

# **AA CONCLUSION STATEMENT**

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**FOR**

## **VARIATION No. 1 TO THE WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028**

**for: Wexford County Council**



**by: CAAS Ltd.**



**AUGUST 2026**

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# Section 1 Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Introduction

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for Variation No. 1 to the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028. The obligation to undertake AA derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC as transposed into Irish legislation by, inter alia, the Planning and Development Acts, as amended. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action (such as a plan or programme) or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of any European Site in view of its conservation objectives. This AA Conclusion Statement should be read in conjunction with the Variation and associated documents including the final, consolidated AA Natura Impact Report (NIR).

## 1.2 Legislative Requirements in relation to AA

In carrying out the AA for the Variation the Council must take account of matters including those arrayed in the first column on Table 1.1 below. The second column identifies how these issues have been addressed.

**Table 1.1 Matters taken into account by the AA**

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

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

## 1.3 AA Conclusion Statement

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

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

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

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

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

## **Section 2 How the findings of the AA were factored into the Variation**

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

The mitigation measures included in the Variation and the existing County Development Plan that are most relevant to the protection of European sites are identified in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below.

**Table 2.1 Mitigation measures for overarching ecologically sensitive components**

| Component                         | Applied Development Plan Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Watercourses and wetland habitats | <p><b>Objective E19 and NRT22</b></p> <p>To ensure riparian buffer zones are provided on the lands zoned Natural Amenity and/or Open Space and Amenity along watercourses in the plan area, and to require, where deemed necessary, that additional lands be set aside for riparian buffer zones. The width of the required riparian zones will be dependent on the width and characteristics of the watercourse and the nature of the site and will be determined having regard to the requirements of the 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment' (Inland Fisheries Ireland 2020) and any updated version of these guidelines.</p> <p><b>Objective E20 and NRT23</b></p> <p>To ensure that development briefs, design statements and masterplans and planning applications identify existing watercourses, ditches and rainfall conveyance routes and ensure that they are maintained and incorporated into design proposals. The application shall include detailed proposals to provide for an appropriate riparian zones having regard to the requirements of the 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment' (Inland Fisheries Ireland 2020) and any updated version of these guidelines. Development proposals shall fully incorporate nature-based solutions to rainwater management which maximize benefits to biodiversity and amenity.</p> <p><b>Objective E17</b></p> <p>To require, for development proposals in and adjoining Flood Zone A and B Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out to an appropriate level of detail, addressing all potential sources of flood risk, demonstrating compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009) or any updated version of these guidelines, paying particular attention to avoidance of known flood risk, avoidance of development in flood plains, residual flood risks and any proposed site specific flood management measures. The SSFRA shall take full account of the information in SRFA including Section 2.1.</p> <p><b>Objective NRT19</b></p> <p>To require, for development proposals in and adjoining Flood Zone A and B Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment carried out to an appropriate level of detail, addressing all potential sources of flood risk, demonstrating compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009) or any updated version of these guidelines, paying particular attention to avoidance of known flood risk, avoidance of development in flood plains, residual flood risks and any proposed site specific flood management measures. The SSFRA shall take full account of the information in SRFA including Section 3.1.</p> <p><b>Objective NRT20</b></p> <p>To require, for development proposals in the lands identified on Map 9, a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment to an appropriate level of detail, which includes all sources of flooding and including an assessment and analysis of pluvial flooding in the area. Proposals for this area will address pluvial flooding over the wider area of the objective and shall take a networked approach to the management of pluvial flooding incorporating sustainable and nature-based solutions. All existing pluvial channels shall be identified, retained and protected by a sufficient set back/riparian zone in accordance with the requirements of Section 11.12 of Volume 1 and the guidance contained in 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment' (Inland fisheries Ireland, 2020). Culverted channels will be daylighted where feasible.</p> |
| General natural environment       | <p>Where necessary, avoidance or mitigation measures, including visitor management, access control, or design modifications, shall be implemented to ensure full compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p><b>Relating to SEVESO sites - Objective COMAH03</b></p> <p>To have regard to the HSA's Guidance on Technical Land-use Planning Advice for Planning Authorities and COMAH Establishments Operators (Version 2 Updated February 2023) in the assessment of planning applications, in local authority own development and in the preparation of the Urban Area Plans and any other plans.</p> <p><b>Objective COMAH04</b></p> <p>To restrict new Major Accident Sites to low risk locations. There will be a presumption against their development in proximity to housing, sensitive commercial uses and workplaces, areas of regular and substantial public congregation/use, designated sites, areas of environmental sensitivity and adjacent to environmental vectors including flood zones.</p> <p><b>Objective COMAH05</b></p> <p>To assess societal and environmental risk as part of the assessment of planning applications and in the carrying out of local authority own works in relation to modifications to existing establishments, new establishments and development in the vicinity of establishments.</p> <p><b>Objective COMAH06</b></p> <p>To attach, to the grant of planning permission for planning applications for warehouses or similar industrial buildings, a condition to exclude the use/storage of chemicals which would come under the Major Accidents Directive (unless it is expressly permitted by a planning application).</p> <p><b>Objective NRT24</b></p> <p>To consult with the Health and Safety Authority for all development within the consultation zone for Nitrofert Ltd, Major Accidents site and have regard to the technical land use advice provided and to control development in the vicinity of the site to ensure the prevention of major accidents limiting the consequences for human health and the environment of such accidents.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

| Component | Applied Development Plan Objectives / Mitigation Measure(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | <p><b>Objective NRT25</b></p> <p>In the assessment of planning applications and in local authority own works, the Council will, in respect of modifications to existing establishments, new establishments and development in the vicinity of establishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consult with and have regard to the technical land use planning advice (TLUP) of the Health and Safety Authority. The Council will have regard to the consultation distances (CD) and any updated versions of these zones issued by the HSA.</li> <li>have regard to the HSA's Guidance on Technical Land-use Planning Advice for Planning Authorities and COMAH Establishments Operators (Version 2 Updated February 2023)</li> <li>restrict new Major Accident Sites to low-risk locations. There will be a presumption against their development in proximity to housing, sensitive commercial uses and workplaces, areas of regular and substantial public congregation/use, designated sites, areas of environmental sensitivity and adjacent to environmental vectors including flood zones.</li> <li>assess societal and environmental risk as part as part of development management processes</li> <li>attach to the grant of planning permission for planning applications for warehouses or similar industrial buildings, a condition to exclude the use/storage of chemicals which would come under the Major Accidents Directive (unless it is expressly permitted by a planning application).</li> </ul> |
| Climate   | <p><b>Objective E26 and NRT31</b></p> <p>To promote and initiate the values and principles of the New European Bauhaus in new developments where feasible, and in particular projects which include the regeneration and renovation of cultural and heritage buildings and places which give access to the public.</p> <p><b>Objective E07 and NRT07</b></p> <p>To support the implementation of active travel measures and promote the development of new linkages which improve permeability by walking and cycling.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

Table 2.2 Mitigation measures for specific sources for potential effect identified in the Variation

| Source for potential effect arising from the Proposed Variation            | Variation Measure(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wastewater and surface water drainage infrastructure and water abstraction | <p><b>Objective E01</b></p> <p>To ensure that the infrastructure identified in Table 1 of Appendix 2 (Serviced Land Assessment) is provided in advance or in tandem with new residential development.</p> <p><b>Objective NRT01</b></p> <p>To ensure that the infrastructure identified in Table 3 of Appendix 2 (Serviced Land Assessment) is provided in advance or in tandem with new residential development.</p> <p><b>Objective E02 and NRT02</b></p> <p>To facilitate the upgrade of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and wastewater network infrastructure to accommodate future population and employment growth. Development requiring wastewater services shall only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that sufficient wastewater treatment capacity is available or will be available within a reasonable timeframe, to serve the development, and where it will not result in adverse impacts on the receiving environment. In the absence of such capacity, or where adequate infrastructure delivery is not secured, development shall not be permitted.</p> <p><b>Objective E03 and NRT03</b></p> <p>To ensure adequate capacity in water sources and that the extraction of water to serve development does not impact on the hydrological regime, ecology or the environment.</p> |

| Source for potential effect arising from the Proposed Variation | Variation Measure(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                 | <p><b>Objective E04 and NRT04</b></p> <p>To facilitate the upgrade of the Water Treatment Plant and water network infrastructure to accommodate future population and employment growth. Development requiring water services shall only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that sufficient water treatment capacity is available or will be available within a reasonable timeframe, to serve the development, and where it will not result in adverse impacts on the receiving environment. In the absence of such capacity, or where adequate infrastructure delivery is not secured, development shall not be permitted.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <p>Visitor pressures from leisure and amenity activities</p>    | <p>Any proposals arising from the increased population or associated recreational and active travel infrastructure shall be subject to project-level Appropriate Assessment screening, and where required, Appropriate. Assessment, to ensure that disturbance, visitor pressure or habitat degradation will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of any European site.</p> <p>Where necessary, avoidance or mitigation measures, including visitor management, access control, or design modifications, shall be implemented to ensure full compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p><b>Objective E24 and NRT30</b></p> <p>To ensure that where, as part of the planning process, an assessment of the potential impacts to European sites is required, consideration is given to the potential impact of an increase in visitor pressures to European sites that may result from the implementation of housing projects, and any associated active travel infrastructure such as cycleways, blue ways or greenways. Where likely significant impacts on European site(s) due to visitor pressures are identified, a visitor management plan will be developed for the proposed project, which also takes into account cumulative pressures from existing visitor levels to the relevant European site(s).</p> <p><b>Objective E23</b></p> <p>Maximise the potential of the River Slaney for tourism and recreational purposes by improving public access to the river, including and extending the provision of a linear parks (in conjunction with the relevant statutory authorities) and subject to appropriate environmental and ecological assessments.</p> <p><b>Objective NRT28</b></p> <p>Maximise the potential of the River Barrow for tourism and recreational purposes by improving public access to the river, including and extending the provision of a linear park (in conjunction with the relevant statutory authorities) and subject to appropriate environmental and ecological assessments.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Built environment</p>                                        | <p><b>Objective E05</b></p> <p>To ensure an integrated approach is taken to the development of this site. The following shall be submitted with any application for the development of the site for mixed uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A phasing programme which details how critical infrastructure will be delivered either prior to, or in tandem with any residential and commercial development.</li> <li>• A Design Statement prepared in accordance with Section 2.3 of Volume 2 Development Management Manual which outlines the evolution of the design process for the proposed development. An emphasis on exemplar sustainable design and aesthetic quality shall be required. A Design Statement for residential or mixed-use development proposals with a residential element will be required to address the mix of dwelling types.</li> <li>• A Retail Impact Assessment prepared in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines (2012) and Volume 8 Retail Strategy (if appropriate).</li> <li>• A comprehensive landscaping scheme which includes landscape, open space and amenities and Green Infrastructure measures to enhance the existing green infrastructure of the area.</li> <li>• An Ecological Assessment. The development will be required to be designed to ensure net ecological gain and the details shall be incorporated into the Landscape plan for the site.</li> <li>• A surface water management scheme which focuses on nature-based solutions (NBS) that provide both ecological and hydrometric benefits.</li> <li>• A statement detailing climate proofing measures that demonstrates consistency with the provisions of Wexford County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024-2029. Consideration shall be given in the design of the scheme to facilitate and utilise district heating.</li> </ul> <p><b>Objective NRT05</b></p> <p>To ensure an integrated approach is taken to any significant redevelopment of this site and to ensure it positively addresses the South-East Greenway. The following shall be submitted with any application for the significant redevelopment of the site for mixed uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A phasing programme which details how critical infrastructure will be delivered either prior to, or in tandem with any residential and commercial development.</li> <li>• A Design Statement prepared in accordance with Section 2.3 of Volume 2 Development Management Manual which outlines the evolution of the design process for the proposed development. An emphasis on exemplar sustainable design and aesthetic quality shall be required. A Design Statement for residential or mixed-use development proposals with a residential element will be required to address the mix of dwelling types.</li> </ul> |



| Source for potential effect arising from the Proposed Variation | Variation Measure(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Retail Impact Assessment prepared in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines (2012) and Volume 8 Retail Strategy.</li> <li>• A comprehensive landscaping scheme which includes landscape, open space and amenities and Green Infrastructure measures to enhance the existing green infrastructure of the area.</li> <li>• An Ecological Assessment. The development will be required to be designed to ensure net ecological gain and the details shall be incorporated into the Landscape plan for the site.</li> <li>• A surface water management scheme which focuses on nature-based solutions (NBS) that provide both ecological and hydrometric benefits.</li> <li>• A statement detailing climate proofing measures that demonstrates consistency with the provisions of Wexford County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024-2029. Consideration shall be given in the design of the scheme to facilitate and utilise district heating.</li> </ul> <p><b>Objective E06</b></p> <p>To have regard to the Enniscorthy Town Centre First Plan and prioritise the regeneration of the brownfield and under-utilised sites identified on Map 7.</p> <p><b>Objective NRT06</b></p> <p>To have regard to the New Ross Town Centre First Plan and the sites identified in the Retail Strategy contained in Volume 8 of the CDP and prioritise the regeneration of brownfield and under-utilised sites identified on Map 9.</p> |

## Section 3 Consideration of Alternatives

Selected alternatives for the Variation from each of the types of alternatives that emerged from the planning/SEA process are summarised below. These alternatives were selected taking into account:

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

### 3.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme, or variation to these) are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment. Summaries of the alternatives for the Variation and their assessment are provided below.

### 3.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The alternatives available for the Variation are significantly limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, including those of Ministerial Guidelines, the Revised National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region and the existing County Development Plan. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Variation including on topics such as population, land use zoning and densities.

Notwithstanding these higher-level policy constraints, a range of reasonable alternatives within the scope of the Variation were identified and assessed in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive.

### 3.3 Alternatives Description and Assessment Summary

#### 3.3.1 Core Strategy Alternatives

Two Core Strategy Alternatives were considered:

**Core Strategy Alternative 1: Allocate the revised housing growth targets in line with Ministerial Guidelines without allowing for 50% additional provision or 65-75% net density or providing further additional zoning**

Under this Core Strategy Alternative, County Wexford would be unlikely to meet revised population targets, as there would be insufficient zoned lands available.

Of the two alternatives, there would be less additional infrastructure, such as water supply, waste water, and public transport infrastructure, required to service new development.

The development of the County's settlements would be stymied and would limit longer-term viability. A lower number of residential units, in comparison with Alternative 2, would be developed, although a greater extent of these would take place within the existing built-up footprints on brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites, with a greater focus on use of consolidation and regeneration sites, with greater potential for wider regeneration benefits to central areas, including housing provision. Regeneration, reuse and redevelopment of more central and brownfield and infill lands and optimising the use of vacant, derelict, and underutilised sites and buildings would be more likely to be achieved. This would have the potential to benefit efforts to improve sustainable mobility.

This Core Strategy Alternative would result in a reduced level of greenfield land consumption and make the greatest contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating the development of a greater proportion of lands (including those within town centre and adjacent areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop a greater proportion of more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere within and around the County's settlements and beyond.

Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to a significant degree.

**Core Strategy Alternative 2: Allocate the revised housing growth targets in line with Ministerial Guidelines and allow for 50% additional provision and 65-75% net density and provide further additional zoning**

Under this Core Strategy Alternative, County Wexford would be more likely to meet revised population targets, as there would be sufficient zoned lands available.

Of the two alternatives, there would be more additional infrastructure, such as water supply, waste water, and public transport infrastructure, required to service new development.

The development of the County's settlements would not be stymied; however, depending on a number of factors, including the extent of "further additional zoning", the development of the County's settlements could be less compact and less sustainable under this scenario and might not optimally support longer-term viability. A higher number of residential units, in comparison with Alternative 2, would be developed, although a lesser extent of these would take place within the existing built-up footprints on brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites, with less of a focus on use of consolidation and regeneration sites, with less potential for wider regeneration benefits to central areas, including housing provision. Regeneration, reuse and redevelopment of more central and brownfield and infill lands and optimising the use of vacant, derelict, and underutilised sites and buildings may be less likely to be achieved. This could have the potential to hinder efforts to improve sustainable mobility.

This Core Strategy Alternative would result in an increased level of greenfield land consumption and make less of a contribution towards the protection and management of the environment in comparison to Alternative 1 by facilitating the development of a lower proportion of lands (including those within town centre and adjacent areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, as a result of facilitating the development of a greater proportion of more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere within and around the County's settlements and beyond.

The mitigation of potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would be dependent upon a number of factors, including the extent of "further additional zoning".

The alternative selected for the Variation is a mix of both Alternatives 1 and 2: Allocate the revised housing growth targets in line with Ministerial Guidelines and allow for 50% additional provision and 65-75% net density, as well as providing further additional zoning in Enniscorthy Town.

This approach would facilitate County Wexford (including Enniscorthy) in meeting the revised population targets and would further enable the rapid activation of available and housing delivery in the interests of providing housing for people, and ensure that housing delivery is not as constrained as it could be with no additional provision of lands, net density allowance or further additional zoning.

### 3.3.2 Transport Infrastructure Alternatives

Under **Transport Infrastructure Alternative 1**, new transport infrastructure would be considered subject to environmental constraints, including those related to habitats and potential impacts (e.g. disturbance from lighting). This would include minimising river crossings, avoiding sensitive habitats, not increasing barriers to flood waters and sustainable design and construction techniques. By focusing on mitigation at both plan and project levels, Alternative 1 would offer the most certainty for environmental protection and management and would be more likely to result in important individual projects (relating to sustainable mobility and emissions/energy objectives) receiving permission.

Under **Transport Infrastructure Alternative 2**, all additional environmental mitigation would be left to be defined in the future, at project level. This would offer the least certainty for environmental protection and management and would be more likely to result in important individual projects (relating to sustainable mobility and emissions objectives) not been given permission.

Selected Transport Infrastructure Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 1

### 3.3.3 Regeneration and Strategic Mixed Use Sites Alternatives

Brownfield and under-utilised sites can offer opportunities for development that can help to ensure the efficient use of central sites, achieving compact growth and higher residential densities, while also ensuring attractive and high-quality living environments.

Strategic mixed use sites provide a wide of development opportunities by reason of their strategic location, scale, nature and/or current use.

Whether and how both regeneration and strategic mixed use sites are developed is an important component in achieving sustainable development.

Not providing specific guidance for future planning applications at regeneration and strategic mixed use sites (**Approach to Regeneration and Strategic Mixed Use Sites Alternative 1**) would reduce the likelihood of sustainable development. Development would be market-led and would seek to comply with relevant planning provisions in the absence of specific guidance. Sustainable development would be less likely than under Alternative 2.

By providing guidance for future planning applications at regeneration and strategic mixed use sites (including reference to the objectives in Chapter 3 Core Strategy and Chapter 5 Design and Placemaking in Towns and Villages) while, at the same time, allowing for flexibility in areas such as final design, layout and uses, **Alternative 2** would increase the likelihood of sustainable development.

Providing detailed criteria for future planning applications at regeneration and strategic mixed use sites with such criteria not allowing for flexibility in areas such as design, layout and uses (**Approach to Regeneration and Strategic Mixed Use Sites Alternative 3**) would potentially hinder compliance with rigid criteria in the longer term, in a context of evolving market needs and planning requirements.

Selected Regeneration and Strategic Mixed Use Sites Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 2

### 3.3.4 Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives

**Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 1: "More Consolidated, More Compact Development"**

Under this Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative, Enniscorthy and New Ross would be facilitated in meeting the revised population targets, resulting in balanced, orderly development and implementation of the Development Plan's Core Strategy.

The approach under this alternative would allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into provisions for Enniscorthy and New Ross to the highest degree.

The infrastructure required to be in place to achieve the growth targets is already in place or planned under this alternative.

The development of town centre and adjacent areas would be more compact and sustainable under this scenario and would better support the longer-term viability of Enniscorthy and New Ross. A higher number of residential units, in comparison with Alternative 2, would be expected to take place within the existing built-up footprints on brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites at appropriate densities, with a greater focus on use of consolidation and regeneration sites, with potential for wider regeneration benefits to central areas, including housing provision. Regeneration, reuse and redevelopment of more central and brownfield and infill lands and optimising the use of vacant, derelict, and underutilised sites and buildings would be more likely to be achieved.

Giving a strong preference to lands that have both greater capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and a more realistic opportunity of being developed over the lifetime of the Plan would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of Enniscorthy and New Ross as envisaged by the wider planning framework to the greatest degree.

There would be greater potential and viability for integrated land use and transportation under this alternative, including proximate development patterns linked by active travel infrastructure and public transport. Associated benefits and improvements to the public realm and appearance of the built environment, including liveability and quality of life improvements, would be more likely.

This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would make the greatest contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands (including those within town centre and adjacent areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in Enniscorthy and New Ross and beyond. There would be a reduced need for greenfield land consumption under this alternative. This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would be considered the most effective out of both Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives considered in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for Enniscorthy and New Ross.

The approach under Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 1 'More Consolidated, More Compact Development' would benefit the protection of various environmental components. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to a significant degree. Less residual environmental effects would result.

Under this alternative there would be:

- More optimum use of land and resources, with positive role for addressing climate change, such as potential for reduced carbon heavy travel patterns.
- Greater potential for modal shift to sustainable travel such as walking, cycling and public transport, with knock on benefits for climate resilience in Enniscorthy and New Ross.
- Use of already serviced lands in more central and built-up town centre areas could lead to potential reduced costs for delivery of new supporting infrastructure.
- Creation of more liveable built environments, with greater accessibility to services and amenities for local communities.

## **Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 2: “Less Consolidated, Less Compact Development”**

Under this Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative, Enniscorthy and New Ross would be facilitated in meeting the revised population targets, resulting in implementation of the Development Plan’s Core Strategy.

The approach under this alternative would not allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into Enniscorthy and New Ross to the highest degree.

Additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate sporadic development, more than would be required for Alternative 1 ‘More Consolidated, More Compact Development’.

The development of Enniscorthy and New Ross would be less compact and less sustainable under this scenario and would not optimally support the longer-term viability of these settlements. A lower number of residential units, in comparison with Alternative 1, would be expected to take place within the existing built-up footprints on brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites at appropriate densities. Under this alternative there would be potential for greater proportion of housing to be delivered outside of the built-up areas, including on urban fringe and outer areas and on greenfield sites, creating unsustainable travel patterns with a reliance on the private car. Giving less of a preference to lands that have both greater capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and a more realistic opportunity of being developed over the lifetime of the Plan and would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of Enniscorthy and New Ross as envisaged by the wider planning framework to a lesser degree.

There would be greater potential for negative impacts on the vitality and viability of the built-up areas, due to increased and sustained levels of vacancy and dereliction for existing buildings and brownfield lands. This alternative would be likely to result in a more dispersed pattern of low-density town centre development, that would be more difficult to serve with active travel infrastructure and public transport.

This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would make less of a contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands (including those town centre and adjacent areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services. Demand to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in Enniscorthy and New Ross would be provided for. This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would be considered the least effective out of both Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives considered in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for Enniscorthy and New Ross.

The approach under Alternative 2 ‘Less Consolidated, Less Compact Development’ would benefit the protection of various environmental components to a lesser degree. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to in many cases; however, more residual environmental effects would result.

Under this alternative there would be:

- An increase in car dependency and associated carbon heavy travel patterns, which would undermine efforts aimed at securing climate resilience.
- Increased peripheral pattern of residential development with potential for self-contained and disconnected built environments.
- Reduced potential for modal shift to sustainable travel options such as walking, cycling and public transport.
- Potential for increased costs associated with the delivery on new supporting infrastructure (roads, footpaths etc.) in more peripheral areas.
- Increased costs for the delivery of necessary supporting infrastructure for urban fringe, outer areas and greenfield sites.

For New Ross, the Selected Compact Development/Land Use Zoning approach is Alternative A "More Consolidated, More Compact Development". This compact development approach performed more favourably across multiple Strategic Environmental Objectives, including those relating to climate, human health, material assets and landscape.

For Enniscorthy, the Selected Compact Development/Land Use Zoning approach is mixture of Alternative A "More Consolidated, More Compact Development" and Alternative B "Less Consolidated, Less Compact Development". This alternative is identified as Alternative C, "A mix of Alternatives A and B above". This approach would facilitate Enniscorthy in meeting the revised population targets and would further enable the rapid activation of available and housing delivery in the interests of providing housing for people, and ensure that housing delivery is not as constrained as it could be in Enniscorthy with a greater focus on brownfield development.

## **Section 4 AA Determination**



**Appropriate Assessment Determination  
under the Planning and Development Act 2024, as amended,  
for Variation No. 1 to the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028**

Pursuant to Section 205 of Part 6 of the Planning and Development Act 2024, as amended, and for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive, as amended, this Appropriate Assessment (AA) determination is being made by Wexford County Council relating to the potential for the Variation No. 1 to the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 that is being made<sup>1</sup> to have effects on the integrity of European sites. In carrying out this Appropriate Assessment (AA), the Council is taking into account the matters including the following:

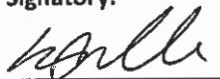
- The Natura Impact Report prepared for the Proposed Variation;
- The Screening for AA Report and Determination for Proposed Material Alterations;
- The Consolidated Natura Impact Report prepared towards the end of the process to inform this final AA determination;
- Written submissions made during the Proposed Variation preparation process; and
- Ongoing advice on AA from the Council's agents.

As part of the AA, it was identified that the Proposed Variation may, if unmitigated, have likely significant effects on 27 (no.) European Sites. The elements of the Proposed Variation that present sources with pathways for potential significant effects to European sites as a result of its implementation are:

- Increases in the capacity required for infrastructure, including wastewater treatment services; and
- Potential increases in visitor pressures (including amenity and leisure activities) on European sites from the proposed increases in population densities and housing targets, including from associated active travel infrastructure such as greenways, blueways and cycleways.

Pursuant to Section 205 of Part 6 of the Planning and Development Act 2024, as amended, and for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive, as amended, the undersigned, having carefully considered the information referred to above agrees with and adopts the reasoning and conclusions presented and determines that, having incorporated mitigation measures<sup>2</sup> into the Variation, no reasonable scientific doubt exists as to the absence of adverse effects on the integrity of any European site as a result of the implementation of Proposed Variation No. 1<sup>3</sup> to be made to the Wexford County Development Plan 2022–2028, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects<sup>4</sup>. This determination has been arrived at in view of the Conservation Objectives of the habitats and/or species, for which these sites have been designated.

**Signatory:**



Eddie Taaffe  
Chief Executive

**Date:**

13/7/26

<sup>1</sup> Incorporating the Proposed Variation and any alteration/modification considered by the AA process.

<sup>2</sup> Objective COMAH03 and NRT25, Objective COMAH04, Objective COMAH05, Objective COMAH06, Objective E01, Objective E02 and NRT02, Objective E03 and NRT03, Objective E04 and NRT04, Objective E05, Objective E06, Objective E07 and NRT07, Objective E16 and NRT19, Objective E18 and NRT22, Objective E19 and NRT23, Objective E20, Objective E21 and NRT30, Objective E22 and NRT31, Objective NRT28, Objective NRT01, Objective NRT05, Objective NRT06, Objective NRT20, Objective NRT24.

<sup>3</sup> Incorporating the Proposed Variation and any alteration/modification considered by the AA process

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

