AtkinsRéalis

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Kildare County Council

June 2026

0091652DG0020

CELBRIDGE ROAD ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEME, MAYNOOTH

Notice

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Contents

Tables

Figures

1. Introduction

Kildare County Council (The Client/KCC) as the Contracting Authority and National Transport Authority (NTA), appointed AtkinsRéalis (the Consultant) to provide Engineering-led Multi-disciplinary Consultancy and Design services for the NTA PAG Phase 3 (Preliminary Design) and Phase 4 (Statutory Processes) of active travel provisions and associated works on the Celbridge Road, Maynooth, Active Travel Scheme. Prior to the commencement of Phase 3 and 4, KCC progressed and delivered Phases 1 and 2 internally.

AtkinsRéalis have been commissioned by Kildare County Council to prepare an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report for the Celbridge Road Active Travel Scheme in Maynooth, hereafter referred to as the proposed scheme.

The proposed scheme is located in Maynooth town, County Kildare. The proposed scheme extents are shown in Figure 1-1.

1.1 Scheme Location

The project is located in Maynooth, situated northeast of County Kildare. It involves approximately 1.2km of active travel facilities which includes works along sections of Celbridge Road, Straffan Road, Rail Park, Laurence Avenue, and Maynooth Park. Figure 1-1 illustrates the location and the extents of the route.

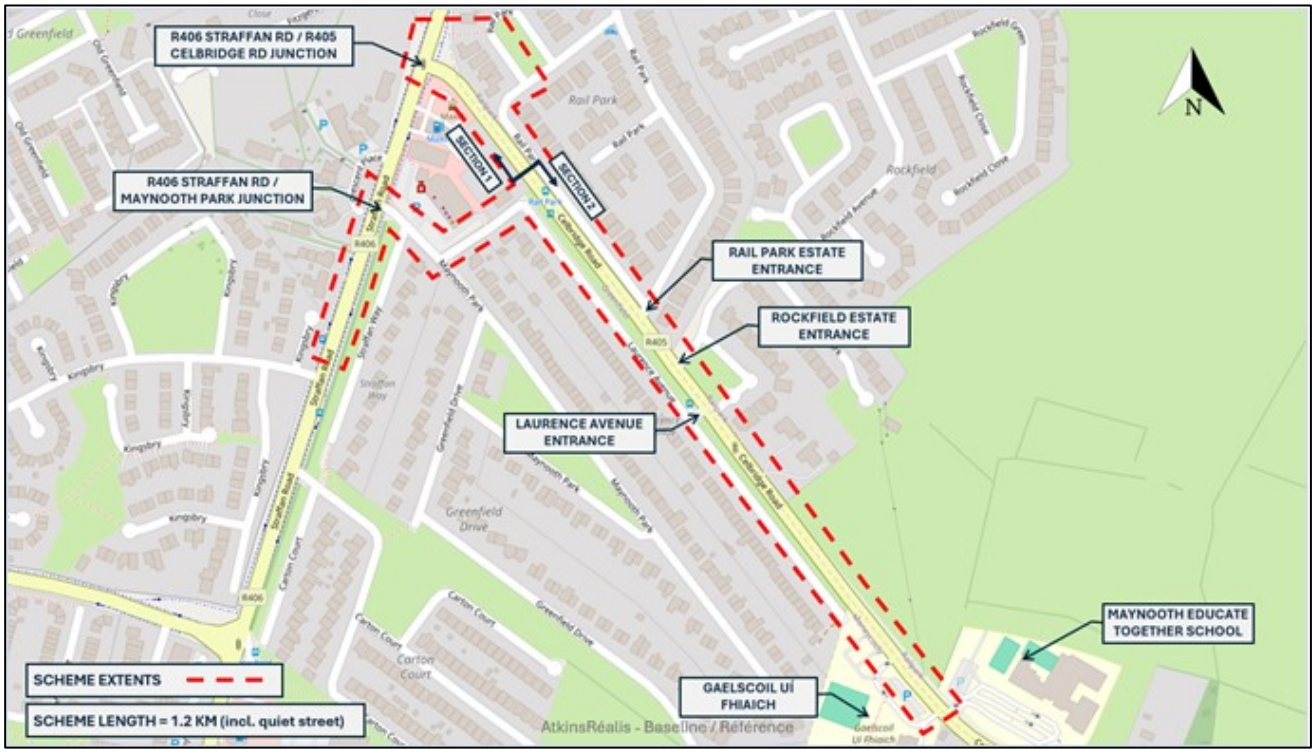

Figure 1-1 – Location of Proposed Scheme

1.2 Description of the Proposed Scheme

Celbridge Road Active Travel Scheme consists a total of approximately 1.2km of active travel planned for the scheme which includes Celbridge Road, Straffan Road, Rail Park, Laurence Avenue, and Maynooth Park.

The proposed works are outlined below.

Table 1-1 – Celbridge Road Active Travel Scheme Corridor Preferred Options

Location	Proposal
Celbridge Road (Residential Zone)	1.75m Standard one-way cycle track on both sides of the road 2.00m Footpaths on both sides of the road 6.25m Carriageway
Celbridge Road (School Zone)	4.00m Shared active travel facilities 6.25m Carriageway
Rail Park	Mixed Traffic (On-road cycling)
Laurence Avenue	Mixed Traffic (On-road cycling) 2.00 Footpath west side of the road
Maynooth Park	3.00m Shared active travel facilities south side of the road 2.00m Footpath north side of the road
Straffan Road	3.80 – 3.90m Existing shared active travel facilities east side of the road

1.3 Scheme Aims & Objectives

The overall purpose of the project is the delivery of a cycle network which will provide safe and attractive cycle routes, catering for all cycle users including commuters, leisure, and family cycling groups. Ultimately when the routes are delivered, they will help to improve safety, including a reduction in vehicle speeds and contribute towards an increased number of trips in the area by pedestrians and cyclists. These enhanced walking and cycling routes will also provide safer, more accessible travel options for school children attending nearby schools and will connect into the active travel facilities proposed under the Maynooth Eastern Ring Road (MERR) project.

The objectives for the scheme are based on multi criteria requirements outlined by the Department of Transport in their report *'Transport Appraisal Framework (June 2023)'* (TAF). The multi-criteria headings are as follows:

- **Transport User Benefits and Other Economic Impacts:** To improve economic welfare of transport network users measuring the connectivity with existing and proposed public transport facilities as well as other economic impacts related to costs of construction and maintenance.
- **Accessibility Impacts:** To improve accessibility to key services, such as retail, healthcare and educational facilities and other high employment areas. Improvements for all road users and bring social inclusion benefits to those for whom non-motorised means are the predominate form of transit. This criterion will also assess four of the five main requirements for cycle-friendly infrastructure according to the Cycle Design Manual, which are: safety, coherence, directness, comfort and attractiveness.
- **Social Impacts:** To improve accessibility for the socially, economically and physically disadvantaged groups; to provide increased health benefits by raising activity levels and to ensure gender impacts are addressed.
- **Land Use Impacts:** To integrate the scheme into strategic land use planning / strategies as set out in national and regional policies and guidelines.

- **Safety Impacts:** To reduce the potential for conflict between all road users along the routes through the provision of a facility which is in line with the current standards. The Scheme will seek to:
  - Improve safety and provide a better environment for vulnerable road users within the study area
  - Improve security by providing adequate lighting and visibility to deter anti-social behaviour.
- **Climate Change Impacts:** To reduce gas emissions in the transport sector by encouraging active travel through improved infrastructure and also to improve the robustness of infrastructure to be able to resist effects of climate change (extreme weather events).
- **Local Environmental Impacts:** To minimize impacts on the receiving environment, considering air quality, noise and vibration, biodiversity, water` resources and soil quality, landscape and visual quality and cultural and heritage impacts.

Additional to the above TAF objectives, the following localised objectives are applicable as highlighted in the Cycle Design Manual:

- Safety in terms of cycle facilities without interference from vehicular traffic, particularly at junctions and entrances.
- Directness in terms of a relatively direct journey which reflects the desire line of the desired journey.
- Coherence in terms of a continuous cycle track being available for the cyclists particularly through junctions without discontinuities.
- Comfort in terms of a high-quality cycle path pavement which is maintained.
- Attractiveness in terms of the visual pleasantness of the cycle route for cyclists.

1.4 Scheme Context

1.4.1 Policy Review

This chapter outlines the review of the relevant transport policies, guidance, and studies for the development of the Celbridge Road Maynooth Active Travel Scheme. Many long-lasting plans and policy objectives at all levels have been used to complete the policy review element of the scheme. Furthermore, these will be used to inform the design decisions and to achieve the goals and objectives of the proposed network. The breakdown of the policies reviewed and detailed in this section are listed in the following order:

- National Level Policy;
- Regional Level Policy; and
- Local Level Policy

1.4.2 National Level Policy

1.4.2.1 National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040)

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF) provides a high-level strategic planning framework to guide development and investment. Maynooth is located in the Eastern and Midland Region, which has experienced population growth at more than twice the national rate. A population of 2.85 million is forecast by 2040 in the Eastern and Midland Region. This forecast indicates a growth in population size of 500,000 people by 2040.

The following policy objectives are relevant to the Celbridge Road Maynooth Active Travel Scheme:

- **National Policy Objective 12:** Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well-designed, high-quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.
- **National Policy Objective 40:** Local planning, housing, health facilities and services, transport/ accessibility and leisure policies will be developed with a focus on meeting the needs and opportunities of an ageing population along with the inclusion of specific projections, supported by clear proposals in respect of ageing communities as part of the core strategy of city and county development plans.
- **National Policy Objective 37:** Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.
- **National Policy Objective 69**: Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions as expressed in the most recently adopted carbon budgets.
- **National Policy Objective 93**: Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green and blue infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.

1.4.2.2 National Development Plan 2021 – 2030

The National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP) sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the successful implementation of the NPF. The NDP steers planning policy and guides investment decisions at a national, regional, and local level. Relevant priorities identified in the NDP are summarized below.

- **NSO 2 Enhanced Regional Accessibility:** The NDP lists the strategic investment priorities with active travel being the most important, followed by public transport, and finally national roads. In line with this prioritization, the plan highlights the need to deliver high-quality greenways and additional walking and cycling infrastructure across Ireland to support the shift to active travel modes.
- **NSO 3 Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities:** The NDP will support the expansion of sustainable mobility options, both in the context of improved public transport and expanded active travel infrastructure, with the aim of offering citizens in rural areas a sustainable alternative to the private car.
- **NSO 4 Sustainable Mobility**: The NDP puts the highest priority for mobility investment on active travel. It notes that increasing modal share of walking and cycling is critical in ensuring Ireland meets its climate action goals.
- **NSO 8 Transitioning to a Climate-Neutral and Climate-Resilient Society**: The NDP commits to encouraging a significant modal shift away from fossil-fuel based transport. A key part of this is the provision of cycling and walking routes to provide sustainable transport options.

1.4.2.3 National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)

The National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) defines the Department of Transport's priorities for the future investment in the transport network to support the implementation of the National Development Plan. NIFTI defines the investment priorities for transportation in Ireland as:

- Mobility of people and goods in urban areas
- Protection and renewal
- Enhanced regional and rural connectivity
- Decarbonisation

Figure 1-2 - NIFTI Four Investment Priorities (source: gov.ie/transport)

To achieve these goals, NIFTI defines the modal hierarchy and transportation investment priorities. NIFTI gives the highest modal priority to active travel followed by public transport and finally private vehicles. This means that, when possible, active transport options should be considered first when attempting to achieve the stated investment priorities.

In addition to modal priority, NIFTI also defines an intervention hierarchy. This hierarchy states that infrastructure investments should be made in the following order:

1. Maintenance of existing infrastructures and assets,
2. Optimisation of the existing network and infrastructure,
3. Improvements to the existing infrastructure,
4. Construction of new infrastructure.

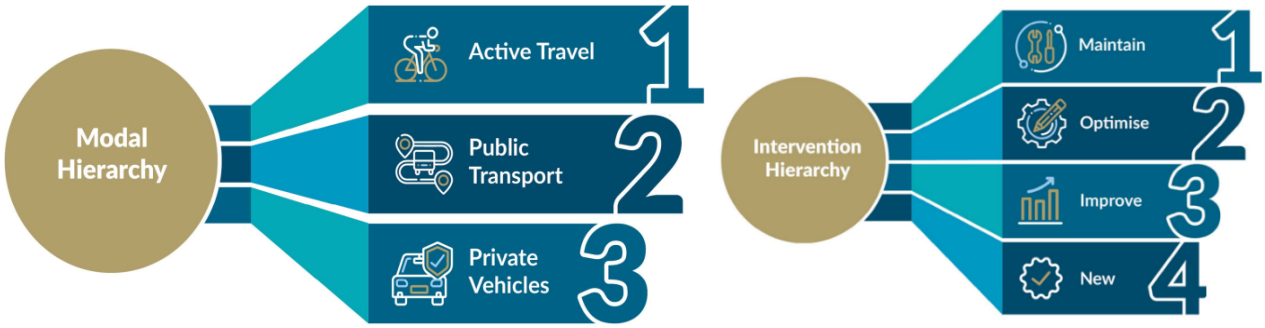

Figure 1-3 - NIFTI Modal and Intervention Hierarchies (source: gov.ie/transport)

As per the NIFTI Intervention Hierarchy, NIFTI places a high emphasis on the use of existing assets (through maintenance, optimisation, or improvement), over the development of new infrastructure assets. NIFTI recognises that investments in transport networks and services, and the policies that drive these investments, can impact on the environment. Several environmental assessments have been carried out in parallel with its development, which includes a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which highlighted a number of potential impacts associated with the Outcomes, Investment Priorities and Hierarchies proposed by NIFTI, as follows:

- Negative Impacts include, but are not limited to:
  - Short-term/localised negative impacts on water quality and increased noise pollution during construction.
  - Localised increases in pollution or increased CO2 emissions, or localised climate vulnerability such as flooding.
  - Long-term impacts on biodiversity, landscape, or cultural heritage features as a result of new infrastructure developments.
  - Long-term impacts because of land-take and changes in land use required for new developments.
- Positive Impacts include, but are not limited to:
  - Positive impacts to population and human health because of increased safety, with improvements to signage, adequate road surfacing, junction upgrades or realignment works.
  - Benefits for the economy, tourism and regional connectivity providing better social inclusion.
  - Reduced carbon emissions and improved air quality because of sustainable mobility developments.
  - Reduction in localised noise pollution and vibration because of development in sustainable and active travel modes and actions to promote electric vehicles.

1.4.2.4 National Sustainable Mobility Policy

The Department of Transport published the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (NSMP) in April 2022. The Policy sets out the policy framework for active travel and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The new policy will primarily focus on measures to promote and facilitate active travel and public transport for all thereby encouraging less private car usage nationally to support the Government's climate commitment.

The policy will outline a set of actions to increase active travel infrastructure provision and improve public transport capacity and services across the country. These will be supported by behavioural change and demand management measures to make sustainable modes the preferred choice for as many people as possible. The Climate Action Plan sets out additional measures to promote other complementary transport mitigation measures such as the switch-over to electric car usage and greater use of renewable fuels for transport. The Celbridge Road Maynooth Active Travel Scheme is in alignment with this plan and would contribute to the implementation of several key actions identified in the plan.

Figure 1-4 below illustrates the benefits of sustainable mobility which will be achieved by delivering the Celbridge Road Maynooth Active Travel Scheme.

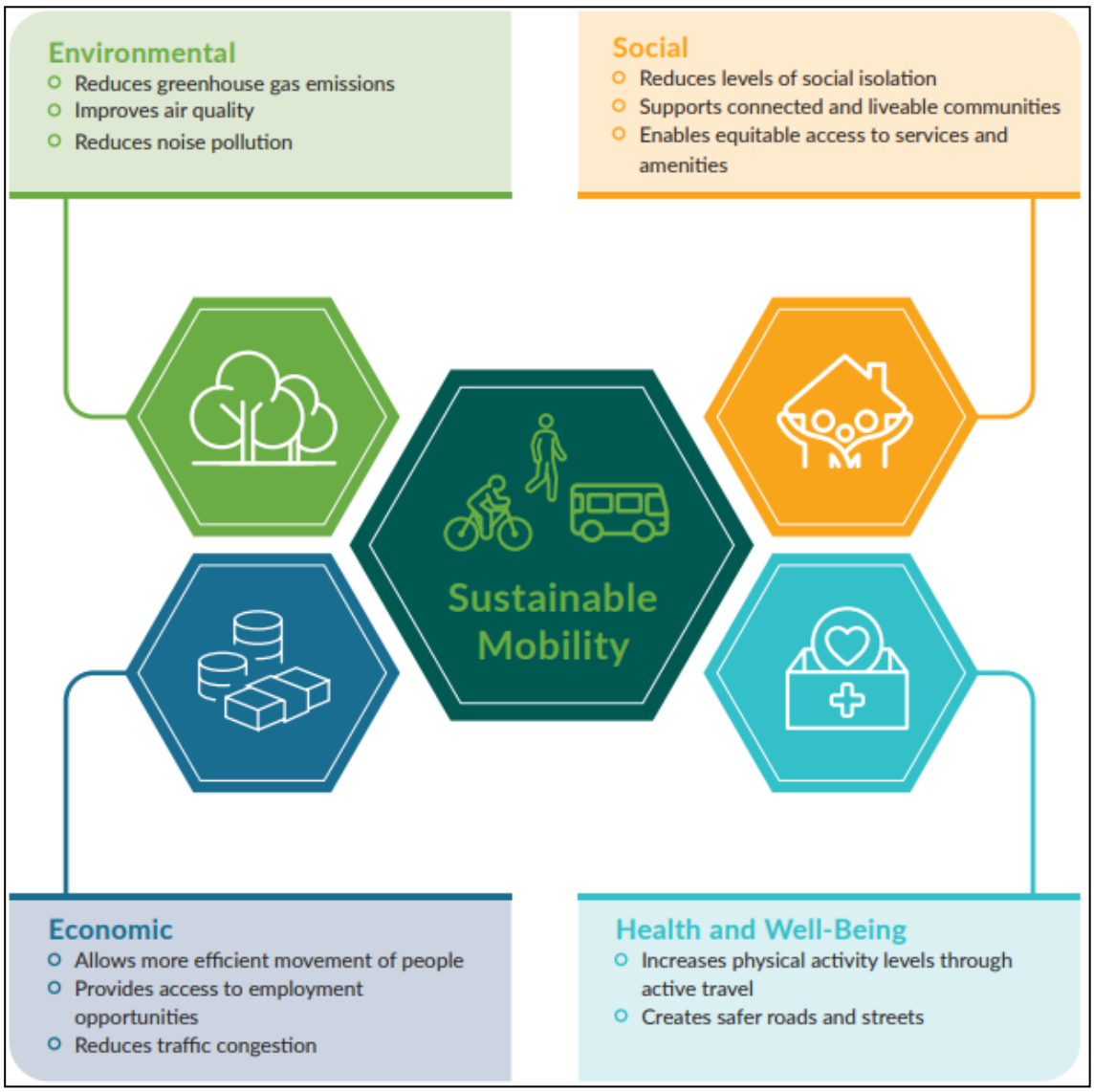

Figure 1-4 - Benefits of Sustainable Mobility

According to the NSMP, the above benefits can be achieved through ten goals, all of which are guided by three key principles, shown in Table 1-2.

Table 1-2 - NSMP Principles and Goals (source: National Sustainable Mobility Plan)

Principles	Goals
Safe and Green Mobility	1. Improve mobility safety.
	2. Decarbonise public transport.
	3. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas.
	4. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in regional and rural areas.
	5. Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car. People Focused Mobility.

Principles	Goals
People Focused Mobility	6. Take a whole of journey approach to mobility, promoting inclusive access for all.
	7. Design infrastructure according to Universal Design Principles and the Hierarchy of Road Users model.
	8. Promote sustainable mobility through research and citizen engagement. Better Integrated Mobility.
Better Integrated Mobility	9. Better integrate land use and transport planning at all levels.
	10. Promote smart and integrated mobility through innovative technologies and development of appropriate regulation.

1.4.2.5 Climate Action Plan 2025

The Climate Action Plan (CAP25) sets out a course of action over the coming years to address climate disruption, which is acknowledged as having diverse and wide-ranging impacts. The document outlines the aims for each sector of industry in Ireland. Electricity, Transport, Built Environment, Industry, Agriculture and Land use have all been assessed in the document with a roadmap laid out to deliver a reduction of emissions in each of these sectors between 2021 and 2030, and to reach net zero nationally by no later than 2050.

As part of the plans for a significant cut in transport emissions, the CAP25 states an objective of 125,000 extra walking, cycling and public transport journeys per day by 2030.

The promotion of walking, cycling and public transport, and a modal shift from the use of private vehicles will all contribute to the achievement of the targets set out in relation to climate action. The CAP25 also mentions the Pathfinder Programme and how the projects will be delivered meeting key criteria as health, well-being, place-making, permeability and universal design.

Specific actions identified in the plan that relate to the Celbridge Road Maynooth Active Travel Scheme are listed below.

- **Action TR/25/7:** Advance roll-out of walking/cycling infrastructure in line with National Cycle Network and CycleConnects plans.
- **Action TR/25/11:** Prioritise and accelerate delivery of NTA Connecting Ireland and new town services, via demand responsive transport pilot initiatives, conventional and nonconventional modes of public transport services.

1.4.2.6 Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2025

The vision of the 'Healthy Ireland Strategy 2021-2025' is to create a healthy Ireland, where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level and is everyone's responsibility.

This policy is developed to encourage walking and cycling by developing physical activities into daily life and decreasing dependency on private cars and replacing this trip with cycling and walking includes public transport as well which will also improve local air quality. This can play a vital role in overall obesity reduction programme which also supports demand management study. This measure comprises of health, environmental and urban land aids. The document sets out four central goals for improved wellbeing and outlines clear routes and strategies to achieve these goals. These goals are as listed below:

- Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life;

- Reduce health inequalities;
- Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing; and
- Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland.

1.4.2.7 National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) 2009 – 2020

The backdrop to this policy is the government's transport policy for Ireland. The NCPF sets out a suite of interventions to improve the ease and safety of cycling to achieve greater mode share going forward. The framework states that the focus needs to be on:

- Reducing volumes of through-traffic, especially HGVs, in city and town centres and especially in the vicinity of schools and colleges.
- Calming traffic/enforcing low traffic speeds in urban areas.
- Making junctions safe for cyclists and removing cyclist-unfriendly multi-lane one-way street systems.
- Paying special attention to integrating cycling and public transport.

Other interventions include the following:

- Schools will be a strong focus of the NCPF.
- Supporting the provision of dedicated signed rural cycle networks for Cycling Tourism.
- Ensuring surfaces used by cyclists are maintained to a high standard and are well lit.
- Ensuring that all cycling networks are sign-posted to a high standard.
- Supporting the provision of secure cycle parking at all destinations of importance.
- Integrating cycling and Public Transport, including cycle parking at stations, and the capability to carry bikes on Public Transport services.
- Creation of municipal bike systems to complement an improved Public Transport system.
- Ensuring proposals cater for a 10% modal share of cyclists.

The NCPF states that making provision for cyclists in the urban environment does not merely consist of providing dedicated cycling facilities, but also involves wider traffic interventions that benefit all vulnerable road users.

1.4.2.8 Get Ireland Active, 2016

Healthy Ireland, a Framework for Improved health and wellbeing 2013-2025 is the national framework for seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. The framework identifies a number of broad inter-sectoral actions, one of which commits to the development of a plan to promote increased physical activity levels.

Get Ireland Active aim is to increase physical activity levels across the entire population thereby helping to improve health and wellbeing. Get Ireland Active has developed a plan which will seek to ensure that no group is disadvantaged and recognises that targeted interventions are required to address and overcome barriers to participation which are experienced by some people.

Get Ireland Active acknowledges the role that cycling can play in achieving physical activity targets. The plan highlights the importance of good planning to promote the use of cycling, stating that the layout of the environment has a significant impact on the levels of physical activity undertaken across age groups.

- "The built environment is an important determinant of physical activity behaviour. The way the built environment is designed, planned, and built can also act as a barrier to being active and can reinforce sedentary behaviour and car dependence."

Cycling for transport or leisure is a form of physical activity that can easily be incorporated into the daily activities of many people. The development of cycling facilities in Monasterevin Town is a positive example of how the built environment can be developed to promote physical activity, improving the health and well-being of those that choose to travel by bike. Facilities like this will be used for a variety of journey purposes including travelling to work and school, which is an ideal opportunity to increase physical activity through everyday journeys.

1.4.2.9 Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan

The Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Cycle Network Plan was compiled by the NTA aims to identify and determine in a consistent, clear, and logical manner, the urban cycle network at the primary, secondary and feeder levels across the seven local authorities of the Greater Dublin Area: Dublin City, South Dublin, Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown, Fingal, Meath, Kildare, and Wicklow. Unlike area-based plans prepared previously by Local Authorities, this Cycle Network Plan is to be consistent across county boundaries such that there is continuity of route networks across these administrative boundaries.

The NTA Cycle Network Plan sets out to develop a detailed understanding of cycling demand over a 10-year horizon period in the greater Dublin area. Over this 10-year period the demand for cycling in the GDA is forecast to increase due to two factors – population growth and the changes to the cycling mode share. The GDA Cycle model, developed as part of the Cycle Network Plan, provides a comprehensive representation of existing and projected future cycling demand patterns in the Greater Dublin Area. Trip assignment and route choice in the model is based on trip distance alone to provide a strategic plot of cycling desire lines on the network.

Figure 1-5 shows the location of Celbridge Road in relation to the NTA Cycle Network Plan within Maynooth. Celbridge Road is marked as a Secondary Route and provides improvement to local area cycle facilities, hence linking residential areas to key destinations and promoting cycling as an effective means of transport. The Secondary Route along Celbridge Road will complement the Primary Route along Straffan Road which creates a continuous and accessible cycle link for the wider network within Maynooth.

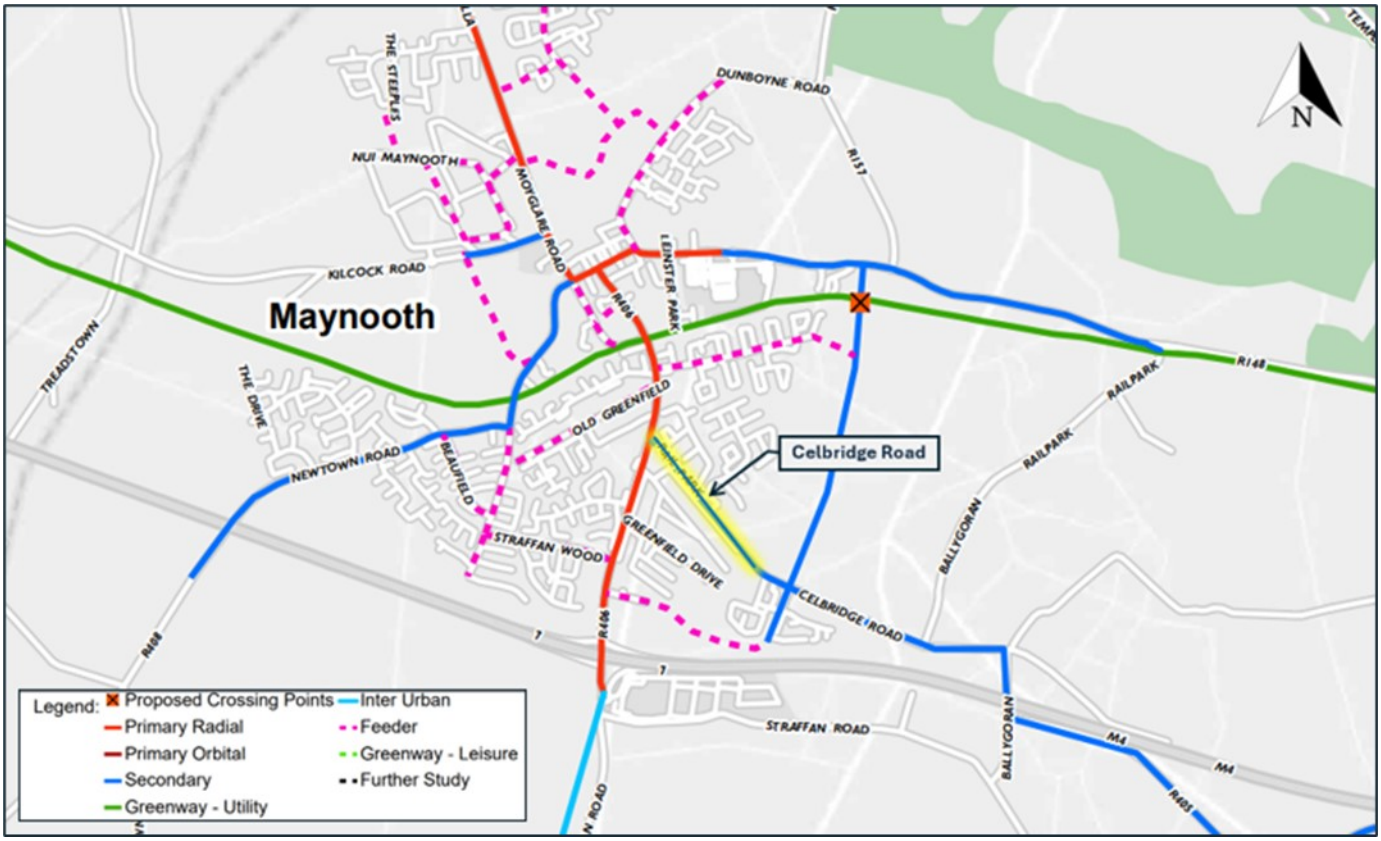

Figure 1-5 - Celbridge Road in relation to the NTA Cycle Network Plan

1.4.3 Regional Level Policy

1.4.3.1 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin focuses on cycling and walking under the transport frameworks of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042 and the National Sustainable Mobility Policy to achieve integrated cycling and pedestrian routes in the area.

The policy objective PIR 9 supports the development of a culture of walking and cycling including through infrastructure provision which supports and encourages walking and cycling within urban areas.

1.4.3.2 Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042

The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042 is the framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services within the Greater Dublin Area including progression of cycleway infrastructure. The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042 outlines the importance of delivery of high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure through the following measures:

- Measure Walk 2 - Improved Footpath, the National Transport Authority and Local Authorities will implement footpath schemes across the Greater Dublin Area.
- Measure Walk 4 - Improved Junction, the National Transport Authority and Local Authorities will implement junction improvements across the Greater Dublin Area through enhanced safety at junctions.
- Measure Cycle 1, it is the intention of the National Transport Authority and Local Authorities to deliver a safe and legible cycle network, in accordance with the updated Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network.

Under Section 14.10 Safe Routes to School, the Safe Routes to School Programme aims to encourage as many students as possible in primary and secondary schools, to walk and cycle through the delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure on key access routes to schools.

1.4.3.3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region, 2019-2031

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape and manage growth in the Eastern and Midland Region. The RSES provides a roadmap for effective regional development identifying key strategic assets, opportunities and challenges and sets out policy responses to ensure the people's needs are met.

The document delivers a combination of response, design, and innovation in how the Eastern & Midlands Region does business, delivers homes, builds communities and values land-use – creating healthy places and promoting sustainable communities. The RSES introduces the concept of a Growth Framework to achieve this integration as it is considered that regional growth cannot be achieved in linear steps.

The "10-minute" settlement concept is proposed throughout the RSES as a means for delivering the land use and transport planning objectives, whereby a range of community facilities and services are accessible in short walking and cycling timeframes from homes or are accessible by high quality public transport to services in larger settlements.

The Strategy promotes cycling and walking as environmentally friendly, fuel efficient and healthy modes of transport to work, school, shopping and for recreational purposes. There are several Regional Policy Objectives

(RPO) specifically promote the development of active travel facilities and modal shifts in both urban and rural areas, as follows:

- **RPO 4.2**: Infrastructure investment and priorities shall be aligned with the spatial planning strategy of the RSES. All residential and employment developments should be planned on a phased basis in collaboration with infrastructure providers so as to ensure adequate capacity for services (e.g. transport) is available to match projected demand for services and that the assimilative capacity of the receiving environment is not exceeded;
- **RPO 8.2**: The capacity and safety of the Region's strategic land transport networks will be managed and enhanced, including through the management of travel demand in order to ensure their optimal use;
- **RPO 8.3**: That future development is planned and designed in a manner which maximises the efficiency and protects the strategic capacity of the metropolitan area transport network, both existing and planned and to protect and maintain regional accessibility;
- **RPO 8.4**: Land use plans within the GDA shall demonstrate a consistency with the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and plans with or outside of the GDA shall be consistent with the guiding principles expressed in the RSES.
- **RPO 8.6**: In order to give local expression to the regional level Transport Strategy within the Region in conjunction with the NTA, Local Transport Plans (LTP) will be prepared for selected settlements in the Region.
- **RPO 8.7**: To promote the use of mobility management and travel plans to bring about behaviour change and more sustainable transport use.
- **RPO 8.13**: Support the Local Link Rural Transport Programme throughout rural areas of the Region.

1.4.3.4 Kildare County Council Development Plan 2023 – 2029

The Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 Chapter 5 – Sustainable Mobility & Transport highlights that the overarching aim of the plan is "*To promote and facilitate ease of movement within and through County Kildare, by integrating sustainable land use planning and a high-quality integrated transport system; and to support and prioritise investment in more sustainable modes of travel, the transition to a lower carbon transport system, and the development of a safer, efficient, inclusive, and connected transport system*".

The primary focus of the policy for the Sustainable Mobility and Transport section of the development plan is to adopt the 'Avoid-Shift-Improve' measures which are outlined in Figure 1-6 below. This strategy aims to avoid and minimize the need for travel, promoting a shift towards environmentally friendly modes of transport, and enhancing the energy efficiency of motorised transport modes.

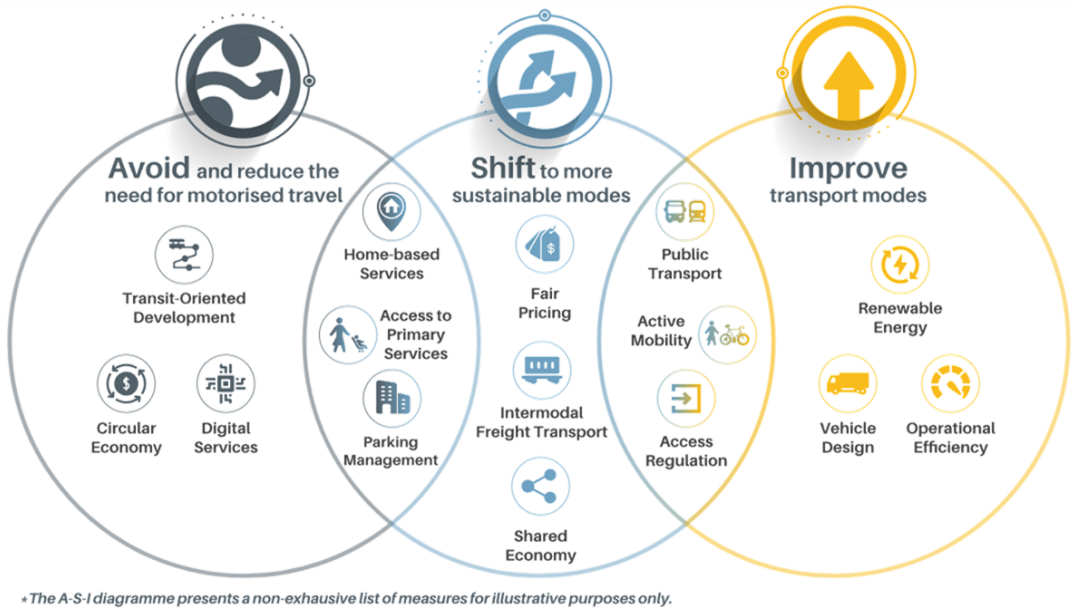

Figure 1-6 - Avoid-Shift-Improve[1] (Extract from KCC Development Plan 2023-2029, Ch. 5)

The following policies and objectives have relevance in relation to the Celbridge Road Maynooth Active Travel Scheme:

- **Policy TM P1**: Promote sustainable development through facilitating movement to, from, through and within the County that is accessible to all and prioritises walking, cycling and public transport.
- **Policy UD P1**: Apply the principles of people-centred urban design and healthy placemaking as an effective growth management tool to ensure the realisation of more sustainable, inclusive, and well-designed settlements resilient to the effects of climate change and adapted to meet the changing needs of growing populations including aging and disabled persons.
- **Objective TM O1**: Support the NTA Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (2022-2042) and facilitate and secure the implementation of projects identified within the Strategy.
- **Objective TM O2**: Promote and drive a human-centred, whole journey approach to improving transport infrastructure and accessibility in County Kildare to ensure a seamless user experience. The use of kissing gates in active travel projects will not be permitted in cases where they would deny access to those using mobility aids and non-standard bicycles.
- **Objective TM O3**: Ensure the application of universal design principles in all new transport infrastructure (including public transport pick up points) and strive to adapt existing infrastructure to become more accessible, where feasible, in accordance with the County Kildare Access Strategy – A Universal Access Approach (2020-2022) and the Department of Justice and Equality's National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017- 2021)
- **Objective TM O5**: Encourage the use of materials and engineering solutions that optimise natural surface water drainage as part of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) with all new active travel, public transport, parking, road and street developments and ensure adequate replacement and additional planting of pollinator-friendly and native species.
- **Objective TM O7**: Introduce measures to reduce traffic congestion in town centres such as pedestrianisation, pedestrian priority and/or improved pedestrian/cycling facilities, in particular increasing the number of safe crossings.

[1] SLOCAT. 2020. Avoid-Shift-Improve Refocusing Strategy, https://slocat.net/asi/

- **Objective TM O9**: Support and encourage the transition from fossil fuel use and consider the preparation of guidance for decommissioning of changing infrastructure to more sustainable uses, through the preparation of the Local Climate Action Plan.
- **Objective UD O1**: Require a high standard of urban design to be integrated into the design and layout all new development and ensure compliance with the principles of healthy placemaking by providing increased opportunities for physical activities, social interaction and active travel, through the development of compact, permeable neighbourhoods which feature high-quality pedestrian and cyclist connectivity, accessible to a range of local services and amenities.

1.4.3.5 Kildare Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029

Kildare County Council has prepared a Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, to create a low carbon and climate resilient County, by delivering and promoting best practice in climate action, at the local level. This is aligned to the Government's overall National Climate Objective, which seeks to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. As part of Ireland's Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 Kildare County Council has committed to developing and implementing its county-focused Climate Action Plan.

The plan focuses on five thematic areas with a view to assessing the actions which can be carried out in order to tackle climate breakdown at a local level by carrying out measures to decrease emissions and enhance biodiversity locally with a view to slowing down and ultimately reversing climate change while closely focusing on quality of life for citizens of County Kildare.

- Theme 1: Governance and Leadership
- Theme 2: Built Environment and Transport
- Theme 3: Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure
- Theme 4: Resilience and Transition
- Theme 5: Sustainability and Resource Management

Several actions under Theme 2 of the document are aligned with the proposed Celbridge Road Maynooth Active Travel Scheme, as follows:

- **B16**: Identify roads and streets within the County that are suitable for road space reallocation, having due regard to environmental sensitivities such as the receiving water environment, biodiversity, European sites, local air quality, and cultural heritage. Prioritise roads and streets currently or likely to be used by public transport including potential town bus services. Work towards ensuring network options are developed between active travel options and public transport routes.
- **B18**: Develop a Pedestrian Enhancement Plan for the regional growth centres and key towns prioritising connectivity to public transport.
- **B19**: Develop and publish a cycle network plan for the County. Where possible, ensure the cycle network is planned on the principle of 'origin and destination' that prioritises connectivity to places of education, employment and public transport. Develop secure bike / mobility parking options that aligns to route options and trip attractor locations. Ensure the cycle network is planned in a manner that has due regard to environmental sensitivities such as the receiving water environment, local air quality, biodiversity, European sites and cultural heritage.
- **B24**: Support the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan to ensure that the public transport network encourages and supports changes in demand for transport, improves regional connectivity and provides an enhanced alternative to the private car.
- **B26**: Promote and implement the Safe Routes to School Programme to create safer walking and cycling routes within communities, alleviate congestion at the school gates and increase the number of students who

walk or cycle to school by providing safe infrastructure. Ensure supported active travel development is carried out in a manner that has due regard to environmental sensitivities such as local human receptors, Biodiversity, European sites, water quality and hydrology, existing traffic and transport conditions and amenity value.

1.4.4 Local Level Policy

1.4.4.1 Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) 2025-2031

The Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan (JLAP) 2025 - 2031, superseding the Maynooth Local Area Plan 2013-2019, is a key statutory planning document which sets out an overarching strategy to guide the planning and sustainable development of Maynooth and Environs.

As part of the JLAP, one of the key objectives is to promote walking and cycling and develop the expansion of cycling facilities throughout Maynooth particularly to and from areas of amenity, employment locations, Maynooth University, schools and residential developments. The key Pedestrian and Cycling objectives are:

- Reducing Maynooth's local carbon footprint caused by transport emissions by implementing the 10-minute settlement principle. This will involve the prioritisation of sustainable movement within the town, with a particular emphasis on supporting active modes of travel (walking and cycling). Car dependency will also be reduced through the provision of car free or low car developments in 'Centre and Urban Neighbourhood' locations and 'Accessible Suburban / Urban Extension Locations'.
- Compliance with the Core Strategies Objectives (CCSO) 1.1 - Support and facilitate compact growth development in Maynooth through the adoption of a quadrant-based planning approach to implementing the 10-minute settlement principle in the town. Such an approach shall seek the realisation of an integrated network of well-designed neighbourhoods that can meet the day-to-day needs of residents within a 10-minute walk of all homes in Maynooth. Quadrant-based planning also supports the sustainable intensification and consolidation of the town centre and established residential, commercial and employment areas.
- Economic Development Objectives (EDO) 3.4 - Align, as far as is practicable, new retail development with existing and proposed public transport infrastructure and services and encourage access by active modes of travel (walking and cycling), in accordance with the 10- minute settlement principle.
- Sustainable Movement and Accessibility Objectives (MATO) 1.1 - Prioritise and promote the development of high-quality, interconnected, safe and sustainable active travel infrastructure and public transport services, to achieve the modal share target as set out in Section 7.3.3 of this Plan, to enable a shift from private vehicle use to sustainable modes of transport in order to decarbonise transport in Maynooth and to enhance the health of the community.
- Sustainable Movement and Accessibility Objectives (MATO) 1.2 - Adopt a 'whole journey approach' to delivering transport infrastructure in Maynooth, to ensure universal accessibility is integrated into all stages of a person's journey from starting point to destination. This includes making all footpaths, tactile paving, cycle paths, roads, pedestrian crossing points, greenways and bus stops / shelters fully accessible to older people, people with disabilities and people with young children.
- Walking, Permeability and Cycling Objectives (MATO) 2.1 - Support and promote the use of sustainable active transport modes in Maynooth and seek to implement a connected network of active travel infrastructure in the town as detailed in Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 and illustrated on Maps 7.1 and 7.2, in conjunction with the National Transport Authority, and other relevant stakeholders including Transport Infrastructure Ireland where interactions with the national road network occur. The indicative measures will form the basis for individual projects. Each project will be subjected to a detailed design process, including environmental and/or ecological assessment, where applicable. All measures shall incorporate nature-based surface water management drainage solutions.

- Walking, Permeability and Cycling Objectives (MATO) 2.4 - Work with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to implement the updated Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan (2022) proposals for Maynooth and with Transport Infrastructure Ireland to implement the National Cycle Network (2024), subject to detailed engineering design and any mitigation measures presented in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) accompanying the NTA Plan.
- Walking, Permeability and Cycling Objectives (MATO) 2.8 - Facilitate and prioritise the upgrade of cycling infrastructure on Celbridge Road (as per measure CYCLE 8 in Table 7.2 and on Map 7.2).

In addition to the above, it is also highlighted that the key objective of the Maynooth and Environs Area Based Transport Assessment's (MEABTA) Cycling Strategy is to provide an integrated network for Maynooth and improve safety for cyclists, with a focus on increasing the cycling mode share. The cycling measures and proposals are further detailed in Table 7.2 and on Map 7.2 of the JLAP, which specifically mentions the Celbridge Road Active Travel Scheme.

Ref. No.	Description	Proposed Link Type	Timeframe
CYCLE 1	Parson Street (Bond Bridge – Main Street)	TBC	Long
CYCLE 2	Kilcock Road (University roundabout – Moyglare Road)	Cycle track	Short
CYCLE 3	Mill Street	Cycle track	Short
CYCLE 4	Meadowbrook Road (Meadowbrook Link Road – Newtown Road junction/Bond Bridge)	Cycle track	Short
CYCLE 5	Beaufield Close	Cycle track	Short
CYCLE 6	Dublin Road (R157 Junction – Intel)	Cycle track	Medium
CYCLE 7	Celbridge Road (Straffan Road – MERR)	Cycle track	Short
CYCLE 8	Celbridge Road (MERR – Celbridge outskirts)	Cycle track	Medium
CYCLE 9	Kilcock Road (University – L5041)	Cycle track	Medium
CYCLE 10	Access to/from Royal Canal Greenway at Jackson's Bridge	Shared street	Long
CYCLE 11	Meadowbrook Link Road[55]	Cycle track	Medium
CYCLE 12	Kilcock Road (L5041 junction – Kilcock)	Cycle track	Long
CYCLE 13	Moyglare Road north of Kilcock Road junction	Cycle track	Medium

Figure 1-7 - Celbridge Road in relation to MEABTA's Cycling Strategy (extract from Table 7.2 of the JLAP)

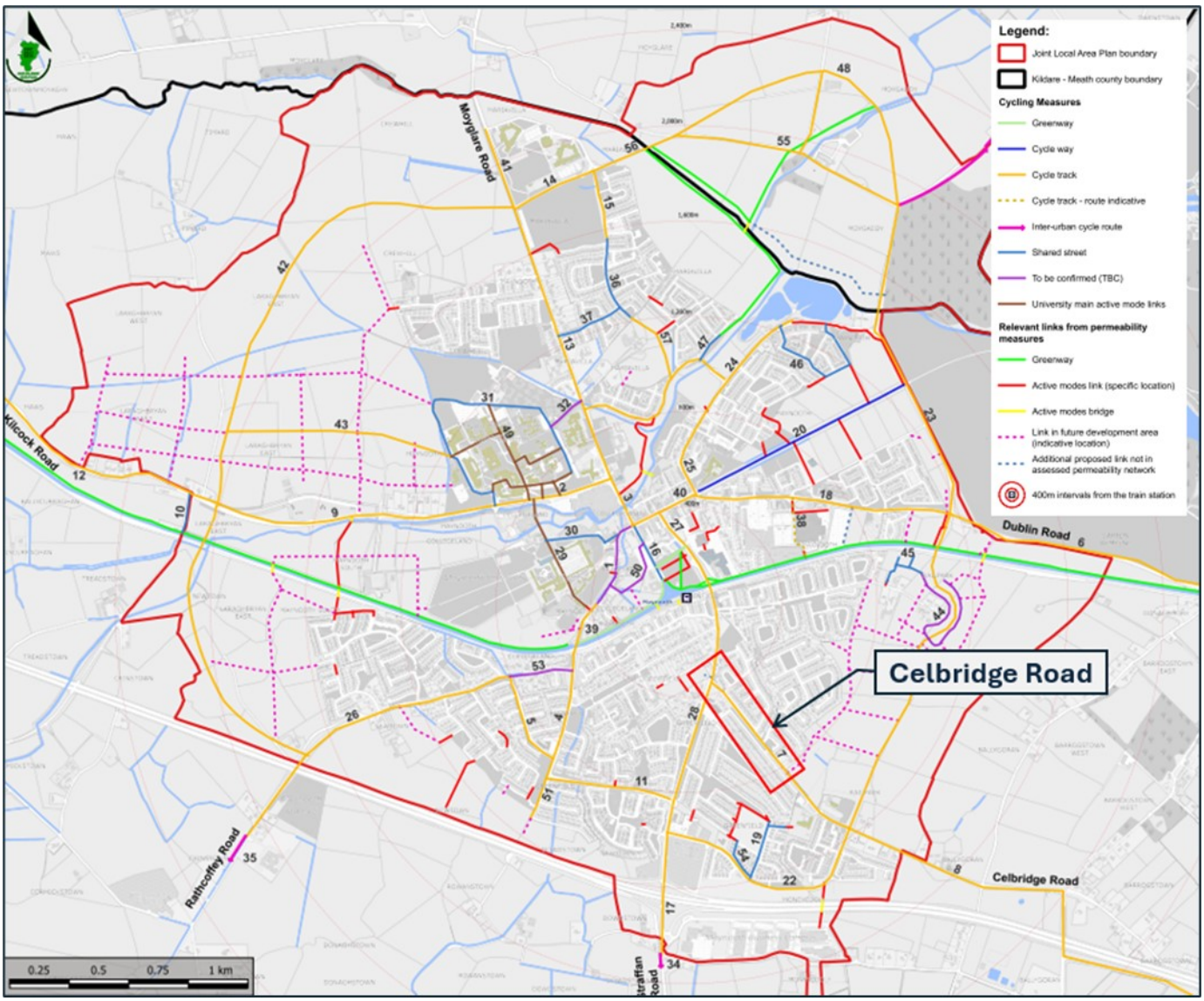

Figure 1-8 - Celbridge Road in relation to the JLAP (2025-2031)

1.4.4.2 Maynooth Decarbonisation Zone

As part of the Kildare Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 (discussed in Section 1.4.3.5), KCC identified Maynooth as the county's Decarbonisation Zone (DZ), making it a focal point for local climate action. As outlined in Chapter 5 of the Climate Action Plan, Maynooth was found to be ideal as a DZ which could function as a "testbed" for mitigation measures that can be replicated in other large towns across the county.

The mission of the Maynooth DZ implementation is to deliver a 51% reduction in emissions within Maynooth by 2030 with a view to achieving a climate neutral zone by 2050 within the Maynooth DZ.

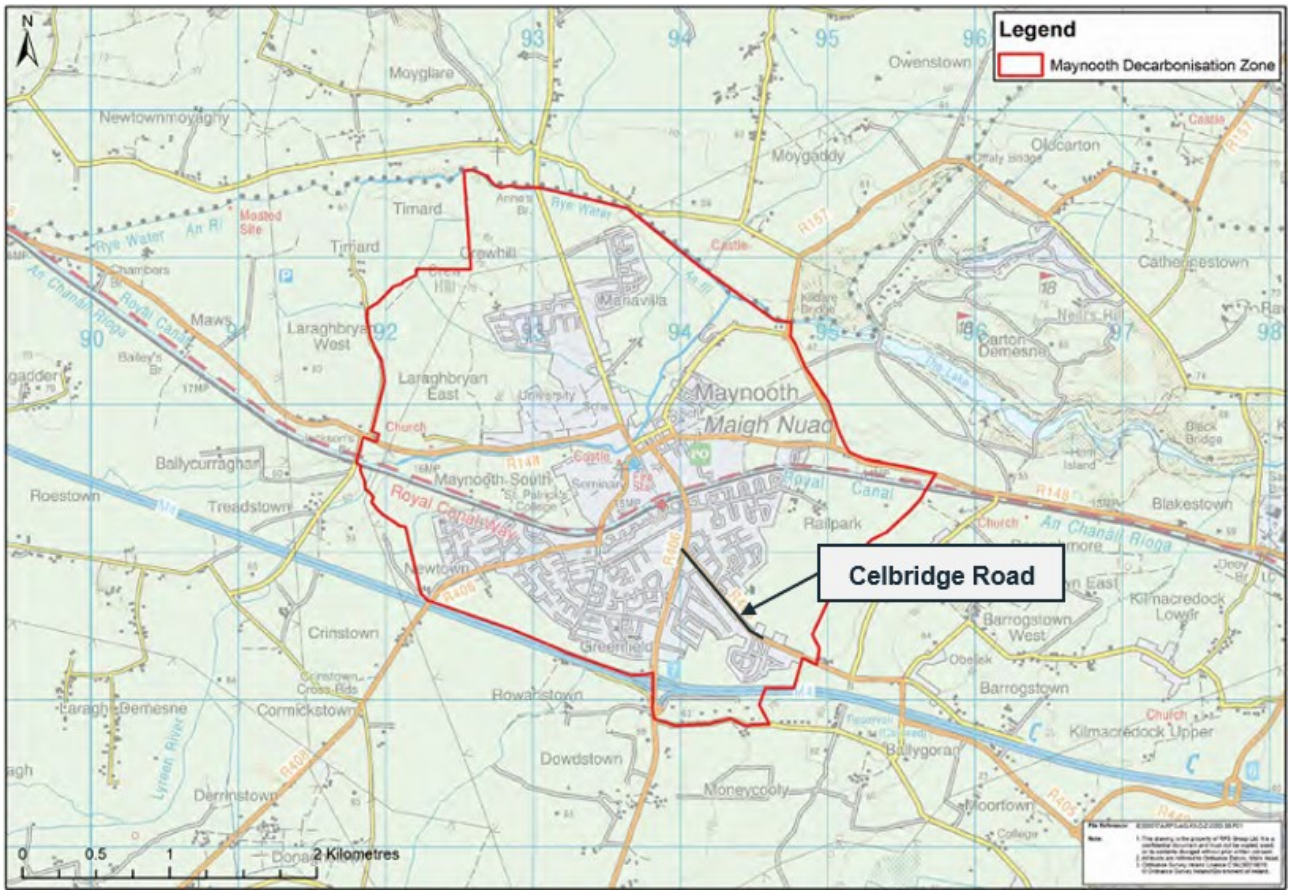

Figure 1-9 - Celbridge Road in relation to the Maynooth DZ (Figure 5.1 of the CAP)

Overall, the plan aligns with national objectives for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and highlights the need for climate focused measures. It prioritises sustainability by promoting reduced transport-related emissions, improving energy efficiency, and strengthening climate resilience within the transport network. The Celbridge Road Active Travel Scheme aligns with the Maynooth DZ by reducing transport emissions which is one of the town's major carbon sources. This is achieved by encouraging a modal shift to active travel from private vehicles.

1.4.5 Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme, launched in March 2021, is a nationwide initiative designed to make it safer, easier, and more attractive for school children to walk, cycle and wheel to school. The SRTS Programme is funded by the Department of Transport (DoT) through the NTA, and coordinated by An Taisce in partnership with schools and local authorities throughout the process.

The Maynooth Educate Together National School, located within the boundary of the Celbridge Road Active Travel Scheme, was selected to participate in the SRTS Programme in Co. Kildare. As part of the programme, the SRTS Travel Survey was carried out to assess how students travel to and from school and identify safety concerns.

Given the proximity of Gaelscoil Uí Fhiaich to Maynooth Educate Together National School, the SRTS Travel Survey was undertaken by An Taisce at both schools to capture a more comprehensive dataset. As part of the programme, both schools distributed the SRTS Travel Survey to all families of the schools during January 2026.

The results are summarised below:

Table 1-3 - SRTS Travel Survey Data

Subject	Gaelscoil Uí Fhiaich	Maynooth Educate Together NS
Responses received	130	207
Students represented	211 of 460 (45.9%)	303 of 412 (73.5%)
Do you think road safety is a problem around your school?	94.6% selected yes	92.3% selected yes
Would you support works at the front of school that improve student safety?	99.2% selected yes	99.5% selected yes
Would you support works that improve the walking and cycling routes to your school?	100.0% selected yes	99.0% selected yes

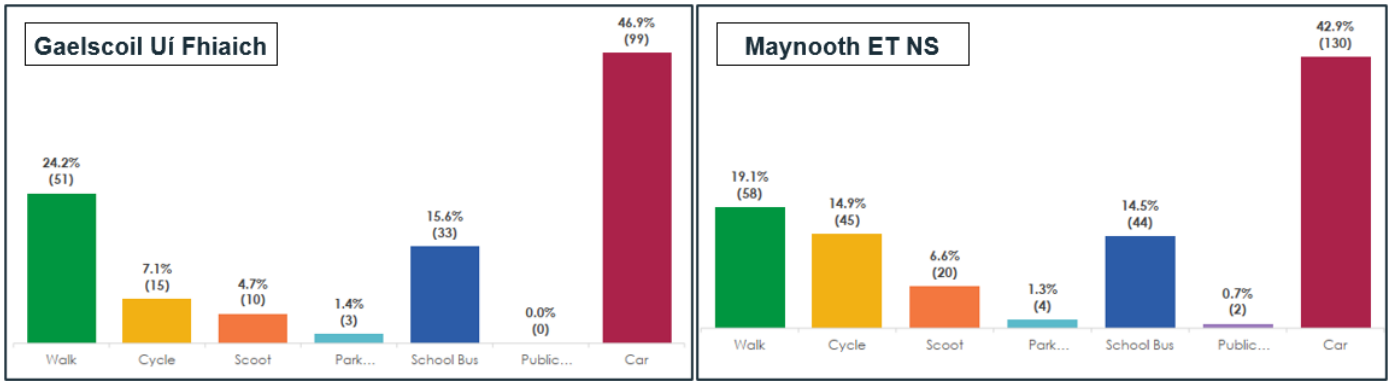

Figure 1-10 - Survey Question - How Does Your Child Most Often Travel to School

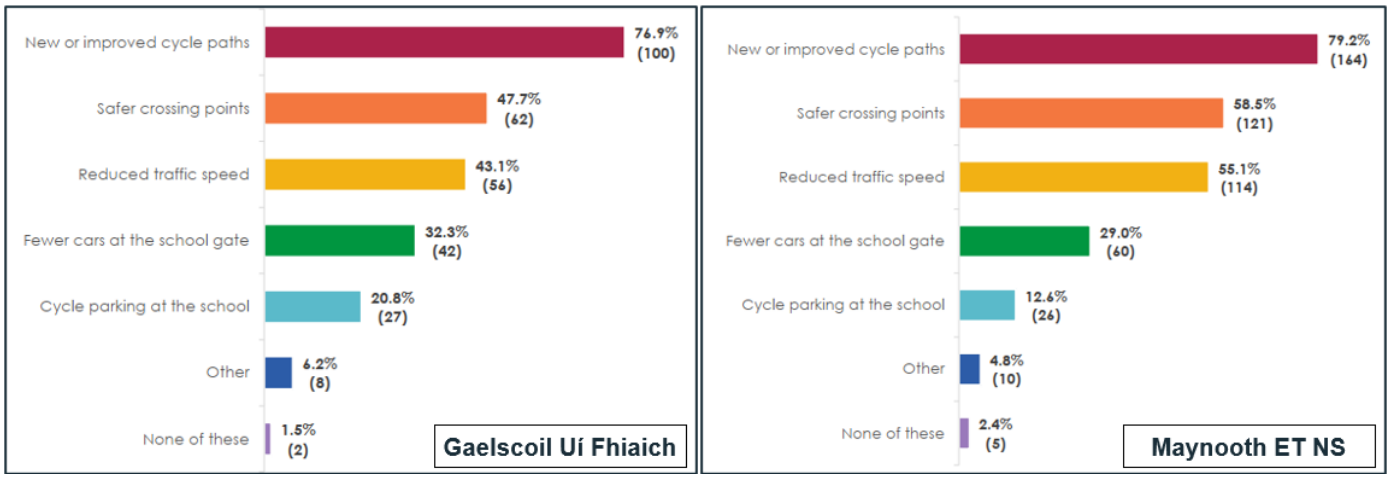

Figure 1-11 - Survey Question - What Would Improve your Journey to School

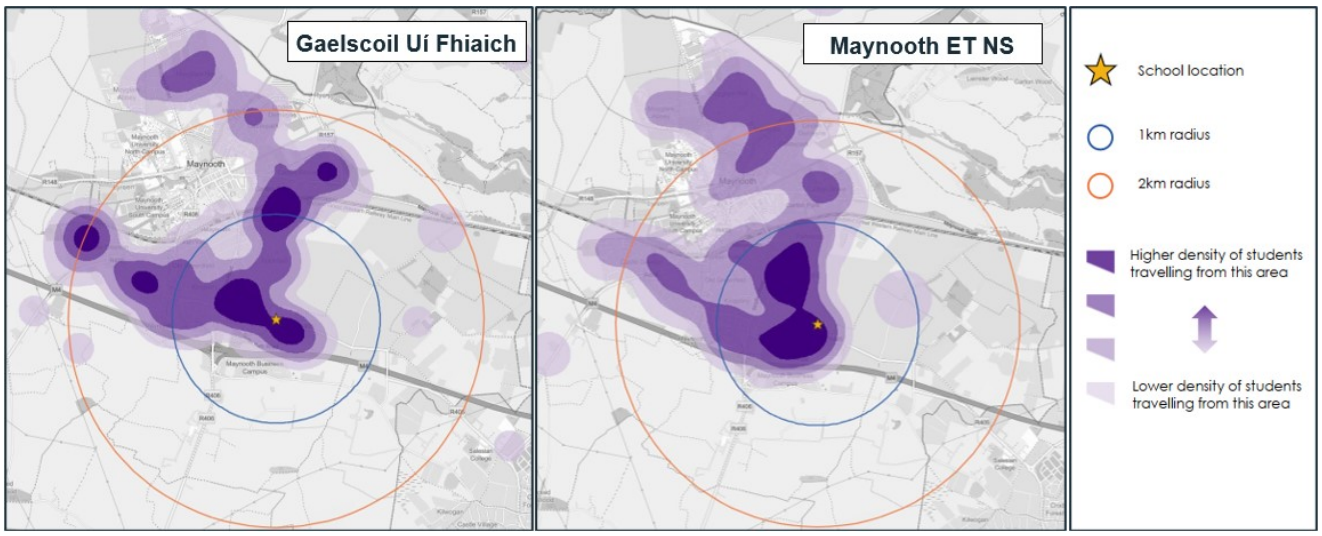

Figure 1-12 - Location Where Students are Travelling From

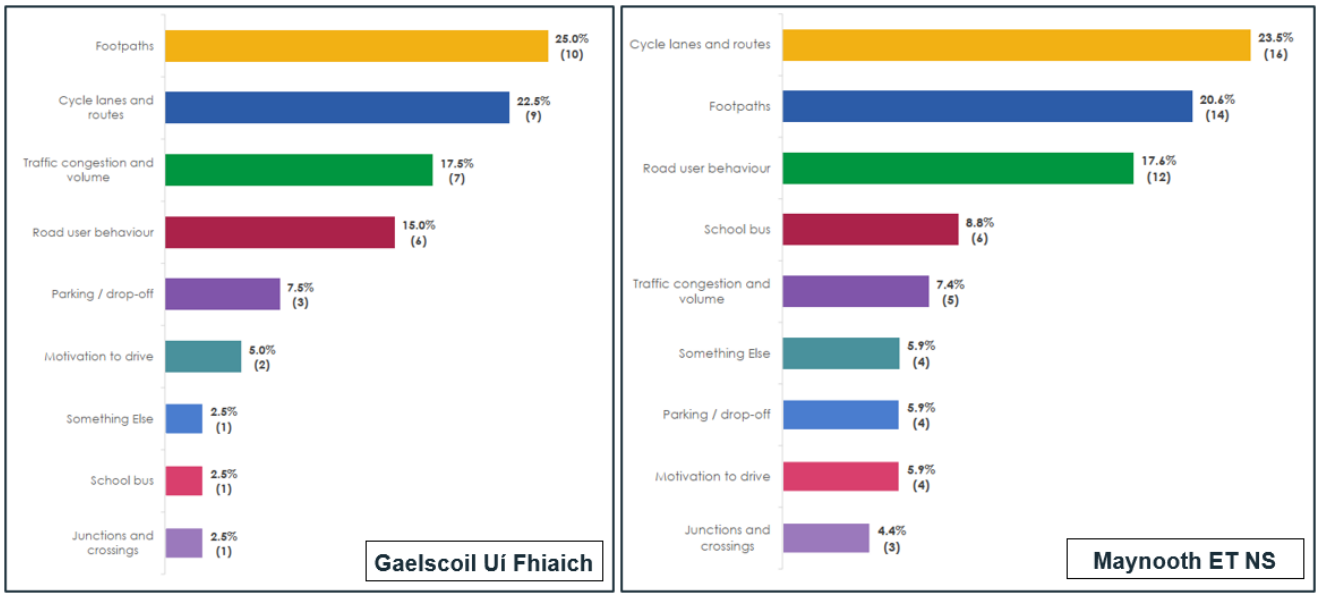

Figure 1-13 - Individual Survey Comments[2]

Based on the survey results above, there is strong support for enhanced active travel facilities from families who has children studying in either schools, particularly upgrades to footpaths and the provision of dedicated cycle tracks. Respondents have also highlighted concerns on high vehicular speeds along the road, especially near school entrances, which increases the risk of collisions between vehicles and pedestrians.

The proposed improvements as part of the Celbridge Road Active Travel Scheme, including footpath upgrades, segregated cycle tracks, traffic calming measures, and enhanced crossing facilities, will significantly improve the current layout of the route and allow school children to travel to and from school in a much safer and more comfortable manner.

[2] The graphs represent the individual survey comments submitted by each respondent with specific concerns. These comments collected from the survey have been categorised into charts and placed under the most applicable category.

1.5 Construction Methodology

The Construction period for the proposed scheme is anticipated to be 12-18 months and can be summarised as follows;

1.5.1 Cycle path Construction

Works will commence with the clearance and off-site removal of redundant road signage, boundary treatment, road surface materials and topsoil. The works will be undertaken using a combination of operatives using hand tools, mechanical excavators and dumper trucks. To facilitate the main works, underground utilities which conflict with the main works will be uncovered using mechanical excavators and hand digging where appropriate. The need for significant utility diversions is not envisaged as part of the works; instead a 'lower and protect' approach will be favoured. This is likely to be restricted to locations where the walking and cycling facilities cross or interface with public roads.

Following the diversion of utilities, the initial pavement and cycle track construction phase will be undertaken. This will include the excavation and removal of the existing stone, soil, concrete and bitumen materials along the route followed by the installation of new path and track base materials. Excavations will be largely undertaken by mechanical means, with any spoil arisings to be removed off site or reused locally where testing confirms its suitability. The proposed scheme involves an anticipated maximum excavation depth of 500mm below ground level to facilitate the base layers for the proposed footpaths / pavements and the ducting for the signalling associated with the scheme. The base layers of the pavement and track are to be made of compacted stone materials.

The works will also involve constructing the civil engineering elements required to facilitate the commissioning of the traffic signals and the public lighting elements at the latter stages of construction. Service chambers and underground duct sets will be laid within trenches and backfilled with granular material. Signal poles and public lighting columns will be erected, and ducting connections will be made to the base of each pole unit. Following completion of the lighting elements, the final pavement surface course will be laid using an asphalt paving machine followed by compaction using a vibrating roller.

1.5.2 Road Resurfacing

The scheme also involves the resurfacing of some of the roadways and painting of new road markings within the scheme footprint. The existing road surface course layer will be planed-out throughout the entire scheme extents with plantings being removed off site. The planed-out area will be replaced with Hot Rolled asphalt (HRA) or Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA) surface course ca. 40mm - 60mm thick. Following road resurfacing new road markings will be painted on road surfaces.

1.5.3 Road Construction

The scheme involves realignment of some of the roadway and full road construction. Similar to the cycle path construction, this will include the excavation and removal of the existing stone, soil, concrete and bitumen materials along the route followed by the installation of new subbase, base, binder and surfacing materials. Excavations will be largely undertaken by mechanical means, with any spoil arisings to be removed off site or reused locally where testing confirms its suitability. The proposed scheme involves an anticipated maximum excavation depth of 515mm below ground level to facilitate the base layers for the proposed pavements. The base layers of the pavement are to be made of compacted stone materials.

1.5.4 Footpath Construction

The construction of the cycleway will also involve relocation and installation of footpaths and kerbs adjacent to the cycleway. Footpaths will be constructed similar to the cycleway; excavation of existing footpath with materials removed off site to a licenced waste facility, excavations along footpath alignment to depths of maximum 500mm, infill of footpath subbase materials (compacted stone) and the pouring of concrete footpaths in shuttered sections. A ca. 100mm high poured concrete kerb will also be installed along the footpath edge.

1.5.5 Drainage Alterations

1.5.5.1 General

Drainage works, which will run in tandem with the pavement construction phase, are considered to be minimal and restricted to areas where the scheme interfaces with the public road. The drainage works at these locations are limited to the relocation of existing road gullies with the larger existing road drainage infrastructure (i.e. carrier drains) not being altered or adjusted. During these works the main carrier drains will be isolated / blocked off from works activities / work zones to facilitate the relocation of drainage gullies.

Typically, drainage will be provided using the existing surface water drainage system with existing gullies relocated into the realigned carriageway channel. The new footpaths and cycle tracks will generally slope towards the road in order to remove the need for additional drainage collection measures. Alternatively, and where the proposed scheme results in a marked increase in catchment area (due to an increased hard-standing area), sections of footpath and/or cycle track will be constructed using either porous surfacing; or where appropriate, the cross-fall will fall towards an adjacent grass verge (thus not discharging into the surface water network). The details of this will be developed as part of the detailed design.

1.5.5.2 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be provided at a number of locations along the scheme to allow for an increase in conventional, nature-based drainage as part of the proposed works. The use of SuDS would enhance biodiversity and amenity through the introduction of plants and in turn would improve the attractiveness of the existing streetscape. The following measures will be considered:

- **Provision of New Green Spaces**

  Where the opportunity arises, additional planting areas will be proposed to allow addition SuDS opportunities for the scheme. This will include additional low-level planting areas and trees to be incorporated into the design i.e. along the filtered permeability location on Laurence Avenue.
- **SuDS Retrofit within Existing Green Spaces**

  At certain locations of the scheme where existing grassed areas are available, additional SuDS can be incorporated to allow these areas to receive surface water by directing the runoff from surrounding hard surfaces including road surfacing, footpaths and cycle tracks to the grassed areas. This may also include the use of filtered drains below the grassed surfaces, improving the quantity and quality of water that enters the watercourses.
- **Tree Pits with Stockholm System**

  Several new trees to be planted as part of the proposed works will be using the “Stockholm System” to create a SuDS tree pit. The Stockholm System provides structural support for the trees through large interlocking stones with voids that are then filled with organic material.

The details of the proposed SuDS will be developed as part of the detailed design.

1.5.6 Verge Reinstatement

For soft landscaping areas topsoil profiles will be graded to tie into the new pavement levels followed by grass seeding. The top soiling and seeding will be undertaken using a combination of mechanical excavator, tractor unit drawing a rotavator / rake / seed spreader and also operatives using hand tools for areas where machinery access is unavailable.

1.5.7 Traffic Management

The construction of the cycleway will be carried out in short segments (ca.100-200m in length) on one side of the roadway at a time to allow for continued traffic flow and will progress along the roadways, as such individual work zones will be relatively small.

1.5.8 Junctions

All junctions along the scheme will be segregated. This will feature cyclists passing through the junction on their own cycle tracks. The proposed junctions are to include kerb upstands throughout (except at crossing points), providing vertical segregation and thereby increasing protection to the cycle tracks.

1.5.1 Watercourse Crossings

There are no watercourse/crossings along the scheme.

1.5.2 Site Compound

It will be the responsibility of the Contractor to determine a suitable location for the site compound within the proposed development area, but away from any identified environmental sensitive receptors (watercourses, designated sites etc). It is planned that existing Local Authority (Kildare County Council) controlled material storage yards in the locality, currently used for the storage of inert materials, will be utilised during the construction phase to store similarly inert materials for incorporation in the proposed scheme. Materials will be brought to site on a periodic basis as required directly from suppliers. Parking for operatives will be at the main compound only. Operatives will be transported from the compound to the works area. No parking will be allowed within the temporary works area or on-street.

2. Scope of Study

2.1 Legislative Context

2.1.1 Natura 2000

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ("the Habitats Directive") is a legislative instrument of the European Union (EU) which provides legal protection for habitats and species of Community interest. Article 2 of the Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of such habitats and species at a favourable conservation status, while Articles 3 to 9, inclusive, provide for the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of special areas of conservation (SACs), known as Natura 2000, which also includes special protection areas (SPAs) designated under Article 4 of Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds ("the Birds Directive"). Both SACs and SPAs are commonly referred to as "European sites" or "Natura 2000 sites".

SACs are selected for natural habitat types listed on Annex I to the Habitats Directive and the habitats of species listed on Annex II to the Habitats Directive. SPAs are selected for species listed on Annex I to the Birds Directive, other regularly occurring migratory species and other species of special conservation interest. The habitats and species for which a Natura 2000 site is selected are referred to as the "*qualifying interests*" of that site and each is assigned a "*conservation objective*" aimed at maintaining or restoring its "*favourable conservation condition*" at the site, which contributes to the maintenance or restoration of its "*favourable conservation status*" at national and European levels.

2.1.2 Appropriate Assessment

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive deals with the management and protection of Natura 2000 sites. Articles 6(3) and (4) set out the decision-making process, known as "*Appropriate Assessment*" (AA), for plans or projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) states: -

> *"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the 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."*

The first sentence of Article 6(3) provides a basis for determining which plans and projects require AA, i.e., those "*not directly connected with or necessary to the management of* [one or more Natura 2000 sites] *but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects*".

In *Waddenzee* (C-127/02), the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that significant effects must be considered "*likely*" if "*it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information*", that they would occur. This clearly sets a low threshold, such that AA is required wherever there is a reasonable possibility of significant effects on a Natura 2000 site. In the same judgment, the CJEU established that the test of significance relates specifically to the conservation objectives of the site concerned, i.e., "*significant effects*" are those which, "*in the light, inter alia, of the characteristics and specific environmental conditions of the site*", could undermine the site's conservation objectives.

In addition to the effects of the plan or project on its own, the combined effects arising from the plan or project under consideration and other plans and projects must also be assessed (see Section 5.4 for more details).

The last part of the first sentence of Article 6(3) defines AA as an assessment of the "*implications* [of the plan or project] *for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives*". In the second sentence, Article 6(3) requires that, prior to agreeing to a plan or project, the competent authority must "*ascertain*" that "*it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned*". In *Sweetman v. An Bord Pleanála* (C-258/11), the CJEU ruled that a plan or project "*will adversely affect the integrity of that site if it is liable to prevent the lasting preservation of the constitutive characteristics of the site that are connected to the presence of a priority natural habitat whose conservation was the objective justifying the designation of the site in the list of sites*". On that basis, EC (2018) described the "*integrity of the site*" as "*the coherent sum of the site's ecological structure, function and ecological processes, across its whole area, which enables it to sustain the habitats, complex of habitats and/or populations of species for which the site is designated*". As such, the "*integrity*" of a specific site is defined by its conservation objectives and is "*adversely affected*" when those objectives are undermined. In *Waddenzee*, the CJEU ruled that the absence of adverse effects can only be ascertained "*where no reasonable scientific doubt remains*".

The "*precautionary principle*" applies to all of the legal tests in AA, i.e., in the absence of objective information to demonstrate otherwise, the worst-case scenario is assumed. Where the tests established by Article 6(3) cannot be satisfied, Article 6(4) applies (see explanation in Section 2.2 below).

2.1.3 Competent Authority

The requirements of Articles 6(3) and (4) are transposed into Irish law by, inter alia, Part 5 of the European Communities (Birds and Natura Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (as amended) ("the Habitats Regulations") and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) ("the Planning and Development Acts"). As per the second sentence of Article 6(3), it is the "*competent national authorities*" who are responsible for carrying out AA and, by extension, for determining which plans and projects require AA. The competent authority in each case is the body responsible for authorising a plan or project, e.g. local or other public authorities (including TII), An Bord Pleanála, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or a Government Minister. In all cases, it is the competent authority who is ultimately responsible for determining whether or not a plan or project requires AA and for carrying out the AA, where required.

2.2 Appropriate Assessment Process

The AA process can be described as being made up of three distinct stages, as described below, the need to progress to each stage being determined by the outcome of the preceding stage.

Stage 1: Screening – This stage involves a determination by the competent authority as to whether or not a given plan or project required AA. As explained in Section 2.1, AA is required in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site, but for which the possibility of likely significant effects on one or more Natura 2000 sites cannot be excluded. The CJEU's Judgment on *Eco Advocacy v. An Bord Pleanála* (C-721/21) and the *Opinion* of Advocate General Kokott in the same case set out the principles for identifying any aspects of a plan or project which may constitute what the CJEU termed in *People Over Wind* (C-323/17) "*measures intended to avoid or minimise harmful effects on a Natura 2000 site*" and, as such, cannot be taken into account in making an AA Screening determination. Consideration of the potential for in-combination effects is also required at this stage.

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment – This stage involves a detailed assessment of the implications of the plan or project, individually and in combination with other plans and projects, for the integrity of the Natura 2000 site(s) concerned. This stage also involves the development of appropriate mitigation to address any adverse effects and an assessment of the significance of any residual impacts following the inclusion of mitigation. In *Kelly v. An*

Bord Pleanála (IEHC 400), the High Court ruled that a lawful AA must contain complete, precise, and definitive findings based on examination and analysis, and conclusions and a final determination based on an evaluation of the findings. In the same judgment, the High Court stressed that, in order for the findings to be complete, precise, and definitive, the AA must be carried out in light of best scientific knowledge in the field and cannot have gaps or lacunae. In *Holohan v. An Bord Pleanála* (C-461/17), the CJEU clarified that AA must "*catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected*" (i.e. the qualifying interests of the site) and assess the implications of the plan or project for the qualifying interests, both within and outside the site boundaries, and other, non-qualifying interest habitats and species, whether inside or outside the site boundaries, "*provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site*". The proposer of a plan or project requiring AA is furnishes the competent authority with the scientific evidence upon which to base its AA by way of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) or Natura Impact Report (NIR). If it is not possible to ascertain that the plan or project will not adversely affect one or more Natura 2000 sites, authorisation can only be granted subject to Article 6(4).

Stage 3: Article 6(4) – If a plan or project does not pass the legal test at Stage 2, alternative solutions to achieve its aims must be considered and themselves subject to Article 6(3). If no feasible alternatives exist, authorisation can only be granted where it can be demonstrated that there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) justifying its implementation. Where this is the case, all compensatory measures must be taken to protect the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

The three stages described above are illustrated in Figure 2-1 below.

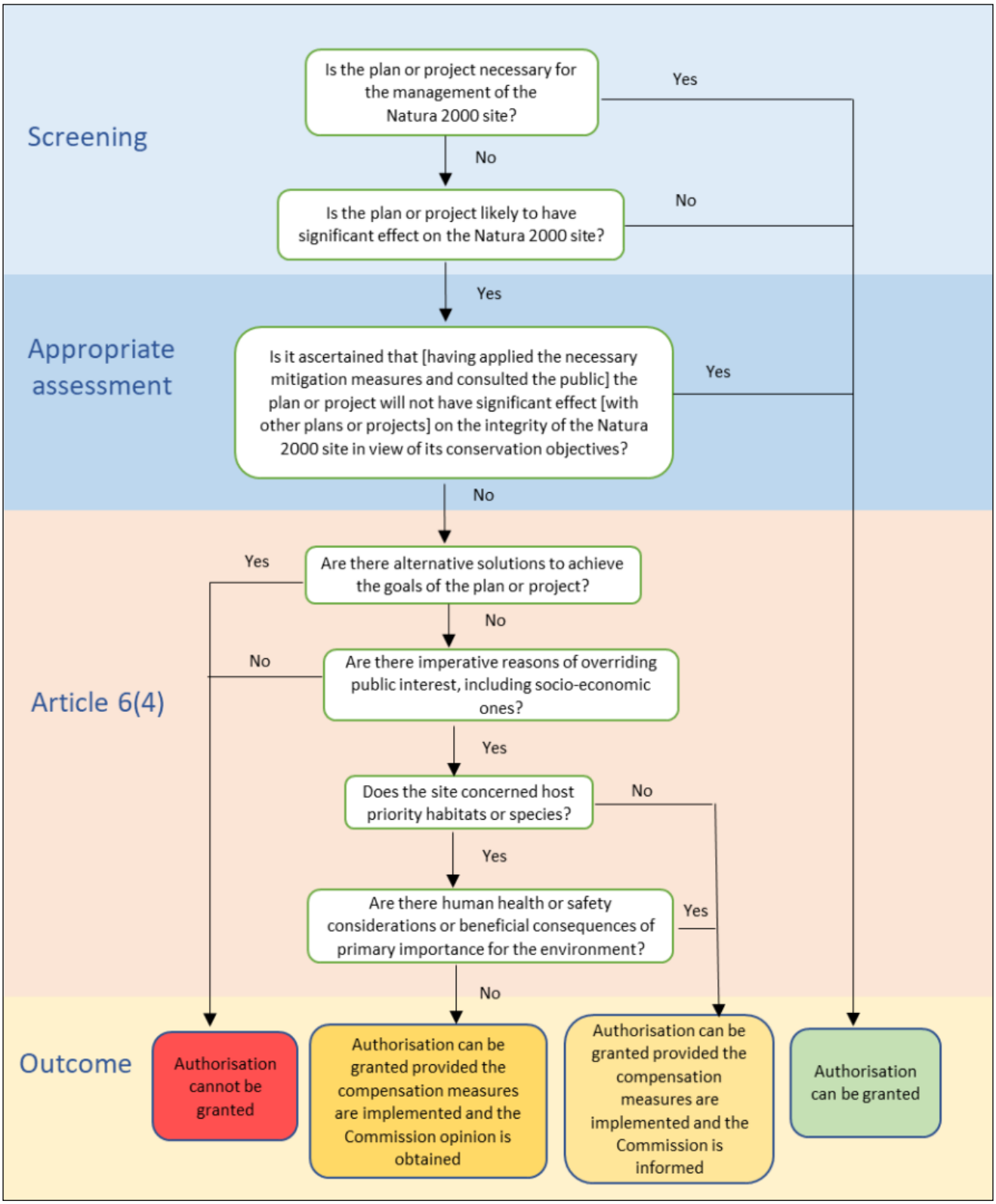

Figure 2-1 - Stages of the Appropriate Assessment process (EC, 2021a)

3. Methods

3.1 Guidance documents

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment was prepared with reference and due consideration to the following documents, guidelines and case law, including but not limited to: -

- Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna. *Official Journal of the European Communities* L 206/7-50.
- Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds. *Official Journal of the European Union* L 20/7-25.
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011. *S.I. No. 77/2011* (as amended) ("the Habitats Regulations").
- Planning and Development Act, 2000. *No. 30 of 2000* (as amended) ("the Planning and Development Acts").
- Planning and Development Regulations, 2001. S.I. No. 600/2001 (as amended) ("the Planning Regulations").
- EC (2019). *Managing Natura 2000 sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.* European Commission, Brussels. *Official Journal of the European Union* C 33/1-62.
- EC (2021a). *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.* European Commission, Brussels. *Official Journal of the European Union* C 437/1-107.
- EC (2021b) *Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive. C(2021) 7301.* European Commission, Brussels.
- DG Env (2022) *Guidance document on assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – A summary.* Directorate-General for Environment, European Commission, Brussels. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxemburg.
- DEHLG (2010a) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Revised 11/02/2010.* Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.
- DEHLG (2010b) *Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10. Dated 11/03/2010.* Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.
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- Mullen, E., Marnell, F. and Nelson, B. (2021) Strict Protection of Animal Species – Guidance for Public authorities on the Application of Articles 12 and 16 of the EU Habitats Directive to development/works undertaken by or on behalf of a Public authority. *National Parks & Wildlife Service Guidance Series* 2, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Dublin.

- OPR (2021) *Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. OPR Practice Note PN01.* Office of the Planning Regulator, Dublin.

- Case law, including *Waddenzee* (C-127/02), *Sweetman v. An Bord Pleanála* (C-258/11), *Kelly v. An Bord Pleanála* (IEHC 400), *Commission v. Germany* (C-142/16), *People Over Wind* (C-323/17), *Holohan v. An Bord Pleanála* (C-461/17), *Eoin Kelly v. An Bord Pleanála* (IEHC 84), *Heather Hill* (IEHC 450) and *Eco Advocacy v. An Bord Pleanála* (C-721/21).

- Sundseth, K. and Roth, P. (2014) *Article 6 of the Habitats Directive – Rulings of the European Court of Justice.* Ecosystems LTD (N2K Group), Brussels.

3.2 Desk Study

Baseline data regarding the receiving environment, including Natura 2000 sites, was gathered through a thorough desk study.

The boundaries of Natura 2000 sites were downloaded from *NPWS: Maps and Data* <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data>. Information on sites, including their overall structures and functions, qualifying interests, conservation objectives and threats/pressures and activities therein, was found in the Site Synopsis, Natura 2000 Standard Data Form, Conservation Objectives and supporting documents for each site. Spatial data for site-specific conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, and boundary data for other designated sites, such as Natural Heritage Areas, was also retrieved from *NPWS: Maps and Data.* Reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive (NPWS, 2019a-c; *Article 17 web tool*) and Article 12 of the Birds Directive (NPWS, 2024c; *Article 12 web tool*) provided further information on the habitats and species concerned at the national level.

Information relating to recent and historical records of species was obtained from the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) *Biodiversity Maps* <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map>.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) map viewer *EPA Maps (Water)* <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water> and spatial data for river, lake, canal, transitional and coastal waterbodies downloaded from the *EPA Geoportal* <https://gis.epa.ie/GetData/Download> was used to identify any hydrological connection between the proposed works and Natura 2000 sites or connected features. Satellite and aerial imagery from Google Earth, Bing Maps and Tailte Éireann was reviewed to identify hedgerows, treelines and other potential ecological features.

In order to inform the assessment of potential in-combination effects, planning applications from the surrounding area were reviewed using the National Planning Application Database, An Coimisiún Pleanála's online map viewer and the EIA Portal.

Information from the aforementioned data sources was last accessed 12th February 2026.

3.3 Site Visit

Invasive plant species surveys were undertaken on 4th of September 2024 by AtkinsRéalis ecologist Daniel Blake who has experience of surveying for invasive plant species, and AtkinsRéalis graduate ecologist Kevin Coogan. The site was walked, and any visible signs of invasive plant species were recorded. Photographs were taken of any non-native invasive plant species observed.

3.4 Statement of Authority

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment report was prepared by Kevin Coogan, Daniel Blake and Colin Wilson. Owen O'Keefe provided peer review and support.

Kevin Coogan (AtkinsRéalis) has a BSc (Hons) in Zoology from University College Dublin. He has developed ecological surveying skills through country-wide small river sampling experience, as well as habitat evaluation experience in Spain and Ireland. He has volunteer experience in bird surveying on North Bull Island SPA and Ireland's Eye SPA. Kevin collated background information for this assessment. He conducts research and site surveys including habitat classification (Fossitt classification), bird surveys, and terrestrial mammal activity. He assists in bat surveying and has carried out numerous bat emergence/activity surveys. He also assists in the development of Appropriate Assessment Screening reports, biodiversity chapters in various types of environmental assessment report (environmental constraints reports, feasibility reports, project design reports).

Daniel Blake (AtkinsRéalis Dublin) has a degree in Wildlife Biology and has been working in the environmental consultancy sector since 2017. He has worked in both large scale government infrastructure projects as well as domestic projects across the UK and Ireland conducting both environmental and ecological roles. Primarily conducting protected species surveys such as bats, badgers, birds, reptiles, small mammals and amphibians as well as invasive species surveys. He has also earned a Natural England licence for the survey of Great crested newt. He has been involved in habitat surveying and assisted in the writing of Appropriate Assessments, Preliminary ecological appraisals and protected species reports. Throughout his career he has acted as an ECoW for numerous sites to ensure environmental laws and practices are met. He has been involved in water and soil sampling surveys, levelling surveys and creation of hibernaculum.

Colin Wilson (AtkinsRéalis Dublin) has a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science and is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM). He has over 16 years working in the fields of ecology and environmental management. He is a Senior Ecologist with experience in ecological surveying, environmental assessment, on-site ecological supervision and mitigation. He has experience on multiple infrastructure projects regarding all elements of surface and groundwater management, monitoring, sampling and associated reporting. Colin also has a broad range of experience in invasive species management, biosecurity and control. Colin has prepared AA screening reports, Natura Impact Statements and has also been involved in the development of Environmental Operating Plans and Construction Environmental Management Plans for a number of national infrastructure projects. Colin is the author of this report.

Owen O'Keefe is a Senior Ecologist at AtkinsRéalis. He holds a BSc (Hons) in Ecology from University College Cork (2015) and is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM). He has 9 years' professional experience in ecological consultancy, including extensive experience in Appropriate Assessment. He has prepared a large number of AA Screening Reports and Natura Impact Statements, as well as carried out technical appraisals of such reports for competent authorities. Owen undertook the peer review of this report.

4. Existing Environment

4.1 General Overview

The location of the proposed scheme is through Maynooth town traveling entirely along urbanised areas predominantly on hardstanding surfaces (roads, pathways) and also includes roadside grass verges. The surface water drainage network from the proposed scheme site is via the existing roadway drainage infrastructure which outfalls to the local Lyreen River which is a tributary of the Rye Water River which in turn connects to River Liffey in Leixlip County Kildare.

4.2 Site Surveys

The site was walked on the 4th September 2024 commencing at Maynooth Educate Together School, and then proceeding along Laurence Avenue followed by Straffan Road and Rail Park before ending at Celbridge Road Griffin Rath Manor. Both sides of the road were inspected for the presence of invasive species. No legally restricted invasive species were found within the scheme site.

Site surveys noted the scheme site consists of hardstanding surfaces, grass verges and road side treelines, hedges and specimen trees. Roadside tree species include rowan, sycamore, beech, ash, yew, willow, laurel, and cypress species. There are no watercourses or Annex 1 habitats located within or adjacent to the scheme site.

4.3 Designated Sites

Natural Heritage Area (NHA) is the basic designation for wildlife sites. These sites are considered to represent important habitats for species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection[3]. These sites are protected under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000)[4].

Additionally, proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) are those which have been published on a non-statutory basis, and have yet to be statutorily designated. These sites are of significance to flora, fauna, and their respective habitats. These sites will be designated on a phased basis over the coming years. Prior to designation pNHAs are subject to limited protection[5].

There are no NHAs within the scheme site, the nearest NHA is Hodgestown Bog NHA located ca. 15km southwest of the scheme site.

There are 2 no. pNHAs within 5km of the proposed scheme. The nearest is the Royal Canal pNHA located c. 350m east of the proposed scheme site. The Rye Water Valley/Carton pNHA is located 1.6km north of the scheme site. There is no potential for direct or indirect hydrological connectivity from the scheme site to the Royal Canal pNHA, as the road drains outfall to the Lyreen river, located c. 770m northwest of the scheme site. There is the potential for indirect hydrological connectivity from the scheme site to the Rye Water Valley/Carton pNHA

[3] https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/nha

[4] https://www.npws.ie/legislation/irish-law/wildlife-amendment-act-2000

[5] https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/nha

via the surface water drainage network which outfalls to the Lyreen river which is a tributary of the Rye Water. Refer to Figure 4-1 below for locations of the 2 no. pNHAs in relation to the scheme site.

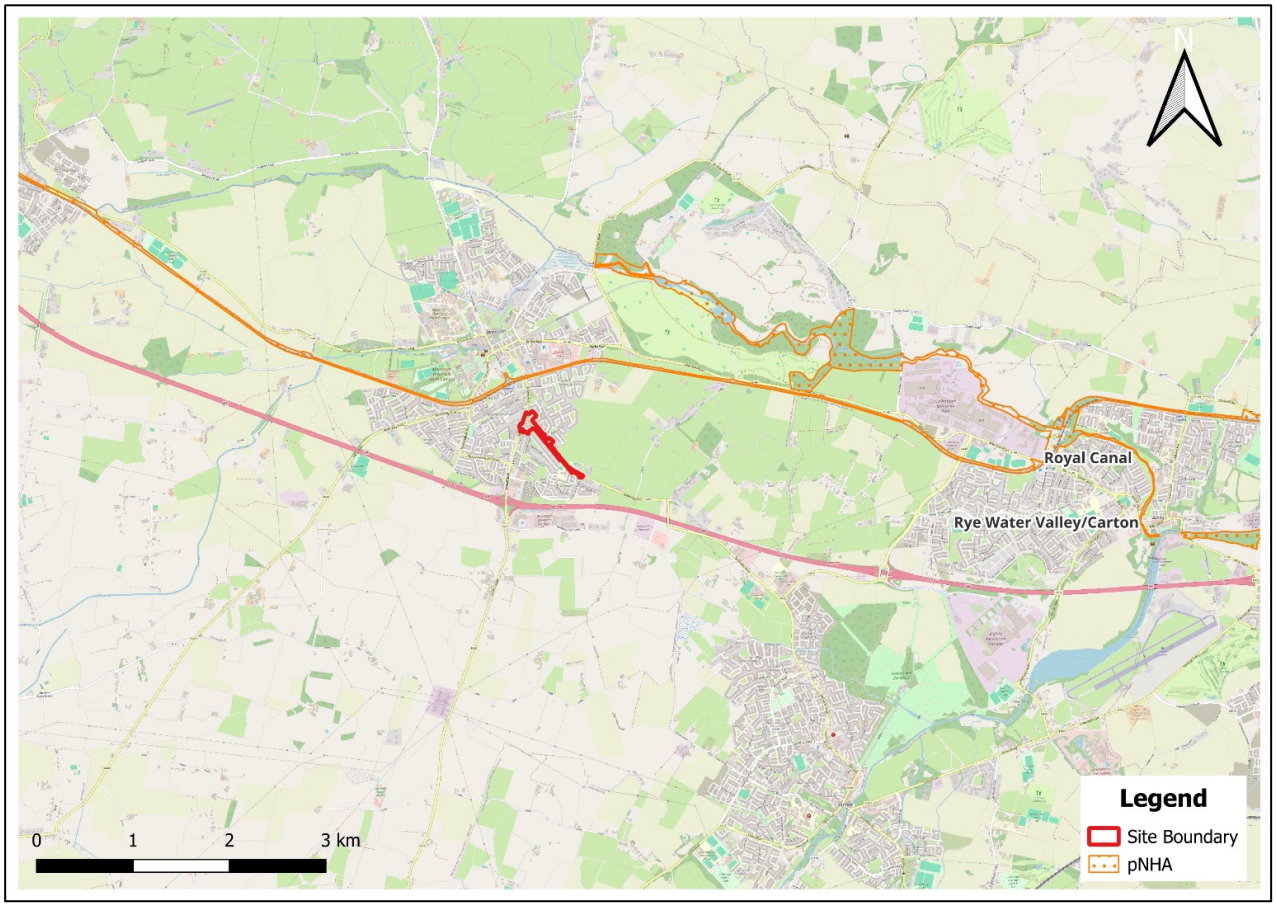

Figure 4-1 - pNHA near Proposed Scheme

4.4 Surface Water Features

There are no surface water features within the scheme site. The closest surface water features to the scheme site are the Maynooth stream located c. 280m from the scheme site, and the Taghadoe stream located c. 480m from the scheme site. These streams are tributaries of the Lyreen river which outfalls to the Rye Water River which in turn connects to the River Liffey. Refer to Figure 4-2 below for all surface water features within proximity of the scheme site. Surface water runoff from the scheme site will outfall via the existing road drainage infrastructure to the Lyreen River.

EPA records detail the Maynooth Stream, Taghadoe Stream and Lyreen River as having 'Poor' water quality status (2019-2024) under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and consider these watercourses as being 'At Risk' of not achieving a favourable WFD water quality status.

The EPA records indicate the Rye Water (EPA code: IE_EA_09R010600) as having 'Poor' water quality status (2019-2024) and consider the watercourse as being 'At Risk' of not achieving a favourable water quality status.

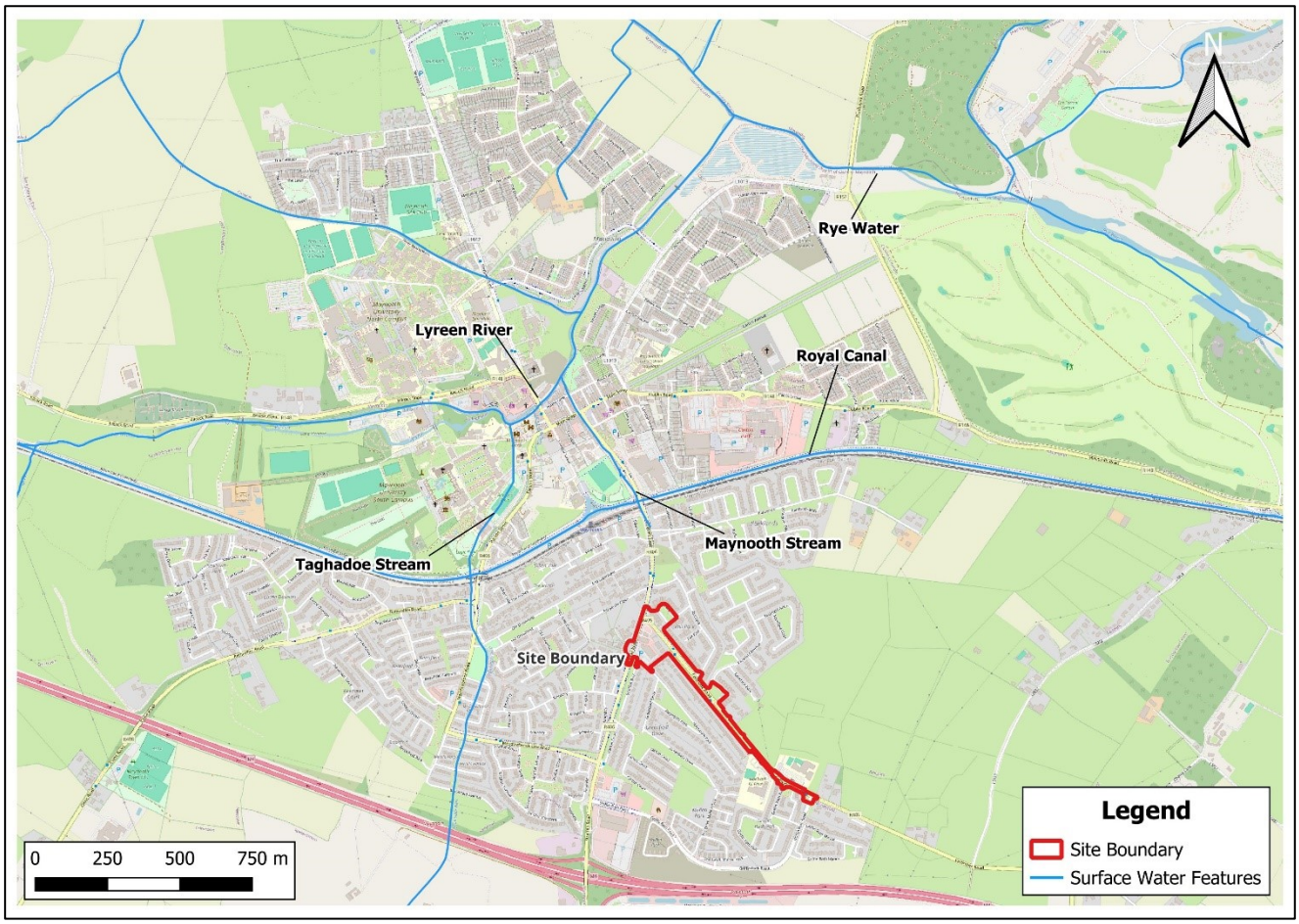

Figure 4-2 - Surface Water Features near the Proposed Scheme

4.5 Groundwater Body

The proposed scheme is located within the Dublin (Code IE_EA_G_008) groundwater body (GWB). This GWB is of 'Good' WFD status with an overall objective to 'Restore' and 'Protect' the current status. The proposed scheme is primarily underlain by a locally important aquifer that is moderately productive in local zones. The groundwater vulnerability beneath the route is predominately 'High'. This indicates that the bedrock would be shallow in this area and highly vulnerable to potential contamination.

4.6 Species

A search of National Biodiversity Data Centre records was carried out on the 12th February 2026 and which included the study area and a 100m buffer zone to capture mobile species in the surrounding environs. The following protected/threatened species were found within the five-year period (2021 – 2026): Frog (*Rana temporaria*), Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus sensu lato*), Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).

NBDC datasets do not identify any invasive plant species as having been recorded within the scheme site. No legally restricted invasive plant species have recorded within or near the scheme site during site surveys.

5. Connectivity to Natura 2000 Sites

5.1 Zone of Influence

The “Zone of Influence” of a plan, project or development is the area which may experience ecological effects as a result of its implementation, including any ancillary activities. The various impacts of a plan or project will each have their own characteristics, e.g. nature, extent, magnitude, duration etc. Accordingly, the area subject to each impact (“zone of impact”) will vary depending on characteristics of the impact and the presence of pathways for its propagation. Ecological features within or connected to one or more zones of impact could, depending on their sensitivities, be affected by the plan or project under consideration. The area containing such features may be regarded as the Zone of Influence. As such, in establishing the Zone of Influence for a plan, project or development, regard must be had to the characteristics of its potential impacts, potential pathways for impacts and the sensitivities of ecological features in the receiving environment.

In its guidance on selecting which Natura 2000 sites to include in the AA Screening, *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities* (DEHLG, 2010a) recommends inclusion of sites in the following three categories: -

- Any Natura 2000 sites within or adjacent to the plan or project area,
- Any Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence of the plan or project (generally within 15 km for plans, to be established on a case-by-case basis for projects, having regard to the nature, scale and location of the project, the sensitivities of the ecological receptors and the potential for in-combination effects), and
- Following the precautionary principle, any other Natura 2000 sites for which the possibility of significant effects cannot be excluded, e.g. for a project with hydrological impacts, it may be necessary to check the full extent of the catchment for Natura 2000 sites with water-dependent qualifying interests.

In addition, *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC, 2021) recommends consideration of Natura 2000 sites hosting fauna which could move to the project area or its zone(s) of impact, and the potential for the project to sever ecological connectivity within or between Natura 2000 sites. *Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management* (OPR, 2021) emphasises the importance of employing the source-pathway-receptor model (rather than arbitrary distances such as 15km) when selecting Natura 2000 sites for inclusion in the AA Screening.

The proposed scheme does not lie within any European site nor is it adjacent to any European site.

The nearest European site is Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC located c. 1.6km from the proposed scheme. Given the distance to this SAC there is no potential connectivity to Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC, or any European site further afield, via groundwater pathways.

The nearest European site, River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, which has highly mobile species as a qualifying interest is >22km from the proposed scheme site. Given this distance there is no potential for the proposed scheme to result in any noise, vibration or visual related adverse effects to any qualifying interest species accommodated within any European site.

The proposed scheme site is made up of hardstanding surfaces, grass verges and road side treelines, hedges and specimen trees. As such there are no habitats suitable for any ex-situ qualifying interest species (e.g. SPA birds, otters, aquatic species etc.). As such any ex-situ QI species are outside the ZoI of the proposed scheme.

The zone of influence of the scheme therefore is limited to those European sites with potential indirect connectivity through the following pathways: -

- Hydrological – effects from surface water quality and quantity.

There are 5 no. European sites within the potential zone of influence (ZoI) of the scheme; 5 no. SACs and 2 no. SPAs, as outlined in Table 5.1 below.

There is hydrological connection from the proposed scheme to Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, North Dublin Bay SAC via the Lyreen river which is a tributary of the Rye Water River, and River Liffey watercourses which ultimately outfalls to Dublin Bay.

Table 5.1 details the European sites which are within the potential ZoI of the proposed scheme, which lists their associated qualifying interests and specifies if there is connectivity to the European site from the proposed scheme or not.

Figures 5-1 depict the locations of the European Sites within the potential ZoI of the proposed scheme.

Table 5-1 - SACs within potential ZoI of the Proposed Scheme

Site Name and Code	Approximate Distance from scheme location	Features of Interest	Within the ZoI
Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (001398)[6]	1.6km north (2.2km downstream via Lyreen river)	• Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] • *Vertigo angustior* (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] • *Vertigo moulinsiana* (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]	Yes Surface water run-off from the proposed scheme site will discharge to the Lyreen river which flows to Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC thereby providing a hydrological link between the proposed scheme site and this SAC. This site is discussed further below.
Ballynafagh Lake SAC (001387)[7]	14.8km south west	• Alkaline fens [7230] • *Vertigo moulinsiana* (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] • *Euphydryas aurinia* (Marsh Fritillary) [1065]	No. There is no direct overlap between the proposed scheme site and this SAC. There is no potential hydrological connection from the proposed scheme to this SAC via watercourses, drains, ditches or any other vectors, as surface water drainage from the proposed scheme enters the Rye Water/Liffey system, flowing away from this SAC The location, scale and duration of proposed scheme is such that it will not contribute to direct or indirect impacts on habitats and species for which the SAC has been designated and does not have the potential to affect the conservation objectives of these habitats and species. The site is not considered further.
Ballynafagh Bog SAC (000391)[8]	14.9km south west	• Active raised bogs [7110]	No. There is no direct overlap between the proposed scheme site and this SAC.

[6] https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001398.pdf
[7] https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001387.pdf
[8] https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000391.pdf

Site Name and Code	Approximate Distance from scheme location	Features of Interest	Within the ZoI
		• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] • Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* [7150]	There is no potential hydrological connection from the proposed scheme to this SAC, via watercourses, drains, ditches or any other vectors as surface water drainage from the proposed scheme enters the Rye Water/Liffey system, flowing away from this SAC. The location, scale and duration of proposed scheme is such that it will not contribute to direct or indirect impacts on habitats for which the SAC has been designated and does not have the potential to affect the conservation objectives of these habitats. The site is not considered further.
South Dublin Bay SAC (000210)[9]	24.6km east (33km downstream)	• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] • Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] • Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]	No. There is no direct overlap between the proposed scheme site and this SAC. Although there is potential weak hydrological connection from the proposed scheme site to this SAC, the Qualifying Interests for which this SAC is designated will not be impacted by any potential adverse hydrological conditions as a result of the proposed scheme during the construction or operational phase. This is due to the dilution, dispersal and attenuation that would occur through c. 33km of watercourses between the proposed scheme site and this SAC. The site is not considered further.

[9] https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000210.pdf

Site Name and Code	Approximate Distance from scheme location	Features of Interest	Within the ZoI
North Dublin Bay SAC (000206)[10]	26.4km (34km downstream)	• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] • Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] • Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330] • Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410] • Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] • Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes) [2120] • Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] • Humid dune slacks [2190] • *Petalophyllum ralfsii* (Petalwort) [1395]	No. There is no direct overlap between the proposed scheme site and this SAC. Although there is potential weak hydrological connection from the proposed scheme site to this SAC, the Qualifying Interests for which this SAC is designated will not be impacted by any potential adverse hydrological conditions as a result of the proposed scheme during the construction or operational phase. This is due to the dilution, dispersal and attenuation that would occur through c. 34km of watercourses between the proposed scheme site and this SAC. The site is not considered further

[10] https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000206.pdf

Table 5-2 - SPAs within potential ZoI of the Proposed Scheme

Site Name and Code	Approximate Distance from scheme location	Features of Interest	Within the ZoI
South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (004024)[11]	26km east (34km downstream)	• Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) [A046] • Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) [A130] • Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) [A137] • Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141] • Knot (*Calidris canutus*) [A143] • Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) [A144] • Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) [A149] • Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157] • Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162] • Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179] • Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*) [A192] • Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) [A193] • Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) [A194] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No. There is no direct overlap between the proposed scheme site and this SPA. Although there is potential weak hydrological connection from the proposed scheme site to this SPA, the Qualifying Interests for which this SPA is designated will not be impacted by any potential adverse hydrological conditions as a result of the proposed scheme during the construction or operational phase. This is due to the dilution, dispersal and attenuation that would occur through c. 34km of watercourses between the proposed scheme site and this SPA. Site surveys identified there are no habitats within the scheme site suitable for accommodating ex-situ SPA birds. The location, scale and nature of the proposed scheme is such that they will not contribute to direct or indirect impacts on the habitats or species for which the SPA has been designated and do not have the potential to affect the conservation objectives of QI wetland habitats or species. This site is not considered further.

[11] https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004024.pdf

Site Name and Code	Approximate Distance from scheme location	Features of Interest	Within the ZoI
North Bull Island SPA (004006)[12]	27km east (35km downstream)	• Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) [A046] • Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) [A048] • Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052] • Pintail (*Anas acuta*) [A054] • Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) [A056] • Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) [A130] • Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140] • Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141] • Knot (*Calidris canutus*) [A143] • Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) [A144] • Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) [A149] • Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156] • Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157] • Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) [A160] • Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162] • Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) [A169] • Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No. There is no direct overlap between the proposed scheme site and this SPA. Although there is potential weak hydrological connection from the proposed scheme site to this SPA, the Qualifying Interests for which this SPA is designated will not be impacted by any potential adverse hydrological conditions as a result of the proposed scheme during the construction or operational phase. This is due to the dilution, dispersal and attenuation that would occur through c. 35km of watercourses between the proposed scheme site and this SPA. Site surveys identified there are no habitats within the scheme site suitable for accommodating ex-situ SPA birds. The location, scale and nature of the proposed scheme is such that they will not contribute to direct or indirect impacts on the habitats or species for which the SPA has been designated and do not have the potential to affect the conservation objectives of QI wetland habitats or species. This site is not considered further.

[12] https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004006.pdf

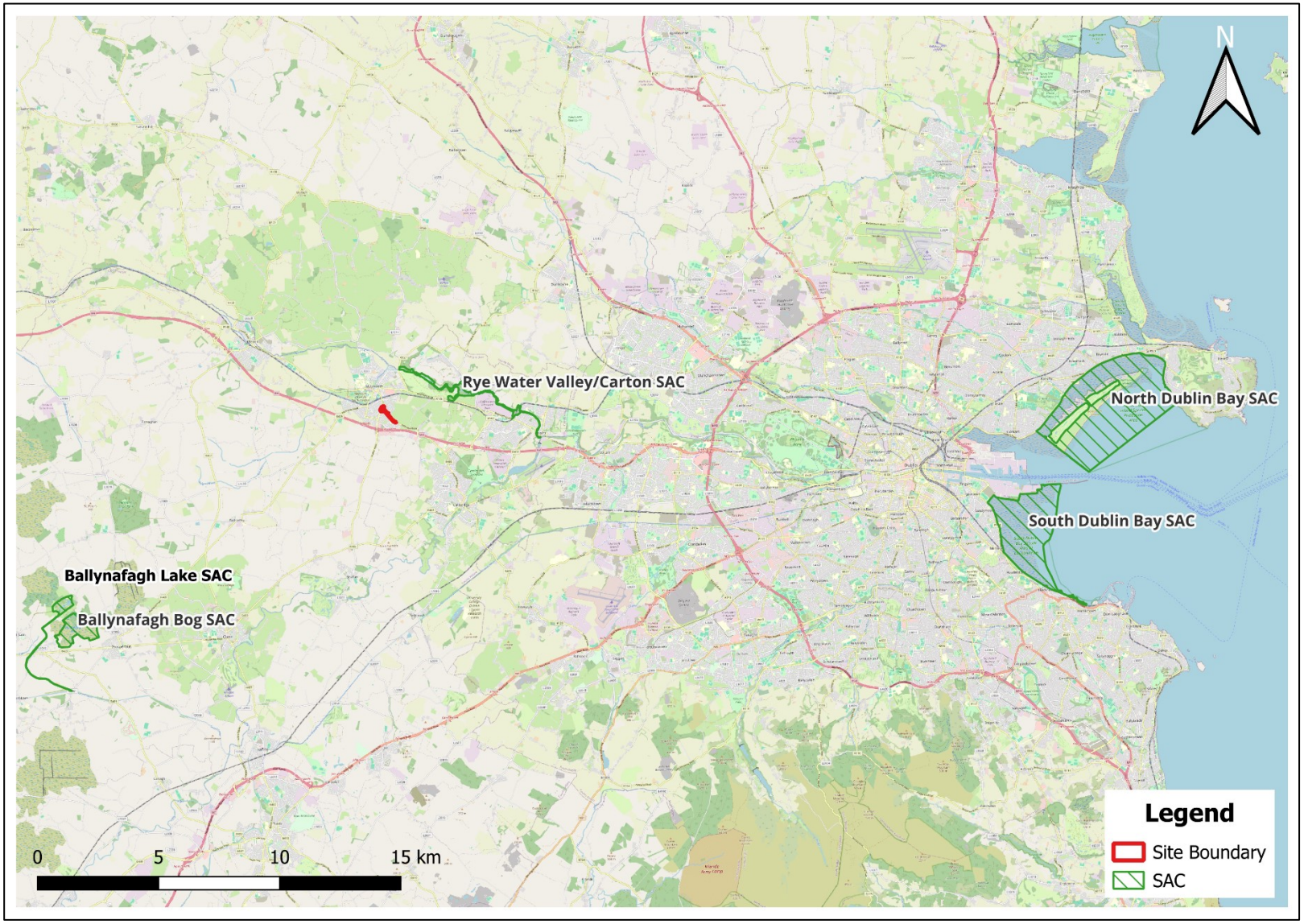

Figure 5-1 - SACs within the potential ZoI of the Proposed Scheme

Figure 5-2 - SPAs within the potential ZoI of the Proposed Scheme

5.2 Brief Description of Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC

A synopsis of the SAC, as detailed by NPWS, is as follows [13]:

> "*Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC is located between Leixlip and Maynooth, in Counties Meath and Kildare, and extends along the Rye Water, a tributary of the River Liffey.*
>
> *The Rye Water in Carton Estate is dammed at intervals, creating a series of lakes. Reed Sweet-grass (Glyceria maxima) is frequent around the lakes, along with Yellow Iris (Iris pseudacorus), Reed Canary-grass (Phalaris arundinacea), Bulrush (Typha latifolia), Water Forget-me-not (Myosotis scorpioides), Marsh-marigold (Caltha palustris) and starworts (Callitriche spp.). Along the remainder of the site the river has been dredged and much of the reed fringe removed.*
>
> *To the north-west of Carton Bridge a small clump of willows (Salix spp.), with dogwood (Cornus sp.), Alder (Alnus glutinosa), Ash (Fraxinus excelsior) and Elder (Sambucus nigra) occurs. The ground flora found here includes Golden Saxifrage (Chrysosplenium oppostifolium), Meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria), Common Valerian (Valeriana officinalis), Wavy Bitter-cress (Cardamine flexuosa) and Bittersweet (Solanum dulcamara)*
>
> *The woods on Carton Estate are mostly old demesne woods with both deciduous and coniferous species. Conifers, including some Yew (Taxus baccata) – a native species, are dominant, with Beech (Fagus sylvatica), oak (Quercus sp.), Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus), Ash and Hazel (Corylus avellana) also occurring. The ground flora is dominated by Ivy (Hedera helix), with such species as Hedge Woundwort (Stachys sylvatica), Wood Speedwell (Veronica montana), Woodruff (Galium odoratum), Wood Avens (Geum urbanum), Common Dog-violet (Viola riviniana), Wild Angelica (Angelica sylvestris), Ramsons (Allium ursinum), Ground-ivy (Glechoma hederacea) and Ivy Broomrape (Orobanche hederae) also found.*
>
> *Hairy St. John's-wort (Hypericum hirsutum), a species legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, occurs in Carton Estate and there is an old record from the estate for the similarly protected Hairy Violet (Viola hirta). However, this latter species has not been recorded from the site in recent years. Another species listed in the Red Data Book, Green Figwort (Scrophularia umbrosa), occurs on the site in several locations by the Rye Water. The woods at Carton Demesne are the site of a rare Myxomycete fungus, Diderma deplanatum.*
>
> *The marsh, mineral spring and seepage area found at Louisa Bridge supports a good diversity of plant species, including stoneworts, Marsh Arrowgrass (Triglochin palustris), Purple Moor-grass (Molinea caerulea), sedges (Carex spp.), Common Butterwort (Pinguicula vulgaris), Marsh Lousewort (Pedicularis palustris), Grass-ofparnassus (Parnassia palustris) and Cuckooflower (Cardamine pratensis). The mineral spring found at the site is of a type considered to be rare in Europe and is a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The Red Data Book species Blue Fleabane (Erigeron acer) is found growing on a wall at Louisa Bridge.*

[13] https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/synopsis/SY001398.pdf

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

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

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

5.2.1 Conservation Objectives of Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC

The conservation objectives for Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC, to maintain the favourable conservation for each of the qualifying interests of the site, were published by NPWS (2021) Version 1.0; 22/12/2021.

These were reviewed and considered when preparing this report. The conservation objectives can be broadly summarized as follows: -

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*)* in Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (*Vertigo angustior*) in Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) in Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC

5.2.2 Potential Threats

The threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the SAC[14] are listed below in Table 5.3.

Table 5-3 - Threats, Pressures and activities with impacts on Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC.

Rank [High/Medium/Low]	Pollution
M	Continuous urbanisation
M	Modifying structures of inland water courses
M	Sylviculture, forestry
L	Dispersed habitation

[14] https://biodiversity.europa.eu/sites/natura2000/IE0001398

L	Fertilisation
L	Grazing
L	Removal of hedges and copses or scrub
L	Roads, motorways

5.3 Identification of Potential Impacts on European Sites

As outlined above, there is 1 no. European sites within 1.6km of the proposed scheme site's red line boundary. This site has the potential to be impacted by the proposed scheme. The possible sources, receptors, and pathways for impacts are discussed below.

5.3.1 Construction Phase

Direct Impacts

The proposed scheme is not located within or adjacent to any European sites and as such there will be no direct impacts on any European site as a result of the construction of the proposed scheme.

Indirect Impacts

The only potential pathway linking the proposed scheme to Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC is via the existing road drainage network, which discharges to the Lyreen Stream which subsequently flows for c. 2.2km to the Rye Water River.

During the construction phase of the proposed scheme, there will be no increase in surface water runoff volumes, nor any alteration to the existing hydrological regime of the Lyreen Stream or the Rye Water River when compared to established baseline conditions. The proposed works are confined entirely to existing road corridors and hardstanding surfaces and do not involve the creation of additional impermeable areas, the extension or modification of the carrier drainage network, or any change to established surface water drainage pathways (refer to Section 1.5.5). Accordingly, there is no mechanism by which the proposed works could alter rainfall runoff characteristics, including rainfall flow rate, flow volume, or flow pathways, to downstream receiving waters. In the absence of any change to contributing catchment area, hardstanding surfaces characteristics, or hydrological connectivity, the baseline flow regime of the Lyreen Stream and Rye Water River will remain unchanged. In particular, there will be no change to flow conditions, flow variability, or water levels, and no interruption or modification of natural hydrodynamic processes. As such, there will be no likely significant effects from works activities on the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC as a result of the hydrological regime / flow levels with existing the road drainage network.

The potential for construction activities to generate contaminated surface water runoff (such as silt laden runoff) and for this to subsequently affect the water quality within the downstream receiving watercourses has been carefully considered. In particular, the assessment examines whether any such runoff could occur at a magnitude or extent capable of giving rise to likely significant effects on the SAC's qualifying interests in view of their conservation objectives.

The scheme area is almost entirely comprised of existing hardstanding surfaces, bar small areas of roadside verges, and the majority of the works will involve only the replacement or upgrading of surface materials (e.g. new bitumen surfacing and road markings). Construction activities, including the development of the cycleway, pathways and road resurfacing, will be carried out in short sections of approximately 100–200m at any one time in order to maintain traffic flow. Given the limited extent and narrow footprint of these works areas, there will be no significant amount of surface water runoff generated from an individual works area, which is noted to be confined only to periods of heavy rainfall.

The works will not involve the use of significant quantities of potentially contaminating materials that could easily run-off from site (such as hydrocarbons or chemicals). The principal construction activity comprises the laying of bituminous materials for resurfacing works. These materials are applied in a bound, non-viscous form and, once laid, are not capable of mobilising or entering the surface water drainage network. In limited locations, works will include the installation of concrete footpaths and kerbs. These elements will be poured within small shuttered sections (Section 1.5.4), thereby containing all cementitious materials during pouring and curing. As such, there is no realistic potential for wet concrete or cementitious runoff to enter surface water drains.

There are only very limited soil excavations required (e.g. at occasional roadside verges), confined to small, localised works areas and undertaken at a relatively shallow depth (maximum c. 500mm). All excavated soil material will be removed from site as it arises. Accordingly, these works areas will contain only negligible quantities of soil due to, off site removal, their limited extent and confined footprint. Consequently, there is only a very limited potential for silt-laden runoff to occur, and any such runoff could only arise during rainfall events, and would be restricted to the small and localised nature of the works areas. As a consequence, the quantity of silts or sediments that could potentially be mobilised as runoff is considered negligible. Furthermore, any small amounts of silt laden runoff, should it occur, would be subject to dilution, dispersal, and attenuation within the existing drainage network, followed by further dilution and dispersal within the Lyreen Stream and the wider Rye Water River system. In this context, it can be objectively concluded that, should it occur, any minor and temporary increase in suspended solids within the Rye Water River would be indistinguishable from natural background variability associated with rainfall driven runoff events within the wider catchment. Therefore, given the scale of the works, and the amount of potential contaminants the proposed works could potentially generate, silt laden runoff does not have the potential to occur at a magnitude, duration or extent capable of giving rise to likely significant effects on the SAC's qualifying interests, having regard to their conservation objectives.

In summary, applying the precautionary principle and based on objective analysis, it can be safely concluded that the proposed works will not alter hydrological regimes or generate silt laden runoff at a magnitude, duration, or extent capable of affecting water quality to a level that could result in likely significant effects on the qualifying interests of the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC.

In addition, the qualifying interests of Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC are noted to be Vertigo snails and Petryfying Springs. The wetland habitats that host the Verigo snails are not connected to or dependent on the Rye Water River and as such there is no viable pathway for impacts to Vertigo species. Similarly the petrifying springs are relaint on upwelling groundwater and are not connected to or dependent on the Rye Water River. As such, the qualifying interest of the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC cannot be affected by any deteriation in water quality within the Rye Water River.

The proposed scheme does include for drainage alteration works which are considered to be minimal and restricted to areas where the scheme interfaces with the public road. The drainage works at these locations are limited to the relocation of existing road gullies with the larger existing road drainage infrastructure (i.e. carrier drains) not being altered or adjusted. During the construction phase, the main carrier drains will be temporarily isolated or blocked off within the immediate works area to facilitate the relocation of drainage gullies, in accordance with standard construction methodologies described in Section 1.5.5. It is noted that this activity forms part of the normal sequencing and safe execution of the works and is not included for the purpose of avoiding or reducing effects on any downstream European site. The potential for effects on the Rye Water

Valley/Carton SAC has been assessed independently of these measures and does not rely on the temporary isolation of drains to conclude that no likely significant effects will arise.

5.3.2 Operational Phase

Direct Impacts

The proposed scheme is not located within or adjacent to any European sites and as such there will be no direct impacts on any European site as a result of the operational phase of the proposed scheme.

Indirect Impacts

During the operational phase surface water drainage from the proposed scheme will outfall to the local storm water network within the roadways. During the operational phase of the proposed scheme, there will not be any increase in drainage runoff levels compared to the current baseline conditions and as such there will be no affects to the hydrological regime of the Lyreen Stream or downstream Rye Water River. When the new cycleways and footpaths are in use, rainfall / surface water run-off from the hardstanding areas does not have the potential to affect the water quality of the Rye Water River given there will be no polluting substances generated from cycling and walking. As such the usage of the active travel scheme does not have the potential to result in likely significant effects to Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC. In addition, as noted above, the qualifying interests of the SAC cannot be affected by adverse water quality impacts.

5.4 In-combination Effects

5.4.1 Requirement for Assessment

The requirement for AA arising out of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive covers plans and projects that, "*either individually or in combination with other plans or projects*", are likely to have a significant effect on one or more Natura 2000 sites. This means that AA is required for any plan or project that, in combination with other plans or projects, would have a significant effect on one or more Natura 2000 sites, irrespective of the presence or absence of such effects from that plan or project on its own. Therefore, regardless of the significance of the effects of the plan or project individually, the potential for significant effects in combination with other plans and projects must be considered in all cases.

5.4.2 Approach and Methodology

The objective of this requirement is to capture significant effects potentially arising from the cumulation or other interaction of non-significant effects from multiple plans and projects. Consequently, the assessment of potential in-combination effects is not a pair-wise assessment, rather, it considers the totality of the effects arising from all plans and projects affecting the Natura 2000 site(s) in question. In identifying the plans and projects to be included in this assessment, it is important to define an appropriate geographical scope and timescale over which potential in-combination effects are to be considered and the sources of information to be consulted, as described below. It is also important to consider the nature of the interactions between effects, which may be additive, antagonistic, synergistic or complex.

5.4.3 Geographical Scope

In defining the geographical scope for identifying potential in-combination effects, it is important to remember that effects are evaluated in view of the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 site(s) concerned. As such, two or more effects relating to the same conservation objective for a given Natura 2000 site would combine even if

their geographical extents did not overlap. For example, the loss of a small area of an Annex I habitat type listed as a qualifying interest of a Natura 2000 site would combine with the loss of an entirely unconnected area of the same habitat type from a remote part of the same site to produce an in-combination effect, the significance of which would need to be evaluated in view of the relevant conservation objective. On that basis, the scope of the assessment of in-combination effects extends to all plans and projects affecting the same conservation objectives as the plan or project under consideration, irrespective of whether those effects are significant or not.

In this case, however, given the scale of the proposed scheme and sensitivities of the Natura 2000 sites in its ZoI, it was deemed most appropriate to include areas in close proximity to the proposed scheme and its ZoI (as described in Section 5.1) within the geographical scope for identifying potential in-combination effects.

5.4.4 Timescale

The timescale over which potential in-combination effects were considered in this case covered plans and projects from 5 years ago (i.e. 2021) to the present and all reasonably foreseeable future plans and projects, i.e. published draft plans and projects which are already in the planning system or have received planning permission.

5.4.5 Sources of Information

The following sources of information were consulted to gather information on other plans and projects:

- Kildare County Council Planning Data viewed through; https://webgeo.kildarecoco.ie/planningenquiry
- An Coimisiún Pleanála Planning Applications viewed through; https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/home
- Kildare Development Plan 2023-2029[15]
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland[16]
- Irish Water[17]

The threats, pressures and activities with negative impacts on the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC were used to identify plans and projects which, by their nature, are likely to give rise to potential impacts on the sites concerned.

5.4.6 Assessment

Kildare County Development Plan (CDP) sets out policies and objectives for the development of the county. The CDP aims to promote the sustainable development and improvement of the economic, environmental, cultural and social aspects of County Kildare. The CDP also requires that any developments must be subject to AA process and that permitted developments comply with the requirements of the WFD, the relevant River Basin Management Plans and the Habitats Directive. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was prepared for the CDP and it went through the AA process. The findings of which were integrated into the objectives of the CDP resulting in a plan that affords high levels of protection to the environment and Natura 2000 sites.

[15] https://kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/Planning/DevelopmentPlans/KildareCountyDevelopmentPlan2023-2029/

[16] https://www.tii.ie/projects/

[17] https://www.water.ie/projects/

A review of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) publicly available planned projects did not identify any major road projects within 10km of the proposed scheme.

A review of Uisce Éireann (Irish Water) projects did not identify any water project in the vicinity of the proposed scheme.

A search of Kildare County Council planning and An Bord Pleanála planning applications has been undertaken for applications submitted within the last 5 years in the vicinity the proposed scheme (last accessed 17/02/2026). Near the proposed works, projects that have been granted planning permission include retention of existing developments, typical extensions to domestic dwellings or the construction of new domestic dwellings. Regarding potential impacts to water quality, these projects will have to comply with the EPA's Code of Practice for Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (EPA, 2021). These developments have conditions attached to their planning permission relating to sustainable development, foul surface water and effluent drainage facilities, and clean surface water run-off drainage facilities. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the developments that have been granted permission will have any significant effects in combination with the proposed scheme.

Key developments which shall be considered are large-scale developments in the region of the proposed scheme, there are 7 no. of these developments which have been further assessed in terms of in-combination effects with the proposed scheme and are presented in Table 5-4 below.

It is considered that there are no An Bord Pleanála or Council approved developments or projects that will act in combination with the proposed scheme to give rise to significant in-combination effects on the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC.

Table 5-4 - Planning applications near the Proposed Scheme.

Ref. No.	Project / Applicant	Project Summary	In-combination Assessment
ABP Ref: NA29S.314232	Córas Iompair Éireann	Córas Iompair Éireann, hereafter referred to as CIÉ or 'the Applicant' (and including all references to Irish Rail or Iarnród Éireann) is applying to An Bord Pleanála ("the Board") for a Railway Order ("RO") for the DART+ West project (hereafter also referred to as "the proposed development") under the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 (as amended and substituted) ('the 2001 Act") and the European Union (Railway Orders) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I. No. 743/2021) and in accordance with EU law.	This project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment process. The associated Natura Impact Statement concluded: "*An Bord Pleanála, as the Competent Authority in this case, may determine that, given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation prescribed in this NIS, the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC, the South Dublin Bay and the River Tolka Estuary SPA, the North Bull Island SPA or any other European site.*" – ROD-IDOM Based on the scale and nature of this project, in-combination effects associated with the proposed scheme on European sites will not occur.
Kildare CC Ref: 21155	High Degree Developments Limited	This forms Phase 1 of a residential masterplan for some 105 no. units in total on a wider c. 3.26 ha landholding under the Applicant's control. The proposed Phase 1 development will consist of: Construction of a residential development comprising 58 no. dwellings in total.	This project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process which concluded: "*that no impacts are likely as a result of the proposed works on the conservation objectives or overall integrity of any Natura 2000 site, and as such, an AA is not required*" – Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants Based on the scale and nature of this project, in-combination effects associated with the proposed scheme on European sites will not occur.
Kildare CC Ref: 21156	High Degree Developments Limited	This forms Phase 2 of a residential masterplan for some 105 No. units in total on a wider c. 3.26 ha landholding under the Applicant's control.	This project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process which concluded: *"in conclusion, no impacts are likely as a result of the proposed works on the conservation objectives or overall integrity of any Natura 2000*

			site. Therefore, Appropriate Assessment is not required" – Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants Based on the scale and nature of this project, in-combination effects associated with the proposed scheme on European sites will not occur.
P8.2019.008	Kildare CC	Maynooth Eastern Ring Road	This project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process which concluded: "*In light of this conclusion, it is the considered opinion of ROD that the Competent Authority, in completing its AA Screening in respect of the Project, should find that the Project, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, does not give rise to any likely significant effects on the Qualifying Interests of the Rye Water Valley/ Carton SAC and their respective Conservation Objectives on the basis of objective scientific information and in view of the best scientific knowledge and the sites' Conservation Objectives*.' Based on the scale and nature of this project, in-combination effects associated with the proposed scheme on European sites will not occur.
P82022.20	Kildare CC	M4 Eastbound Bus Priority Measures Pilot	This project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process which concluded: "*Therefore it is concluded that a Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment will not be required to inform the project appraisal either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, with respect to any Natura 2000 sites and their Conservation Objectives*." Based on the scale and nature of this project, in-combination effects associated with the proposed scheme on European sites will not occur.
22627	Esprit Investments LTD	A large-scale commercial haulage facility over 9.8ha of land. Including commercial buildings and parking.	This project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process which concluded: "*Subject to the successful implication of mitigation measures it can be concluded that the proposed development will not cause any significant negative impacts on the designated sites habitats, legally protected species or any other feature of ecological importance."* – RSK Ecological Impact Assessment 2022.

			Based on the scale and nature of this project, in-combination effects associated with the proposed scheme on European sites will not occur.
301230	Kildare CC	Mixed use development of 462 no. dwellings including the refurbishment of Gate Lodge (a Protected Structure)	This project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process which concluded: "*I consider it reasonable to conclude on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to carry out a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects ABP-301230-18 Inspector's Report Page 89 of 106 would not adversely affect the integrity of the European sites nos. 1398, 4024, 0210, 2026 and 4006, or any other European site, in view of the sites' Conservation Objectives*." Based on the scale and nature of this project, in-combination effects associated with the proposed scheme on European sites will not occur.
22220	Lidl Ireland GmbH,	Relating to the demolition of the existing Discount Foodstore and construction of a new single storey mono-pitch Discount Foodstore with ancillary off-licence use	Based on the scale and nature of this project, in-combination effects associated with the proposed project on European sites will not occur.
2660044	Electricity Supply Board (ESB)	a 10-year approval for development at this site consisting of up to approximately 15.05 kilometres (km) of 38 kilovolts (kV) underground cable (UGC) and all associated site and development works at various locations in County Kildare with a total site area of c. 16.13ha.	This project has been subject to a Natura Impact Statement which concluded: *"Provided the above listed mitigation measures are implemented, it is considered that the Proposed Works will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, either alone or incombination with other plans or projects."* Based on the scale and nature of this project, in-combination effects associated with the proposed scheme on European sites will not occur.

5.5 Likelihood of Significant Effects on Natura 2000 Sites

The proposed scheme is located entirely within the urban areas of Maynooth town and as such there is no direct connectivity to any European sites, as such any potential direct impacts are negated.

There is indirect connectivity from the scheme site to the Rye Water River/Carton SAC via the Lyreen Stream. The proposed scheme will not involve any direct interaction with this watercourse as in-stream works are not necessitated. Surface water run-off during the construction and operational phases will outfall to the watercourse which in turn outfalls to the Rye Water River. It has been concluded that, given the scale, nature, and extent of the proposed scheme and considering any potential contaminants the proposed scheme could potentially generate, there is no potential for likely significant effects to Rye Water River/Carton SAC via this hydrological connectivity.

5.6 AA Screening Conclusion

On the basis of objective information and in view of best scientific knowledge and applying a precautionary principle, it is concluded by the authors of this report that with the absence of any mitigation measures the proposed scheme, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not result in likely significant effects on Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC or any other European site. Thus, it is recommended that it is not necessary for the proposed scheme to proceed to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

Should the scope, nature or extent of the proposed scheme change, a new assessment (AA Screening Report or AA Screening Addendum Report) would be required.

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