

# **Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening Report**

Galway Inner Harbour  
Masterplan





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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

MKO has been appointed to provide the information necessary to allow the competent authority to undertake a Screening for Appropriate Assessment associated with the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan (hereafter referred to as the 'Masterplan') prepared by the Galway Harbour Company (GHC). The assessment in this report is based on a desk study and evaluates the potential for the Masterplan to result in significant effects on European sites in the absence of any best practice, mitigation, or preventative measures. The current project is not directly connected with, or necessary for, the management of any European site and consequently the project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process.

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:

- › Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010)
- › Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. Office of the Planning Regulator, OPR (2021).
- › European Commission's Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2021)
- › Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018)

This AA Screening Report should be read in conjunction with the Masterplan and the accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report (September 2025).

## 1.2 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Screening is the process of determining whether an Appropriate Assessment is required for a plan or project. Screening for Appropriate Assessment is required under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). The Habitats Directive and the associated Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) are transposed into Irish legislation by the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011<sup>1</sup>. The legislative provisions for appropriate assessment screening for planning applications are set out in Section 177U of the 2000 Act (as amended). Where it cannot be excluded that a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site<sup>2</sup> then same shall be subject to an Appropriate Assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Under Section 177U—(1) it states *"A screening for appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or application for consent for proposed development shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site. The competent authority's determination as to whether an Appropriate Assessment is required must be made on the basis of objective information and should be recorded. The competent authority may request information to be supplied to enable it to carry out screening"*. This AASR has been prepared

<sup>1</sup> S.I. No 477/2011 – European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations

<sup>2</sup> Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)



in compliance with the provision of section 177U of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Where it cannot be excluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt at the Screening stage, that a proposed plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, would be likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a European site, an Appropriate Assessment is required. Where an Appropriate Assessment is required, the competent authority will require the applicant to prepare a Natura Impact Statement.

The term Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is defined in legislation<sup>3</sup>. An NIS, where required, should present the data, information, and analysis necessary to reach a definitive determination as to 1) the implications of the plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, for a European site in view of its conservation objectives, and 2) whether there will be adverse effects on the integrity of a European site. The NIS should be underpinned by best scientific knowledge, objective information and by the precautionary principle.

### 1.3

## Site Location Context

The Masterplan is located within the existing Port of Galway, which is located southeast of the City of Galway. (Grid Reference: M 30174 24895)

The Galway Port has developed directly to the southeast of the old medieval walled city. The Commercial Dock was built in 1832. Uses related to the docks, including gasworks, coal yards and grain fertilizer stores, developed around the harbour. Over the past 20 years, many of these uses have gradually been replaced by apartments and office developments around the west and south sides of the docks. The rest of the site is currently an open expanse of former and current commercial lands used by Galway Port.

The lands associated with the Masterplan cover an area of 7.6 hectares. The wider area surrounding the site includes a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial properties.

The area covered by the Masterplan is shown in **Figure 1-1**.

### 1.4

## Statement of Authority

A desk study and subsequent reporting was undertaken David Mesarcik. David is an Ecologist with MKO, he holds a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology as well as a postgraduate degree in Ecology. This report has been reviewed by Colin Murphy. Colin is a Project Ecologist with MKO, he holds a BSc in Ecology and Environmental Biology and an MSc in Environmental Science and Policy, and has over 4 years of professional consulting experience.

<sup>3</sup> As defined in Section 177T of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, an NIS means a statement, for the purposes of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive of the implications of a proposed development, on its own and in combination with other plans and projects, for a European site in view of its conservation objectives. It is required to include a report of a scientific examination of evidence and data, carried out by competent persons to identify, and classify any implications for the European site in view of its conservation objectives.





### Map Legend



Drawing Title

## Site Location Map

Project Title  
Galway Inner Harbour  
Masterplan, Co. Galway

Drawn By <b>DM</b>	Checked By <b>CM</b>
Project No. <b>240529</b>	Drawing No. <b>Figure 1.1</b>
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## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN

### 2.1 Background to the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan

#### 2.1.1 Purpose of the Masterplan

The purpose of the Masterplan is to set out a non-statutory framework and vision for the development of the Inner Harbour lands.

### 2.2 Content of the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan

The Masterplan provides an overall vision for the Inner Harbour Area to create a sustainable, mixed-use urban quarter as an integral part of the city centre. The overall vision seeks to:

- › Create a sustainable mixed-use urban quarter, a place to live, work and enjoy, integral to the city and city living. The site is 7.6ha and has development potential for a Gross Floor Area of approx. 138,305 sq. m. The redevelopment of the Inner Harbour proposes a mix of residential (39%), student accommodation (10%), and commercial development (51%).
- › Provide a breathing space for the city by opening up the docks as a public realm event space. There is potential for over 20,540 sq. m of new public realm spaces and 37,832 sq. m for open space.
- › Create an active travel network and 'green/blue links' which has the potential to connect with the City Centre, Ceannt Quarter (Augustine Hill) and surrounding areas. The active travel network will also connect the harbour waterfront to the green/blue corridors along the River Corrib, Lough Atalia and the coastline.
- › Provide a significant multi-purpose event space suitable for meetings, conferences and exhibitions in the heart of Galway.
- › Plan for flexible, adaptable growth, with development plots and blocks allowing a variety of uses, maximising infrastructural efficiency. While most of the buildings would be residential apartment blocks and commercial/office space, it is also proposed that there would be a hotel, and multiple buildings for cultural uses, water-based leisure activities, or other recreational purposes. The buildings are proposed to be set back from the dock edge and will be predominately six to eight storeys in height, however they will range from two storeys to higher landmark buildings.
- › Minimise the need and demand for vehicular movement by providing a mix of uses, with flexible parking provision that can be repurposed in response to people's changing behavioural patterns, as better modal options become available.
- › Reintroduce nature and biodiversity with natural connections to nearby Lough Atalia and wetland areas.
- › Minimise energy consumption and carbon emissions through various actions including net zero energy buildings or similar.
- › Allow for phased development and integrate the development with the established urban structure of the city centre core.

Due to the significant area involved, the redevelopment of the entirety of the Inner Harbour lands is likely to extend over a period of time and, consequently, the use mix may be adjusted over time to reflect the city's needs as the development takes place. GHC is at an advanced stage of planning in respect of the relocation and extension of the existing port. The new port will be a modern, sustainable

facility, well connected with Europe and beyond and with ready access to modern rail, motorway and telecommunication links.

While some of the Inner Harbour lands could be developed in the short term (the Land Development Agency has commenced early-stage consultation on development of Inner Harbour lands), the development of the majority is dependent on a successful outcome to the current planning application for the new harbour extension. This permission will enable the building of what is effectively a new port, beyond the existing Harbour Enterprise Park, thereby freeing up the entirety of the Inner Harbour lands for redevelopment. This, in turn, provides an opportunity for the redevelopment of the Inner Harbour lands as a new mixed-use quarter in the city.

## 2.3

## Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

A Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening has been undertaken alongside the preparation of this AA Screening Report, and the findings of the SEA Screening have informed the AA Screening and vice versa.

The SEA process is a requirement of the Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>4</sup>, referred to as ‘the SEA Directive’, which requires that an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans or projects which are likely to have either significant positive or significant negative effects on the environment.

The purpose of SEA, as defined in Article 1 of the SEA Directive, is as follows:

*“The objective of this directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.”*

Screening for SEA was undertaken in accordance with the processes set out in the EPA’s Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening.

The SEA Screening Report concluded that the Masterplan for the Inner Harbour does not fall within the scope of the SEA Directive and is not deemed to require SEA screening.

The SEA Screening Report accompanies the Masterplan and this AA Screening Report.

## 2.4

## Description of the Baseline Ecological Environment

## 2.4.1

### EPA Information

The area of Galway Inner Harbour associated with the Masterplan is situated entirely within the WFD Catchment 29, Galway Bay South East, and within the Carrowmoneash [Oranmore]\_SC\_010 Sub-catchment 29\_6, (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>). The River Corrib runs to the northwest of the Site and flows into the Inner Galway Bay at the Claddagh Basin adjacent to the Galway Inner Harbour. The Site is located opposite Lough Atalia, an estuarine lagoon, on the east side of Galway City.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A32001L0042>

### 3. IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES

#### 3.1 Data Sources Informing the Assessment

In preparation of the report, the below sources were consulted to inform the assessment.

- › Review of NPWS Site Synopses, Conservation Objectives for the European Sites Review of 2019, 2013 and 2007 EU Habitats Directive (Article 17) Reports.
- › Review of online web-mappers: National Parks and Wildlife Service<sup>5</sup> (NPWS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)<sup>6</sup>, Environmental Sensitivity Mapping tool<sup>7</sup> and National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)<sup>8</sup>.
- › Review of other plans and projects within the area.

#### 3.2 Identification of the European Sites within the Likely Zone of Impact

The following methodology was used to establish any European Sites upon which there is a potential for a likely significant effect (LSE) to occur either individually or in combination with other plans and projects as a result of the Masterplan:

- › Initially the most up to date GIS spatial datasets for European designated sites and water catchments were downloaded from the NPWS website (www.npws.ie) and the EPA website (www.epa.ie).
- › All European sites that could potentially be affected were identified using a source-pathway - receptor model. To provide context for the assessment, European sites within the vicinity of the Galway Inner Harbour are shown on Figure 3-1. Information on these sites according to the site-specific conservation objectives is provided in Table 3-1. Sites that were further away from the Galway Inner Harbour were also considered.
- › In relation to Special Protection Areas, in the absence of any specific European or Irish guidance in relation to such sites, the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Guidance, 'Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPA)' (2016) was consulted. This document provides guidance in relation to the identification of connectivity between proposed development and Special Protection Areas. The guidance takes into consideration the distances species may travel beyond the boundary of their SPAs and provides information on dispersal and foraging ranges of bird species which are frequently encountered when considering plans and projects. Table 3-1 provides details of all relevant European Sites as identified in the preceding steps and assesses the potential for likely significant effects on each.
- › The assessment considers any likely direct or indirect impacts of the Proposed Development, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on European Sites by virtue of criteria including the following: size and scale, land-take, distance from the European Site or key features of the site, resource requirements, emissions, excavation requirements, transportation requirements and duration of construction, operation and decommissioning were considered in this assessment.
- › The site synopses and conservation objectives of these sites, as per the NPWS website (www.npws.ie), were consulted and reviewed at the time of preparing this report.

<sup>5</sup> <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/edf34d92e28040fd87d3d14f55d8d95f>

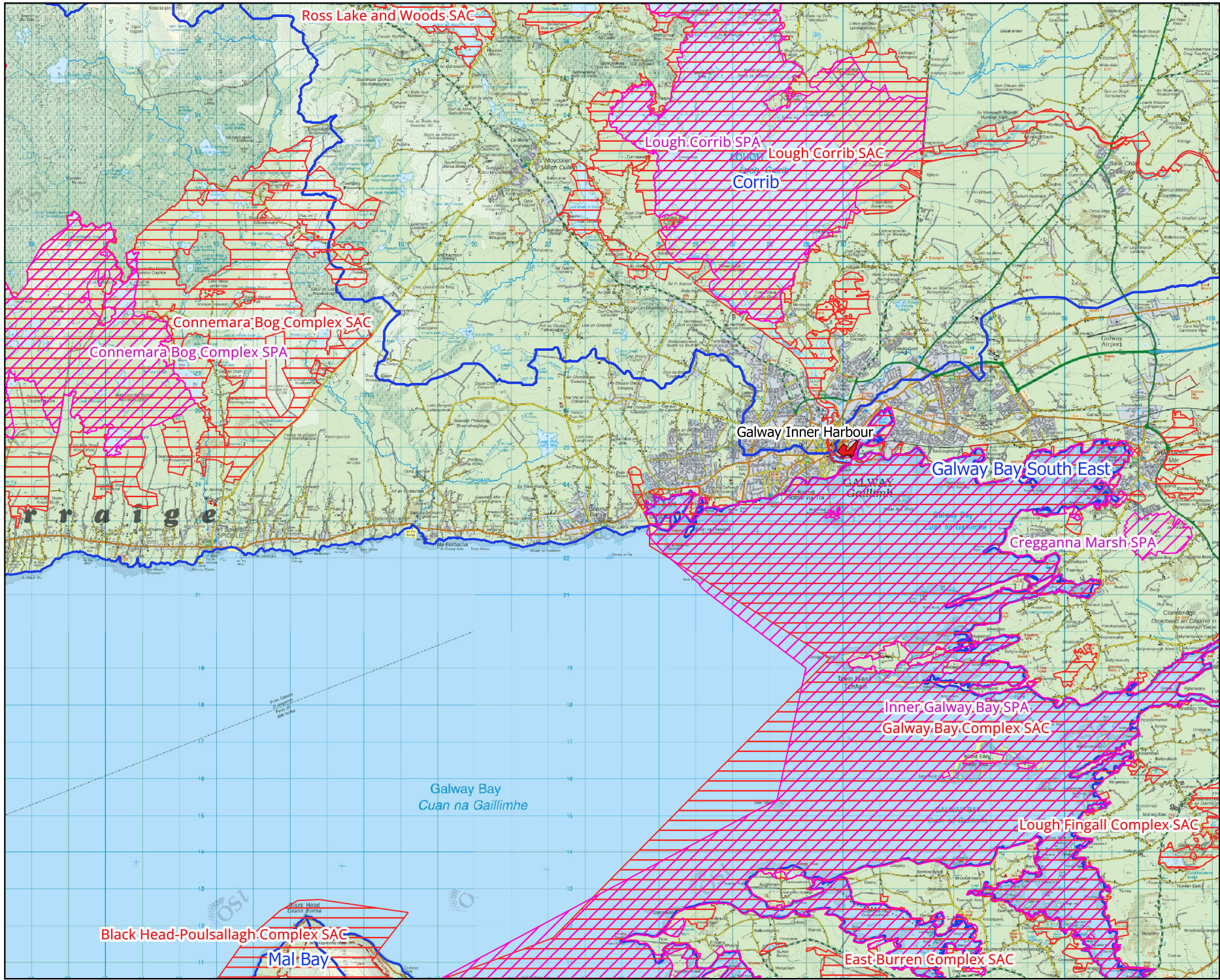
<sup>6</sup> <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://enviromap.ie/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://biodiversityireland.ie/>

- › The potential for the Proposed Development to result in cumulative impacts on any European Sites in combination with other plans and projects was considered in the assessment that is presented in Section





## Map Legend

- Galway Inner Harbour Location
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- EPA Hydrological Catchments



Drawing Title  
European Designated sites within the likely zone of Influence

Project Title  
Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan, Co. Galway

Drawn By DM	Checked By CM
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Table 3-1 Identification of Designated sites with potential for LSEs

European Sites and Distance from Galway Harbour	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated  (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, on the 21/10/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Influence Determination
<b>Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)</b>			
<p><b>Galway Bay Complex SAC [000268]</b></p> <p>The SAC borders the eastern section of the Masterplan boundary.</p>	<p><b>Habitats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</li> <li>› Coastal lagoons [1150]</li> <li>› Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]</li> <li>› Reefs [1170]</li> <li>› Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]</li> <li>› Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]</li> <li>› Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</li> <li>› Atlantic salt meadows (Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]</li> <li>› Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]</li> <li>› Turloughs [3180]</li> <li>› Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]</li> <li>› Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</li> </ul>	<p>Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, April 2013<sup>9</sup>), were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a></p>	<p>The Masterplan deals with an area within the confines of the existing Galway Port. The port is located within the Inner Galway harbour, which is designated as part of the Galway Bay Complex SAC. The eastern section of the port borders the SAC.</p> <p>The purpose of the Masterplan is a vision for the future of the Inner Harbour to ensure development is conducted in a unified way. The Masterplan will serve as a guidance document and does not propose direct works, nor does it set out any policies, targets / goals, legal requirements, or allocate resources for the development of the Inner Harbour. No direct works will arise from the implementation of the Masterplan that would result in any likely significant effects on the QI habitats and species of the SAC.</p> <p>Any future development envisaged from the Masterplan will require a screening for Appropriate</p>

<sup>9</sup> NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Galway Bay Complex SAC 000268. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht



European Sites and Distance from Galway Harbour	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated  (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, on the 21/10/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Influence Determination
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]</li> <li>› Alkaline fens [7230]</li> <li>› Limestone pavements [8240]</li> </ul> <b>Species:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]</li> <li>› Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]</li> </ul>		<p>Assessment in its own right and may require Appropriate Assessment at that stage. The Masterplan also envisages the planting of native tree species and the provision of green space along the eastern boundary of the port, which will improve the ecological connectivity of the port to the SAC.</p> <p>As such, no potential for Likely Significant Effects as a result of the Masterplan was identified and an appropriate assessment is not required.</p>
Lough Corrib SAC [000297]  <b>Distance: 0.21 km</b>	<b>Habitats:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]</li> <li>› Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]</li> <li>› Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]</li> <li>› Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260]</li> </ul>	Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, April 2017 <sup>10</sup> ), were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a>	The Masterplan is not connected with the SAC; as such, no potential for Likely Significant Effects as a result of the draft Masterplan was identified and an appropriate assessment is not required

<sup>10</sup> NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Lough Corrib SAC 000297. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

European Sites and Distance from Galway Harbour	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated  (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, on the 21/10/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Influence Determination
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco- Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</li> <li>› Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]</li> <li>› Active raised bogs [7110]</li> <li>› Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]</li> <li>› Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]</li> <li>› Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]</li> <li>› Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]</li> <li>› Alkaline fens [7230]</li> <li>› Limestone pavements [8240]</li> <li>› Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]</li> <li>› Bog woodland [91D0]</li> </ul> <p><b>Species:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</li> <li>› Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]</li> <li>› Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</li> <li>› Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</li> <li>› Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]</li> <li>› Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]</li> </ul>		

European Sites and Distance from Galway Harbour	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated  (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, on the 21/10/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Influence Determination
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]</li> <li>› Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]</li> <li>› Hamatocaulis vernicosus (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216]</li> </ul>		
<b>Lough Fingall Complex SAC</b> [000606]  <b>Distance: 7.97 km</b>	<b>Habitats:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Turloughs [3180]</li> <li>› Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]</li> <li>› Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]</li> </ul> <b>Species:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]</li> </ul>	Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, Jan 2019 <sup>11</sup> ), were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a>	The Masterplan is not connected with the SAC; as such, no potential for Likely Significant Effects as a result of the Masterplan was identified and an appropriate assessment is not required.
<b>Connemara Bog Complex SAC</b> [002034]  <b>Distance: 13.01 km</b>	<b>Habitats:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Coastal lagoons [1150]</li> <li>› Reefs [1170]</li> <li>› Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]</li> </ul>	Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, Oct 2015 <sup>12</sup> ),	The Masterplan is not connected with the SAC; as such, no potential for Likely Significant Effects as a result of the Masterplan was identified and an appropriate assessment is not required.

<sup>11</sup> NPWS (2019) Conservation Objectives: Lough Fingall Complex SAC 000606. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>12</sup> NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Connemara Bog Complex SAC 002034. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

European Sites and Distance from Galway Harbour	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated  (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, on the 21/10/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Influence Determination
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]</li> <li>› Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]</li> <li>› Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260]</li> <li>› Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]</li> <li>› European dry heaths [4030]</li> <li>› Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]</li> <li>› Blanket bogs (*if active bog) [7130]</li> <li>› Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]</li> <li>› Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]</li> <li>› Alkaline fens [7230]</li> <li>› Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and</li> <li>› Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]</li> </ul> <p><b>Species:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Euphydryas aurinia (Marsh Fritillary) [1065]</li> <li>› Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]</li> <li>› Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]</li> <li>› Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]</li> </ul>	<p>were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a></p>	

European Sites and Distance from Galway Harbour	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated  (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, on the 21/10/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Influence Determination
<b>Special Protection Area (SPA)</b>			
<p>Inner Galway Bay SPA [004031]</p> <p><b>Distance: The SPA borders the eastern section of the Masterplan boundary.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002]</li> <li>› Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]</li> <li>› Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]</li> <li>› Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]</li> <li>› Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]</li> <li>› Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]</li> <li>› Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069]</li> <li>› Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137]</li> <li>› Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]</li> <li>› Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]</li> <li>› Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]</li> <li>› Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169]</li> <li>› Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]</li> <li>› Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]</li> <li>› Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis) [A191]</li> <li>› Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</li> <li>› Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</li> </ul>	<p>Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, May 2013<sup>13</sup>), were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a></p>	<p>The Masterplan deals with an area within the confines of the existing Galway Port. The Inner Galway Bay SPA lies directly adjacent to the eastern section of the Masterplan boundary.</p> <p>The purpose of the Masterplan is a vision for the future of the Inner Harbour to ensure development is conducted in a unified way. The Masterplan will serve as a guidance document and does not propose direct works, nor does it set out any policies, targets / goals, legal requirements, or allocate resources for the development of the Inner Harbour. No direct works will arise from the implementation of the Masterplan that would result in any likely significant effects on the SCI species of the SPA.</p> <p>Any future development envisaged from the Masterplan will require a screening for Appropriate Assessment in its own right and may require Appropriate Assessment at that stage. The Masterplan also envisages the planting of native tree</p>

<sup>13</sup> NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Inner Galway Bay SPA 004031. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

European Sites and Distance from Galway Harbour	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated  (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, on the 21/10/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Influence Determination
			species and the provision of green space along the eastern boundary of the port, which will improve the ecological connectivity of the port to the SPA and may provide additional foraging habitat for some of the SCI species.  As such, no potential for Likely Significant Effects as a result of the Masterplan was identified and an appropriate assessment is not required.
Lough Corrib SPA [004042]  <b>Distance: 3.79 km</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Gadwall (Anas strepera) [A051]</li> <li>› Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056]</li> <li>› Pochard (Aythya ferina) [A059]</li> <li>› Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061]</li> <li>› Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065]</li> <li>› Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082]</li> <li>› Coot (Fulica atra) [A125]</li> <li>› Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]</li> <li>› Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]</li> <li>› Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]</li> <li>› Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</li> <li>› Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]</li> <li>› Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]</li> </ul>	Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, Jan 2023 <sup>14</sup> ), were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a>	The Masterplan is not connected with the SPA; as such, no potential for Likely Significant Effects as a result of the Masterplan was identified and an appropriate assessment is not required.

<sup>14</sup> NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: Lough Corrib SPA 004042. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

European Sites and Distance from Galway Harbour	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated  (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, on the 21/10/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Influence Determination
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</li> </ul>		
Cregganna Marsh SPA [004142]  <b>Distance: 7.62 km</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]</li> </ul>	Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, Jan 2023 <sup>15</sup> ), were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a>	The Masterplan is not connected with the SPA; as such, no potential for Likely Significant Effects as a result of the Masterplan was identified and an appropriate assessment is not required.
Rahasane Turlough SPA [004089]  <b>Distance: 16.80 km</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038]</li> <li>Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]</li> <li>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]</li> <li>Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]</li> <li>Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]</li> <li>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</li> </ul>	Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, Jan 2023 <sup>16</sup> ), were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a>	The Masterplan is not connected with the SPA; as such, no potential for Likely Significant Effects as a result of the Masterplan was identified and an appropriate assessment is not required.

<sup>15</sup> NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: Cregganna Marsh SPA 004142. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>16</sup> NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: Rahasane Turlough SPA 004089. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

European Sites and Distance from Galway Harbour	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated  (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, on the 21/10/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Influence Determination
<p>Connemara Bog Complex SPA [004181]</p> <p><b>Distance: 17.50 km</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]</li> <li>› Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098]</li> <li>› Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]</li> <li>› Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]</li> </ul>	<p>Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, Jan 2023<sup>17</sup>), were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a></p>	<p>The Masterplan is not connected with the SPA; as such, no potential for Likely Significant Effects as a result of the Masterplan was identified and an appropriate assessment is not required.</p>

<sup>17</sup> NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: Connemara Bog Complex SPA 004181. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.



### 3.3 In-combination Effects

This section of the AA Screening Report provides an outline of the potential cumulative effects on European Sites as a result of the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan. A search and review in relation to plans and projects that may have the potential to result in cumulative and/or in-combination effects on European Sites was conducted. The assessment of cumulative effects is a requirement under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

Types of potential cumulative effects that were considered as part of this AA Screening are:

- › Potential **intra-Masterplan** cumulative effects: These arise from the interactions between different types of potential environmental effects resulting from a Plan, Programme, etc. Where there are elevated levels of environmental sensitivities identified in the baseline study, future development could result in environmental conflicts and lead to a deterioration in environmental integrity.
- › Potential **inter-Masterplan** cumulative effects: these arise when the effects of the implementation of the Framework occur in combination with those of other plans, programmes, developments, etc.

In considering the relationship with legislation and other plans and programmes, it is important to note that the Masterplan currently exists separate to the hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for land-use development, housing, infrastructure, sustainable development, energy, environmental protection and environmental management. These other existing policies and plans have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes and form the decision-making and consent-granting Framework. The Masterplan does not set the framework for future development consent and is proposed on a non-statutory, non-binding basis to outline a vision for potential redevelopment of the area.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out Ireland's planning policy direction until 2040. The NPF is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The RSES for the Northern and Western Region, the existing and emerging City Development Plans set out objectives relating to the development of the area, that have been subject to environmental assessment.

Implementation of the Masterplan will be consistent with and conform with the NPF, RSES and low-tier Development Plans, including provisions in relation to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been integrated into these documents including through SEA and AA processes.

In order to be realised, the elements of the Masterplan will have to demonstrate compliance with, as relevant, various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework. The proposed Masterplan is not part of any statutory decision-making or consent-granting framework.

Cumulative effects that have been considered include those resulting in-combination with:

- › Land-use policy, plans and programmes
- › Galway City Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)
- › Energy policy, plans and programmes
- › Climate-related policy, plans and programmes
- › Water services, waste management and transport infrastructure plans

- › Other environmental protection and management plans (e.g. any River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans).

Potential cumulative/in-combination effects on European Sites may include:

- › Contributions towards reductions in travel-related greenhouse gases and other emissions to air, reduction in consumption from non-renewables and associated achievement of legally binding targets (in-combination with plans and programmes from all sectors, including energy, transport and land-use planning), as a result of facilitating:
  - Sustainable compact growth
  - Sustainable mobility including walking, cycling and public transport
  - Drainage, flood risk management and resilience
  - Renewable energy, including community and local production and initiatives
  - Sustainable infrastructure design solutions including energy efficient buildings and green infrastructure;
- › Contributions towards travel-related greenhouse gases and other emissions to air (in combination with plans and programmes from all sectors, including transport and land-use planning) as a result of facilitating development which must be accompanied by an amount of road-based capacity;
- › Facilitation of new developments that are accompanied by appropriate levels of water services, therefore contributing towards water/environmental protection
- › Need for and the use of water and wastewater treatment capacities arising from new developments and associated potential adverse effects;
- › Potential cumulative effects upon surface and ground-water status as a result of new developments – construction and operation (loadings, flows and abstractions);
- › Potential cumulative effects that enhance ecological connectivity, contributing to sustainable mobility, arising from linear developments, such as those relating to green infrastructure;
- › Potential cumulative effects on flood risk by, for example, development of greenfield lands, and
- › In-combination with plans and programmes from all sectors, potential adverse effects on all environmental components arising from all developments (e.g. infrastructural, residential, economic and agricultural) in greenfield and brownfield areas. These plans and programmes are subject to compliance with environmental legislation and undergo SEA and AA, and projects will be subject to EIA and AA.

These effects would have the potential, if unmitigated or not considered within any project design, to result in changes in the environment within and beyond the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan area and potentially impact European Sites.

## 3.4 Plans

The following development plans have been reviewed and taken into consideration as part of this assessment:

- › Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029
- › Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032
- › Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2030

The review detailed in **Table 3-2** focused on policies and objectives that relate to European sites and natural heritage. Policies and objectives relating to sustainable land use were also reviewed.

Table 32 Review of Relevant Plans

Plans	Key Policies/Issues/Objectives Directly Related to European Sites in The Zone of Influence	Assessment of Potential Effects on European Sites
Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029	<p><b>Policy 5.2 Protected Spaces: Sites of European, National and Local Ecological Importance</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protect European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network (including Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) in accordance with the requirements in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and associated national legislation.</li> <li>2. Ensure that all plans or projects within the Plan area will only be authorised and /or supported after the competent authority has ascertained based on scientific evidence, screening for appropriate assessment and /or a Habitats Directive Assessment that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The plan or project will not give rise to an adverse direct, indirect or secondary effect on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or</li> <li>ii. The plan or project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type/and or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or</li> <li>iii. The plan or project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons for overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>The Development Plan was comprehensively reviewed, with particular reference to Policies and Objectives that relate to the Natura 2000 network and other natural heritage interests. As the development plan includes specific policies and objectives to protect European Sites and to ensure that no adverse effects on any European Site occur as a result of any plan or project, no potential for cumulative impacts when considered in conjunction with the Masterplan were identified.</p> <p>There will be no impact on designated sites or biodiversity as a result of the Masterplan.</p>

Plans	Key Policies/Issues/Objectives Directly Related to European Sites in The Zone of Influence	Assessment of Potential Effects on European Sites
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Protect, conserve and promote the nationally designated sites of ecological importance, including existing and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (NHA and pNHAs) in the city.</li> <li>4. Protect, conserve and support the development of an ecological network throughout the city which will improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</li> <li>10. Protect and conserve rare and threatened habitats and their key habitats, (wherever they occur) listed on Annex I and Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43EEC) and listed for protection under the Wildlife Acts 1976-2000 and plant species listed in the Flora Protection Order 2015.</li> <li>11. Ensure that plans and projects with the potential to have a significant impact on European sites (SAC or SPA) whether directly, indirectly or in combination with other plans or projects are subject to Appropriate Assessment, under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43EEC) and associated legislation and guidelines, to inform decision making.</li> <li>12. Achieve a sustainable balance between meeting future recreational needs (both passive and active) and the protection of the city's ecological heritage.</li> <li>13. Support the inclusion of natural features, such as trees, hedgerows, stone walls, ponds and the use of green design features and the incorporation of biodiversity measures in development layouts.</li> <li>14. Support and implement measures to control and manage alien/invasive species, where appropriate in accordance with the EU (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.</li> </ol> <p><b>Policy 5.3 Blue Spaces: Coast, Canals and Waterways</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protect and maintain the integrity of the coastal environment and waterways by avoiding significant impacts and meeting the requirements of statutory bodies, national and European legislation and standards.</li> <li>2. Conserve and protect natural conservation areas within the coastal area and along waterways and ensure that the range and quality of associated habitats and the range and populations of species are maintained.</li> </ol>	

Plans	Key Policies/Issues/Objectives Directly Related to European Sites in The Zone of Influence	Assessment of Potential Effects on European Sites
<b>Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES)</b>	<p><b>RPO 5.4:</b> Encourage the prioritisation of Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO) for all sites of Conservation Value, designated in EU Directive (i.e. SACs, SPAs) to integrate with the development objectives of this Strategy.</p> <p><b>RPO 5.5:</b> Ensure efficient and sustainable use of all our natural resources, including inland waterways, peatlands, and forests in a manner which ensures a healthy society and a clean environment and there is no net contribution to biodiversity loss arising from development supported in this strategy. Conserve and protect designated areas and natural heritage areas. Conserve and protect European sites and their integrity.</p> <p><b>RPO 5.7:</b> Ensure that all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the RSES are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA and AA as appropriate.</p>	<p>The RSES was comprehensively reviewed, with particular reference to Policies and Objectives that relate to the Natura 2000 network and other natural heritage interests. No potential for cumulative impacts when considered in conjunction with the Masterplan were identified.</p> <p>There will be no impact on designated sites or biodiversity as a result of the Masterplan.</p>
<b>Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2024-2030</b>	<p><b>Objective 1: Adopt a Whole-of Government, Whole of-Society Approach to Biodiversity.</b> Proposed actions include capacity and resource reviews across Government; determining responsibilities for the expanding biodiversity agenda providing support for communities, citizen scientists and business; and mechanisms for the governance and review of this National Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p><b>Objective 2: Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs. Supporting actions will build on existing conservation measures.</b> Efforts to tackle Invasive Alien Species will be elevated. The protected area network will be expanded to include the Marine Protected Areas. The ambition of the EU Biodiversity Strategy will be considered as part of an evolving work programme across Government.</p>	<p>The BAP was comprehensively reviewed, with particular reference to Policies and Objectives that relate to the Natura 2000 network and other natural heritage interests. No potential for cumulative impacts when considered in conjunction with the Masterplan were identified.</p> <p>There will be no impact on designated sites or biodiversity as a result of the Masterplan.</p>

Plans	Key Policies/Issues/Objectives Directly Related to European Sites in The Zone of Influence	Assessment of Potential Effects on European Sites
	<p><b>Objective 3: Secure Nature's Contribution to People. Actions highlight the relationship between nature and people in Ireland.</b></p> <p>These include recognising the tangible and intangible values of biodiversity, promoting nature's importance to our culture and heritage, and recognising how biodiversity supports our society and our economy.</p> <p><b>Objective 4: Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity.</b></p> <p>This objective focuses on biodiversity research needs, as well as the development and strengthening of long-term monitoring programmes that will underpin and strengthen future decision-making. Action will also focus on collaboration to advance ecosystem accounting that will contribute towards natural capital accounts.</p> <p><b>Objective 5: Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives.</b> Collaboration with other countries and across the island of Ireland will play a key role in the realisation of this Objective. Ireland will strengthen its contribution to international biodiversity initiatives and international governance processes, such as the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.</p>	

## Other Projects

Other planning applications, including development projects and infrastructure, may have potentially adverse impacts associated with them. Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 includes policies to ensure that any plan or project under the plan that is required to follow the AA process does so and is assessed in this regard.

Due to the relatively high level of the proposals under the Masterplan and the intervening period associated with any project-level development proposals at the site, it is not possible at this stage to fully assess the potential cumulative impacts with other planning applications; actions that may arise in terms of other projects will be considered at the project level and a full cumulative assessment made at this stage. This will ensure that any cumulative impacts in combination with any proposed development under the Masterplan are fully assessed. The precise nature of any mitigation required would also be determined at the project level with respect to the project in isolation and to ensure that no cumulative impacts would occur.

## Conclusion of in-combination/cumulative assessment

The review of plans that are described above did not reveal any additional potential pathways for effect on European Sites that may have arisen as a result of those plans.

Through the implementation of overarching policies and objectives of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029, no negative in-combination effects from projects to European Sites are expected through the implementation of the Masterplan.

4.

## **APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING STATEMENT AND CONCLUSIONS**

The findings of this Screening Assessment are presented following the European Commission's Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2021) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018) as well as the Department of the Environment's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010).

4.1

### **Concluding Statement**

It is concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt, on the basis of objective information and in light of the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites, that the Masterplan, either individually or in combination with other plans, will not have a likely significant effect on any European Site. The primary reason for this conclusion is that the Masterplan presents a vision for the redevelopment of the area and does not constitute a statutory document. It is intended as a guide for the future development of the Inner Harbour lands and does not provide for the re-zoning or de-zoning of lands. Any and all future projects and developments that are proposed from the Masterplan will be subject to the AA process at the planning stage to ensure that they will not adversely affect the integrity of European sites.



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