

# NATURA IMPACT STATEMENT

---

IN SUPPORT OF THE  
**APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**  
OF  
**VARIATION No. 1**  
TO THE  
**LONGFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN**  
**2009-2015**

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF  
**ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE**

**for: Longford County Council**

Great Water Street,  
Longford,  
Co. Longford



**by: CAAS Ltd.**

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, The Courtyard  
25 Great Strand Street  
Dublin 1



**SEPTEMBER 2012**

## Table of Contents

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Background.....	1
1.2	Legislative Context .....	1
1.3	Stages of Appropriate Assessment .....	2
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Stage 1 Screening .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	Description of the Variation .....	3
2.2	Natura 2000 Sites in and within 15 km of the Plan Area .....	5
2.3	Assessment Criteria .....	11
2.4	Conclusions.....	27
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.....</b>	<b>28</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	28
3.2	Other Plans and Programmes .....	28
3.3	Potential Significant Effects .....	30
3.4	Conservation Objectives .....	32
3.5	Integrity of Site Checklist .....	34
3.6	Conclusion .....	34
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures .....</b>	<b>35</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	35
4.2	Measures to protect Habitats and Species .....	35
4.3	Water Protection .....	37
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>40</b>

## List of Tables

Table 2.1: Local Area Plans to be included as part of the Core Strategy Variation.....	3
Table 2.2 cSACs in County Longford.....	7
Table 2.3 SPAs in County Longford.....	7
Table 2.4 cSACs within 15km of the of County Longford border .....	8
Table 2.5 SPAs within 15 km of border of County Longford.....	10
Table 2.6 Assessment of New Core Strategy Aims and Policies.....	12
Table 2.7 Assessment to changes of Settlement Strategy .....	14
Table 2.8 Assessment of Implementation of the Core Strategy.....	15
Table 2.9 Assessment of Changes to the Main Document of the Plan as a result of incorporating the Core Strategy .....	17
Table 2.10 Natura 2000 sites potentially affected by LAPs.....	23
Table 2.11 Screening of Natura 2000 sites within Co Longford.....	25
Table 2.12 Screening of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of County Longford border.....	26

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Natura 2000 sites within Co. Longford and 15km of the County Boundary (May 2012).....	6
--	---

# Section 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This is the Natura Impact Statement in support of the Appropriate Assessment of Variation No. 1 to the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup>. This report is divided into these four sections:

Section 1	Introduction
Section 2	Stage 1 Screening
Section 3	Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment
Section 4	Mitigation Measures

## 1.2 Legislative Context

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as "The Habitats Directive", provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. These are candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/ECC).

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA):

*"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public*

*If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the [Natura 2000] site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.*

*Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest."*

These requirements are implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. These new regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and

---

<sup>1</sup> Directive 92/43/EEC

Natural Habitats)(Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in the CJEU judgements.

### **1.3 Stages of Appropriate Assessment**

This Appropriate Assessment has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities.* Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009.
- *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC,* European Commission Environment DG, 2000.
- *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC:* European Commission, 2000

AA comprises four stages:

#### **Stage One: Screening**

The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

#### **Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment**

The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts.

#### **Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions**

The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

#### **Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain**

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

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

In the case of this Natura Impact Report, it is found that the Variation only requires Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessment.

## **Section 2 Stage 1 Screening**

### **2.1 Description of the Variation**

#### **2.1.1 Background**

Longford County Council have adopted a Statutory Variation to the current Longford County Development Plan to introduce a Core Strategy, in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2010.

#### **2.1.2 What are the main aims of the Core strategy and what changes will it introduce?**

The Core Strategy articulates a medium to longer term evidence and quantitatively based strategy for the spatial development of County Longford, whilst demonstrating consistency with national and regional development objectives outlined in the National Spatial Strategy and the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines.

In summary, the Core Strategy identifies the quantum, location and phasing of development for the plan period that is consistent with the regionally defined population targets and settlement hierarchy, and, which reflects the availability of existing services, planned investment, sequential development and environmental requirements (i.e. an evidence based approach in determining the suitability of lands for zoning purposes).

In accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000- 2011 and the Guidance Note on Core Strategies issued in November 2010<sup>1</sup>, the core strategy includes;

- Population targets;
- Quantification of the requirements for zoning of lands for residential purposes; and
- Existing and future distribution of population within a defined settlement hierarchy.

For the purposes of this assessment, the Variation can be divided into three components

1. Amendments to sections of the Development Plan
2. Modifications to existing zoning
3. Integration of existing Local Area Plans into the CDP

The Core Strategy demonstrates that the Longford County Development Plan 2009- 2015 is consistent as far as practicable with the policies of the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government in relation to national and regional population targets, thus strengthening further the role of the Longford County Development Plan as the fundamental implementation mechanism between national, regional, and local policy.

The main policy provisions of the Plan to which the Core Strategy relates are contained at Sections 2 and 3 of the Plan. In this regard the population projections and Settlement Strategy contained at section 2.3 of the Development Plan, in particular, are replaced by the Core Strategy Table and revised Settlement Strategy which identify population projections, distributions and zoned land availability for the County over the CDP period. The purpose of the Settlement Strategy is to identify and define all settlements in terms of a hierarchy for development for the duration of the Development Plan period. In this context, the Settlement Strategy forms the basis for guiding the quantum, scale and location of new developments within County Longford, up to 2015.

In addition to the changes made to the Development Plan and to facilitate the revised zoning objectives, contained as part of the Core Strategy, zonings and policies contained within existing Local Area Plans in the County will need to be addressed as a result of this Core Strategy. In instances where existing Local Area Plan zoning objectives are modified under this Core Strategy variation, the County Development Plan zonings shall take precedent over any Local Area Plan until

such time as appropriate action is taken to either modify or revoke the relevant Local Area Plans (modification/revocation of Local Area Plans are a separate process). Ultimately, it is therefore proposed that the zoning maps and objectives contained as part of this document will replace any revoked local area plans.

A separate core strategy applies in respect of Longford Town Development Plan, resulting in a set of actions to be implemented in relation to Longford Town Northern and Southern Environs Local Area Plans (lands of which are substantially contained within the Longford Town administrative area). Any lands that are located within the environs of Longford Town, outside of the Town Development boundary and that are not located within the Northern and Southern Environs Local Area Plan areas are addressed as part of this variation. It should be noted that while a separate Core Strategy variation applies to Longford Town, this variation will also deal with Longford Town when determining population targets, as Longford Town is also the principal town in the County Settlement Hierarchy.

For the purposes of clarity, a schedule of works proposed as part of this variation is set out in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Local Area Plans to be included as part of the Core Strategy Variation**

LAP	Date Adopted	Expiry Date	Action	Process Required Following Variation
Ballymahon	As per CDP	As per CDP	Addressed as part of Variation.	No action required
Carriglass	July 2004	July 2010	Core strategy Map and objectives incorporated into CDP under Core Strategy.	Core Strategy to Replace LAP
Lanesboro	Sept 2004	Sept 2010	Core strategy Map and objectives incorporated into CDP under Core Strategy.	Core Strategy to Replace LAP
Newtownforbes	May 2006	May 2012	Core strategy Map and objectives incorporated into CDP under Core Strategy.	Core Strategy to Replace LAP
Drumlish	June 2006	June 2012	Core strategy Map and objectives incorporated into CDP under Core Strategy.	Core Strategy to Replace LAP
Kenagh	Sept 2006	Sept 2012	Core strategy Map and objectives incorporated into CDP under Core Strategy.	Core Strategy to Replace LAP
Ardagh	Sept 2006	Sept 2012	Core strategy Map and objectives incorporated into CDP under Core Strategy.	Core Strategy to Replace LAP
Granard	Oct 2006	Oct 2012	Core strategy Map and objectives incorporated into CDP under Core Strategy.	Core Strategy to Replace LAP
Ballinallee	Oct 2006	Oct 2012	Core strategy Map and objectives incorporated into CDP under Core Strategy.	Core Strategy to Replace LAP
Edgeworthstown	Jan 2008	Jan 2014	Core strategy Map and objectives incorporated into CDP under Core Strategy.	Core Strategy to Replace LAP
Longford Northern Environs	Aug 2008	Aug 2014	To be addressed following the Longford County Development Plan Core Strategy and the Longford Town Development Plan Core Strategy	
Longford Southern Environs	2010	2016	To be addressed following the Longford County Development Plan Core Strategy and the Longford Town Development Plan Core Strategy	

## **2.2 Natura 2000 Sites in and within 15 km of the Plan Area**

### **2.2.1 SACs and SPAs**

This section of the screening process describes the Natura 2000 sites within a 15km zone of impact of the plan area. A distance of 15km is currently recommended in the DoE document *DRAFT - Guidance for Planning Authorities* and as a precautionary measure, to ensure that all potentially affected Natura 2000 sites are included in the screening process. A map indicating the locations of the sites is given in Figure 2.1.

Tables 2.2 to 2.5 list the Natura 2000 sites that are a) within County Longford and b) within 15 km of the county boundary. The qualifying features for each site have been obtained through a review of the site synopses available from the NPWS website.



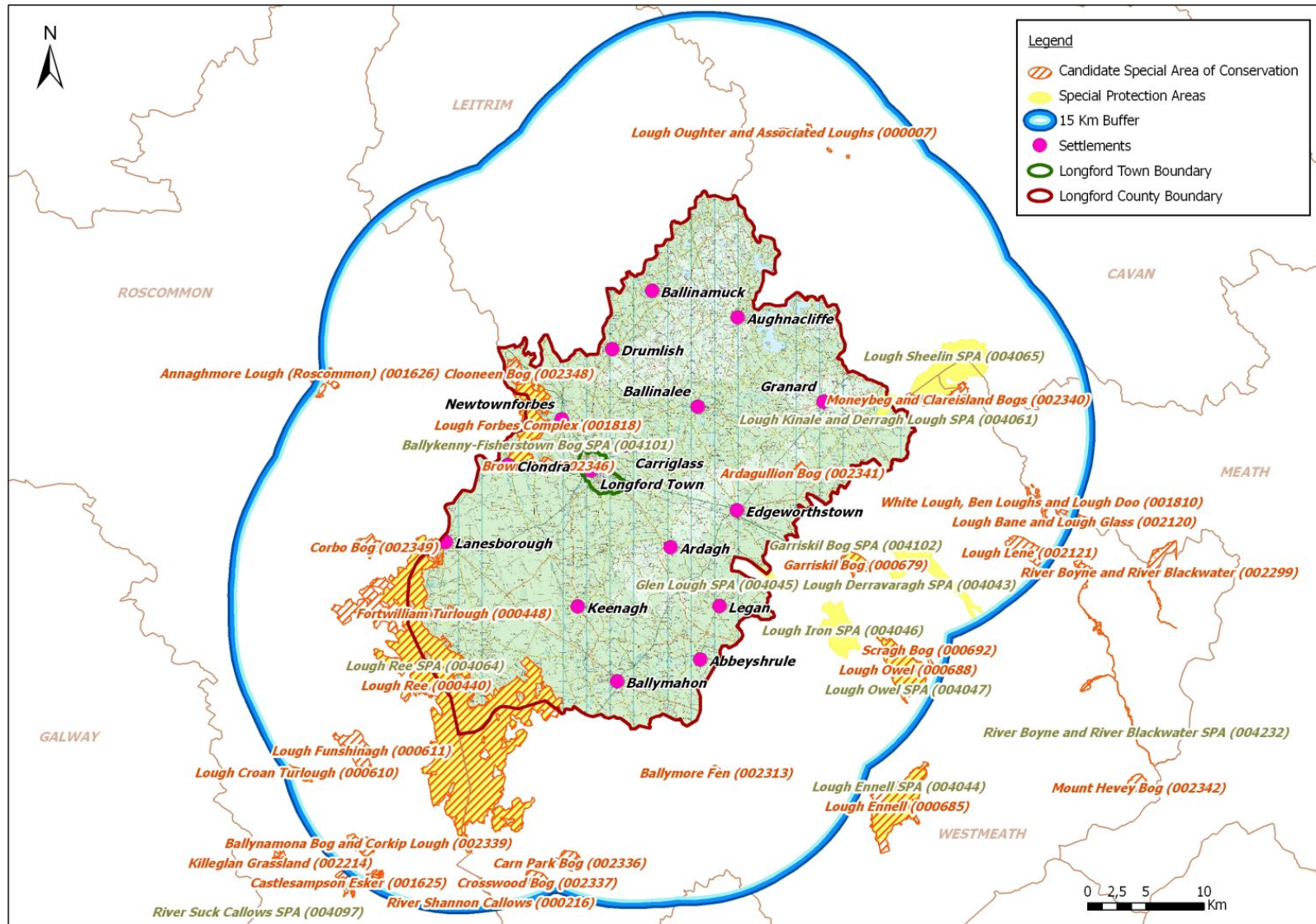


Figure 2.1 Natura 2000 sites within Co. Longford and 15km of the County Boundary (May 2012)

**Table 2.2 cSACs in County Longford**

Conservation Interests	Site Name and code	Qualifying Feature
IE0000440	Lough Ree cSAC	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation Alkaline fens Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in British Isles Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia)(*important orchid sites) Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Bog woodland Limestone pavements <i>Lutra lutra</i>
IE0000448	Fortwilliam Turlough cSAC	Turloughs
IE0001818	Lough Forbes Complex	Active raised bogs Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ( <i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i> ) Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion
IE0002341	Ardagullion Bog	Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion
IE0002346	Brown Bog	Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion
IE0002348	Clooneen Bog	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion Bog woodland

**Table 2.3 SPAs in County Longford**

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Feature
4045	Glen Lough SPA	Whooper Swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> )
4061	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	Pochard ( <i>Aythya ferina</i> ) Tufted Duck ( <i>Aythya fuligula</i> ) Wetlands & Waterbirds
4064	Lough Ree SPA	Whooper Swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> ) Wigeon ( <i>Anas penelope</i> ) Teal ( <i>Anas crecca</i> ) Mallard ( <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> ) Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> ) Tufted Duck ( <i>Aythya fuligula</i> ) Common Scoter ( <i>Melanitta nigra</i> ) Goldeneye ( <i>Bucephala clangula</i> ) Little Grebe ( <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> ) Coot ( <i>Fulica atra</i> ) Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> ) Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> ) Common Tern ( <i>Sterna hirundo</i> )
4101	Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA	Greenland White-fronted Goose ( <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> )

**Table 2.4 cSACs within 15km of the of County Longford border**

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Feature
IE0000007	Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs	Natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i> -type vegetation Bog woodland <i>Lutra lutra</i>
IE0000216	River Shannon Callows	Lowland hay meadows ( <i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i> ) Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils ( <i>Molinia caerulea</i> ) Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ( <i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i> ) Limestone pavements <i>Lutra lutra</i>
IE0000610	Lough Croan Turlough	Turlough
IE0000611	Lough Funshinagh	Turlough
IE0000679	Garriskil Bog	Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion
IE0000688	Lough Owel	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. Transition mires and quaking bogs Alkaline fens <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>
IE0000692	Scragh Bog	Alkaline fens Transition mires and quaking bogs <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> <i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i>
IE0001625	Castlesampson Esker	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates ( <i>Festuco Brometalia</i> )(*important orchid sites) Turloughs
IE0001626	Annaghmore Lough (Roscommon)	Alkaline fens <i>Vertigo geyeri</i>
IE0001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>
IE0002120	Lough Bane and Lough Glass	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>
IE0002121	Lough Lene	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>
IE0002313	Ballymore Fen	Transition mires and quaking bogs
IE0002336	Carn Park Bog	Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration
IE0002337	Crosswood Bog	Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Feature
IE0002339	Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough	Turloughs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Bog woodland Active raised bogs Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i>
IE0002340	Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Active raised bogs Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i>
IE0002349	Corbo Bog	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Active raised bogs Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i>

**Table 2.5 SPAs within 15 km of border of County Longford**

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Feature
4043	Lough Derravaragh SPA	Whooper Swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> ) Pochard ( <i>Aythya ferina</i> ) Tufted Duck ( <i>Aythya fuligula</i> ) Coot ( <i>Fulica atra</i> ) Wetlands & Waterbirds
4046	Lough Iron SPA	Whooper Swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> ) Wigeon ( <i>Anas penelope</i> ) Teal ( <i>Anas crecca</i> ) Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> ) Coot ( <i>Fulica atra</i> ) Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> ) Greenland White-fronted Goose ( <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> ) Wetlands & Waterbirds
4047	Lough Owel SPA	Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> ) Coot ( <i>Fulica atra</i> ) Wetlands & Waterbirds
4065	Lough Sheelin SPA	Great Crested Grebe ( <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> ) Pochard ( <i>Aythya ferina</i> ) Tufted Duck ( <i>Aythya fuligula</i> ) Goldeneye ( <i>Bucephala clangula</i> ) Wetlands & Waterbirds
4096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	Whooper Swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> ) Wigeon ( <i>Anas penelope</i> ) Corncrake ( <i>Crex crex</i> ) Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> ) Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> ) Black-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa limosa</i> ) Black-headed Gull ( <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> ) Wetlands & Waterbirds
4102	Garriskil Bog SPA	Greenland White-fronted Goose ( <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> )
4139	Lough Croan Turlough SPA	Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> ) Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> ) Greenland White-fronted Goose ( <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> ) Wetlands & Waterbirds

## 2.3 Assessment Criteria

### 2.3.1 Is the Variation Necessary to the Management of Natura 2000 Sites?

Under the Habitats Directive, Plans that are directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site do not require AA. For this exception to apply, management is required to be interpreted narrowly as nature conservation management in the sense of Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive. This refers to specific measures to address the ecological requirements of annexed habitats and species (and their habitats) present on a site (s). The relationship should be shown to be direct and not a by-product of the plan, even if this might result in positive or beneficial effects for a site (s). The Development Plan as varied includes measures that will benefit the protection of Natura 2000 sites however its primary purpose is not the nature conservation management of the sites, but to provide for development. Therefore, the Development Plan as varied is not considered by the Habitats Directive to be directly connected with or necessary to the management of Natura 2000 sites.

### 2.3.2 Elements of the Plan with Potential to Give Rise to Significant Effects

The Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 has already been subject to appropriate assessment. The assessment concluded that:

*'There is a potential for adverse impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites as a result of the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015. However, the measures that have been formulated and proposed for inclusion in the Development Plan mitigate this potential, provided that upon adoption they are fully implemented and adhered to as Council policy. Thus, the plan, which includes appropriate mitigation measures, will not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.'*

Appropriate Assessment of the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015, March 2009

The present assessment examines only those impacts that will arise through the changes to the Plan brought about by the Core Strategy Variation. The assessment process identifies whether the changes brought about by the Core Strategy Variation are likely to cause any direct, indirect or secondary impacts (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 network sites. During this assessment a number of factors were taken into account including the sites' conservation objectives and known threats. The overall aim of the assessment is to attempt predict the consequences that can be *reasonably* foreseen by implementation of a policy or objective.

It should be noted that the aims and policies that make up the Core Strategy are highly strategic in nature and therefore the impact assessment can at best be generalised.

#### 2.3.2.1 Component 1 – Introduction of New Core Strategy Aims and Policies to the CDP and modification of existing policies

The Core Strategy Variation has led to the introduction of new Core Strategy aims and policies to the CDP. The potential impact of the implementation of these policies and aims is assessed in Table 2.1 and 2.2. The requirement to demonstrate clear mechanisms for the implementation of the Core Strategy have been realised by the introduction of the policies as set out in Table 2.3. This table also contains an assessment of impacts that may arise through the implementation of these policies.

In addition existing policies have been modified. Changes to these policies have been assessed and are included in Table 2.4. It should be noted that for these modified policies:

- Deletions from the County Development Plan are either marked using a strikethrough i.e. ~~strikethrough~~, or where an entire section is to be deleted this is stated.
- Additions to the County Development Plan are indicated using *italics*, or where an entire section is to be added this is stated. Additions to policies arising from the Appropriate Assessment and SEA process are indicated using *blue italics*.

**Table 2.6 Assessment of New Core Strategy Aims and Policies**

<b>New Core Strategy Strategic Aims</b>	<b>Impact Assessment</b>
<p>Aim 1</p> <p>To demonstrate that the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 is consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region and other national guidelines and policies.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>Aim 2</p> <p>To facilitate the closer alliance of County and sub-county level plans with regional policy.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>Aim 3</p> <p>To identify the appropriate quantum, location and phasing of development considered necessary to provide for future population growth over the plan period in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy and Midland Regional Planning Guidelines.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>Aim 4</p> <p>Develop this quantum of land in a manner that supports public transport and existing services.</p>	<p>Construction and operation of infrastructure developed through the implementation of this policy could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation of habitats or habitat loss and disturbance of species. Pollution of watercourses may occur during construction and through the discharge of treated wastewater. This in turn may lead to cumulative and indirect impacts on Natura sites downstream of the discharge point.</p>
<p>Aim 5</p> <p>Provide a framework supported by evidence based settlement strategy, for deciding on the scale, phasing and location of new development, having regard to existing services and planned investment over the coming years.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>Aim 6</p> <p>To provide a framework within which the provision of sustainable infrastructure, amenities, economic investment and development can take place to maximize the use of resources in the plan area.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>

<b>New Core Strategy Policies</b>	<b>Impact Assessment</b>
<p><b>CS 1: Key Service Town, Service Town, Local Service Towns</b></p> <p>Proposals for residential development in the settlements defined above and as shown on the maps contained at Appendix 16, 17 &amp; 18 will be determined in accordance with the requirements of the settlement hierarchy defined, the Core Strategy Table with regard to population return, the ability of the proposal to enhance the character of the settlement, the demand/need for the proposed level and type of residential development in the settlement and compliance with technical, legislative, environmental, design policy and/or criteria contained within the development plan or any other relevant plan, the functional area of which the settlement forms part.</p>	<p>Development within towns and settlements through the implementation of this policy could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation of habitats or habitat loss and disturbance of species. Pollution of watercourses may occur during construction and through the discharge of treated wastewater. This in turn may lead to cumulative and indirect impacts on Natura sites downstream of the discharge point.</p>
<p><b>CS 2: Serviced Settlements</b></p> <p>Serviced Settlements have been defined in accordance with the fact that infrastructure provision exists within these settlements and represents a tier of the settlement hierarchy that has most diversity amongst the settlements contained within it.</p> <p>Having regard to the above, proposals for residential development in service settlements, as shown on maps contained at Appendix 19, will be determined in accordance with the population allocations of the Core Strategy, the character and nature of the existing settlement and the ability of the proposal to enhance this, the ability of the settlement to absorb further development, the demand/need for the proposed level and type of residential development in the settlement and compliance with technical, legislative, environmental, design policy and/or criteria contained within the development plan or any other relevant plan, the functional area of which the settlement forms part.</p> <p>Residential Development will also be considered on lands identified as Site Resolution Objective in accordance with the relevant zoning provision standards. Any residential development in these settlements will also be determined in accordance with the population allocations of the Core Strategy, the character and nature of the existing settlement and compliance with technical, legislative, environmental, design policy and/or criteria contained within the development plan or any other relevant plan, the functional area of which the settlement forms part.</p>	<p>Development within towns and settlements through the implementation of this policy could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation of habitats or habitat loss and disturbance of species. Pollution of watercourses may occur during construction and through the discharge of treated wastewater. This in turn may lead to cumulative and indirect impacts on Natura sites downstream of the discharge point.</p>



<p><b>CS 3: Rural Service Settlements</b></p> <p>Proposals for residential development in settlements defined as 'Rural Service Settlements' and as shown on the maps contained in Appendix 3 will be determined in accordance with the requirements of the Core Strategy Table with regard to population return, the sequential test, the creation and maintenance of a sense of identity, recognition of the local character, the availability of appropriate infrastructure and sustainable community services and compliance with technical, legislative, environmental, design policy and/or criteria contained within the development plan or any other relevant plan, the functional area of which the settlement forms part.</p> <p>Proposals for one-off dwellings may also be considered on these lands and proposals in this regard will be determined in accordance with rural policy contained at 2.3.7.5.</p>	<p>Development within towns and settlements through the implementation of this policy could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation of habitats or habitat loss and disturbance of species. Pollution of watercourses may occur during construction and through the discharge of treated wastewater. This in turn may lead to cumulative and indirect impacts on Natura sites downstream of the discharge point.</p>
---	---

**Table 2.7 Assessment to changes of Settlement Strategy**

<b>Amended provisions of current Settlement Strategy</b>	<b>Impact Assessment</b>
<p>SET 6:</p> <p>It is an objective of the Development Plan that village policy statements may be prepared and may contain zonings and will also contain policy statements which will provide a basic framework for the development of each village settlement.</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>
<p>SET 7: (Forms part of current CDP, italics used to indicate amendment in order to comply with requirements of Core Strategy)</p> <p>Applications for development in Rural Service Settlements will be subject to assessment in terms of the size of development considered appropriate to the location, their visual impact and other normal planning criteria, including their ability to consolidate and enhance existing village character, and create or strengthen a sense of identity and distinctiveness for the settlement.</p> <p><i>Small scale residential clusters and limited local level services such as post offices, neighbourhood shops, schools etc. only will be considered in these settlements.</i></p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>

**Table 2.8 Assessment of Implementation of the Core Strategy**

<b>New Implementation and Monitoring</b>	<b>Impact Assessment</b>
<p>IMP-CS 1:</p> <p>The Planning Authority shall promote and facilitate the development of the County in accordance with the provisions of the Core Strategy, including directing development in line with the settlement hierarchy and promoting development at an appropriate scale that is reflective of the terms of the Core Strategy Table and zoning maps.</p>	<p>Development within towns and settlements through the implementation of this policy could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation of habitats or habitat loss and disturbance of species. Pollution of watercourses may occur during construction and through the discharge of treated wastewater. This in turn may lead to cumulative and indirect impacts on Natura sites downstream of the discharge point.</p>
<p>IMP-CS 2:</p> <p>a) It is an objective of the Council to review the following Local Area Plans on adoption of this variation, in order to ensure that the population targets, future housing land requirement, zoning maps and policies contained as part of this Core Strategy can effectively be realised;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballymahon</li> <li>• Carriglass</li> <li>• Lanesboro</li> <li>• Newtownforbes</li> <li>• Drumlish</li> <li>• Kenagh</li> <li>• Ardagh</li> <li>• Granard</li> <li>• Ballinalee</li> <li>• Edgeworthstown</li> </ul> <p>b) The Northern and Southern Environs LAPs shall be reviewed, on adoption of this Core Strategy variation, and following the completion of the Longford Town Development plan Core Strategy, to ensure consistency with the provisions of the Core Strategies. c) Having regard to points a) and b) and where any ambiguity arises between the content of any existing Land Use plan and this variation, the Core Strategy will take precedence during any transitional period.</p>	<p>Development within towns and settlements through the implementation of this policy could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation of habitats or habitat loss and disturbance of species. Pollution of watercourses may occur during construction and through the discharge of treated wastewater. This in turn may lead to cumulative and indirect impacts on Natura sites downstream of the discharge point.</p>

<b>New Implementation and Monitoring</b>	<b>Impact Assessment</b>
<p>IMP-CS 3:</p> <p>The Planning Authority shall monitor and maintain a record of residential development permitted in settlements designated under the Settlement Hierarchy in order to ensure compliance with the population allocations defined by the Core Strategy Table.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>IMP-CS 4:</p> <p>The Planning Authority shall apply the Settlement Hierarchy to determine the scale, rate and location of proposed developments and apply appropriate development management measures to ensure compliance with the Settlement Hierarchy and Strategy, including the population targets for the County as prescribed in the Core Strategy Table.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>IMP-CS 5:</p> <p>It is policy of the council that all activated and committed planning permissions, including those located on lands identified as 'Strategic Land Reserve', will be prioritised where it is determined that they support the completion of an unfinished housing estate.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>IMP-CS 6:</p> <p>It is policy of the council that all activated and committed planning permissions, including those located on lands identified as 'Strategic Land Reserve' shall be assessed in accordance with the requirements of Section 42 of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2011. In assessing applications for the extension of duration of planning permissions, in Strategic Land Reserve areas the Planning Authority shall consider the compatibility of the proposal in accordance with the settlement hierarchy and the role and function of the settlement within same.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>IMP-CS 7: The Planning Authority shall monitor and maintain a record of the quantum of residential development permitted by way of extension of duration on lands zoned 'Strategic Land Reserve' in order to ensure general compliance with the terms of the Core Strategy.</p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>

**Table 2.9 Assessment of Changes to the Main Document of the Plan as a result of incorporating the Core Strategy**

<b>Changes to Section 3 - Housing</b>	<b>Impact Assessment</b>
<p>Policy HOU DS 3 is amended as follows;</p> <p>f) Individual sites will be required to provide minimum back garden lengths of 11 metres. These standards will apply unless otherwise specified in individual Local Area Plans/Village Policy Statements, <i>in policy contained as part of this Development Plan with regard to the settlement</i>, or where residential density guidelines are applied with alternative requirements particularly in relation to the quality of the completed development and/or specific use criteria (e.g sheltered housing provision).</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>
<p>Policy HOU DS 6 is amended as follows;</p> <p>b) Generally density should reflect the existing and traditional character of the settlement <i>and be in keeping with the requirements of policy contained in the Core Strategy section of this plan</i>. In line with the "Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoEHLG, 2008) or any subsequent update, higher densities shall be permitted in urban and town centres, particularly in areas with close proximity to rail lines and other modes of public transport. In all other cases, the density of developments will be assessed on a site by site basis. In this regard pre-planning discussions are actively encouraged.</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>
<b>Changes to Section 4 - Economic Development</b>	<b>Impact Assessment</b>
<p>ECON 1 is amended as follows;</p> <p>The Planning Authority will encourage the development of industrial, commercial and business development at appropriate scales having regard to the settlement strategy of the County. Generally where the proposed development is considered to be a large scale employer or considered intensive in nature, such developments shall preferably locate within Longford Town or <del>Local Area Plan</del>, settlements as defined in the settlement strategy <i>hierarchy</i> or on lands <i>identified and zoned</i> for these purposes, as part of this plan.</p> <p>(NB; Footnote no. 20 as per the current CDP still applies.)</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>

<p>ECON 5 is amended as follows;</p> <p>Where an area of land is outside a settlement (<del>i.e. an area not covered or proposed to be covered by a Local Area Plan or Village Policy Statement, as listed in this document</del>), and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Development Plan, Local Area Plan or other statutory document, the use of such land shall be deemed to be primarily agricultural. This provides for agricultural and ancillary uses including <i>associated</i> residential. Other uses may be permitted subject to assessment on a site-by-site basis against relevant development management standards and technical criteria, including the other policies and objectives contained within this plan</p>	<p>Development of agricultural land through the implementation of this policy could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation of habitats or habitat loss and disturbance of species. Pollution of watercourses may occur during construction and through the discharge of treated wastewater. This in turn may lead to cumulative and indirect impacts on Natura sites downstream of the discharge point.</p>
<p>AGR 1 is amended as follows;</p> <p>Where an area of land is outside a settlement (<del>i.e. an area not covered or proposed to be covered by a Local Area Plan or Village Policy Statement, as listed in this document</del>), and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Development Plan <del>or</del>, Longford Town Development Plan <i>or other statutory document</i>, the use of such land shall be deemed to be primarily agricultural. Primarily agricultural zoning provides for agricultural use of the land and any ancillary uses, including <i>associated</i> residential. Other uses may be permitted, subject to assessment on a site-by-site basis and compliance with the development control standards and other policies and objectives contained within this plan.</p> <p>The Establishment of suitably small-scale industrial/commercial developments in rural areas on family owned land and developments which would promote rural diversification, subject to relevant planning criteria, will also be encouraged.</p>	<p>Development of agricultural land through the implementation of this policy could potentially have direct and/or indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 network through fragmentation of habitats or habitat loss and disturbance of species. Pollution of watercourses may occur during construction and through the discharge of treated wastewater. This in turn may lead to cumulative and indirect impacts on Natura sites downstream of the discharge point.</p>
<p>Reference to the following departments in the Plan should be read as follows;</p> <p>Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government replaced with Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government;</p> <p>Department of Agriculture and Food replaced with Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine;</p> <p>Regional Fisheries Board replaced with Inland Fisheries Ireland.</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>

Changes to Section 5 Infrastructure	Impact Assessment
<p>New Policy WS is inserted as follows;</p> <p><i>Where required, public wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure - which fully complies with requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) including the need to provide secondary treatment and other treatment as required - shall be operational and with adequate capacity to accommodate waste water arising from development, prior to developments being occupied. Discharges arising from this collection and treatment shall also comply with the requirements of the Directive.</i></p> <p><i>WS(a)</i></p> <p><i>It is the policy of Longford County Council to investigate the preparation a Water Services Strategic Plan - in compliance with the Water Services Act - for the functional area of the Council. Such a Plan may be prepared jointly with other Water Services Authorities.</i></p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>WS2 is amended as follows;</p> <p>It is the policy of Longford County Council to investigate the feasibility of establishing additional projects in terms of improving existing water supply, establishing new supplies, sewerage mains provision <i>(including the connection of unsewered, areas including individual properties/ premises, serviced by septic tanks to the existing and planned sewer network)</i> and improvement of existing treatment plants in the medium and long-term and for their extension to include adjoining residential dwellings.</p>	<p>No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>WS15 is amended as follows;</p> <p>The Council shall <del>consult</del> <i>implement the relevant recommendations set out in the EPA publication "Urban Wastewater Discharges in Ireland for Population Equivalents Greater than 500 persons – a Report for the Years 2004-5" (and any subsequent update) Focus on Urban Waste Water Discharges in Ireland (EPA Office of Environment Enforcement, 2012)</i> in the provision, maintenance and expansion of water treatment systems in the County.</p>	<p>No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>

<p>Policy FLO 3 is amended as follows;</p> <p>The Council shall have regard to the provisions of the guidelines issued by the DoEHLG regarding flooding <i>implement the recommendations and provisions of the DEHLG's 2009 Guidelines for Planning Authorities entitled The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (and any subsequent update)</i> in the operation of its duties.</p>	<p>No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>New Policy FLO 4 is inserted as follows;</p> <p><i>Where the probability of flooding from rivers is low (less than 0.1%, flood zone C) the developer should satisfy him or herself that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. Among other things, mapping including the OPW's Pluvial and Groundwater Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment mapping should be considered for this purpose.</i></p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>Paragraph (c) of HS 1 is amended to remove reference to the Regional Fisheries Board and replace this with <i>Inland Fisheries Ireland</i>.</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>
<p><b>Changes to Section 6: Environment, Heritage and Amenities</b></p>	
<p>ENV 7 is amended as follows;</p> <p>It is the policy of Longford County Council to encourage and promote compliance with the recommendations contained in the Shannon <i>International</i> and North South Share <i>Western International</i> River Basin Management Plans.</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>
<p>ENV 9 is amended as follows;</p> <p>The Council shall incorporate <i>implement</i> the <i>relevant</i> recommendations contained within any future the River Basin District/River Basin Management Plans for the Shannon International River Basin District and the North Western <i>International</i> River Basin District, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>
<p>NHB 6 is amended as follows;</p> <p>It is the policy of the Council to protect sites designated in National and European legislation, and in other relevant International Conventions, Agreements and Processes. This includes sites proposed to be designated or designated as:</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive1 (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).</li> <li>• Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds).</li> <li>• Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Nature Reserves, and Refuges for Flora or Fauna under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000.</li> </ul> <p>Both the Birds and Habitats Directives have been transposed in Irish law by Ministerial Regulation. The European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 are the most important of these because they provide for the protection measures and management regime that apply to SPAs and SACs.</p> <p><i>No projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects (Except as provided for in Section 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) no alternative solution available,</li> <li>(b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and</li> <li>(c) adequate compensatory measures in place.)</li> </ul>	
<p>NHB 20 is amended as follows;</p> <p>Proposed large-scale developments, particularly on greenfield sites and in environmentally sensitive areas, shall be assessed in terms of their impact on the biodiversity of the area. <i>All projects and plans arising from this plan will be and, where appropriate, screened for the need to undertake appropriate assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service</i></p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>



<p>New Policy NHB 22 is inserted as follows;</p> <p><i>The National Parks and Wildlife Service will be invited to prioritise the preparation of Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites which are located in the vicinity of the County. This is in order to examine how the Conservation Objectives of the sites can be achieved in the context of the proper planning and sustainable development of the Plan area.</i></p>	<p>New policy included as part of the Core Strategy. No negative impacts anticipated from implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>CHAR 3 is amended as follows;</p> <p>The Council shall aim to identify and protect the character and quality of urban areas through <del>the establishment and implementation of its Local Area Plan and Village Policy Statement</del> schedule as outlined in Section 2.3 <i>policy contained as part of this plan with regard to the settlements defined at section 2.3 and through the establishment and implementation of relevant Local Area Plans and village policy statements.</i></p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>
<p>AM 5 is amended as follows;</p> <p>It is the policy of the Council, <del>through its schedule of Local Area Plans and Village Policy Statements,</del> to assess the existing public open spaces in the settlements in the County. Any deficiencies in public open space and areas where this deficiency may be addressed, will be identified <del>at the plan stage</del> and provision facilitated through the zoning and development management process.</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>
<p>SC 4 is amended as follows;</p> <p>To identify appropriate locations within settlements for childcare facilities. Areas zoned Residential, Educational, Institutional and/or Commercial <del>under the Local Area Plans</del> <i>as part of this plan or other relevant statutory document</i> will generally be considered suitable for the establishment of childcare facilities, subject to usual planning considerations (as outlined below).</p>	<p>No significant changes to objective arising from variation to CDP that would affect the original assessment. No further assessment required</p>

### 2.3.3 Component 2 of the Variation: Phasing

The second of three components comprising the Variation has led to the revision of Land Use Zoning Maps through the introduction of a phased approach in relation to future residential development in accordance with the context of the adopted Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands Region. The Variation has not provided for any significant increases in land zoned for development however it does provide for the phasing of already zoned lands, with the application of both Strategic Industrial and Residential Reserve objectives.

The phasing of land provided for by the Variation had particular regard to both the capacity of the settlement to contribute towards achieving the objectives of the new Core Strategy, as well as opportunities for public or sustainable travel and the availability of existing and planned critical water and waste water infrastructure. Phasing also took into account environmental sensitivities including biodiversity and flora and fauna and flood risk.

By potentially delaying the development of lands within environmentally sensitive areas, phasing could potentially improve the protection of ecology and water status. This protection is already contributed towards by the various provisions of the existing development plan.

Overall, this component of the Variation does not change the assessment provided in the Appropriate Assessment of the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 (March 2009) and this component of the Variation will not result in any impacts or changes to the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

### 2.3.4 Component 3 of the Variation: Insertion of LAPs into the CDP

As part of the variation, Local Area Plans for the following towns have been included in the CDP for the first time: Granard, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Lanesboro, Abbeyshrule, Ardagh, Aughnacliffe, Ballinalee, Ballinamuck, Carriglass, Clondra, Drumlish, Keenagh, Legan and Newtownforbes. The policies and zoning maps have been examined to determine what sites may be affected.

**Table 2.10 Natura 2000 sites potentially affected by LAPs**

Settlement	Natura Site that may be affected
Granard	Impacts unlikely. Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough 5km to the east
Edgeworthstown	Impacts unlikely. Glen Lough SPA 5km to south east
Ballymahon	Impacts unlikely. Lough Ree cSAC and SPA 5km to the west
Lanesboro	On shores of Lough Ree cSAC and SPA
Abbeyshrule	Impacts unlikely. Lough Iron SPA 10 km east
Ardagh	Impacts unlikely. Glen Lough SPA 7km to east
Aughnacliffe	Impacts unlikely. Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough 15km to the east
Ballinalee	Impacts unlikely. Ardgullion Bog cSAC 8km to southeast
Ballinamuck	Impacts unlikely. Lough Forbes complex cSAC 10km to south west
Carriglass	Impacts unlikely. Brown Bog cSAC 6 km to the west
Clondra	Adjacent to Lough Forbes complex cSAC and Ballykenny Fishertown Bog SPA
Drumlish	Impacts unlikely. Cloneen bog 8 km to west
Keenagh	Impacts unlikely. Lough Ree cSAC 6 km to south west
Legan	Impacts unlikely. Lough Iron SPA 8 km to east
Newtownforbes	Lough Forbes complex cSAC and Ballykenny Fishertown Bog SPA 1 km to west

### **2.3.5 Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts**

In general, any development that may result from implementation of the Variation, such as construction of housing, roads, rail, water and wastewater infrastructure, gas, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure could lead to a number of impacts depending on where development is sited, the scale of development and types and quantities of emissions. In practice and as outlined in the EU document "*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*", and the national guidance document '*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities*', impacts that could potentially occur through the implementation of the Variation can be categorised under a number of headings

- Loss/Reduction of habitat area – e.g. as a result of development, transport infrastructure etc
- Disturbance to key species – e.g. as a result of increased public access to protected sites and increased recreational pressure such as development of footpaths and cycleways particularly along the coast.
- Habitat or species fragmentation – e.g. through land intensification and urbanisation
- Reduction in species density
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value such as decrease in water quality and quantity – e.g. through inadequate wastewater treatment, runoff of pollutants during construction and operational phases of development.

It should be noted that the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 has already been subject to appropriate assessment. The present assessment examines only those impacts that will arise through the changes to the Plan brought about by the Core Strategy Variation. However, a precautionary approach has been taken to screening sites potentially affected. The Core Strategy is a high level plan that provides a framework for the sustainable development within Co. Longford. Apart from the details and zoning maps for the Local Area Plans, the Core Strategy does not prescribe the particular locations of any developments of infrastructure. There is a potential that any designated site within the functional area of the plan or any water dependant site that is downstream of the county may be adversely affected, and therefore screened in for Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

**Table 2.11 Screening of Natura 2000 sites within Co Longford**

Site Name	Is there potential for:					
	Reduction of Habitat Area	Disturbance to Key Species	Habitat Fragmentation	Reduction in Species Density	Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value (Water Quality Etc.)	AA Required
Lough Ree cSAC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fortwilliam Turlough cSAC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lough Forbes Complex	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ardagullion Bog	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Brown Bog	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clooneen Bog	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Glen Lough SPA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lough Ree SPA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Table 2.12 Screening of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of County Longford border**

Site Name	Is there potential for:					AA Required
	Reduction of Habitat Area	Disturbance to Key Species	Habitat Fragmentation	Reduction in Species Density	Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value (Water Quality Etc.)	
Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
River Shannon Callows cSAC	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Lough Croan Turlough cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lough Funshinagh cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Garriskil Bog cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lough Owel cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Scragh Bog cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Castlesampson Esker cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Annaghmore Lough (Roscommon) cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lough Lene cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Ballymore Fen cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Carn Park Bog cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Crosswood Bog cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Corbo Bog cSAC	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lough Derravaragh SPA	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lough Iron SPA	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lough Owel SPA	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lough Sheelin SPA	No	No	No	No	No	No
Middle Shannon Callows SPA	No	No	No	No	No	No
Garriskil Bog SPA	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lough Croan Turlough SPA	No	No	No	No	No	No

## **2.4 Conclusions**

The likely impacts that will arise from the implementation of the Variation have been examined in the context of a number of factors that could potentially affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. On the basis of the findings of this Screening for Appropriate Assessment, it is concluded that the Variation:

- (i) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site and
- (ii) may have significant impacts on the Natura 2000 network.

Therefore, applying the Precautionary Principle and in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required. That stage is set out in Section 3 of this report.

## Section 3 Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment

### 3.1 Introduction

The main objective of this stage (Stage 2) in the AA is to determine whether the Plan as varied by the introduction of the Core Strategy (either alone or in combination with other plans, programmes and projects) would result in significant adverse impacts to the integrity of any Natura 2000 site with respect to the site's structure, function and/or conservation objectives.

The Stage 1 Screening has created lists of sites with potential to be affected by the Core Strategy. Therefore, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required. The potential adverse effects considered at this stage will either be effects occurring as a result of the application of the Core Strategy alone or in-combination with other plans, programmes and/or projects.

### 3.2 Other Plans and Programmes

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combinations with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely impact upon Natura 2000 sites. Table 3.1 lists the plans or projects that may interact with the Variation to cause in-combination effects to Natura 2000 sites. The plans or projects are listed according to a spatial hierarchy of International, National, Regional/Local Projects and Plans.

**Table 3.1 Plans & Projects Likely to Cause In-Combination Effects**

<b>International</b>		
<b>Directive</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>In-combination Effects</b>
EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	Objectives seek to maintain and enhance the quality of all surface waters in the EU.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EU Freshwater Fish Directive (78/659/EEC)	Objectives seek to protect those fresh water bodies identified by Member States as waters suitable for sustaining fish populations. For those waters it sets physical and chemical water quality objectives for salmonid waters and cyprinid waters.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EU Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	This directive establishes a regime, which sets underground water quality standards and introduces measures to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	The Floods Directive applies to river basins and coastal areas at risk of flooding. With trends such as climate change and increased domestic and economic development in flood risk zones, this poses a threat of flooding in coastal and river basin areas.	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure such as flood walls or flood defences. Avoidance on, or near protected areas should be implemented or where this is not possible, favouring infrastructure that carries a lower risk of damage to protected areas should be emphasised in the plan.
Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)	This Directive has the objective of reducing water pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources and preventing	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve

	further pollution.	environmental quality.
The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC)	The primary objective is to protect the environment from the adverse effects of discharges of urban wastewater, by the provision of urban wastewater collecting systems (sewerage) and treatment plants for urban centres. The Directive also provides general rules for the sustainable disposal of sludge arising from wastewater treatment.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
Sewage Sludge Directive (86/278/EEC)	Objective is to encourage the appropriate use of sewage sludge in agriculture and to regulate its use in such a way as to prevent harmful effects on soil, vegetation, animals and man. To this end, it prohibits the use of untreated sludge on agricultural land unless it is injected or incorporated into the soil.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
The Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Directive (96/61/EC)	Objective is to achieve a high level of protection of the environment through measures to prevent or, where that is not practicable, to reduce emissions to air, water and land from industrial sources.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
<b>National</b>		
<b>Plan</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>In-combination Effects</b>
National Development Plan 2007-2013	Objectives of the NDP are to promote more balanced spatial and economic development.	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure.
National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020	Objectives of the NSS are to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective planning.	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure.
<b>Regional</b>		
Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022	Policy document which aims to direct the future growth of the Midlands Area over the medium to long term and works to implement the strategic planning framework set out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS)	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure.
<b>Local</b>		
Leitrim County Development Plan 2009-2015 Cavan County Development Plan 2008 - 2014 Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 - 2014 Roscommon County Development Plan 2008 - 2014	Overall strategies for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of the relevant Local Authorities.	Longford shares its boundary with a number of midland counties. Furthermore a number of Natura 2000 sites are located in more than one county. Similar development plans are in existence throughout the region, accordingly these plans acting alone or in combination can have a cumulative impact on Natura 2000 sites located within County Longford.



### 3.3 Potential Significant Effects

European Commission Environment DG document "Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC" outlines that types of impacts that may affect Natura 2000 sites. These include:

- Reduction of Habitat Area
- Disturbance to Key Species
- Habitat or Species Fragmentation
- Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value

The Core Strategy is a high level plan that provides a framework for the sustainable development within County Longford. Apart from the details and zoning maps for the Local Area Plans, the Core Strategy does not prescribe the particular locations of any developments of infrastructure. Overall, the Core Strategy underpins the development of housing, communities and urban centres with supporting transport, water, waste, energy and communication infrastructure within the County.

#### 3.3.1 Reduction of Habitat Area

Direct habitat loss is caused where there is complete removal of a habitat type. Habitat loss can also occur through the reduction of habitat quality and a loss of important habitat functions. It can arise from the introduction of invasive species, toxic contamination or physical alteration.

There is a potential that any designated site within the functional area of the plan may be adversely affected in this manner through the implementation of the Core Strategy. Development either in isolation or in combination with other similar developments can potentially lead to significant adverse impacts on the environment with long term consequences. Construction of housing and commercial/industrial properties could lead to loss of habitats if inappropriately located within the boundaries of a designated site. Installation of linear infrastructure e.g. roads and other transportation links, water and wastewater pipelines, electricity supply lines, can have a negative impact over a wide distance where such infrastructure crosses designated sites. Impacts can include habitat or species fragmentation where, for example, electricity supply lines interrupt the flight paths of birds or newly installed bridges disturb the migration of salmon. Indirectly, habitat loss may also occur through draining of development lands adjacent to or hydro-geologically linked to designated sites that support water based habitats such as bogs, fens and turloughs.

A review of the zoning maps for those settlements to be included in the County Development Plan as part of the Core Strategy Variation indicates that there are no Natura 2000 sites or parts of designated sites subject to zoning that would lead to direct habitat loss. However, the Core Strategy Variation does support the development under certain circumstances of otherwise unzoned, agricultural land for residential purposes and this could lead to habitat loss through inappropriately sited developments. The Natura 2000 sites potentially affected include Lough Ree cSAC, Fortwilliam Turlough cSAC, Lough Forbes Complex cSAC, Ardagullion Bog, Brown Bog, Clooneen Bog, Glen Lough SPA, Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA, Lough Ree SPA, and Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA.

#### 3.3.2 Fragmentation

Habitat and species fragmentation can occur through the breaking up of or loss of habitats resulting in interference with existing ecological units. Fragmentation can also result from impediments to the natural movements of species. This is relevant where important corridors for movement or migration are likely to be disrupted such as along river corridors such as when construction introduces a barrier to the free movement of species from one habitat to another

Installation of linear infrastructure e.g. roads and other transportation links, water and wastewater pipelines, electricity supply lines, can have a negative impact over a wide distance where such infrastructure crosses designated sites. Impacts can include habitat or species fragmentation where, for example, electricity supply lines interrupt the flight paths of birds or newly installed bridges disturb the migration of salmon.

The Natura 2000 sites potentially affected include Lough Ree cSAC, Fortwilliam Turlough cSAC, Lough Forbes Complex cSAC, Ardagullion Bog, Brown Bog, Clooneen Bog, Glen Lough SPA, Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA, Lough Ree SPA, and Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA.

### **3.3.3 Disturbance to Key species**

Disturbance to the species supported within the Natura 2000 site is likely to increase where there is an increase in activity levels from recreation and amenity or from developments within or adjacent to designated areas. Sources of disturbance include noise, vibration, light, construction and operation activities or other sources of disturbance arising from recreation and amenity or from the inappropriate timing of works. The Natura 2000 sites potentially affected include Lough Ree cSAC (the otter *Lutra lutra* is a qualifying species at this site), Glen Lough SPA, Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA, Lough Ree SPA and Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA (all sites designated for bird species that can be vulnerable to disturbance, particularly during the nesting season).

A review of the zoning maps for those LAPs to be included in the CDP through the core strategy variation found that only two settlements were close enough to designated sites to potentially affect them through disturbance – Clondra, adjacent to Lough Forbes complex cSAC and Ballykenny Fishertown Bog SPA and Lansboro, adjacent to Lough Ree cSAC and SPA. The Variation does not provide for any increases in land zoned for development however it does provide for the phasing of already zoned lands. As such, this phased zoning will not lead to any additional impacts from disturbance of species.

### **3.3.4 Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value**

The key indicators of conservation value for Natura 2000 sites in Co. Longford are surface water and groundwater quality and quantity. Impacts on Natura 2000 sites may occur where there are hydrological connections between the sites and development areas. Implementation of the Core Strategy Variation may result in alterations to the hydrological regime or physical environment of sites from abstraction, drainage, and discharges to watercourses or groundwater resources. Of particular importance will be the provision of water supplies and the disposal of wastewater.

A review of information provided by the Waste Services department of Longford County Council indicates that all Waste Water Treatment (WWT) plants within the towns for which LAPs have been included in the CDP as part of the Core Strategy Variation have sufficient capacity to treat wastewater produced by the existing population. However, a number of towns (Ballymahon, Ardagh, Aughnacliffe and Ballinalee) have limited capacity to cater for the future population growth proposed under the Core Strategy Variation. New WWT plants are proposed for construction by the end of 2013 in Ardagh, Aughnacliffe and Ballinalee.

Any increase in population within the towns and settlements affected by the Core Strategy Variation will increase the loading on the existing wastewater infrastructure. In the absence of adequate treatment, discharges from such plants can potentially increase the nutrient loading on receiving waters with direct, long term and adverse consequences for the aquatic environment. The abstraction of water for public and group schemes supply has the potential to affect Natura 2000 Sites where hydrological pressures arise.

The Natura 2000 sites potentially affected include those that are surface water dependant, in particular Lough Ree cSAC and Lough Forbes Complex cSAC. These sites are vulnerable as waste water from a number of towns within Longford is discharged to rivers which ultimately drain into these lakes. Cumulative impacts through waste water discharges from surrounding counties may also affect these sites, as well as indirectly affecting sites downstream in the River Shannon.

Development located in proximity to groundwater dependent habitats may interfere with the hydro geological regime that supports groundwater-dependant qualifying interests such as fens, bogs and turloughs. Drainage on and around bogs will increase flow from the bog area and cause drying out. This will reduce the extent and quality of habitat. The Natura 2000 sites potentially affected include Lough Ree cSAC, Fortwilliam Turlough cSAC, Lough Forbes Complex cSAC, Ardagullion Bog, Brown Bog and Clooneen Bog.

### 3.4 Conservation Objectives

It is the goal of NPWS to draw up conservation plans for all areas designated for nature conservation. These plans will, among other things, set clear objectives for the conservation of the features of interest within a site. Where no Management Plan is yet available, NPWS have provided generic Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites

One generic Conservation Objectives has been provided for SPAs, as follows:

- To maintain the bird species of special conservation interest for which the SPA has listed, at favourable conservation status.

Generic Conservation Objectives for cSACs have been provided as follows:

- To maintain Annex I habitats and Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status.
- To maintain the extent species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
- To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Favourable conservation status of a species can be described as being achieved when: "*population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced or 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.*"

Favourable conservation status of a habitat can be described as being achieved when: "*its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that 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.*"

Conservation Objectives, where available, were downloaded from the NPWS website ([www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)) in May 2012. Conservation Objectives for those sites screened in at Stage 1 are given in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Conservation Objectives**

Site Name	Conservation Objectives
Lough Ree cSAC	Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected: [1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i> [3150] Natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i> -type vegetation [6210] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates ( <i>Festuco Brometalia</i> )(* important orchid sites) [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7230] Alkaline fens [8240] * Limestone pavements [91A0] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91D0] * Bog woodland
Fortwilliam Turlough cSAC	Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected: [3180] * Turloughs
Lough Forbes Complex cSAC	Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected: [3150] Natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i> -type vegetation [7110] * Active raised bogs

Site Name	Conservation Objectives
	<p>[7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</p> <p>[7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i></p> <p>[91E0]* Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)□</p>
Ardagullion Bog cSAC	<p>Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <p>[7110] * Active raised bogs</p> <p>[7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</p> <p>[7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i></p>
Brown Bog cSAC	<p>Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <p>[7110] * Active raised bogs</p> <p>[7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</p> <p>[7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i></p>
Clooneen Bog cSAC	<p>Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <p>[7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</p> <p>[7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i></p> <p>[91D0] * Bog woodland</p>
River Shannon Callows cSAC	<p>Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <p>[1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i></p> <p>[6410] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caeruleae</i>)</p> <p>[6510] Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>)</p> <p>[8240] * Limestone pavements</p> <p>[91E0]* Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</p>
Glen Lough SPA	<p>Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:</p> <p>Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>)</p>
Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	<p>Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:</p> <p>Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>), Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>), Wetlands &amp; Waterbirds</p>
Lough Ree SPA	<p>Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:</p> <p>Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>), Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>), Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>), Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>), Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>), Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>), Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>), Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>), Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>), Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>), Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>), Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>), Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)</p>
Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA	<p>Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:</p> <p>Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>)</p>

### 3.5 Integrity of Site Checklist

Generally as part of a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment a checklist of site integrity is carried out. This aids in determining whether a plan will have a significant adverse effect on a Natura 2000 site. This checklist is taken from "Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC".

**Table 3.4: Integrity of Site Checklist**

<b>Conservation objectives</b>	
<b>Does the plan have the potential to:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Cause delays in progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site?	Yes
Interrupt progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site?	Yes
Disrupt those factors that help to maintain the favourable conditions of the site?	Yes
Interfere with the balance, distribution and density of key species that are the indicators of the favourable condition of the site?	Yes
<b>Other indicators - Does the plan have the potential to:</b>	
Cause changes to the vital defining aspects (e.g. nutrient balance) that determine how the site functions as a habitat or ecosystem?	Yes
Change the dynamics of the relationships (between, for example, soil and water or plants and animals) that define the structure and/or function of the site?	Yes
Interfere with predicted or expected natural changes to the site (such as water dynamics or chemical composition)?	Yes
Reduce the area of key habitats?	Yes
Reduce the population of key species?	Yes
Change the balance between key species?	Yes
Reduce diversity of the site?	Yes
Result in disturbance that could affect population size or density or the balance between key species?	Yes
Result in fragmentation?	Yes
Result in loss or reduction of key features (e.g. tree cover, tidal exposure, annual flooding, etc ?	Yes

### 3.6 Conclusion

Impacts may be considered significant where inappropriate development takes place either within or close to a Natura 2000 site. It is therefore concluded that the implementation of the Core Strategy Variation has the potential to cause long term, direct and indirect adverse impacts on the protection and conservation of Natura 2000 sites.

## Section 4 Mitigation Measures

### 4.1 Introduction

Where it cannot be demonstrated that there will be no adverse effects from implementation of the Plan, mitigation measures have been devised. The measures that have been incorporated are compatible with those proposed by the SEA environmental report and with other relevant plans and programmes e.g Programme of Measures proposed by the River Basin Management Plan and SEA.

The Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 as a whole has previously been screened for compliance with the Habitats Directive and numerous policies and objectives have been included in the plan which will serve to protect the Natura 2000 network. These policies also apply to the core strategy and the Local Area Plans

### 4.2 Measures to protect Habitats and Species

As outlined in Section 3.3 of this assessment a number of significant effects that could impact on habitats and species have been identified. No zoning or specific projects are proposed by the Core Strategy Variation that would result in direct impacts on any Natura 2000 site. However, the Core Strategy Variation does support the development under certain circumstances of otherwise unzoned, agricultural land for residential purposes and this could lead to direct and indirect loss or disturbance of habitats and species.

Measures have been included in the objectives of the Longford County Development Plan that will ensure these impacts are avoided. These measures apply to the provisions of the Variation, including the new LAPs introduced. As a result of the Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Variation, a number of new policies have been introduced to strengthen the protection afforded to Natura 2000 sites. These policies will ensure that appropriate assessments are carried out where development projects are likely to have significant effects on European designated sites (**Policy NHB 6 and Policy NHB 20**). This will ensure that project level effects, which cannot be predicted at the Development Plan level, will be mitigated and encroachment on protected sites through inappropriate development will be avoided.

New policies incorporated in the Plan include the following:

#### **Policy NHB 6:**

It is the policy of the Council to protect sites designated in National and European legislation, and in other relevant International Conventions, Agreements and Processes. This includes sites proposed to be designated or designated as:

- Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup> (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).
- Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds).

Both the Birds and Habitats Directives have been transposed in Irish law by Ministerial Regulation. The European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 are the most important of these because they provide for the protection measures and management regime that apply to SPAs and SACs.

No projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation,

decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)<sup>[1]</sup>.

**Policy NHB 20:**

Proposed large-scale developments, particularly on greenfield sites and in environmentally sensitive areas, shall be assessed in terms of their impact on the biodiversity of the area. All projects and plans arising from this plan will be screened for the need to undertake appropriate assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

**Policy NHB 22:**

The National Parks and Wildlife Service will be invited to prioritise the preparation of Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites which are located in the vicinity of the County. This is in order to examine how the Conservation Objectives of the sites can be achieved in the context of the proper planning and sustainable development of the Plan area.

Existing policies within the Longford County Development Plan that will act to protect the Natura 2000 network include the following:

**HER 4** The Planning Authority shall endeavour to identify important landscapes and habitats and the importance of local character, identity and distinctiveness, in both the natural and built heritage of the County. This shall include an investigation of the Heritage Plan for the County into locally important and small scale heritage sites. Where these have been identified as important under the Heritage Plan, they shall be afforded the relevant protection.

**NHB 1** It is an objective of the Council to protect, conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity and natural heritage. This includes wildlife (flora and fauna), habitats, landscapes and/or landscape features of importance to wildlife or which play a key role in the conservation and management of natural resources such as water.

**NHB 7** The Council shall seek to identify, protect and conserve, in cooperation with the relevant statutory authorities, vulnerable, rare and threatened species of wild fauna and flora and their habitats with particular reference to those species identified in national and European legislation, and in other International Conventions, Agreements and Processes.

**NHB 8** The Council shall seek to co-operate with statutory and other relevant agencies to identify and protect a representative sample of the County's wildlife habitats, of local or regional importance, not otherwise protected by legislation. In addition, it is Council policy to protect; Ramsar sites under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (especially as Waterfowl Habitat).

**NHB 9** Protect and enhance important landscape features and their setting including rivers, streams, canals, lakes and associated wetlands such as reedbeds and swamps; ponds; springs; bogs; fens; trees; woodlands and scrub; hedgerows and other field boundary types such as stone walls and ditches. These are important because;

(a) they form part of a network of habitats, corridors and 'stepping stones' essential for wildlife to flourish, thus providing a high quality natural environment for all,

and/or

(b) they protect and enhance surface water and groundwater resources and are essential as part of the integrated approach to the management of water resources, necessary to ensure the highest water quality into the future, as set out in the Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy).

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Except as provided for in Section 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

- (a) no alternative solution available,
- (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and
- (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

## 4.3 Water Protection

Section 3.3 of this assessment identified that impacts on water may arise through abstraction of drinking water and point source discharges of wastewater. Where necessary, Longford County Council has made applications to the Environment Protection Agency for Waste Water Discharge Authorisation and Certificates of Authorisation from the EPA.

In addition, any newly proposed or upgraded wastewater treatment plants should fully comply with all Urban Waste Water Regulations requirements 2001 – 2004 (paying particular emphasis to Phosphorous due to the Natura 2000 sites sensitivity), and should furthermore comply with all wastewater discharge authorization requirements as per 2007 Regulations and Urban Wastewater Regulations 2001.

Where there is a lack of wastewater treatment or insufficient capacity in terms of hydraulic capacity or biological treatment, Longford County Council have measures in place to address this issue. **Policy WS** has been included as part of the Core Strategy Variation to ensure that wastewater infrastructure is in place prior to developments being occupied. Proposals are assessed as regards capacity of services to cater for them and development would not be permitted unless adequate treatment can be assured. Any development proposed within affected settlements will need to clearly demonstrate this as part of any planning application.

Strict control measures have been included in the Plan to ensure that single dwelling WWT Discharges comply with relevant Environmental Protection Agency guidance (EPA) (**Policy HOU DS 12**). The council is committed to protecting both groundwater and surface waters through implementation of the River Basin Management Plans for the two River Basin District Authorities which relate to Longford (**Policy ENV 7** and **Policy ENV 9**)

Impacts from the abstraction of water will be addressed through compliance with environmental and ecological legislative requirements and the promotion of water conservation. An updated policy has also been included to ensure that any abstraction of water from Lough Ree be subject to assessment for compliance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (**Policy ILW3 –See following page- amended text in red**).

As a result of the Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Variation, a number of new policies have been introduced to strengthen the protection afforded to surface water and groundwater, in order to protect water quality and availability. The new policies added to the Plan include the following:

### **Policy WS:**

Where required, public wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure - which fully complies with requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) including the need to provide secondary treatment and other treatment as required - shall be operational and with adequate capacity to accommodate waste water arising from development, prior to developments being occupied. Discharges arising from this collection and treatment shall also comply with the requirements of the Directive.

### **Policy WS(a)**

It is the policy of Longford County Council to investigate the preparation a Water Services Strategic Plan - in compliance with the Water Services Act - for the functional area of the Council. Such a Plan may be prepared jointly with other Water Services Authorities.

### **Policy WS 2**

It is the policy of Longford County Council to investigate the feasibility of establishing additional projects in terms of improving existing water supply, establishing new supplies, sewerage mains provision (including the connection of unsewered, areas including individual properties/ premises, serviced by septic tanks to the existing and planned sewer network) and improvement of existing treatment plants in the medium and long-term and for their extension to include adjoining residential dwellings.



**Policy WS 15:**

The Council shall implement the relevant recommendations set out in the EPA publication (and any subsequent update) *Focus on Urban Waste Water Discharges in Ireland* (EPA Office of Environment Enforcement, 2012)

**Policy FLO 3:**

The Council shall implement the recommendations and provisions of the DEHLG's 2009 Guidelines for Planning Authorities entitled *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management* (and any subsequent update) in the operation of its duties.

**Policy FLO4:**

Where the probability of flooding from rivers is low (less than 0.1%, flood zone C) the developer should satisfy him or herself that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. Among other things, mapping including the OPW's Pluvial and Groundwater Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment mapping should be considered for this purpose.

**Policy ENV 7:**

It is the policy of Longford County Council to encourage and promote compliance with the recommendations contained in the Shannon International and North Western International River Basin Management Plans.

**Policy ENV 9:**

The Council shall implement the relevant recommendations contained within the River Basin Management Plans for the Shannon International River Basin District and the North Western International River Basin District, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

Existing policies within the Longford County Development Plan

**ILW1** The Royal Canal, Rivers Shannon, Inny and Camlin and Lough Ree, Lough Gowna and the County's other rivers and lakes are recognised as important amenity and recreational resources and, as such, it is the policy of the Council to preserve, protect and enhance these important resources

**ILW 3** Longford County Council shall, within its powers, protect Lough Ree from unsustainable, large-scale and high volume abstraction of water resources for use in areas external to Longford County. **All abstractions of water from Lough Ree will be subject to assessment for compliance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, in accordance with Policy NHB 6 and Policy NHB 22**

**ILW 7** Development will be strictly controlled in the vicinity of the inland waterways of the County and will not normally be permitted. Application for such development shall be assessed, in addition to normal planning criteria, in terms of its potential impact on the visual, recreational, ecological and environmental integrity of the area.

**HOU DS 12 f) f)** Where it is proposed to dispose of treated effluent direct to a watercourse, the applicant shall submit an Assimilative Capacity Report on the receiving water, prepared by an experienced hydrologist and containing the following information;

- i. Assessing the chemical, biological (Q rating) and bacterial condition of thereceiving water.
- ii. Assessing the flow data of receiving waters, indicating 95 %ile flow and Dry Weather Flow.
- iii. Provide an assessment of the associated impacts of the proposed discharge on the chemical, biological and bacteriological quality of the receiving waters with regard to the relevant legislation.

**HOU DS 12 f** Where it is proposed to dispose of treated effluent by percolation, a detailed site assessment and characterisation should be submitted in accordance with EPA standards. The Council may require an experienced hydro-geologist report to be submitted on the likely impact of the discharge on ground water quality.

**WS10** To protect, within its powers, valuable groundwater sources and important surface water bodies from pollution through infiltration by domestic, agricultural or other sources effluent/pollutant material.

**SW 1** The discharge of surface water run-off and rainwater into foul sewage systems shall be strictly prohibited.

**SW 2** Surface water storage measures shall be provided where it is considered that the surface water run-off levels exceed permissible discharge rates. Storm water run-off design should be carried out in accordance with Sustainable Urban Drainage Standards (SUDS), "Dublin Corporation Stormwater Management Policy Technical Guidelines" and "Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works" incorporating "Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study, Volume 2 , New Developments" or any future updates.

## **Section 5 Conclusion**

Stage 1 Screening and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the Longford County Development Plan Core Strategy Variation has been carried out. Implementation of the Core Strategy Variation has the potential to result in impacts to the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, if unmitigated.

The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 network have been addressed by the inclusion of a mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of impacts in the first place and mitigate impacts where these cannot be avoided. In addition, all lower level plans arising through the implementation of the Core Strategy Variation will themselves be subject to Appropriate Assessment when further details of design and location are known.

Having incorporated mitigation measures, it is considered that the Variation will not have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.