policies, such as the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024), have been subject to AA and are already in effect in the making and determination of planning applications.

This Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report has been prepared on foot of the initiation of the process to vary the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.

The findings of this Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report will assist WCC in making a determination as to whether proposed Variation No. 6 to the CDP is likely to give rise to significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites (known as 'European Sites' in Irish legislation). Thus, the aims of this AA Screening Report are to:

- Provide information on and assess the potential for Variation No. 6 to significantly affect European Sites; and
- Determine whether Variation No. 6, alone or in combination with other projects, is likely to have significant effects on European Sites in view of their conservation objectives.

This report is being carried out in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC).

The report has taken into consideration the European Commission's (EC) publication – *Guidance document on Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – A summary (September 2021)*, Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08 from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Project in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities* (December 2009) from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

1.3 Legislative Context:

The EU Habitats Directive

The assessment of impacts on Designated European Sites i.e. Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, finds its origins in the EU Directive on the Conservation of Habitats, Flora and Fauna (92/43/EEC), more commonly known as the "Habitats Directive" which came into force in 1994 and was transposed into Irish law in 1997. "The Habitats Directive" provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance.

The Habitats Directive was formulated as a direct result of the continuous deterioration of natural habitats and the increasing impacts on wild species arising in the most part as a result of development and agricultural activity. The main aim of the EU Habitats Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species at a favourable conservation status, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance.

The conservation status of a habitat is defined in Article 1 of the Directive as the sum of the influences acting on a natural habitat and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions, as well as the long-term survival of its typical species. The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as favourable when:

- Its natural range and the areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing,
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance, exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future,

- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable¹.

Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of European Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. These are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/ECC).

In its implementation, the Habitats Directive introduces the 'Precautionary Principle' approach towards proposals whereby projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there is not likely to be any significant impact on the conservation status of the designated site.

As set out in *Managing Natura 2000 Sites* (referred to as MN2000²), the conservation of natural habitats and habitats of species forms the most ambitious and far-reaching challenge of the Habitats Directive. This is set out in Article 6 of the Directive, which governs the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites. In this context, Article 6 is viewed as one of the most important of the 24 articles of the Directive being the one which determines the relationship between conservation and land use.

Article 6 of the Directive has three main provisions. This structure provides for a clear distinction between Article 6(1) and (2) which define a general regime while Article 6(3) and (4) define the procedures to be applied to specific circumstances.

- A) Article 6(1) makes provision for the establishment of the necessary conservation measures, and is focused on positive and proactive interventions. This relates to the development of Conservation Management Plans specifically designed for designated sites.
- B) Article 6(2) makes provision for avoidance of habitat deterioration and significant species disturbance. Its emphasis is therefore preventive.
- C) Article 6(3) and (4) set out a series of procedural and substantive safeguards governing plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.

Article 6 is seen to reflect the overall aim of the Habitats Directive "*promoting biodiversity by maintaining or restoring certain habitats and species at 'favourable status' within the context of Natura 2000 sites*" while taking into account economic, social, cultural and regional requirements as a means to achieving sustainable development.

1.4 Stages of Appropriate Assessment

This AA Screening Report has been prepared in accordance with the European Commission's publication – *Guidance document on Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – A summary (September 2021)*, referred to as the "EC Guidance Document (EC2000)". The guidance within this document provides a non-mandatory methodology for carrying out assessments required under Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, and is viewed as an interpretation of the EU Commission's document "*MN2000*".

This AA Screening Report has taken into consideration the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government publication *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities* (December 2009)³. This guidance is intended to assist and guide planning authorities in the application of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as it relates to their roles, functions and responsibilities in undertaking Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects. It applies to plans and projects for which public

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC

² Managing Natura 2000 sites; The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC'

³ This was updated in 2010

authorities receive an application for consent, and to plans or projects which a public authority wishes to undertake or adopt.

It sets out the different steps and stages that are needed in establishing whether a plan or project can be implemented without adversely affecting the integrity of a European Site.

The guidance addresses issues of mitigation and avoidance of impacts, and also the Article 6(4) derogation provisions for circumstances in which there are no alternatives and for which there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) requiring a plan or project to proceed.

This guidance was prepared jointly by the NPWS and Planning Divisions of DEHLG, with input from local authorities. It preceded, but anticipated, the legislation which now transposes the Birds and Habitats Directives in Ireland, i.e. the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, and parallel provisions relating to Appropriate Assessment in planning legislation (i.e. Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended and associated Regulations).

Stage 1 of the Methodological Guidance is the screening process, which examines the likely effects of a project, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans upon a European Site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. This stage of the screening process involves four steps, which fall under the following headings:

1. Management of the site - *Involves determining whether or not the project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;*
2. Description of the project or plan - *Describing the project or plan and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the European Site; and*
3. Characteristics of the site - *Identifying the potential effects on the European Site(s)*
4. Assessment of Significance - *Assessing the significance of any effects on the European Site(s).*

Stage 2 of the process "Appropriate Assessment" follows Stage 1 where, following an evaluation of the plan it has been established the plan is likely to have a significant effect on any European Site. This stage involves the following:

- A description of the European Sites that will be considered further in the Appropriate Assessment process;
- A description of significant impacts on the conservation feature of these sites likely to occur from the proposed development; and
- Recommendations.

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. First, the plan should aim to avoid any negative impacts on European Sites by identifying possible impacts early in the plan-making, and writing the plan in order to avoid such impacts. Second, mitigation measures should be applied, if necessary, during the Appropriate Assessment process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain. If the plan is still likely to result in adverse effects, and no further practicable mitigation is possible, then it is rejected. If no alternative solutions are identified and the plan is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effect.

This AA Screening Report is therefore Stage 1 of the AA process. If AA is determined to be required, the assessment would be undertaken in a Stage 2 report.

Section 2 Screening

2.0 Management of the site

Determining whether or not the project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site.

Plans or projects that are directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation and management of a European Site are exempt from the need for Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. For this exemption to apply, management should be interpreted narrowly as nature conservation management in the sense of Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive, for example the relationship between the proposed plan and the management of the European Site should be shown to be direct and not a by-product of the plan.

The Proposed Variation relates to revisions to the core strategy and associated housing targets of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028. The conservation of European sites may be a by-product of this land use plan including the proposed variation thereto, via the implementation of the objectives of the plan in the development management process. However, it is considered that the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, and any variation thereof, is not directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation and management of a European Site.

2.1 Description of the project or plan

Describing the project or plan and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the European Site.

The Proposed Variation No.6 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 is described in **Section 1.2** of this report; the purpose of the Proposed Variation is to increase housing targets in the Development Plan as a result of the NPF Housing Growth Requirements. This targeted growth in housing can be accommodated within the County's existing settlement boundaries and on land that is already served, or is serviceable, by infrastructure.

Therefore, the increase in housing will not require the zoning of new land or the extension of settlement boundaries in the Wicklow County Development Plan or subsidiary local plans.

This screening should be considered in the context of other projects or plans, each of which underwent AA to the stage deemed necessary:

- The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied), including subsidiary local plans for the following settlements:
 - Baltinglass
 - Newtownmountkennedy
 - Rathdrum
 - Ashford
 - Aughrim
 - Carnew
 - Dunlavin
 - Tinahely
 - Avoca
 - Donard
 - Newcastle

- Roundwood
- Shillelagh

- Proposed Variation No. 4 (including the draft Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework) to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2025
- Proposed Variation No. 5 (including the draft Arklow Local Planning Framework) to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2025
- Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018
- Wicklow Town – Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025
- Blessington Local Area Plan 2025
- Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole Local Area Plan 2013
- Arklow Local Area Plan 2018

Section 3 Description of European Sites

3.0 European sites located within 15km of Proposed Variation No. 6

This section of the screening process describes the European Sites within a 15km radius of the area of the proposed variation to the County Development Plan (the entire County), and any additional European Sites that are hydrologically connected or share groundwater bodies with the area of the proposed variation.

3.1 Priority Species and Habitats

A number of species and habitats are given 'Priority' status in the Habitats Directive by the EU because they are considered to be particularly vulnerable and are mainly, or exclusively, found within the European Union.

There are no 'Priority Species' known from Ireland.

Priority Habitats are present in Ireland, with a number of these present in Wicklow's SACs and these are prefixed with an asterisk in Table 1. The importance of Priority Habitats is emphasised at several places in the Directive (Articles 4 and 5 and Annex III), not only in terms of the selection of sites, but also in the measures required for site protection (Article 6) and surveillance (Article 11).



- LEGEND
- Settlements at Levels 1-6 of the Wicklow Settlement Hierarchy
 - Wicklow County Boundary
 - 15km from County Wicklow Boundary
 - Special Areas of Conservation
 - Special Protection Areas

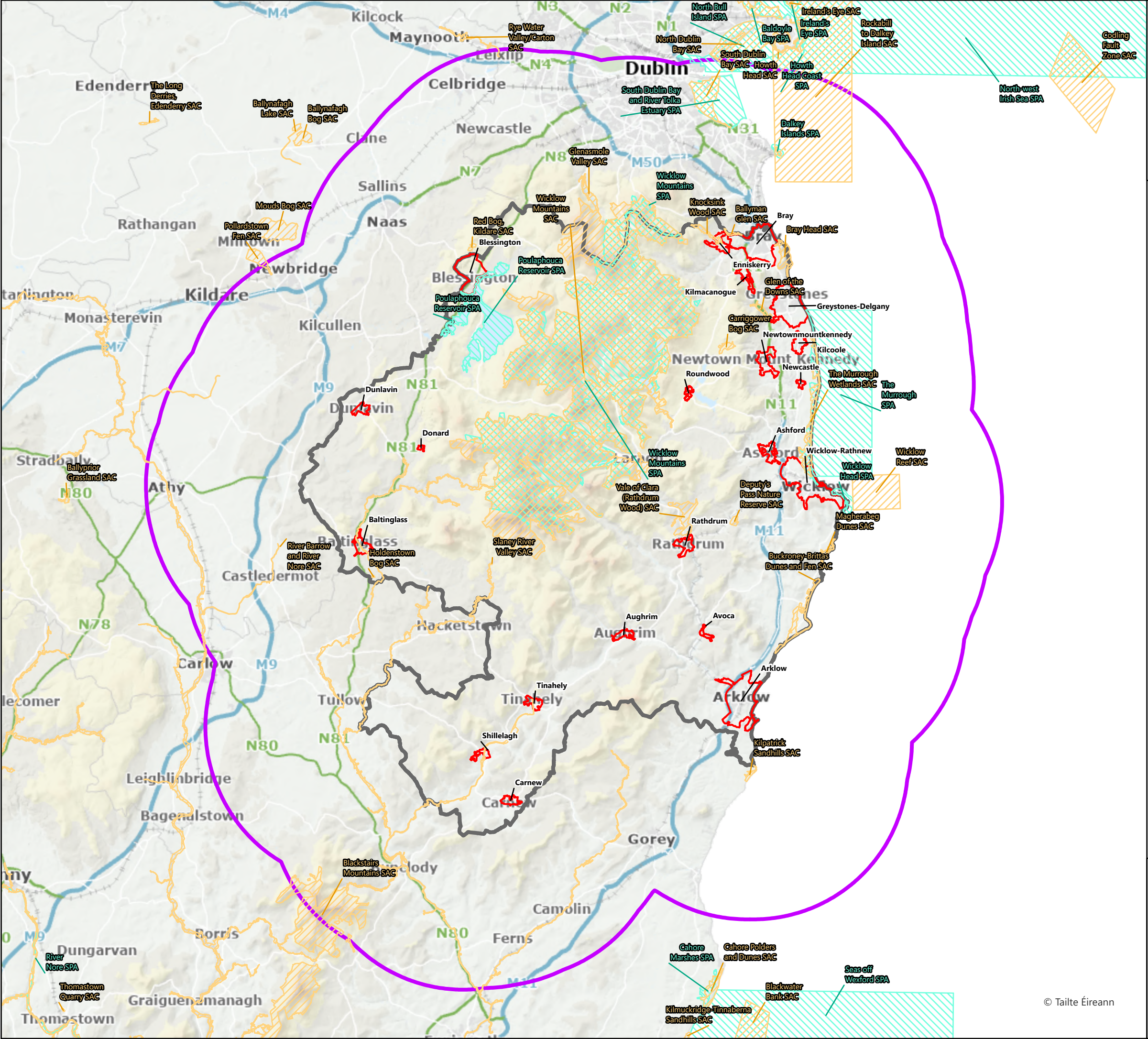


Table 1 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 15km of Variation No. 6 area

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Interests	
		Annex I Habitat (* indicates priority habitat)	Annex II Species (* indicates priority species)
000206	North Dublin Bay SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] ▪ Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] ▪ Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410] ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] ▪ Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] ▪ Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]* ▪ Humid dune slacks [2190] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort) [1395]
000210	South Dublin Bay SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] 	
000396	Pollardstown Fen SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]* ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]* ▪ Alkaline fens [7230] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vertigo geyeri (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013] ▪ Vertigo angustior (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] ▪ Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]
000397	Red Bog, Kildare SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] 	
000713	Ballyman Glen SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]* ▪ Alkaline fens [7230] 	
000714	Bray Head SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] ▪ European dry heaths [4030] 	

000716	Carriggower Bog SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] 	
000717	Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] 	
000719	Glen of the Downs SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] 	
000725	Knocksink Wood SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]* Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]* 	
000729	Buckroney-Brittas Dunes and Fen SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]* Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetia) [2150]* Dunes with Salix repens ssp. argentea (Salicion arenariae) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] Alkaline fens [7230] 	
000733	Vale of Clara (Rathdrum Wood) SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] 	
000770	Blackstairs Mountains SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] European dry heaths [4030] 	
000781	Slaney River Valley SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] ▪ Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alosa fallax fallax (Twaiite Shad) [1103] ▪ Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] ▪ Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] ▪ Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]
001209	Glenasmole Valley SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]* ▪ Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]* 	
001398	Rye Water Valley/Cartron SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vertigo angustior (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] ▪ Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]
001742	Kilpatrick Sandhills SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] ▪ Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] ▪ Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]* ▪ Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea) [2150]* 	
001757	Holdenstown Bog SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] 	
001766	Magherabeg Dunes SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] ▪ Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] ▪ Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]* ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]* 	
002122	Wicklow Mountains SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] ▪ Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] ▪ European dry heaths [4030] ▪ Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] ▪ Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> [6130] ▪ Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230]* ▪ Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]* ▪ Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) [8110] ▪ Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210] ▪ Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220] ▪ Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] 	
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Estuaries [1130] ▪ Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] ▪ Reefs [1170] ▪ <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] ▪ Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] ▪ Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] ▪ Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] ▪ European dry heaths [4030] ▪ Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220]* ▪ Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] ▪ Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] ▪ <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] ▪ <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] ▪ <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] ▪ <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] ▪ <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] ▪ <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twait Shad) [1103] ▪ <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] ▪ <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] ▪ <i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i> (Killarney Fern) [6985]
002249	The Murrugh Wetlands SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] ▪ Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] ▪ Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7210]* ▪ Alkaline fens [7230] 	
002274	Wicklow Reef SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reefs [1170] 	
003000	Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reefs [1170] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]

Table 2 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within 15km of Variation No. 6 area

Site Code	Site Name	Special Conservation Interests & Features of Interest
004006	North Bull Island SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] ▪ Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] ▪ Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] ▪ Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] ▪ Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] ▪ Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] ▪ Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] ▪ Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] ▪ Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] ▪ Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] ▪ Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] ▪ Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] ▪ Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] ▪ Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] ▪ Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] ▪ Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] ▪ Shoveler (<i>Spatula clypeata</i>) [A857] ▪ Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
004024	South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] ▪ Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] ▪ Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] ▪ Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] ▪ Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] ▪ Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] ▪ Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] ▪ Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] ▪ Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] ▪ Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] ▪ Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] ▪ Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
004040	Wicklow Mountains SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>) [A098] Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) [A103]
004063	Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]
004127	Wicklow Head SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188]
004172	Dalkey Islands SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194]
004186	The Murrough SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>) [A855] Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>) [A885] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
004236	North-west Irish Sea SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>) [A003] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>) [A187] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] ▪ Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] ▪ Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] ▪ Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] ▪ Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204] ▪ Little Gull (<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>) [A862] ▪ Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>) [A885]
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Table 3 Additional Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), beyond 15km of Variation No. 6 area, that are hydrologically connected or share groundwater bodies with that area.

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Interests	
		Annex I Habitat (* indicates priority habitat)	Annex II Species (* indicates priority species)
000764	Hook Head SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] ▪ Reefs [1170] ▪ Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tursiops truncatus (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] ▪ Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]
000710	Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] ▪ Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] ▪ Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]* ▪ Dunes with Salix repens ssp. argentea (Salicion arenariae) [2170] ▪ Humid dune slacks [2190] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪

Table 4 Additional Special Protection Areas (SPAs) beyond 15km of Variation No. 6 area that are hydrologically connected or share groundwater bodies with that area.

Site Code	Site Name	Special Conservation Interests & Features of Interest
004237	Seas off Wexford SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] ▪ Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] ▪ Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013] ▪ Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016] ▪ Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] ▪ Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] ▪ Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] ▪ Mediterranean Gull (<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>) [A176] ▪ Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] ▪ Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] ▪ Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] ▪ Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] ▪ Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] ▪ Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] ▪ Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] ▪ Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] ▪ Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] ▪ Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204] ▪ Sandwich Tern (<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>) [A863] ▪ Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>) [A885]
004019	The Raven SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] ▪ Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] ▪ Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] ▪ Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] ▪ Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] ▪ Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] ▪ Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
004076	Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004] ▪ Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] ▪ Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028] ▪ Bewick's Swan (<i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>) [A037] ▪ Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] ▪ Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] ▪ Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] ▪ Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] ▪ Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053] ▪ Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] ▪ Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>) [A062] ▪ Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067] ▪ Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] ▪ Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) [A082] ▪ Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] ▪ Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] ▪ Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] ▪ Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] ▪ Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] ▪ Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] ▪ Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] ▪ Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] ▪ Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] ▪ Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] ▪ Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] ▪ Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] ▪ Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] ▪ Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] ▪ Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] ▪ Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>) [A855] ▪ Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>) [A885] ▪ Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
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3.2 Conservation Objectives

The Habitats Directive aims, inter alia, to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species which have been identified as the qualifying features of sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the Special Conservation Interests of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network and are known as European Sites under Irish legislation.

European Site's Conservation Objectives are defined by NPWS and are *"intended to ensure that the relevant Annex 1 habitats and Annex II species present on a site are maintained in a favourable condition"* (Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects – Guidance for Planning Authorities DoEHLG 2010).

The DoEHLG Guidelines state that, *"The conservation objectives derive from the qualifying interests, the Natura 2000 standard data form, and the management plan for the site, with summary information contained in the site synopsis"*.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

The qualifying features and special conservation interests of the relevant European Sites are listed in Tables 1 and 2 above. Further descriptive detail of site characteristics, quality and importance, and vulnerability of these features, are available for each European Site on www.npws.ie.

Section 4 Assessment of Impacts

4.0 Introduction

Assessment is the process of evaluating the importance or significance of project/plan impacts (whether adverse or beneficial). This is essentially a judgment, built up from the collation of available information and the use of objective criteria and standards.

4.1 Assessment of likely impacts on European Sites

This Assessment will examine and evaluate the significance of impact, if any, of Proposed Variation No. 6 on each of the European Sites located within 15km of the proposed variation area. The distance of 15km is derived from the recommendation in the DoEHLG document *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects – Guidance for Planning Authorities*.

Table 5 provides details of each European Site as sourced from the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The principal sources of information include the following:

- Site synopses
- Qualifying interests
- Conservation objective series

Under Article 11 of the Habitats Directive, each member state is obliged to undertake surveillance of the conservation status of the natural habitats and species in the Annexes and under Article 17, to report to the European Commission every six years on their status and on the implementation of the measures taken under the Directive.

In April 2019, Ireland submitted the assessment of the conservation status for its habitats and species. This is set out in *"The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland"* (NPWS 2019) and includes any threats and pressures on the habitats and species.

The possible impacts that might arise from the proposed variation to the plan have been examined in the context of a number of factors that could potentially affect the integrity of the European Sites. These factors are as follows; Reduction in Habitat area; Disturbance to Key Species; Habitat of Species Fragmentation; Reduction in Species Density; Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value (Water Quality etc). The assessment of significance is based on Direct⁴, Indirect⁵ and Cumulative⁶ Impact assessment criteria.

The 'Assessment of Likely Impacts' table also references and discusses as relevant, specific objectives within the proposed variation to the plan that may have an impact on the designated sites in accordance with their individual conservation objectives.

⁴ Direct Impacts of the variation to the plan on the designated site are those impacts which arise directly from the objectives of the plan i.e. land take, excavation works etc.

⁵ Indirect Impacts of the variation to the plan on the designated site relate to those impacts of the plan which have a knock on effect on the designated site i.e. the provision of a new water supply scheme serving the plan area may not be located within a designated site however the abstraction of such water may indirectly impact on the habitat itself.

⁶ Cumulative = individual affects from disparate projects may add up or interact to cause additional effects not apparent when looking at the individual effect at one time or in isolation.

Table 5 Assessment of Likely Impacts

Table 5.1 North Dublin Bay SAC					
Summary of European Site Synopsis⁷					
<p>This site covers the inner part of north Dublin Bay, the seaward boundary extending from the Bull Wall lighthouse across to the Martello Tower at Howth Head. The North Bull Island is the focal point of this site.</p> <p>North Bull Island is a sandy spit which formed after the building of the South Wall and Bull Wall in the 18th and 19th centuries. It now extends for about 5 km in length and is up to 1 km wide in places. A well-developed and dynamic dune system stretches along the seaward side of the island. Various types of dunes occur, from fixed dune grassland to pioneer communities on foredunes. Behind the first dune ridge, plant diversity increases.</p> <p>About 1 km from the tip of the island, a large dune slack with a rich flora occurs, usually referred to as the 'Alder Marsh' because of the presence of Alder trees (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>). Saltmarsh extends along the length of the landward side of the island. The edge of the marsh is marked by an eroding edge which varies from 20 cm to 60 cm high. The habitat 'annual vegetation of drift lines' is found in places, along the length of Dollymount Strand.</p> <p>The island shelters two intertidal lagoons which are divided by a solid causeway. The sediments of the lagoons are mainly sands with a small and varying mixture of silt and clay. The north lagoon has an area known as the "Salicornia flat". Common Cordgrass (<i>Spartina anglica</i>) occurs in places but its growth is controlled by management. The sediments on the seaward side of North Bull Island are mostly sands. The site extends below the low spring tide mark to include an area of the sublittoral zone.</p> <p>This site is an excellent example of a coastal site with all the main habitats represented. The site holds good examples of nine habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive; one of these is listed with priority status. Several of the wintering bird species have populations of international importance, while some of the invertebrates are of national importance. The site contains a numbers of rare and scarce plants including some which are legally protected. Its proximity to the capital city makes North Dublin Bay an excellent site for educational studies and research.</p>					
Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats⁸	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide. ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Annual vegetation of drift lines. 	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24

⁷ For full site synopses for each European Site, see www.npws.ie

⁸ For full range of conservation objectives and threats for each European site, see www.npws.ie

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] ▪ Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] ▪ Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] ▪ Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]* ▪ Humid dune slacks [2190] ▪ <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonizing mud and sand. ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (<i>GlaucoPuccinellietalia maritima</i>). ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>). ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Embryonic shifting dunes. ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes'). ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes'). ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Humid dune slacks. ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Petalwort. <p>Threats include habitat/species loss, non-native species, the presence of physical barriers, changes to vegetation composition e.g. depending on habitat</p>				
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	the expansion of common cordgrass/bare ground/ scrub/ trees/ creeping willow, loss of marram grass/lyme grass cover), fertilizer run-off, water abstraction, brackish water.				
<p>Assessment</p> <p>This European site is c.14km from the Wicklow County boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).</p> <p>Given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.14km from the plan boundary and c. 15km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth. ▪ the lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment). ▪ The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) ▪ The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) <p>It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will not cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).</p>					

Table 5.2 South Dublin Bay SAC**Summary of European Site Synopsis**

This site lies south of the River Liffey in Co. Dublin, and extends from the South Wall to the west pier at Dun Laoghaire. It is an intertidal site with extensive areas of sand and mudflats. The sediments are predominantly sands but grade to sandy muds near the shore at Merrion Gates. The main channel which drains the area is Cockle Lake.

The bed of Dwarf Eelgrass (*Zostera noltii*) found below Merrion Gates is the largest stand on the east coast. Green algae (*Enteromorpha* spp. and *Ulva lactuca*) are distributed throughout the area at a low density. Several small, sandy beaches with incipient dune formation occur in the northern and western sectors of the site, notably at Poolbeg, Irishtown and Merrion/ Booterstown. The formation at Booterstown is very recent.

South Dublin Bay is an important site for waterfowl. Although birds regularly commute between the south bay and the north bay, recent studies have shown that certain populations which occur in the south bay spend most of their time there. Large numbers of gulls roost in South Dublin Bay, e.g. 4,500 Black-headed Gulls in February 1990; 500 Common Gulls in February 1991. It is also an important tern roost in the autumn, regularly holding 2000-3000 terns including Roseate Terns, a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

At low tide the inner parts of the south bay are used for amenity purposes. Baitdigging is a regular activity on the sandy flats. At high tide some areas have windsurfing and jet-skiing. This site is a fine example of a coastal system, with extensive sand and mudflats, and incipient dune formations. South Dublin Bay is also an internationally important bird site.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide. <p>Threats include habitat loss, loss in community structure/extent/distribution of <i>Zostera</i> and <i>angulus tenuis</i>.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24

Assessment

This European site is c. 8.6km from the Wicklow County boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c. 8.6km from the plan boundary and c. 9.7km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.3 Pollardstown Fen SAC**Summary of European Site Synopses**

Pollardstown Fen is situated on the northern margin of the Curragh of Kildare, approximately 3 km north-west of Newbridge. It lies in a shallow depression, running in a north-west/south-east direction. About 40 springs provide a continuous supply of water to the fen. These rise chiefly at its margins, along distinct seepage areas of mineral ground above the fen level.

Pollardstown Fen is unusual in Ireland as it is an extensive area of primary and secondary fen peat, lacking scrub vegetation on its surface. Damp pastures occur on wet mineral soils and partly-drained peats on the fen margins. These are reasonably species-rich, with particularly good displays of orchids in some areas.

The fen has ornithological importance for both breeding and wintering birds. Little Grebe, Coot, Moorhen, Teal, Mallard, Mute Swan, Water Rail, Snipe, Sedge Warbler and Reed Bunting all breed annually within the fen vegetation. Reed Warbler and Garganey, both rare breeding species in Ireland, have been recorded at Pollardstown and may have bred. In recent years two very specialised bird species associated with fens, Marsh Harrier and Savi's Warbler, have been seen at Pollardstown.

Otter and Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), two species listed in Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, occur at Pollardstown.

Various groups of the invertebrate fauna have been studied and the system has been shown to support a true fen fauna. The species complexes represented are often rare in Ireland, with the sub-aquatic organisms are particularly well-represented. A number of internationally important invertebrates (mostly Order Diptera, i.e. two-winged flies) have been recorded from the site. Of particular conservation importance, however, is the occurrence of all three of the Whorl Snails (*Vertigo* spp.) that are listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Pollardstown is the only known site in Ireland (or Europe) to support all three species (*Vertigo geyeri*, *V. angustior* and *V. moulinsiana*), and it therefore provides a unique opportunity to study their different habitat and hydrological requirements.

Pollardstown fen is the largest spring-fed fen in Ireland and has a well-developed and specialised flora and fauna. Owing to the rarity of this habitat and the numbers of rare organisms found there, the site is rated of international importance.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7210]* ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220]* ▪ Alkaline fens [7230] ▪ <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013] ▪ <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>* ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)* ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alkaline fens 	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Geyer's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>) ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo angustior</i>) ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) <p>Threats include habitat loss, changes in soil pH, loss of peat forming vegetation, changes to water level, changes in vegetation composition/cover, non-native species, loss of algae cover, increase in bare/disturbed ground, changes in phosphate/nitrate levels, loss of tufa formation, loss of brown moss cover, increase in coverage of trees/shrubs, changes in soil wetness, loss of species distribution</p>				
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Assessment

This European site is c. 13.8km from the Wicklow County boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is no hydrological connection or shared groundwater body from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site.

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.13.8km from the plan boundary and c. 15.2km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.4 Red Bog, Kildare SAC**Summary of European Site Synopsis**

Red Bog, Kildare is located 3 km north of the village of Blessington in east Co. Kildare, close to the boundary with Co. Wicklow. It comprises a wetland complex of lake, fen and bog situated in a hollow between ridges of glacially-deposited material and underlain by rocks of Ordovician age.

The shores of the lake are muddy and support such species as Bog Stitchwort (*Stellaria alsine*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) and Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*). Fringing the lakeshore is a narrow zone with emergent Soft Rush, Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), as well as the moss *Climacium dendroides*. In places, particularly at either end of the lake and along its south-eastern side, this zone grades into extensive areas of quaking scraw vegetation of dense Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*).

The deeper water supports submerged aquatic plants such as Water-starworts (*Callitriche* spp.) and Water-crowfoots (*Ranunculus* spp.), while in sheltered areas floating plants including Common Duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and the liverwort *Riccia fluitans* are found. At the north-east end of the site, bog vegetation has developed, with Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) being the most frequent species.

Red Bog is of ornithological significance and breeding birds recorded from the site include Mute Swan, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Coot, Moorhen, Snipe and Black-headed Gull (estimated <20 pairs). Gravel extraction, drainage and eutrophication of the wetland from agricultural activities in the surrounding lands all pose a threat to the site.

Red Bog, Kildare is a site of particular conservation significance, supporting a good example of transition mire, a habitat that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Transition mires and quaking bogs. <p>Threats include habitat loss, changes in soil pH, loss of active peat formation, change in water levels/flow patterns, changes in vegetation composition, drainage from trampling and disturbed ground, gravel extraction.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26.

Assessment

This European site is c. 0.3km from the Wicklow County boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (shared groundwater body).

Given:

- The location of the European Site outside the plan boundary, c. 0.3km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth, which is in relatively close proximity to the European Site. The objectives of that plan made specific reference to this European Site.
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.5 Ballyman Glen SAC**European Site**

Ballyman Glen is situated approximately 3 km north of Enniskerry and straddles the County boundary between Dublin and Wicklow. It is orientated in an east-west direction with a stream running through the centre. The glen is bounded mostly by steeply sloping pasture with Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and areas of wood and scrub.

Ballyman Glen contains a small strip of alkaline fen which is associated with petrifying spring/seepage areas that have given rise to thick deposits of marl. The fen area is being invaded by Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*). Associated with the fen, and also with the woodland elsewhere in the site, are petrifying springs. These lime-encrusted seepage areas are rich in bryophytes including such diagnostic species as *Cratoneuron commutatum* and *C. filicinum*. Wet woodland and scrub occur along the margins of the stream for most of the length of the glen, extending outwards in areas to create inaccessible and species-rich patches of woodland. Areas of marsh are found in the wetter areas by the stream, particularly at the western end of the site. There is an area of broadleaved woodland on the steeper southern slopes of the glen.

An area of land that slopes towards the fen has been used as a landfill site for domestic refuse. The site is also used for a clay pigeon shoot and shattered clay pigeons are scattered throughout the area.

The fen vegetation at this site is well developed, with an unusually large number of sedge species present. The presence of alkaline fen and of petrifying spring/seepage areas is also particularly notable, as these habitats are listed, the latter with priority status, on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Fens are rare in Wicklow and Dublin, and this is one of only two sites in Wicklow for the Narrow-leaved Marshorchid.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220]* ▪ Alkaline fens [7230] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)* ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alkaline fens <p>Threats include habitat loss, changes to hydrological regime, changes to soil pH changes to nitrate/phosphate level, changes to vegetation level, trampling/dung, loss of active peat formation, non-native species, increase in coverage of trees/shrubs, disturbed vegetation where tufa is present.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26.

Assessment

This European site is partly within County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6) and immediately adjoins (with some minor overlaps) the boundaries of the settlements of Bray and Enniskerry, both targeted for increased growth. Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (shared groundwater body).

Given:

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), which encompasses the nearest settlements targeted for increased growth (Bray and Enniskerry) and those part of the European Site within Co. Wicklow. The objectives of that plan made specific reference to this European Site and, where small areas of the European site are within settlement boundaries with specific land use zonings, zones those lands OS2 Passive Open Space. Proposed Variation No. 6 does not propose to alter this zoning.
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.6 Bray Head SAC**Summary of European Site Synopsis**

This coastal site is situated in the north-east of Co. Wicklow between the towns of Bray and Greystones. The bedrock geology is Cambrian quartzites and shales (with mudstones and greywackes). Bray Head consists of a plateau of high ground, with five prominent quartzite knolls and has a maximum height of 241 m. The more exposed higher ground has a covering of shallow acidic soils, with protruding bedrock and scree. Elsewhere, deeper soils are formed by drift deposits and are calcareous in character.

Dry heath is the principal habitat over much of Bray Head. The heath communities which occur on the dry slopes above the sea cliffs, especially those south-facing, are more open in character and dominated by grasses rather than dwarf shrubs. The annual plant communities which develop here are typical of those found only on sites in south-eastern Ireland. Calcareous dry grassland, typically species-rich, occurs on deposits of glacial till. Bloody Crane's-bill (*Geranium sanguineum*) was refound recently in this community at Bray Head - this is a typical species of the Burren and associated areas, and is very rare in eastern Ireland.

Rocky sea cliffs, another Annex I habitat, form most of the seaward boundary at this site and extend for approximately 2 km. Steep clay cliffs extend southwards for a further 1 km, with a small area of clay cliff also at the northernmost part of site. The rocky cliffs are divided by a railway track built in the 1800s. The lower cliffs are fairly steep in places but above the track they are less steep, and often support heath or dry grassland vegetation. In parts the cliffs are up to 60 m in height. The clay cliffs in the southern part of the site are steep and unstable and have little vegetation. A stand of mostly native woodland occurs in the northern part of the site. This is a fairly pure Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) dominated woodland, with some Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*).

Bray Head has an important seabird colony. Peregrine Falcon, an Annex I species of the E.U. Birds Directive, breeds at the site, as do Raven and Kestrel. The heath and grassland habitats at this site are threatened by reclamation for agriculture and also by frequent burning. The site is a popular recreational area and is especially used by walkers. Bray Head is of high conservation importance as it has good examples of two habitats (sea cliffs and dry heath) listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. It also supports a number of rare plant species and has ornithological importance.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] ▪ European dry heaths [4030] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts. ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of European dry heaths. <p>Threats include habitat loss (length), the occurrence of physical barriers, changes in vegetation structure/height, non-native species, expansion of</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22

	heath/woodland below or over certain % of site, changes in soil pH, browsing of new growth, increases in disturbed ground, reclamation for agriculture, frequent burning,				
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Assessment

This European site is located within County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6) and immediately adjoins (with some minor overlaps) the boundaries of the settlements of Bray and Greystones-Delgany, both targeted for increased growth. Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment).

Given:

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), which encompasses one of the nearest settlements targeted for increased growth (Bray) and those part of the European Site within Co. Wicklow. The objectives of that plan made specific reference to this European site.
- The provisions of the Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Area Plan 2013 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening), which encompasses one of the nearest settlements targeted for increased growth (Greystones-Delgany) and additional AG-GB 'Agriculture – Greenbelt' zonings outside of that settlement and adjacent to the European site. The objectives of that plan made specific reference to this European Site and, where small areas of the European site are within the area with specific land use zonings, zones those lands AG-GB 'Agriculture – Greenbelt' or AP3 'Greystones Harbour and North Beach Action Plan'. Proposed Variation No. 6 does not propose to alter this zoning; it is noted that Proposed Variation No. 4 (Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 2025) is progressing through the statutory processes concurrently. Proposed variation No. 4 is subject to Appropriate Assessment which directly addresses this European Site.
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.7 Carriggower Bog SAC**Summary of European Site Synopsis**

Carriggower Bog is situated on Calary plateau at the eastern edge of the Wicklow Mountains. The site is an area of wet bog and poor fen, flanked by the Vartry River on the south-western side. The bog was exploited for peat extraction until 100 years ago and the peat cuttings are now flooded. The remaining bog vegetation is characterised by bog moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) hummocks. Very wet areas of transition mire occur on the south-western side of the site. The whole area is quaking and is characterised by a mosaic of sedges, grasses and rushes.

Towards the northern side of the site there are rock outcrops of quartzite which form low knolls. The mosaic of transition bog habitats supports a wide range of poor fen/bogland invertebrates, including a suite of wetland species of international importance (most within the Order Diptera).

Carriggower Bog is a notable site for wintering Snipe (117 – mean winter count 1996/97 to 2000/01) and Jack Snipe (16 – mean winter count 1996/97 to 2000/01). These numbers are probably of national importance and the site has consistently held the highest national count for Jack Snipe in recent years. The very wet bog is prime habitat for both of these species.

This site is of conservation importance because it shows a good transition between fen and bog vegetation (with the fen being colonised by characteristic bog species). Transition mire, which is present at the site, is listed in Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The area holds a rich and varied flora, and it provides a habitat for some rare invertebrates. Carriggower Bog is the last remaining site in Wicklow from which some of these invertebrates are recorded. It also has ornithological interest, being an important site for Jack Snipe.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Transition mires and quaking bogs. <p>Threats include loss of habitat, change in soil pH, change in water levels/flow direction, drainage from trampling, disturbed soil, non-native species, loss of peat forming vegetation cover.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26.

Assessment

This European site is located within County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). The plan area and this European site share a groundwater body, including a number of settlements targeted for increased growth.

Given:

- The distance of this European Site at c. 2km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth, despite being within the plan boundary.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.8 Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve SAC

Summary of European Site Synopsis

Deputy's Pass woodland is located on the northern spur of the Deputy's Pass near Glenealy in Co. Wicklow. The predominant vegetation community in Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve is Sessile Oak woodland. The oak is of coppice origin, 70-80 years old, and forms a nearly closed canopy. Other tree species present are Rowan, Holly, and Downy Birch and Beech. The site supports breeding populations of the Smooth Newt and the Common Frog, amphibians protected by the Wildlife Act, 1976. Deputy's Pass is managed as a Nature Reserve and is part of an internationally important series of oak woods in Co. Wicklow which are almost certainly natural in origin and which retain much of their original character and species composition.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in British Isles [91A0]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles in Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve SAC. Threats include invasive non-native species and overgrazing by deer.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22

Assessment

This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site at c. 4km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth, despite being within the plan boundary.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.9 Glen of the Downs SAC**Summary of European Site Synopsis**

Glen of the Downs is a semi-natural oak wood situated within an impressive glacial overflow channel. It is located on the Dublin-Wexford road, about 7 km south of Bray, Co. Wicklow. The underlying rock is mostly quartzite and it outcrops in a few places. The soil is a sandy loam, brown earth to brown podzolic, and is very dry over much of the site. Most of the site has been a Nature Reserve since 1980. Much of the site comprises Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) woodland referable to the Blechno-Quercetum petraeae association. Sessile Oak is especially dominant on the mid to upper slopes. The site includes some areas of mixed woodland, in which Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and other non-native species occur.

Glen of the Downs is notable for some rare invertebrates, including *Mycetobia obscura* (Order Diptera) which is found in only one other locality in Britain and Ireland. A breeding bird census carried out in 1990 recorded a total of 21 species holding territory. Although exploited heavily in the past, this woodland is well developed, rich in species and is of high conservation significance. The site supports oak woodland of a type that is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The glacial overflow channel is the largest example of such a feature in the country.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To restore the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles in Glen of the Downs SAC <p>Threats include habitat loss, loss of canopy cover/diversity, loss of saplings/natural regeneration, overgrazing, non-native invasive species.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22

Assessment

This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6), with the boundary of the settlement of Greystones-Delgany, targeted for increased growth, being c. 0.2km from the site. Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment).

Given:

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Area Plan 2013 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening), which encompasses one of the nearest settlements targeted for increased growth (Greystones-Delgany) and additional AG-GB 'Agriculture – Greenbelt' zonings outside of that settlement and adjacent

to the European site. The objectives of that plan made specific reference to this European Site. Proposed Variation No. 6 does not propose to alter this zoning; it is noted that Proposed Variation No. 4 (Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 2025) is progressing through the statutory processes concurrently. Proposed variation No. 4 is subject to Appropriate Assessment which directly addresses this European Site.

- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.10 Knocksink Wood SAC**Summary of European Site Synopsis**

Knocksink Wood is situated in the valley of the Glencullen River, just north-west of Enniskerry in Co. Wicklow. The fast flowing Glencullen River winds its way over granite boulders along the valley floor. The steep sides of the valley are mostly covered with calcareous drift, and support extensive areas of woodland. The south-western end of Knocksink Wood comprises oak woodland which is dominated by Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) with a spare shrub layer of Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*). A notable feature of the wooded slopes are the frequent and extensive springs and seepage areas, and there is tufa formation in several places. Associated with springs and the river are stands of wet alluvial forest. Islands in the river and open gravelly areas provide further habitat diversity in this site. A number of scarce or rare plants occur within the site including Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acer*), Ivy-leaved Bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*) and Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*).

The site contains a substantial area of potentially ancient woodland. It has one of the most diverse woodland invertebrate faunas in Ireland, including some wet woodland organisms which are threatened at an international level. The importance of this site lies in the diversity of woodland habitats which occur. Three habitats listed in Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, two of which have priority status (petrifying springs and alluvial woodland), occur at this site. The presence of rare or threatened plants and invertebrates adds to the interest.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] ▪ Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] ▪ Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restore the favourable conservation condition of Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)* ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles in Knocksink Wood SAC ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* <p>Threats include habitat loss, change in water flow/level, change in level of tufa formation, change in nitrate/phosphate levels, change in vegetation composition/cover, loss of canopy</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26.

	cover/diversity, loss of saplings/natural regeneration, overgrazing, non-native invasive species, overcoverage of common nettle.				
<p>Assessment</p> <p>This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6) and is partly within the settlement boundary of Enniskerry, which is targeted for increased growth. Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment).</p> <p>Given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment). ▪ The provisions of the Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), which encompasses the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth (Enniskerry) and those part of the European Site within Co. Wicklow. The objectives of that plan made specific reference to this European Site and, where areas of the European site are within settlement boundaries, those lands are not zoned for development. ▪ The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) ▪ The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) <p>It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will not cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).</p>					

Table 5.11 Buckroney- Brittas Dunes and Fen SAC

European Site

Buckroney-Brittas Dunes and Fen is a complex of coastal habitats located about 10km south of Wicklow town. It comprises two main sand dune systems, Brittas Bay and Buckroney Dunes, connected on the coast by the rocky headland of Mizen Head. The dunes have cut off the outflow of a small river at Mizen Head and a fen, Buckroney Fen, has developed. A further small sand dune system occurs south of Pennycomequick Bridge.

The invertebrate fauna of Buckroney fen has been investigated and some notable species have been recorded, including the beetle *Eurynebria complanata* and the following flies: *Machimus cowini*, *Anasimyia lunulata*, *Parhelophilus consimilis* and *Lejogaster splendia*. Little Tern, a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, has bred or attempted to breed at Buckroney strand in recent years. Teal are regular in winter (119), as are Curlew (46), Lapwing (515) and Snipe (87). Several coastal habitats that are listed on the E.U. Habitats Directive, including two priority habitats - fixed dune and decalcified dune heath are present. The area contains two legally protected plants, as well as a number of other rare or scarce plant species. The site provides habitat for some rare species of invertebrate and for the vulnerable Little Tern. A rich flora and fauna has persisted on this site despite extensive amenity use and adjacent farming. However, future land use practices will need to be managed to ensure the continued survival of this unique mosaic of coastal habitats.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>) [2150]	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Annual vegetation of drift lines in Buckroney-Brittas Dunes and Fen SAC.</p> <p>Threats to the Grey Dunes include recreation.</p> <p>Pressures on the dune slacks habitat come from a number of sources, including sports and leisure activities (e.g. walking).</p> <p>Threats to Alkaline fens are land abandonment, overgrazing, drainage and pollution.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.26

Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] Alkaline fens [7230]					
<p>Assessment</p> <p>This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment).</p> <p>Given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The distance of this European Site at c. 3km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth, despite being within the plan boundary. ▪ The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment). ▪ The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) ▪ The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) <p>It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will not cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).</p>					

Table 5.12 Vale of Clara (Rathdrum Wood) SAC

European Site

The Vale of Clara (Rathdrum Wood) SAC is situated mostly on the east side of the Avonmore River, immediately north of Rathdrum in Co. Wicklow, in a deep, steeply-sided valley through which runs the Avonmore River. It is an integral part of one of the most scenic valleys in Wicklow. The woodland is a remnant of the once extensive forests of east Wicklow, which may have occupied this site since the end of the last Ice Age. Unfortunately, the hardwoods have been replaced, or underplanted with conifers, since the 1940s. The woods in the Vale of Clara are a mosaic of relatively pure oak woodland (Sessile Oak, *Quercus petraea*), mixed woodland and commercial plantations, growing on an acidic orange-brown, sandy loam over a schist bedrock. A distinct mor humus, often several centimetres thick, overlies the mineral soil.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in British Isles [91A0]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles in Vale of Clara (Rathdrum Wood) SAC. Threats include invasive non-native species and overgrazing by deer.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6) and immediately adjoins the boundary of the settlement of Rathdrum, targeted for increased housing growth. Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment).

Given:

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment). This includes the Rathdrum Town Plan, the area of which is immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of the site, the text of which specifically refers to the European Site.
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.13 Blackstairs Mountains SAC**Summary of European Site Synopsis**

The Blackstairs Mountains are located along the border of the Counties Wexford and Carlow, forming a mountain chain that runs in a north-east/south-west direction for approximately 22 km, and includes six peaks over 520 m. The range has a core of granite, and on the Carlow side, erosion has cut deeply into the dome exposing successive layers of granite, giving a steeply stepped slope. On the east side some overlying Ordovician slates and sandstones are evident. Mount Leinster is the highest mountain of the range (795 m).

The site is important for extensive areas of dry heath. Upland grassland is found on those slopes which have been heavily grazed. Wet heath occurs in mosaic with dry heath towards the base of some of the steeper slopes and is also found outside the western edge of the commonage. There are relatively extensive tracts of a peat/heath mosaic on the gentle slopes at the east of the southern section of the site and within the commonage. A series of lowland bogs north of Mount Leinster and around Black Rock Mountain have recently been identified which have considerable local importance. These occur around Ballycrystal, south-west of Black Rock Mountain, where the highest feeders of the Urrin River rise, and around Crann on the north of the Black Rock ridge, where feeders of the Clody River rise just south of the Wexford/Carlow border. In these bogs considerable populations of Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) occur.

The headwaters of the Urrin River are included within the site. The woodland in the south of the area is comprised of Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*). There are also patches of peaty marsh, with species similar to those listed for the lowland bog. Small numbers of Red Grouse use the site – their numbers have declined here in recent years.

Land use within the site is centred on grazing. Overall, sheep numbers are low, though there are some pockets where high numbers are found. In these areas there are patches of bare ground, an abundance of Mat-grass and in some places upland grassland replaces the heath. Burning of the Heather is carried out on what appears to be a rotational basis. Heather is regenerating in the burnt areas.

The Blackstairs Mountains SAC is the only example of moorland above 300 m in Counties Wexford and Carlow. It includes good examples of dry heath, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The plant and animal communities are typical of upland habitats, and the growth of Heather is particularly profuse, rivalling some of the larger areas of Heather cover in Co. Wicklow. The presence of rare and scarce species adds significantly to the conservation value of the site.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] ▪ European dry heaths [4030] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of European dry heaths <p>Threats include habitat loss, changes in soil pH, changes in composition of vegetation (incl. loss of cross-leaved</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22

	heath, crowberry, lichens), non-native invasive species, broken sphagnum cover, browsing, burning, drainage from heavy trampling, disturbed bare ground, over coverage of trees/shrubs.				
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Assessment

This European site is c.11km from the Wicklow County boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (shared groundwater body).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.11km from the plan boundary and c. 16km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.14 Slaney River Valley SAC

Summary of European Site Synopsis

This site comprises the freshwater stretches of the River Slaney as far as the Wicklow Mountains; a number of tributaries, the larger of which include the Bann, Boro, Glasha, Clody, Derry, Derreen, Douglas and Carrigower Rivers; the estuary at Ferrycarrig; and Wexford Harbour. The site flows through the Counties of Wicklow, Wexford and Carlow. Towns along the site but not within it include Baltinglass, Hacketstown, Tinahely, Tullow, Bunclody, Camolin, Enniscorthy and Wexford. The river is up to 100m wide in places and is tidal at the southern end from Edermine Bridge below Enniscorthy. In the upper and central regions almost as far as the confluence with the Derry River the geology consists of granite. Above Kilcarrig Bridge, the Slaney has cut a gorge into the granite plain. The Derry and Bann Rivers are bounded by a narrow line of uplands which corresponds to schist outcrops. Where these tributaries cut through this belt of hard rocks they have carved deep gorges, more than two miles long at Tinahely and Shillelagh. South of Kildavin the Slaney flows through an area of Ordovician slates and grits.

Two rare aquatic plant species which are legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015, have been recorded in this site: Short-leaved Water-starwort (*Callitriche truncata*), a very rare, small aquatic herb found nowhere else in Ireland, and Opposite-leaved Pondweed (*Groenlandia densa*). Good examples of wet woodland are found associated with Macmine marshes, along the banks of the Slaney and its tributaries, and within reedswamps. Old oak woodlands are best represented at Tomnafinnoge, though patches are present throughout the site. At Tomnafinnoge the wood is dominated by mature, widely spaced Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*), which were planted around 1700, with some further planting in 1810. Tomnafinnoge Wood is a remnant of the ancient Shillelagh oak woods, and it appears that woodland has always been present on the site. Below Enniscorthy there are several areas of woodland with a mixed canopy of oak, Beech, Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Ash and generally a good diverse ground flora. Near the mouth of the river at Ferrycarrig is a steep south facing slope covered with oak woodland. North of Bunclody, the river valley still has a number of dry woodlands though these have mostly been managed by the estates.

At the southern end of the site, the Red Data Book species Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*) occurs. Three more Red Data Book species have also been recorded from the site: Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acer*), Basil Thyme (*Acinos arvensis*), and Small Cudweed (*Logfia minima*). Basil Thyme and Small Cudweed are protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015. A nationally rare species, Summer Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*), is also found within the site.

The site is considered to contain a very good example of the extreme upper reaches of an estuary. Tidal reedbeds with wet woodland are present in places. Further south of Macmine are expanses of intertidal mudflats and sandflats and shingle shore often fringed with a narrow band of saltmarsh and brackish vegetation. A significant area of Atlantic salt meadows also occurs at Castlebridge.

Wexford Harbour is an extensive, shallow estuary which dries out considerably at low tide exposing large expanses of mudflats and sandflats. The harbour is largely sheltered by the Raven Point to the north and Rosslare Point in the south.

The site supports populations of several species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, including Sea Lamprey, River Lamprey and Brook Lamprey, Otter, Salmon, small numbers of Freshwater Pearl Mussel, and in the tidal stretches, Twaite Shad. A survey of the Derreen River in 1995 estimated the population of Freshwater Pearl Mussel at about 3,000 individuals. This is a significant population, especially in the context of eastern Ireland. The Slaney is primarily a spring salmon fishery and is regarded as one of the top rivers in Ireland for early spring fishing. The upper Slaney and tributary headwaters are very important for spawning. The site supports regionally significant numbers of Common Seal. This Annex II species occurs year-round in Wexford Harbour where several sandbanks are used for breeding, moulting and resting activity. At least 27 Common Seal regularly occur within the site.

The site is of high ornithological importance also, with internationally important populations of Mute Swan (300), Light-bellied Brent Goose (200), Bar-tailed Godwit (1,843) and Black-tailed Godwit (350) occurring – all figures are average peaks for the five winters, 1995/96-99/2000. A nesting colony of Little Egret has recently become established within the site (12+ pairs in 2003) and birds are present in the area throughout the year.

The site supports many of the mammal species occurring in Ireland. Those which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book include Pine Marten, Badger, Irish Hare and Daubenton's Bat. Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*), another Red Data Book species, also occurs within the site.

Agriculture is the main land use. Arable crops are important. Improved grassland and silage account for much of the remainder. The spreading of slurry and fertilizer poses a threat to the water quality of this salmonid river and to the populations of E.U. Habitats Directive Annex II animal species within it. Run-off is undoubtedly occurring, as some of the fields slope steeply directly to the river bank. In addition, cattle have access to the river bank in places. Fishing is a main tourist attraction along stretches of the Slaney and its tributaries, and there are a number of Angler Associations, some with a number of boats. Fishing stands and styles have been erected in places. Both commercial and leisure fishing takes place. There are some gravel pits along the river below Bunclody and many of these are active. There is a large landfill site adjacent to the river close to Hacketstown and at Killurin. Boating, bait-digging and fishing occur in parts of Wexford Harbour.

Waste water outflows, runoff from intensive agricultural enterprises, a meat factory at Clohamon, a landfill site adjacent to the river, and further industrial development upstream in Enniscorthy and in other towns could all have potential adverse impacts on the water quality unless they are carefully managed. The spread of exotic species is reducing the quality of the woodlands.

The site supports populations of several species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and habitats listed on Annex I of this Directive, as well as important numbers of wintering wildfowl including some species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The presence of wet and broadleaved woodlands increases the overall habitat diversity and the occurrence of a number of Red Data Book plant and animal species adds further importance to the site. Overall it is of considerable conservation significance.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To restore the favourable conservation condition of Sea lamprey To restore the favourable conservation condition of Brook lamprey To restore the favourable conservation condition of River lamprey To restore the favourable conservation condition of Twaite shad To restore the favourable conservation condition of Salmon To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Estuaries To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide To restore the favourable conservation condition of Otter To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Water 	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.26

<p>Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]* Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099] Alosa fallax fallax (Twaite Shad) [1103] Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365] 	<p>courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To restore the favourable conservation condition of old sessile oakwoods with Ilex and Blechnum. To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion). [objective under review for freshwater pearl mussel] <p>Threats include habitat loss, waste water outflows, agricultural runoff, non-native invasive species, loss of species density/occurrence loss of river accessibility to species, loss of spawning habitat quality, changes to water quality, reduction in fish biomass available, disturbance to species from human activity, changes to water flow/level, changes to vegetation composition. Reduction in areas of floodplain, changes to ratio of seedlings/natural regeneration,</p>				
<p>Assessment</p> <p>This European site is partly within County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6), and short sections pass through the settlements of Baltinglass, Shillelagh and Tinahely, which are all targeted for increased growth. The majority of the site is not within the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, with the most distant part of the site being c. 44km from the plan area, though as a river valley there is a source receptor pathway (hydrological connection). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment).</p> <p>Given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The distance of the majority of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, and the relatively short lengths of the site passing through 3 No. settlements targeted for increased growth (Baltinglass, Shillelagh, Tinahely). 					

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment). This includes the Baltinglass, Shillelagh, and Tinahely Town Plans, the objectives of which refer to this European Site.
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.15 Glenasmole Valley SAC

European Site

Glenasmole Valley in south Co. Dublin lies on the edge of the Wicklow uplands, approximately 5 km from Tallaght. The River Dodder flows through the valley and has been impounded here to form two reservoirs which supply water to south Dublin. The non-calcareous bedrock of the Glenasmole Valley has been overlain by deep drift deposits which now line the valley sides. They are partly covered by scrub and woodland, and on the less precipitous parts, by a herb-rich grassland. There is much seepage through the deposits, which brings to the surface water rich in bases, which induces local patches of calcareous fen and, in places, petrifying springs. Tufa depositing springs are long-known from the site, along the valley sides, and some have substantial tufa mounds and banks. Tufa formation is also known from small streams within the woodland at the site.

Orchid-rich grassland occurs in the drier parts of this site and in places grades into Molinia meadow. The areas of Molinia meadows at the site occur associated with the grasslands on the valley sides, and in particular in seepage and flushed areas. Woodland occurs in patches around the site. Wet semi-natural broadleaved woodland is also found around the reservoir. The lake shore vegetation is not well developed, which is typical of a reservoir.

As well as the Green-winged Orchid and Small-white Orchid, two other threatened species which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book occur in the site, Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*) and Yellow Bird's-nest (*Monotropa hypopitys*). Small-white Orchid is legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999.

The site provides excellent habitat for bats, with at least four species recorded: Pipistrelle, Leisler's, Daubenton's and Brown Long-eared. Otter occurs along the river and reservoirs. The site supports Kingfisher, an Annex I species under the E.U. Birds Directive.

Glenasmole Valley contains a high diversity of habitats and plant communities, including three habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The presence of four Red Data Book plant species further adds to the value of the site, as does the presence of populations of several mammal and bird species of conservation interest.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]* ▪ Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites). ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Petrifying 	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.26

	springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)* Threats include habitat loss, non-native invasive species, changes in vegetation composition (e.g. over cover of woody species, hair mosses, algae), grazing/disturbance, increases in bare ground, changes to levels of tufa formation, changes nitrate/phosphate levels,				
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Assessment

This European site is c. 1.8km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (shared groundwater body).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.1.8km from the plan boundary and c. 11km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.16 Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC

Summary of European Site Synopsis

Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC is located between Leixlip and Maynooth, in Counties Meath and Kildare, and extends along the Rye Water, a tributary of the River Liffey. The Rye Water in Carton Estate is dammed at intervals, creating a series of lakes. The woods on Carton Estate are mostly old demesne woods with both deciduous and coniferous species.

Hairy St. John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*), a species legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, occurs in Carton Estate and there is an old record from the estate for the similarly protected Hairy Violet (*Viola hirta*). However, this latter species has not been recorded from the site in recent years. Another species listed in the Red Data Book, Green Figwort (*Scrophularia umbrosa*), occurs on the site in several locations by the Rye Water. The woods at Carton Demesne are the site of a rare Myxomycete fungus, *Diderma deplanatum*.

The marsh, mineral spring and seepage area found at Louisa Bridge supports a good diversity of plant species. The mineral spring found at the site is of a type considered to be rare in Europe and is a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The Red Data Book species Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acer*) is found growing on a wall at Louisa Bridge.

Within the woods, Blackcap, Woodcock and Long-eared Owl have been recorded. Little Grebe, Coot, Moorhen, Tufted Duck, Teal and Kingfisher, the latter a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, occur on and about the lake.

The Rye Water is also a spawning ground for Trout and Salmon, and the rare, Whiteclawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) has been recorded at Leixlip. The latter two species are listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The rare Narrowmouthed Whorl Snail and Desmoulin's Whorl Snail occur in marsh vegetation near Louisa Bridge. Both are rare in Ireland and in Europe, and are listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The scarce dragonfly, *Orthetrum coerulescens*, has also been recorded at Louisa Bridge.

The conservation importance of the site lies in the presence of several rare and threatened plant and animal species, and the presence of petrifying springs, a habitat type listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The woods found on Carton Estate and their birdlife are of additional interest.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]* ▪ <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)* ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo angustior</i>) ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) 	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.26

	Threats include habitat loss, changes to levels of tufa formation, changes to water flow/level, changes to nitrate/phosphate levels, changes to vegetation composition (e.g. over cover of algae, decline in habitat quality for species of conservation value, decline in soil wetness.				
<p>Assessment</p> <p>This European site is c. 14.3km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There are no shared groundwater bodies or direct hydrological connection between the site and the area of Proposed Variation No. 6.</p> <p>Given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.14.3km from the plan boundary and c. 19.4km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth. ▪ The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment). ▪ The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) ▪ The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) <p>It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will not cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).</p>					

Table 5.17 Kilpatrick Sandhills SAC**Summary of European Site Synopsis**

Kilpatrick Sandhills are located c. 8km south of Arklow town, and just south of the Wicklow/Wexford county boundary. The site is comprised of a mosaic of coastal habitats but primarily a mature sand dune system which extends along 2 km of coastline.

Various stages of sand dune formation can be seen at this site. Embryonic shifting fore dunes occur mainly along the middle and southern sections of the site.

In the fixed dunes Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) is the dominant grass. On the older dunes, there is an abundance of legumes. Further inland, on the more mature grey dunes, Burnet Rose (*Rosa pimpinellifolia*) is common. The scarce species Lesser Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum minus*) occurs among the vegetation of the more mobile dunes.

Dune heath occurs behind the fixed dunes in the mid and southern sections of the site. This is a very rare vegetation type in Ireland.

On the landward side of the dunes, in the middle of the site, there is a low-lying marsh. To the west of the marsh is an area of wet scrub woodland.

At the northern end of the site is a rocky headland, Kilmichael Point, which affords fine views along the coastline. Rock outcrops occur where the overlying clay drift has eroded, exposing cliffs which rise in steps to about 10 m. The headland supports a species-rich coastal grassland and cliff vegetation, including the scarce species, Rock Sea-lavender (*Limonium binervosum*).

The Red Data Book species, Sea Stock (*Matthiola sinuata*), has been observed among rocky crevices here in the past, but has not been recorded recently. The species is now thought to be extinct in Ireland.

At the southern end of the site, the sand dunes and beach are used by visitors for amenity purposes. Parts of the site are also used for grazing cattle. Grazing is a critical factor in coastal systems: the correct grazing pressure maintains species-rich open swards and curtails scrub encroachment. Over-exposure to grazing and amenity usage can cause damage to dune vegetation and exacerbate dune erosion.

The site is ecologically important as a good example of a mature and fairly intact sand dune system which shows the developmental stages of dunes from fore dunes to mature grey dunes. A good diversity of habitats and species are present. Fixed dunes and dune heath are priority habitats under Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] ▪ Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] ▪ Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Annual vegetation of drift lines. ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Embryonic shifting dunes. ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes). 	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea) [2150]* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To restore the favourable conservation condition of Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea)* <p>Threats include habitat loss, under/over grazing, pressure from amenity use by humans, additional physical barriers, changes in vegetation composition, non-native invasive species.</p>				
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Assessment

This European site is partly located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6), immediately adjoining the county boundary south of Arklow. Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment).

Given:

- The position of the majority of this European Site outside the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, and the distance of this European Site at c. 3.3km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.18 Holdenstown Bog SAC**Summary European Site Synopsis**

Holdenstown Bog is situated about 3 km south-east of Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow. It is a small raised bog surrounded by transition mire which has developed in a kettle hole. At this site the whole bog is very wet and the surface has a hummock-hollow topography. The hummocks are dominated by Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), while the hollows have a range of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). In addition, there is a good diversity of sedges (*Carex* spp.), including the scarce Bog Sedge (*Carex limosa*), the only known locality for this species in Co. Wicklow. Other typical bog plants found here include Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). The margins of the bog support wet scrub vegetation in which Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) are prevalent. The rest of the bog perimeter is rich in sedges (*Carex nigra*, *C. otrubae*, *C. hirta*), rushes (*Juncus articulatus* and *J. subnodulosus*), as well as a range of wetland herbaceous plants such as Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*).

Holdenstown Bog is of conservation importance as an intact example of transition mire, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and for a range of plant species typical of incipient raised bog development.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Transition mires and quaking bogs <p>Threats include habitat loss, changes in soil pH, decline in active peat formation, changes in water level/flow, non-native invasive species, drainage from heavy trampling, increases in disturbed bare ground.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from Baltinglass, a settlement targeted for increased growth, to the European site (shared groundwater body).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site of c. 2km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).

- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.19 Magherabeg Dunes SAC**Summary European Site Synopsis**

Magherabeg Dunes SAC is a sand dune system situated at Ardmore Point, about 5km south of Wicklow Head in Co. Wicklow. The Three Mile Water River enters the sea through the dunes. The site is fairly intact, though some areas are being naturally eroded by wind and sea, in particular at the southern end, where bedrock has been exposed. Despite its small size, the dune system at Magherabeg shows most of the developmental stages, with embryonic dunes, white dunes and grey fixed all represented. Species present include Sea Couch, Marram and Sea Sandwort. Stable fixed dunes are well represented, with such species as Red Fescue, Common Restharrow, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Wild Pansy, Wild Thyme and White Clover. Burnet Rose is present on the older fixed dunes, with species such as Gorse and Bracken also present. The dune system is backed by drift banks, which are well covered by deciduous woodland and scrub. Other species occurring on these drift banks include Hemp-agrimony, Yellow-wort and the scarce species Wood Vetch. Along the low cliffs at Ardmore Point a line of petrifying springs with tufa formations occurs, and a range of specialised moss species are found. The Three Mile Water River, which flows through the dunes provides habitat for wetland species such as sedges, including Bladder Sedge, Fox Sedge and Grey Sedge. The very rare hybrid sedge, *Carex x grossii* has also been recorded here. Common Reed is also found along the river. The site is of conservation importance because it is a fine example of a dune system which is fairly intact and which has a well-developed flora. The lack of easy public access to this site has undoubtedly helped in preventing damage and erosion from amenity activities. The presence of wetland vegetation on the site is of additional interest.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Annual vegetation of drift lines in Magherabeg Dunes SAC.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from Wicklow-Rathnew, a settlement targeted for increased growth, to the European site (shared groundwater body).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site of c. 3km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
 - The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
 - The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
 - The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.20 Wicklow Mountains SAC

Summary European Site Synopsis

Wicklow Mountains SAC is a complex of upland areas in Counties Wicklow and Dublin. Most of the western part of the site consists of an elevated moorland, covered by peat. The dominant topographical features are the products of glaciation; high corrie lakes, deep valleys and moraines are common features of this area. The substrate over much of the area is peat, usually less than 2m deep. Poor mineral soil covers the slopes, and rock outcrops are frequent. The Wicklow Mountains are drained by several major rivers including the Dargle, Liffey, Dodder, Slaney and Avonmore and the river water in the mountain areas is often peaty, especially during floods.

The vegetation over most of Wicklow Mountains SAC is a mosaic of heath, blanket bog and upland grassland with stands of dense Bracken, and small woodlands mainly along the rivers. Small areas of old oakwood occur on the slopes of Glendalough and Glenmalur, with native Sessile Oak trees, many of which are 100-120 years old. The site supports a range of rare plant species including Parsley Fern, Marsh Clubmoss, Lanceolate Spleenwort, Small-white Orchid and Bog Orchid, which are all legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015.

Deer are abundant, mainly hybrids between Red and Sika Deer. Other mammals include Hare, Badger and Otter, the latter being a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Pine Marten has recently been confirmed as occurring within the site. Among the birds, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Raven and Red Grouse are resident throughout the site. Wood Warbler and Redstarts are rare breeding species of the woodlands. Dipper and Grey Wagtail are typical riparian species. Merlin and Peregrine, both Annex I species of the E.U. Birds Directive, breed within the site.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) in Wicklow Mountains SAC.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.9, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22

<p>Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> [6130] Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) [8110] Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210] Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</p>	<p>Threats to wet heath include overgrazing and erosion. Furthermore, climate change is acknowledged to be a potential future threat as it is expected to cause rises in temperature and decreases in precipitation.</p> <p>Threats to dry heath include overgrazing by sheep and burning for agriculture.</p> <p>Threats to calaminarian grassland include impacts from recreational activities (walking/hiking).</p> <p>The main threats to the otter include pollution, particularly organic pollution resulting in fish kills; and accidental deaths (road traffic and fishing gear).</p>				
<p>Assessment</p> <p>This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). Source receptor pathways, through shared waterbodies, exist between this European site and most of the settlements targeted for increased growth.</p> <p>Given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The distance of this European Site of c. 1.6km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth. 					

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.21 River Barrow and River Nore SAC

Summary of European Site Synopsis

This site consists of the freshwater stretches of the Barrow and Nore River catchments as far upstream as the Slieve Bloom Mountains, and it also includes the tidal elements and estuary as far downstream as Creadun Head in Waterford. The site passes through eight counties – Offaly, Kildare, Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Wexford and Waterford. Major towns along the edge of the site include Mountmellick, Portarlinton, Monasterevin, Stradbally, Athy, Carlow, Leighlinbridge, Graiguenamanagh, New Ross, Inistioge, Thomastown, Callan, Bennettsbridge, Kilkenny and Durrow. The larger of the many tributaries include the Lerr, Fushoge, Mountain, Aughavaud, Owenass, Boherbaun and Stradbally Rivers of the Barrow, and the Delour, Dinin, Erkina, Owveg, Munster, Arrigle and King's Rivers on the Nore.

Good examples of alluvial forest (a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive) are seen at Rathsnagadan, Murphy's of the River, in Abbeyleix estate and along other shorter stretches of both the tidal and freshwater elements of the site. A good example of petrifying springs with tufa formations occurs at Dysart Wood along the Nore. This is a rare habitat in Ireland and one listed with priority status on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

The best examples of old oak woodlands are seen in the ancient Park Hill woodland in the estate at Abbeyleix; at Kyleadahir, on the Delour, Forest Wood House, Kylecorragh and Brownstown Woods on the Nore; and at Cloghristic Wood, Drummond Wood and Borris Demesne on the Barrow, though other patches occur throughout the site. Oak woodland covers parts of the valley side south of Woodstock and is well developed at Brownsford where the Nore takes several sharp bends.

On the steeply sloping banks of the River Nore, about 5 km west of New Ross, in Co. Kilkenny, Kylecorragh Woods form a prominent feature in the landscape. This is an excellent example of relatively undisturbed, relict oak woodland with a very good tree canopy. The wood is quite damp and there is a rich and varied ground flora. Borris Demesne contains a very good example of a semi-natural broadleaved woodland in very good condition.

Eutrophic tall herb vegetation occurs in association with the various areas of alluvial forest and elsewhere where the floodplain of the river is intact. Floating river vegetation is well represented in the Barrow and in the many tributaries of the site. Dry heath at the site occurs in pockets along the steep valley sides of the rivers especially in the Barrow Valley and along the Barrow tributaries where they occur in the foothills of the Blackstairs Mountains. Dry heath at the site generally grades into wet woodland or wet swamp vegetation lower down the slopes on the river bank.

Salt meadows occur at the southern section of the site in old meadows where the embankment has been breached, along the tidal stretches of in-flowing rivers below Stokestown House. The estuary and the other E.U. Habitats Directive Annex I habitats within it form a large component of the site. Extensive areas of intertidal flats, comprised of substrates ranging from fine, silty mud to coarse sand with pebbles/stones are present. Good quality intertidal sand and mudflats have developed on a linear shelf on the western side of Waterford Harbour, extending for over 6 km from north to south between Passage East and Creadaun Head, and in places are over 1 km wide. The sediments are mostly firm sands, though grade into muddy sands towards the upper shore.

The western shore of the harbour is generally stony and backed by low cliffs of glacial drift. At Woodstown there is a sandy beach, now much influenced by recreation pressure and erosion. Behind it a lagoonal marsh has been impounded which runs westwards from Gaultiere Lodge along the course of a slow stream. The dunes which fringe the strand at Duncannon are dominated by Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*) towards the sea.

Seventeen Red Data Book plant species have been recorded within the site, most in the recent past. These are Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*), Divided Sedge, Clustered Clover, Basil Thyme (*Acinos arvensis*), Red Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis angustifolia*), Borrer's Saltmarsh-grass, Meadow Barley, Opposite-leaved Pondweed (*Groenlandia densa*), Meadow Saffron/Autumn Crocus (*Colchicum autumnale*), Wild Clary/Sage, Nettle-leaved Bellflower, Saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*), Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*), Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acer*), Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederaceae*) and Greater Broomrape. The site is very important for the presence of a number of E.U. Habitats Directive Annex II animal species including Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), White-clawed Crayfish, Salmon, Twaite Shad, three lamprey species –

Sea Lamprey, Brook Lamprey and River Lamprey, the tiny whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* and Otter. Three rare invertebrates have been recorded in alluvial woodland at Murphy's of the River. These are: *Neoascia obliqua* (Order Diptera: Syrphidae), *Tetanocera freyi* (Order Diptera: Sciomyzidae) and *Dictya umbrarum* (Order Diptera: Sciomyzidae). The site is of ornithological importance for a number of E.U. Birds Directive Annex I species, including Greenland White-fronted Goose, Whooper Swan, Bewick's Swan, Bar-tailed Godwit, Peregrine and Kingfisher. Nationally important numbers of Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit are found during the winter.

Land use at the site consists mainly of agricultural activities – mostly intensive in nature and principally grazing and silage production. Slurry is spread over much of the area. Arable crops are also grown. The spreading of slurry and fertiliser poses a threat to the water quality of the salmonid river and to the populations of E.U. Habitats Directive Annex II animal species within the site. Many of the woodlands along the rivers belong to old estates and support many non-native species. Little active woodland management occurs. Fishing is a main tourist attraction along stretches of the main rivers and their tributaries and there are a number of Angler Associations, some with a number of beats. Fishing stands and styles have been erected in places. Both commercial and leisure fishing takes place on the rivers. There is net fishing in the estuary and a mussel bed also.

Overall, the site is of considerable conservation significance for the occurrence of good examples of habitats and of populations of plant and animal species that are listed on Annexes I and II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Furthermore it is of high conservation value for the populations of bird species that use it. The occurrence of several Red Data Book plant species including three rare plants in the salt meadows add further interest to this site.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Estuaries [1130] ▪ Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] ▪ Reefs [1170] ▪ Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] ▪ Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] ▪ Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] ▪ Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] 	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Estuaries.</p> <p>To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of the Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide.</p> <p>To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of Reefs.</p> <p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand.</p> <p>To restore the Favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows.</p> <p>To restore the favourable conservation condition of Mediterranean salt meadows.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.26

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ European dry heaths [4030] ▪ Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] ▪ Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]* ▪ Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] ▪ Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]* ▪ Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] ▪ Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] ▪ Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] ▪ Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] ▪ Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] ▪ Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099] ▪ Alosa fallax fallax (Twaites Shad) [1103] ▪ Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] ▪ Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] 	<p>To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation.</p> <p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of European dry heaths.</p> <p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels.</p> <p>To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion).</p> <p>To restore the favourable conservation condition of Old oak woodland with Ilex and Blechnum.</p> <p>To restore the Favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae).</p> <p>To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of Desmoulin's whorl snail.</p> <p>To restore the Favourable conservation condition of the Freshwater pearl mussel (Margaritifera margaritifera).</p> <p>To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of White-clawed crayfish.</p>				
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vandenboschia speciosa (Killarney Fern) [6985] 	<p>To restore the Favourable conservation condition of Sea lamprey. To restore the favourable conservation condition of Brook lamprey. To restore the Favourable conservation condition of River lamprey. To restore the favourable conservation condition of Twaite shad. To restore the favourable conservation condition of Salmon. To restore the favourable conservation condition of Otter. To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of Killarney Fern.</p> <p>Threats include high inputs of nutrients into the river system from agricultural run-off/waste water treatment plants, non-native invasive species (e.g. Cherry laurel/Rhododendron), overgrazing, vulnerable water quality, flash floods, dredging, land reclamation.</p>				
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Assessment

This European site is c. 14km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection and shared groundwater bodies).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.5km from the plan boundary at its closest, and stretching to c. 58km from the plan area at its furthest. The site is c. 7km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).

- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.22 The Murrough Wetlands SAC**European Site**

The Murrough is a coastal wetland complex which stretches for 15km from Ballygannon to north of Wicklow town, and in parts, extends inland for up to 1 km. On the seaward side, vegetation includes species such as Sea Rocket, Sea Sandwort, Sea-holly and Yellow Horned-poppy. Low sand hills occur at Kilcoole, with Marram and Lyme-grass. Typical species include Sweet Vernal-grass, Crested Dog's-tail, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Burnet Rose and Pyramidal Orchid. In some places, particularly at the south of the site, a gorse heath has developed on the stony ridge.

Saltmarsh is present within the site at Broad Lough and in the northern end of the site in the vicinity of The Breaches. Fen vegetation is well developed in the Murrough wetlands, with both alkaline and calcareous fen with Great Fen-sedge represented. The Murrough is an important site for wintering waterfowl and breeding birds. Species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive include Little Egret, Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover, Kingfisher and Little Tern. Otter has also been reported regularly.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of Plan the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Atlantic salt meadows (Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410] Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210] Alkaline fens [7230]	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA. Threats to alkaline fens include land abandonment, overgrazing, drainage and pollution.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 and a relatively small area is within the boundary of the LAP for Wicklow Town-Rathnew, which is targeted for increased growth. The majority of the European site is located to the north of Wicklow Town - Rathnew and at its northern extent is adjacent to the boundary of the Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole LAP, settlements also targeted for increased growth. Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising population targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment).

There are source receptor pathways from a range of settlements targeted growth through shared groundwater bodies and hydrological connections, including Wicklow Town-Rathnew, Greystones-Delgany, Kilcoole, Newtownmountkennedy, Ashford, and Newcastle.

Given:

- The location of the majority of this European Site outside settlements targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment). This includes the Wicklow Town-Rathnew, Greystones-Delgany, Kilcoole, Newtownmountkennedy, Ashford, and Newcastle local plans, the objectives of which refer to this European Site.
- The provisions of the Wicklow Town-Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), the objectives of which make reference to this European Site. Where this European site is within this settlement, it is either no zoned or development or zone OS2 'Natural Areas'.
- The provisions of the Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole LAP 2013 and concurrent Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Planning Framework 2025 (subject to Appropriate Assessment), the objectives of which make reference to this European site.
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.23 Wicklow Reef SAC

Summary of European Site Synopsis

Wicklow Reef is situated just to the north of Wicklow Head on the east coast of Ireland in Co. Wicklow. The substrate is a mixture of cobbles, bedrock and sand and is subject to strong tidal streams.

Wicklow Reef is an example of a subtidal reef constructed by the honeycomb worm *Sabellaria alveolata*. In Irish waters this worm normally constructs reefs on intertidal rocks, in areas subject to some sand scour. Such reefs are widespread but uncommon. *Sabellaria alveolata* subtidal reefs are known to occur in the Mediterranean but this example is an extremely unusual feature and may be the first record for Britain and Ireland.

The reef occurs at a depth of 12-30 m and reaches a thickness of at least 0.3-0.5 m. It is composed of consolidated sand grains formed into a honeycomb structure by the activities of the worm. There is a good diversity of species associated with the reef, including hydroids (e.g. *Hydrallmania falcata*), a variety of polychaete worms, the snail *Calliostoma zizyphinum*, the bivalves *Musculus discor* and *Mytilus edulis*, other molluscs, bryozoans, barnacles, amphipods, crabs, starfish, brittlestars and sea squirts. Three of the species associated with this biogenic reef are rare in Irish waters. The bryozoan *Phaeostachys spinifera* is only known from five locations, with the majority on the west coast and no records in the Irish sea south of Co. Antrim. The polychaete *Eulalia ornata* and the amphipod *Unciola crenatipalma* are only known from one and two sites respectively in Ireland.

Wicklow Reef is of high conservation value as it is the only documented example in Ireland of a biogenic reef. Further, it supports a number of uncommon species.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reefs [1170] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Reefs <p>Threats include habitat loss, changes in biological composition of current-swept subtidal reef community complex.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is entirely at sea, c. 0.5km from the County boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (including a hydrological connection of watercourses entering the sea at Wicklow Town-Rathnew, the closest being c. 1km from the site).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c. 0.5km from the plan boundary at its closest, and stretching to c. 5km from the plan area at its furthest. The site is c. 0.8km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the Wicklow Town-Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), the text of which makes reference to this European site.
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.24 Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC

Summary of European Site Synopsis

This site includes a range of dynamic inshore and coastal waters in the western Irish Sea. These include sandy and muddy seabed, reefs, sandbanks and islands. This site extends southwards, in a strip approximately 7 km wide and 40 km in length, from Rockabill, running adjacent to Howth Head, and crosses Dublin Bay to Frazer Bank in south Co. Dublin. The site encompasses Dalkey, Muglins and Rockabill islands.

Reef habitat is uncommon along the eastern seaboard of Ireland due to prevailing geology and hydrographical conditions. Expansive surveys of the Irish coast have indicated that the greatest resource of this habitat within the Irish Sea is found fringing offshore islands which are concentrated along the Dublin coast. A detailed survey of selected suitable islands has shown areas with typical biodiversity for this habitat both intertidally and subtidally. These reefs are subject to strong tidal currents with an abundant supply of suspended matter resulting in good representation of filter feeding fauna such as sponges, anemones and echinoderms.

The area selected for designation represents a key habitat for the Annex II species Harbour Porpoise within the Irish Sea. Population survey data show that porpoise occurrence within the site boundary meets suitable reference values for other designated sites in Ireland. The species occurs year-round within the site and comparatively high group sizes have been recorded. Porpoises with young (i.e. calves) are observed at favourable, typical reference values for the species. Casual and effort-related sighting rates from coastal observation stations are significant for the east coast of Ireland and the latter appear to be relatively stable across all seasons. The selected site contains a wide array of habitats believed to be important for Harbour Porpoise including inshore shallow sand and mudbanks and rocky reefs scoured by strong current flow. The site also supports Common Seal and Grey Seal, for which terrestrial haul-out sites occur in immediate proximity to the site. Bottlenosed Dolphins has also occasionally been recorded in the area. A number of other marine mammals have been recorded in this area including Minke, Fin and Killer Whales and Risso's and Common Dolphins.

The coastal environment of Co. Dublin is a very significant resource to birds with some nationally and internationally important populations. Of particular note in this site are the large number of terns (Arctic, Common and Roseate) known to use Dalkey Island as a staging area (approx. 2,000) after breeding. Other seabirds commonly seen include Kittiwake, Razorbill, Guillemot, Puffin, Fulmar, Shag, Cormorant, Manx Shearwater, Gannet and gulls.

This site is of conservation importance for reefs, listed on Annex I, and Harbour Porpoise, listed on Annex II, of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reefs [1170] Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Reefs. To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour porpoise. <p>Threats include habitat loss, changes in biological composition to the intertidal and subtidal reef community complex,</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

	additional artificial barriers, impact of human activities.				
<p>Assessment</p> <p>This European site is entirely at sea, c. 4km from the County boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (including a hydrological connection of watercourses entering the sea at Bray and elsewhere, the closest being c. 4km from the site).</p> <p>Given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c. 4km from the plan boundary at its closest, and stretching to c. 45km from the plan area at its furthest. The site is c. 4km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth. ▪ The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment). ▪ The provisions of the Wicklow Town-Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), the text of which make reference to this European site. ▪ The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) ▪ The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) <p>It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will not cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).</p>					

Table 5.25 North Bull Island SPA**European Site 004006**

This site covers all of the inner part of north Dublin Bay, with the seaward boundary extending from the Bull Wall lighthouse across to Drumleck Point at Howth Head. The North Bull Island sand spit is a relatively recent depositional feature, formed as a result of improvements to Dublin Port during the 18th and 19th centuries. It is almost 5 km long and 1 km wide and runs parallel to the coast between Clontarf and Sutton. Part of the interior of the island has been converted to golf courses.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048], Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157], Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144], Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140], Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156], Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141], Lightbellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046], Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169], Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149], Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054], Teal (Anas crecca) [A052], Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179], Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160], Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162], Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143], Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056]	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p> <p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in North Bull Island SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.</p> <p>Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is c. 13.9km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.13.9km from the plan boundary and c. 15km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.26 South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA

European Site 004024

The South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA comprises a substantial part of Dublin Bay. It includes the intertidal area between the River Liffey and Dun Laoghaire, and the estuary of the River Tolka to the north of the River Liffey, as well as Booterstown Marsh. A portion of the shallow marine waters of the bay is also included.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<p>Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137], Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143], Common tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193], Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149], Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192], Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157], Arctic tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194], Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141], Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130], Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179], Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046], Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144], Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p> <p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.</p> <p>Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.</p>	None	None	None	<p>CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26</p>

Assessment

This European site is c. 8.5km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.8.5km from the plan boundary and c. 15km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.27 Wicklow Mountains SPA**European Site 004040**

This is an extensive upland site, comprising a substantial part of the Wicklow Mountains. Most of the site is in Co. Wicklow, but a small area lies in Co. Dublin. The underlying geology of the site is mainly of Leinster granites, flanked by Ordovician schists, mudstones and volcanics. The predominant habitats present are blanket bog, heaths and upland grassland. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the Merlin and Peregrine birds. Other birds of the open peatlands and scree slopes that have been recorded within the site include Ring Ouzel and Red Grouse.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098] Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103]	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA. Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.9, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22

Assessment

This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this site from any settlement identified for additional growth (the most proximate settlements being Enniskerry 2km, Roundwood 2.5km, Donard 4km and Blessington 5km).
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) and the provisions of the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), the text of which make reference to this European site.

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.28 Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA**European Site 004063**

Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA, located in the western foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, was created in 1944 by damming of the River Liffey for the purpose of generating electricity from hydropower. The reservoir covers an area of approximately 20 square kilometres and is the largest inland water body in the mid-east and south-east regions. The reservoir receives water from two main sources, the River Liffey at the northern end, and the Kings River at the southern end. The exit is into the River Liffey gorge at the western end. Underlying the reservoir are sands and gravels deposited during the last glaciation. The shores of the lake are mostly sandy. When water levels are low the exposed lake muds are colonised by an ephemeral flora of annual plant species. Wet grassland areas occur in sheltered bays around the lake but especially in the northern part. Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) is the main grass species present, but other plant species characteristic of wet grasslands occur, including Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*). Sedges (*Carex* spp.) are locally common, while Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) scrub is often found associated with the wet grassland. In some places the water washes against grassy banks which are generally less than a metre high, and in a few places there are steep sand and clay cliffs, up to 15 m high - these are remnants of the old River Liffey channel. In many places the banks are actively eroding, and a strip of conifers has been planted around much of the perimeter of the reservoir in an attempt to stabilize the banks.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043], Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA. Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) and the provisions of the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), the text of which make reference to this European site.
It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.29 Wicklow Head SPA**European Site 004127**

Wicklow Head is a rocky headland with extensive exposures of mica-schist and is situated approximately 3km south of Wicklow town. The site comprises the cliffs and cliff-top vegetation, as well as some heath vegetation and the marine area to a distance of 500m from the base of the cliffs is included in the site. At the time this site was identified for Special Protection Area (SPA) designation it was utilised by a nationally important population of Kittiwake and this species is regarded as a special conservation interest for this SPA. A survey in 2002 recorded a nationally important population of breeding Kittiwake (956 pairs) and other breeding seabirds including Fulmar (62 pairs), Shag (11 pairs), Herring Gull (20 pairs), Guillemot (281 pairs) and Razorbill (125 pairs). The site also supports a pair of breeding Peregrine. Ravens nest annually on the cliffs, and the heath supports such species as Stonechat, Whitethroat and Linnet.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188]	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA. Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.24

Assessment

This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) and the provisions of the Wicklow Town-Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025 (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment), the text of which make reference to this European site.

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.30 Dalkey Islands SPA**European Site 004172**

The site comprises Dalkey Island, Lamb Island and Maiden Rock, the intervening rocks and reefs, and the surrounding sea to a distance of 200 m. Dalkey Island, which is the largest in the group, lies c. 400 m off Sorrento Point on the Co. Dublin mainland from which it is separated by a deep channel. The island is low-lying, the highest point of which (c. 15 m) is marked by a Martello Tower. Soil cover consists mainly of a thin peaty layer, though in a few places there are boulder clay deposits. Vegetation cover is low-growing and consists mainly of grasses. Dense patches of Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) occur in places. Lamb Island lies to the north of Dalkey Island, and at low tide is connected by a line of rocks. It has a thin soil cover and some vegetation, mainly of grasses, Nettles (*Urtica dioica*) and Hogweed. Further north lies Maiden Rock, a bare angular granite rock up to 5 m high that is devoid of higher plant vegetation.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Common tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193], Arctic tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194], Roseate tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA. Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is c. 6.5km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.6.5km from the plan boundary and c. 6.5km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.31 The Murrough SPA**European Site 004186**

The Murrough is a coastal wetland complex which stretches for 15km from Ballygannon to north of Wicklow town, and in parts, extends inland for up to 1 km. On the seaward side vegetation includes species such as Sea Rocket, Sea Sandwort, Sea-holly and Yellow Horned-poppy. Low sand hills occur at Kilcoole, with Marram and Lyme-grass. Typical species include Sweet Vernal-grass, Crested Dog's-tail, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Burnet Rose and Pyramidal Orchid. In some places, particularly at the south of the site, a gorse heath has developed on the stony ridge.

Saltmarsh is present within the site at Broad Lough and in the northern end of the site in the vicinity of The Breaches. Fen vegetation is well developed in the Murrough wetlands, with both alkaline and calcareous fen with Great Fen-sedge represented. The Murrough is an important site for wintering waterfowl and breeding birds. Species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive include Little Egret, Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover, Kingfisher and Little Tern. Otter has also been reported regularly.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) [A195] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat at The Murrough SPA as a resource for the regularly-occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.</p> <p>Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is located in County Wicklow (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.32 North-West Irish Sea SPA**European Site 004236**

The North-West Irish Sea cSPA constitutes an important resource for marine birds. The estuaries and bays that open into it along with connecting coastal stretches of intertidal and shallow subtidal habitats, provide safe feeding and roosting habitats for waterbirds throughout the winter and migration periods. These areas, along with more pelagic marine waters further offshore, provide additional supporting habitats (for foraging and other maintenance behaviours) for those seabirds that breed at colonies on the north-west Irish Sea's islands and coastal headlands. These marine areas are also important for seabirds outside the breeding period.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193], Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065], Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) [A195], Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194], Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199], Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179], Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001], Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184], Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018], Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>) [A187], Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017], Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013], Little Gull (<i>Larus minutus</i>) [A177],	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA. Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188], Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200], Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009], Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192], Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204], Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>) [A003], Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183], Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182]					
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Assessment

This European site is located c. 13.9km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.13.9km from the plan boundary and c. 13.9km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.33 Hook Head SAC**European Site 000764**

The areas of conservation interest at Hook Head comprise marine subtidal reefs to the south and east of the Hook Head Peninsula, and also sea cliffs from Hook Head to Baginbun and Ingard Point. The peninsula forms the eastern side of Waterford Harbour, while to the east it adjoins the estuary mouth of Bannow Bay. Hook Head itself is composed of Carboniferous limestone overlain by Devonian Old Red Sandstone and is palaeontologically of international importance.

An exposed to moderately exposed intertidal reef community complex occurs around Hook Head. Subtidally the reefs are aligned in a north-east/south-west orientation and are typically strewn with boulders, cobbles and patches of sand and gravel. They are exposed to prevailing winds and swells from the west and tidal streams tend to be moderate but are strong in some areas. There are also a number of isolated reefs that project from a sand plain. The reefs around Hook Head have excellent examples of tide-swept communities and species richness is high in both the shallow and deep-water communities.

The sublittoral sediments within this area consist of exposed, tide-swept patches of duned gravel and moderately exposed silty sand with only weak tidal streams. The sea cliffs, which extend for a distance of approximately 15 km, are mostly low, usually not more than 10 m, though they extend up to 30 m high near Baginbun Head. Both clay and rock cliffs are represented. The cliffs at this site are of ornithological interest for breeding (Hough, Raven) and Peregrine, and there is a small seabird colony, mainly of Guillemots, near Baginbun. The headland is a noted landfall point for migrants.

The waters off Hook Head are rich in marine life and are a popular diver site for SCUBA enthusiasts. Rock pools on the shore support a diverse flora and fauna.

In summary, this site is of conservation importance for its subtidal reef and shallow bay communities, and their diversity of species, as well as for the vegetated sea cliffs. These habitats are listed under the E.U. Habitats Directive. The rocky coastline is also important for a number of breeding birds, two of which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] ▪ Reefs [1170] ▪ Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] ▪ Tursiops truncatus (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] ▪ Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Large shallow inlets and bays ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Reefs ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts ▪ To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose Dolphin (Tursiops truncatus) 	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.8, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

	Threats include habitat loss, changes community complexes (e.g. echinoderm and sponge dominated community complexes), additional physical barriers, non-native invasive species, over coverage of bracken/woody species, impact of human activities.				
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Assessment

This European site is c. 55km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.55km from the plan boundary and c. 59km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
Tthe lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.34 Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC**European Site 000710**

The Raven is situated on the north side of Wexford Harbour, incorporating the dynamic sand system of Raven Point and the coast running north to Curracloe House. The site is designated as a National Nature Reserve. The site incorporates a large sand dune system comprising a suite of coastal habitats which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The dynamic nature of the system is best seen at the southern end of the site where sandflats, lagoons, drift lines and small dune slacks develop and are being continuously transformed by the activity of the sea and the wind. There has been heavy erosion along the eastern side of the site in recent years, but the sand dune system on the south-western end of the Raven is accreting, building towards the west along the wall which is the southern boundary of the Wexford Slobs, at about 3 m per year.

The unplanted areas of fixed dunes are fairly typical of the habitat, with a low open sward of grasses, herbs, bryophytes and lichens occurring amongst areas of Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*). A feature of the site is the presence of dune slacks. Some of the current slack communities are associated with artificial ponds that were originally created as forest fire control reservoirs.

Dune ridges with Marram occur in a band along the eastern and south-eastern sides of the site. Associated with the embryonic dunes and the upper beach area is a band of annual drift line vegetation. A small, though good example of Atlantic salt meadow occurs below the fixed dunes at the more sheltered western side of the point. A number of rare and protected plants have been recorded from this dune system including Round-leaved Wintergreen, Lesser Centaury (*Centaurea pulchellum*) and Wild Asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis* subsp. *prostratus*), all three of which are protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999.

The dunes at this site support a diverse invertebrate fauna with significant species in the fore dunes, Marram dunes and fixed dune grassland. The invertebrates of the marine and intertidal habitats have also been described at this site. Four intertidal biological community types have been described: a sand community complex dominated by polychaetes; an estuarine mud community complex dominated by polychaetes and crustaceans; a mixed sediment community complex; and a fine sand community complex with *Spiophanes bombyx*.

The Raven has important bird interests, being part of the Wexford Slobs and Harbour complex. Of critical significance is that it forms the principal night roost for the internationally important Wexford Harbour population of Greenland Whitefronted Goose. Curracloe is a popular summer resort and parts of the Raven receive high recreational pressure. In particular, pony trekking has caused erosion of the embryonic dunes in some places. It is planned to gradually remove all the conifers from the sand dune system. Some selected areas will be clearfelled, others will be left as scrub pine. After harvesting the conifers, certain areas behind the dunes will be planted with hardwoods, including Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*). Other areas, in particular the more low-lying areas of former dune slack, will be left to regenerate naturally.

The Raven Point Nature Reserve is an excellent example of a dynamic dune system that contains a suite of coastal habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. It also provides a roosting site for an internationally important flock of Greenland White-fronted Goose, a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Further, it supports many uncommon species of plant and animal. Overall, this is a site of considerable conservation significance.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] ▪ Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima) [1330] ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] ▪ Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] ▪ Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]* ▪ Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salix arenariae</i>) [2170] ▪ Humid dune slacks [2190] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Annual vegetation of driftlines ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Embryonic shifting dunes ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) ▪ To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salix arenariae</i>) ▪ To restore the favourable conservation condition of Humid dune slacks <p>Threats include habitat loss, additional physical barriers, non-native invasive species, changes to natural tidal regime, significant expansions of common cordgrass, recreational pressure/pony trekking.</p>				
<p>Assessment</p> <p>This European site is c. 35km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by</p>					

infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.35km from the plan boundary and c. 37km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.35 Seas off Wexford SPA**European Site 004237**

The marine waters off the coast of County Wexford mark the boundary between the Irish and Celtic Seas. These waters constitute a valuable feeding resource for the seabirds that return every spring to Wexford's coastal and island colonies to breed. Outside of the summer months these relatively shallow coastal waters provide safe feeding and roosting opportunities for a range of marine birds overwintering here or on passage.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194], Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193], Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183], Redthroated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001], Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) [A009], Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184], Little Tern (Sterna albifrons) [A195], Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018], Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065], Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200], Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188], Guillemot (Uria aalge) [A199], Manx Shearwater (Puffinus puffinus) [A013], Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192], Gannet (Morus bassanus) [A016],	<p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p> <p>Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Mediterranean Gull (<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>) [A176], Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204], Sandwich Tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>) [A191], Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017], Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]					
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Assessment

This European site is c. 21.7km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.21.7km from the plan boundary and c. 23km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- the lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.36 The Raven SPA**European Site 004019**

The Raven SPA extends from north of Rosslare Point to Blackwater Harbour on the coast of Co. Wexford. The seaward boundary of the site extends a maximum distance of approximately 4.5 km from the shoreline to encompass important areas of shallow water utilised by some of the species of special conservation interest.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144], Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395], Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017], Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141], Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p> <p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in The Raven SPA as a resource for the regularly-occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.</p> <p>Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

Assessment

This European site is c. 31.4km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).

Given:

- The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.31.39km from the plan boundary and c. 33km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth.
- The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment).
- The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)

- The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment)
It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will **not** cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).

Table 5.37 Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA**European Site 04076**

Wexford Harbour is the lowermost part of the estuary of the River Slaney, a major river that drains much of the south-east region. The site is divided between the natural estuarine habitats of Wexford Harbour, the reclaimed polders known as the North and South 'Slobs', and the tidal section of the River Slaney. The seaward boundary extends from the Rosslare peninsula in the south to the area just west of The Raven Point in the north. Shallow marine water is a principal habitat, but at low tide extensive areas of intertidal flats are exposed. These vary from rippled sands in exposed areas to sandy-muds in the more sheltered areas, especially at Hopeland and the inner estuary to the west of Wexford bridge. The flats support a rich macroinvertebrate fauna, including the bivalves Cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*), Baltic Tellin (*Macoma balthica*) and Peppery Furrow-shell (*Scrobicularia plana*), the polychaetes Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*), Catworm (*Nephtys hombergi*) and Ragworm (*Hediste diversicolor*) and the crustacean *Corophium volutator*. Beds of mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) also occur. Salt marshes fringe the intertidal flats, especially in the sheltered areas such as Hopeland and towards Castlebridge. The Slobs are two flat areas of farmland, mainly arable and pasture grassland, empoldered behind 19th century seawalls. The lands are drained by a network of channels which flow into two central channels, in parts several hundred metres in width. Water from the channels is pumped into the sea with electric pumps. The channels often support swamp vegetation. The river section of the site is extensive, extending to Enniscorthy, a distance of almost 20 km from Wexford town. It is noticeably tidal as far as Edermine Bridge but with tidal influence right up to Enniscorthy. In places, such as the Macmine marshes, it is several hundreds metres wide and here reedswamp is well developed.

Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives and Threats	Direct Impact(s) of the variation	Indirect Impact(s) of the variation	Cumulative impact(s) of the variation	Relevant objectives included in the County Development Plan
Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>) [A062], Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142], Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149], Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067], Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143], Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004], Bewick's Swan (<i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>) [A037], Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069], Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141], Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>)	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p> <p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in SPA as a resource for the regularly-occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.</p> <p>Threats include habitat loss, habitat degradation from development & agriculture, pollution from land and sea, invasive species, human disturbance, etc.</p>	None	None	None	CPO 17.1, CPO 17.2, CPO 17.4, CPO 17.5, CPO 17.6, CPO 17.14, CPO 17.15, CPO 17.18, CPO 17.19, CPO 17.20, CPO 17.21, CPO 17.22, CPO 17.24, CPO 17.25, CPO 17.26

[A144], Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156], Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160], Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017], Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125], Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140], Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052], Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038], Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130], Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) [A195], Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028], Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050], Bartailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157], Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054], Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005], Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053], Lesser Blackbacked Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183], Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162], Hen Harrier (<i>Circus</i>					
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cyaneus) [A082], Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus) [A179], Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046], Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048]					
<p>Assessment</p> <p>This European site is c. 21km from the Wicklow county boundary (the area of Proposed Variation No. 6). Proposed Variation No. 6, in revising housing targets and altering phasing provisions, proposes to accommodate these increases within serviced/serviceable lands already zoned for new housing development and already served by infrastructure as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (which were subject to Appropriate Assessment). There is a source receptor pathway from the area of Proposed Variation No. 6 to this European Site (hydrological connection).</p> <p>Given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The distance of this European Site from the Proposed Variation No. 6 area, c.21km from the plan boundary and c. 23km from the nearest settlement targeted for increased growth. ▪ The lack of additional zoning of lands or water/wastewater service capacity exceedances beyond those already set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and subsidiary local/town plans (previously subject to Appropriate Assessment). ▪ The provisions of the National Planning Framework: First Revision (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) ▪ The provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (previously subject to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) <p>It is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 will not cause any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this site in terms of reduction in habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of Conservation Value (water quality, etc.).</p>					

4.2 Summary of Assessment of Significance

Tables 5.1 to 5.39 assess the potential impact of Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 on European Sites situated within 15km of the boundary of the area of the proposed variation. This assessment has taken in direct, indirect and cumulative potential impacts arising from the provisions and objectives of the variation.

The assessment of each of the European Sites indicates that the proposed variation will not result in any additional significant adverse impacts on any of these sites that was not already identified and addressed in the Wicklow CDP 2022-2028 (as varied).

Proposed Variation No. 6 has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the County Development Plan and in accordance with European, National and Regional legislation which set the framework for the achievement of the optimal balance of social, economic and physical development within the plan area. The effects of higher-level strategies and plans are considered insofar as they inform the plan. Subsidiary plans and projects will be subject to separate assessment procedures in accordance with all applicable regulations and directives.

Having regard to the purpose and provisions of Proposed Variation No. 6 it is considered that the proposed variation (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any European Sites.

5.0 Conclusions and AA Determination

The likely impacts that will arise from Proposed Variation No. 6 have been examined in the context of a number of factors that could potentially affect the integrity of European sites and have been presented in Tables 5.1 – 5.37.

It is the conclusion of this screening statement that there will be no adverse impacts on the integrity of any European Sites located within 15km of the area of Proposed Variation No.6 and that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.

Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Determination

for:

Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied)

An Appropriate Assessment Screening determination⁹ is being made by Wicklow County Council regarding Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied).

This determination relates to whether the proposal to make Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Wicklow County Development Plan, as varied, would or would not necessitate the undertaking of Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, as amended).

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

- The AA Screening Report prepared for Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied);
- The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, including associated Stage 2 AA Natura Impact Report;
- The AA Screening Reports and associated determinations prepared for Variation No.'s 1, 2 and 3 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028;
- Proposed Variations No.'s 4 and 5 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied) including the Stage 2 AA Natura Impact Reports prepared for Proposed Variation No.'s 4 and 5.

As identified in the AA Screening Report:

- The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 was subject to Stage 2 AA, which identified sources for likely significant effects on European Sites and facilitated the integration of measures into the Plan to ensure the appropriate protection and management of European Sites with which all lower tier plans/projects must comply;
- Following the source-pathway-receptor model, the relevant attributes of European sites were assessed. There is no additional source for any likely significant effect on any European site that would be introduced by Proposed Variation No. 6 that has not already been considered by the Stage 2 AA undertaken for the County Development Plan and/or the emerging Stage 2 AA being undertaken for Proposed Variations No.'s 4 and 5;
- The findings of each assessment which is provided in Natura Impact Reports accompanying each plan that forms part of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied) including its adopted subsidiary local plans and Proposed Variations No.'s 4 and 5. As there is no additional source for any likely significant effect on any European site that would be introduced by Proposed Variation No. 6, there is no likely significant in combination effect that would result from the implementation of Proposed Variation No. 6.
- Therefore, it is considered that Proposed Variation No. 6 is not foreseen to have any likelihood for any significant effect on any European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects - and therefore any potential for a significant effect to any European site as a result of implementing Proposed Variation No. 6 can be ruled out.

⁹ Pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and having regard to the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

The Planning Authority has carefully considered the AA Screening Report and agrees with and adopts the reasoning and conclusion presented.

It is hereby determined Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022- 2028 (as varied) will not give rise to any effects on the ecological integrity of any European Site, alone or in combinations with any other plans, programmes or projects in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species for which these sites have been designated; and that Stage Two AA (including the preparation of a Natura Impact Report) is not required for Proposed Variation No. 6.

The AA Screening process will consider any future amendments to the Proposed Variation and such consideration may require subsequent determination by the Council, where amendments are proposed.

Signatory: 

Helena Dennehy
Director of Services, Planning, Economic and Rural Development.

Date: 01 December 2025