

# **SEA Screening of the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan**

Screening for Strategic  
Environmental Assessment





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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Galway Harbour Company (GHC) is preparing the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan (hereafter referred to as the 'Masterplan'). The aim of the Masterplan is to set out a non-statutory framework and vision for the future development of the Inner Harbour lands, in conjunction with the plans for the expansion of the Port in Galway. The Masterplan will enable the development of the Inner Harbour as a distinctive, vibrant, city-centre neighbourhood where people can work, live and play, with well-designed buildings and a high-quality walkable public realm that links into the city centre network of streets and to the wider city.

MKO was commissioned by GHC to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening of the Masterplan. The purpose of Screening is to determine whether the Masterplan must be subject to an SEA. GHC, as the competent body responsible for the Masterplan preparation, is also responsible for ensuring the Masterplan is prepared in compliance with [Directive 2001/42/EC](#) (i.e. the 'SEA Directive'), as transposed into national legislation.

The SEA Screening Report has been informed by the screening process outlined in the EPA's [Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening](#) published in 2021.

This SEA Screening Report should be read in conjunction with the Masterplan and the accompanying Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report.

A Preliminary Screening for SEA was forward to the designated environmental authorities (as listed in Section 3.3 of this report) and submissions and observations received have been incorporated into the SEA Screening Report.

### 1.1.1 Statement of Authority

This report has been prepared by Eoin O'Sullivan and reviewed by Michael Watson, both of MKO. Eoin O'Sullivan is a Project Director Environment with MKO with over 15 years of experience in the assessment of a wide range of energy and infrastructure related projects and working in the fields of environmental and human health risk assessment, waste management, waste policy and permitting. Eoin is proficient in undertaking detailed quantitative risk assessments for the protection of controlled waters and human health. Eoin holds an MSc in Environmental Engineering and is a Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management (CWEM) and Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) with the Society of Environment. Michael Watson is a Director and head of the Environment Team in MKO. Michael has over 20 years' experience in the environmental sector. Michael's professional experience includes managing Environmental Impact Assessments, EPA licence applications, environmental due diligence and general environmental assessment on behalf of clients in the wind farm, waste management public sector, and commercial and industrial sectors nationally.

## 1.2 Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan

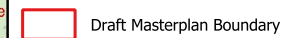
### 1.2.1 Background and geographical area covered by the Masterplan

The Port has developed directly to the south-east 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 side of the docks. The rest of the site is currently an open expanse of former and current commercial lands used by Galway Port.





### Map Legend



Drawing Title

## Site Location Map

Project Title  
Galway Inner Harbour  
Masterplan, Co. Galway

Drawn By	Checked By
DM	CM
Project No.	Drawing No.
240529	Figure 1.1
Scale	Date
1:43,000	23/10/2024



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The lands associated with the Masterplan cover an area of 7.6 hectares. The main section of the site can be accessed from Lough Atalia Road to the north of the site. Access to the western section of the site is via Dock Street and Dock Road. The site is currently occupied by the Galway Harbour Offices, Galway Lifeboat Station, Lasta Na Mara Cargo Service, Mor Oil, Texaco Petrol Station, City Direct Bus, Galway Bay Seafoods and car parking. The wider area surrounding the site includes a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial properties. The Inner Harbour site is situated within the functional area of Galway City Council which hosts a population of 84,414 (2022 Census). The area covered by the Masterplan is shown in Figure 1-1.

### 1.2.2 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.

### 1.2.3 Content of the 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 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.

#### 1.2.4 Policy context

The policy context in Ireland heavily influenced the preparation of the Masterplan. The Masterplan and the hierarchy of plans and policies it sits within is illustrated in Figure 1-2.

The Masterplan's "Statement of Consistency with Planning Policy" illustrates in detail how the masterplan complies and fulfils the requirements of national, regional and local policy. Therefore, the paragraphs below briefly summarise the relationship between the Masterplan and other plans within the hierarchy. The findings from the SEAs of the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, and the Galway City Development Plan are also described in the following paragraphs to provide context for the SEA of the Masterplan.



Figure 1-2 Hierarchy of plans and policies

##### 1.2.4.1 National

In 2018, Ireland's [National Planning Framework](#) ('Project Ireland 2040') (NPF) was published. The NPF First revision was published on 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2025.

The NFP First Revision includes the objective for a 50% increase in the population and employment of Galway City by 2040. A key element of national policy is to deliver growth in a compact form with a focus on the regeneration of brownfield sites and underutilised land, particularly where these sites are integrated with the existing built footprint, are proximate to existing neighbourhoods and employment areas, services and community facilities and where they are well served by existing and planned public transport and walking / cycling networks. The redevelopment of the Inner Harbour meets the NPF's preferred approach for new development.

As part of the preparation of the NPF, a number of environmental assessments were undertaken including SEA. Through the SEA, environmental considerations have been integrated into the NPF by the:

- Development and evaluation of alternatives;
- Assessment and refinement of National Policy Objectives (NPOs) and National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs);
- Inclusion of recommended mitigation measures to address the potential impacts arising from the alternatives, NPOs and NSOs considered; and
- Inclusion of additional supporting text to strengthen the commitments in the NPF to protection of the environment.

The NPF recognises that as more policy detail is developed down through the hierarchy, there is further opportunity for focused assessment to inform decision making. Therefore National Policy Objective 1 requires that *“all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the National Planning Framework are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA and AA as appropriate”*.

The [SEA Statement](#) for the NPF (2018) concludes the following:

*“The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the National Planning Framework have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the plan have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration”*.

The SEA Statement for the First Revision of the NPF is not publicly available currently.

#### 1.2.4.2 Regional

The [Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032](#), published in 2020, identified the Inner Harbour as a strategic site of regeneration which can deliver a significant quantum of residential and mixed-use development in Galway City to meet the needs of the growing population. Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 3.6.4 directly supports the regeneration and development of city centre sites at Galway Harbour.

As part of the preparation of the RSES for the Northern & Western Region, a number of environmental assessments were carried out, including SEA. Section 1.5 of the RSES (p.12) states that the environmental assessments ensure that the RSES responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment, and ensure the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of growth and development are considered and negative effects are reduced, offset or avoided.

The [SEA Statement](#) of the RSES concluded the following:

*“The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the RSES have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the plan have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration”*.



*“Many of the environmental issues raised have been addressed in the RSES, primarily through inclusion of overarching environmental objectives as the key response. These overarching objectives establish the starting position for all development arising from the RSES and go toward integrating environment into decision making as the policy base is expressed at lower tiers of planning”.*

#### 1.2.4.3 Local

The [Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029](#) (GCDP) strongly supports the development of the ‘major regeneration site’ at the Inner Harbour stating that the site is of such a scale and nature that it can satisfy the demand for additional residential and commercial uses in the city centre.

*“It has potential for significant redevelopment providing an opportunity to re-establish links between the city centre and the sea, to create a high-quality waterfront setting; a new city centre mixed use neighbourhood and include for water-related leisure uses.” (p.254).*

*“It has potential to reveal the past trading history of the city and celebrate a high-quality coastal edge linked to the city centre. In particular, it has potential to accommodate housing in the context of local need, national compact growth agenda and the strategy for housing in Housing for All” (p.255).*

The GCDP “requires the preparation of a masterplan for the Inner Harbour” (p.276) and states that “in principle the proposals for a mix of uses on these lands complemented by a unique waterfront setting linked to the city centre is acceptable and welcome” (p. 255). The Council will consider the redevelopment of these lands where it can be demonstrated that a number of requirements can be satisfied. These criteria are listed in Appendix 1 of the SEA Screening. The Masterplan’s “Statement of Consistency with Planning Policy” demonstrates how the Masterplan fulfils each criterion.

The GCDP was subject to mandatory SEA. The SEA process identified where likely significant environmental effects may arise and outlined measures to mitigate potentially negative effects on the environment. The GCDP states that the SEA “ensured full integration and consideration of environmental issues throughout each stage to date in the Development Plan process” and “the results of the SEA were fully integrated into the preparation and making of the Plan.” (p. 8).

In summary, the NPF, the RSES and the GCDP integrated the findings and recommended mitigation measures outlined in their respective SEAs in the plan-making process, ensuring that likely significant effects on the environment are avoided, reduced or offset. As part of the SEA process, the NPF, the RSES and the GCDP are also monitored to further ensure that no significant adverse or unforeseen adverse effects arise from the implementation of these plans. The Masterplan sits at the lower tier of the plan hierarchy and must be considered in relation to the current NPF, RSES and GCDP which have already been subject to SEA.

### 1.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment

SEA is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme (P/P) <sup>1</sup> before a decision is made to adopt it.

#### 1.3.1 SEA legislation

The SEA process is a requirement of the [Directive 2001/42/EC](#), referred to as ‘the SEA Directive’, which requires that an environmental assessment is carried out of certain P/P which are likely to have either significant positive or significant negative effects on the environment.

<sup>1</sup> Plans and Programmes should also be read to include the full range of strategies, frameworks, and studies.

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.”*

The following Regulations transpose the SEA Directive into Irish law.

- [S.I. No. 435 of 2004](#) (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by [S.I. No. 200 of 2011](#) (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).
- [S.I. No. 436 of 2004](#) (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended by [S.I. No. 201 of 2011](#) (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended, provides a clear hierarchy of land use plans requiring mandatory SEA including County and City Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Planning Schemes for Strategic Development Zones.

S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended, encapsulates all other types of plans and programmes in the land use planning sector, and as such the Masterplan, will be assessed under the requirements of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended (hereafter referred to as the ‘SEA Regulations’).

## 1.3.2 Stages in the SEA process

SEA comprises the following principal stages:

1. **Screening (current stage):** Determine whether the P/P is likely to result in significant environmental effects.
  - a. If the P/P falls within the remit of the SEA Regulations and/or there is uncertainty about whether the P/P may give rise to significant effects, SEA Scoping will be required.
  - b. If the P/P does not fall within the remit of the SEA Regulations, SEA will not be required.
2. **Scoping:** Consultation with the Environmental Authorities on the scope and level of detail to be considered in the assessment.
3. **Environmental Report:** An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the P/P.
4. **Consultation** on the draft Environmental Report.
5. **Evaluation** of the submissions and observations made on the draft Environmental Report prior to finalising the P/P.
6. Issuing of an **SEA Statement** identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the final P/P.

### 1.3.2.1 Overview of the Screening process

In deciding whether a P/P is likely to have significant environmental effects, regard must be had to the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive, as also set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. The Screening process comprises three principal stages (in line with the process set out in the EPA’s [Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening](#)):

1. **Stage 1: Applicability** – To determine if the Masterplan falls within the scope of the SEA Directive and transposing legislation, and to confirm if it constitutes a plan that requires mandatory SEA, i.e. a pre-screening check (see Chapter 2).
2. **Stage 2: Screening** – To determine the characteristics of the Masterplan and to identify whether the plan may give rise to significant effects on the environment. The application of environmental significance criteria is important in determining whether an SEA is required.

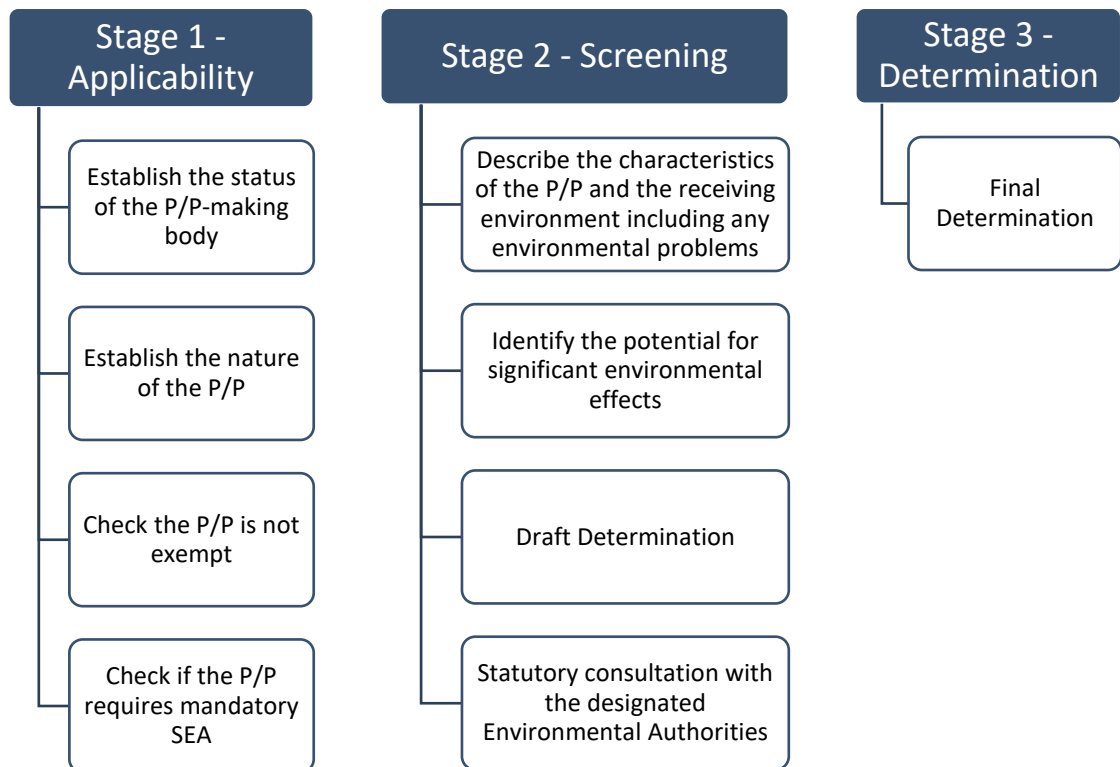
Annex II of the SEA Directive sets out the ‘statutory’ criteria that should be addressed when undertaking this stage:

- a. The first environmental significance criterion relates to the characteristics of the P/P, having regard to: the degree to which the P/P sets out a framework for other projects and activities; the influence of the P/P on other projects, plans or activities; the role of the plan for integrating environmental considerations to promote sustainable development; environmental issues of relevance to the P/P and the relevance of the P/P for the implementation of EU legislation on the environment.
- b. The second environmental significance criterion refers to the characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected, having regard to; the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects; the cumulative nature of the effects; the transboundary nature of the effects; the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values or intensive use; the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European or international protection status.

Prior to finalising any determination on the need for SEA, it is a statutory requirement to consult with the SEA Environmental Authorities. Notice of the Screening must be sent to the designated Environmental Authorities for their consideration for a period of not less than four weeks from the date of the notice. Following the consultation, the draft Screening Report and Masterplan should be updated to reflect feedback. A determination can then be made on the basis of the screening information and the observations/submissions received.

3. **Stage 3: Determination** –As soon as practicable after making the final determination as to whether SEA is required or not, the decision should be made available on GHC’s website for public inspection and a copy of the final determination sent to the SEA Environmental Authorities notified during screening (requirement to be met at a later stage).

Figure 1-3 SEA Screening steps as outlined in the EPA's Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening



### 1.3.3

## Appropriate Assessment and its relationship to Screening for SEA

SEA does not stand alone in environmental assessments of P/P. The Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening stage is particularly important as a determination on the need for AA is required before SEA screening can be completed. There is a high level of overlap between the SEA process and the AA process, in particular relating to biodiversity, human health, water, etc.

Screening for AA was undertaken in accordance with the [Habitats Directive](#) (92/43/EEC) and [S.I. No. 477/2011](#) (the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.) Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive establishes the requirement for AA:

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

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an AA to be undertaken when a plan or project is “likely to have a significant impact on a European site”. European sites or Natura 2000 sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

The first step in the AA process is to determine whether an AA is required for the plan or project being screened. This step is referred to as an “AA Screening” and the purpose is to establish, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objectives criteria, whether a plan or project, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.



As outlined in the Department<sup>2</sup> Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08, AA Screening is of relevance to SEA Screening:

*“Where following screening, it is found that the plan or the amendment may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 Site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting the precautionary approach,*

- *An Appropriate Assessment of the plan must be carried out and*
- *In any case where a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out.”*

Therefore, where a plan or programme requires a full AA, it shall also require a full SEA.

The AA Screening Report (May 2025) concluded, in view of best scientific knowledge, 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 and projects, will not have a likely significant effect on any European Site. The primary reason for this conclusion is because the Masterplan 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.

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

#### 1.4

## Structure of the Screening Report

Chapter 1 has described the background, purpose, and content of the Masterplan, and the requirement to undertake SEA Screening. The remainder of this report is structured into the following chapters (in line with the three principal stages in the Screening process):

- Chapter 2 sets out the applicability assessment (Stage 1) to determine whether the Masterplan falls within the scope of the SEA Directive and transposing legislation.
- Chapter 3 describes the next steps to be undertaken in the SEA Screening of the Masterplan.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (15<sup>th</sup> February 2008)  
<https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

## 2. STAGE 1: APPLICABILITY

### 2.1 Stage 1: Applicability

This chapter sets out the applicability assessment to determine whether the Masterplan falls within the scope of the SEA Directive and transposing legislation.

Table 2-1 Applicability of the Masterplan for SEA

Applicability of the Masterplan for SEA		
Section 1: General details		
Type and title of P/P	Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan	
Name of P/P maker	Galway Harbour Company (GHC)	
Date	May 2025	
Section 2: Status of the P/P maker		
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	No	The Masterplan is being prepared by the Galway Harbour Company a standalone economic entity with the mandate to sustain and grow the business of the Port of Galway, as a wholly owned subsidiary of Galway City Council.
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	Yes	The Masterplan is being prepared in accordance with the GCDP which “ <i>requires the preparation of a masterplan for the Inner Harbour</i> ” (p.276) and states that “ <i>in principle the proposals for a mix of uses on these lands complemented by a unique waterfront setting linked to the city centre is acceptable and welcome</i> ” (p. 255).

Section 3: Nature of the P/P		
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecoms, tourism, town and country planning or land use? <sup>3</sup>	Yes	The Masterplan falls under the town and country planning category covered by the SEA Directive and transposing legislation.
Does the P/P set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Annexes of the EIA Directive?	No	<p>Following finalisation and publication, the Masterplan will be a non-statutory document that responds to the requirements in the GCDP to prepare a masterplan for the Inner Harbour. The primary purpose of the Masterplan is to provide further detail and clarity with regards to the existing land use objectives for the lands. The Masterplan does not establish any form of framework by which future application for development consent will be bound.</p> <p>Proposals for development in the Inner Harbour will still be assessed for compliance against the GCDP policies and will be required to undertake a planning application and (if necessary) site-specific EIA and AA, depending on the scale and nature of the proposals.</p> <p>The principles at the core of the Masterplan are informed by the existing policy and key objectives in the GCDP. Therefore, future development of the Inner Harbour will continue to accord with the objectives and policies, including the environmental requirements, of the GCDP.</p>
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No	Screening for AA was undertaken in May 2025. The AA Screening concluded that the Masterplan will not give rise to likely significant effects on any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. Consequently, a Stage 2 AA is not required for the Masterplan.
Section 4: Exceptions		
Is the sole purpose of the P/P for national defence, civil emergency or finance / budget?	No	The Masterplan is not a P/P of a type exempted from SEA.

<sup>3</sup> The reference to town and country planning and land-use may relate to plan making procedures under S.I. 435/2004, as amended, such as "Master Plans", "public realm strategies", "urban centre strategies" and plan making procedures under S.I. 436/2004, as amended, such as Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, County Development Plans, Strategic Development Zones and Local Area Plans.

Section 5: Conclusion	
<p>Summarise the relevant information informing the assessment and the main reasons the P/P <b>does or does not fall within the scope of the SEA Directive</b>.</p>	<p>The Masterplan fulfils the requirement in the GCDP to prepare a masterplan for the Inner Harbour.</p> <p>However, it does not fulfil the second cumulative criteria for a ‘plan or programme’ namely it is not prepared or adopted by an authority at a national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government.</p> <p>The Masterplan will act as a non-statutory guiding plan for the future development of the Inner Harbour. However, the Masterplan does not set the framework for future development consents.</p> <p>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 and includes principles in relation to sustainable development, enhanced biodiversity, environmental protection, creation of green infrastructure, positive climate action and the protection of heritage. Screening for AA has also been undertaken, and it has been determined that there will be no likely significant effect to any European site arising from the implementation of the Masterplan, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.</p> <p><b>Therefore it is considered that the Masterplan does not fall within the scope of the SEA Directive and is not deemed to require SEA Screening.</b></p>

## 2.2

## Statutory consultation

Prior to finalising the determination on the need for SEA, it is a statutory requirement to consult with the SEA Environmental Authorities:

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Notice of this draft Screening Report **has been** issued to the Environmental Authorities for their consideration for a four-week period from December 2024. Following the consultation period, any submissions or observations will be considered prior to making the final determination.



Submissions were received from the EPA and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) regarding this SEA Screening and Masterplan. The submission details and responses can be viewed in Appendix 2 of this Final Screening Report.

3.

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Following detailed review and assessment as part of the SEA Screening process, it is considered that the Masterplan for the Inner Harbour **does not fall within the scope of the SEA Directive and therefore does not require further assessment of the likely effects on the environment of the preparation of the Masterplan through SEA.** The conclusion is drawn for consideration of the following factors:

- The Masterplan is a non-statutory plan, which sits below the statutory GCDP.
- The Masterplan does not propose direct works but puts forward a vision for the Inner Harbour to ensure development is conducted in a unified way.
- The Masterplan does not propose a change in the land-use zoning set out in the GCDP which was subject to full SEA.
- The existing protective objectives and policies in the GCDP still apply.
- As the Masterplan is a guidance document only, any new development relating to the Inner Harbour will be assessed for compliance against the GCDP and will be subject to a planning application and site-specific EIA and AA, as appropriate.



## APPENDIX 1

### GALWAY CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN CRITERIA FOR THE INNER HARBOUR

# Galway City Development Plan Criteria for the inner harbour

In advance of specific proposals for development, the Council requires a masterplan to be prepared for the overall site and will be required to undertake the following:

- Set out a vision for the area and show compliance with the development plan and city council plans and strategies including the Galway Transport Strategy, Public Realm Strategy, Urban Density and Building Height Study, Heritage Plan, Biodiversity Action Plan and any future plans and strategies such as the Greenspace Strategy, Retail Strategy and the emerging new LECP.
- Address critical issues including sustainability, urban design context, maximum building heights, massing, appropriate use mixes and high-quality public realm.
- Ensure that opportunities for water-based recreational facilities are maximised and that public access is secured throughout the area and along the waterfront.
- Ensure a high-quality urban design and demonstrate how redevelopment can connect into and extend the historic street pattern of the city centre.
- Include for maximum public access and permeability throughout the site, give linkage and views to the waterfront and key coastal vistas and consider the challenge of transition areas bounding the site and anticipate opportunities for linkages and continuity in the design and layout of these sites. This will be particularly important with regard to the adjoining Ceannt Quarter site where regeneration is also planned and where maximum advantage of the waterfront location can be delivered.
- Demonstrate how a favourable amenity can be secured in the transition area edging the adjoining industrial lands at the Harbour Enterprise Park.
- Demonstrate where taller buildings and/or landmark buildings are part of the composition, how existing important views, vistas and landmarks are respected and show how such buildings contribute to aspects of urban design such as accessibility, enclosure, character, permeability and adaptability. Consider opportunities for innovative architecture or architecture by design competitions.
- Develop the public realm in a manner that maximises the benefits of the waterfront location, achieves a strong sense of place, achieves permeability and reflects a defined functionality and strong landscape impact. This element too should demonstrate how linkage with existing spaces can be achieved and where continuity with likely scenarios on the adjoining Ceannt Quarter site can be made.
- Carry out detailed flood risk assessment and demonstrate how any redevelopment will be resilient to the impacts of climate change. There will also be a requirement to comply with the outcomes of the Coirib go Cósta Galway City Flood Relief Scheme being advanced by the City Council in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW).
- Demonstrate how the regeneration of the site will deliver sustainable uses, in particular housing, enterprise and new public spaces of critical scale that will result in creating a successful place with a distinct identity.
- Detail the type, quantum and distribution of uses. The use mix shall provide for a minimum residential content on the site equivalent to 30% of the proposed gross floor area, in order to achieve a significant level of residential presence and a critical mass to create a new community.
- The distribution of other uses should include for commercial, office, recreational and cultural uses. Potential for an iconic building should be explored in view of the significance of the site location and the proven record of such buildings for attracting tourist interest internationally.



- Include measures to support environmental sustainability and climate action including sustainable building design, green infrastructure and SuDs and the associated long-term operation and management of these.
- Include measures to ensure connections to the green network, including green and blue links, city cycle and pedestrian networks and ensure biodiversity gain within the site.
- Include in the design concept, measures which reflect and protect the industrial heritage of the site.
- Take cognisance of the proximity of the Seveso III site in the Harbour Enterprise Park.
- Include for assessment of the site in the context of the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.
- Include for a maximum plot ratio for CC zones of 2:1.
- Include for the provision of an arts/cultural facility at the developer's expense. A delivery and management regime that enables the long-term sustainable use of such a facility will be devised in collaboration with Galway City Council and other relevant stakeholders.
- Include a delivery strategy and phasing programme which demonstrates delivery of public benefits corresponding with each stage of construction such as a public square/cultural facility. The phasing programme should also be so designed that it is sensitive to market changes and that development for each phase can be, as far as is feasible, completed to a level that is self-contained and will not result in a negative visual impact on any publicly exposed area for a prolonged period.
- Include economic and investment strategies which will include for the role of all agency involvement in the delivery of services and infrastructure to be clarified.



## APPENDIX 2

### **DESIGNATED ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITIES CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

Appendix 2 Designated Environmental Authorities Consultation Responses

Designated Environmental Authority	Submission	Response
EPA	<p>Point No. 1</p> <p><i>Previous Port/Harbour developments including Rosslare, Waterford, Foynes and Dublin Ports underwent full SEA. EPA recommends that you consider the SEAs for the other ports to determine how your screening has differed from other port related plans.</i></p>	<p><b>Rosslare Europort Masterplan</b></p> <p>Not publicly available for review.</p>
		<p><b>Port of Waterford (POW)</b></p> <p>POW - This plan provides the framework to allow Port of Waterford bring forward essential projects for planning and consent purposes as required.</p> <p>Comparatively the Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan does <u>not</u> set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Annexes of the EIA Directive. The Masterplan will act as a non-statutory guiding plan for the future development of the Inner Harbour. However, proposals for development in the Inner Harbour will be assessed for compliance against the GCDP policies and will likely be required to undertake a planning application and site-specific EIA and AA, depending on the scale and nature of the proposals.</p>
		<p><b>Foynes- Shannon Foynes Port Vision 2041</b></p> <p>Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) - Vision 2041 (HRA   Planning &amp; SFPC, 2013) states that Vision 2041 is not defined as a plan or programme under the SEA Regulations and accordingly, does not fall within the remit of the SEA Regulations. The SEA Environmental Report is a non-statutory voluntary assessment, which has been commissioned by SFPC.</p> <p>The Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan does <u>not</u> set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Annexes of the EIA Directive. The</p>

Designated Environmental Authority	Submission	Response
		<p>Masterplan will act as a non-statutory guiding plan for the future development of the Inner Harbour. However, proposals for development in the Inner Harbour will be assessed for compliance against the GCDP policies and will likely be required to undertake a planning application and site-specific EIA and AA, depending on the scale and nature of the proposals.</p> <p><b>Dublin Port Masterplan</b></p> <p>Dublin Port Masterplan 2012-2040 SEA Environmental Report (Jacobs Engineering Ltd, 2012) states that there was no legal requirement for the application of SEA to the Masterplan and so a non-statutory voluntary SEA was produced.</p> <p>The Galway Inner Harbour Masterplan does <u>not</u> set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Annexes of the EIA Directive. The Masterplan will act as a non-statutory guiding plan for the future development of the Inner Harbour. However, proposals for development in the Inner Harbour will be assessed for compliance against the GCDP policies and will likely be required to undertake a planning application and site-specific EIA and AA, depending on the scale and nature of the proposals.</p>
EPA	<p>Point No. 2</p> <p><i>EPA also notes that there is a wider Galway Port redevelopment ongoing and the relationship between the Inner Harbour Masterplan and ongoing port development in the context of SEA should be considered, including cumulative effects.</i></p>	<p>There are no specific development proposals arising from the Masterplan and no changes to the land use zoning which could potentially lead to cumulative effects with the GCDP. The preparation of the Masterplan has been undertaken with consideration to the overall balanced development strategy of the city, and the specific objectives for the Inner Harbour Regeneration Area, as set out in</p>



Designated Environmental Authority	Submission	Response
		<p>Chapter 10 of the current GCDP. Therefore, the Masterplan complies with the GCDP and does not lead to cumulative effects with the current GCDP.</p> <p>As the Masterplan is a guidance document only, any new development relating to the Inner Harbour will be assessed for compliance against the GCDP policies and will be subject to a planning application and site-specific EIA and AA, as appropriate.</p>
EPA	<p>Point No. 3</p> <p><i>While the determination of the SEA screening remains with the plan maker, EPA suggests that the potential for significant environmental effects, including cumulative effects, for the following parameters inter alia should be considered and addressed in the Masterplan (site preparation, construction and operational phases):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Soil/sediment/geology - including the need for remediation of any potential</i></li> <li>➤ <i>contaminated land associated with historical land uses/activities,</i></li> <li>➤ <i>water quality</i></li> <li>➤ <i>biodiversity</i></li> <li>➤ <i>traffic management</i></li> <li>➤ <i>climatic factors (including flood risk and potential sea level rise)</i></li> <li>➤ <i>air</i></li> <li>➤ <i>noise</i></li> <li>➤ <i>landscape/coastscape</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Where potential negative effects are identified, these should be considered and suitable mitigation proposed where appropriate.</i></p>	<p>The GCDP has been subject to full SEA and AA including the application of mitigation and monitoring measures, thereby ensuring full integration and consideration of environmental issues. Therefore, it is not considered that the Masterplan will result in significant effects on the environment over and above any identified (and mitigated against) as part of the SEA of the GCDP.</p> <p>Typical effects arising from the development of the Inner Harbour lands will be in line with the zoning as outlined in the GCDP and considered as part of the SEA process for the development of the GCDP. The Masterplan is not envisaged to lead to any significant negative effects over and above any identified (and mitigated against) as part of the SEA of the current GCDP.</p> <p>Given that the Masterplan must be consistent and compliant with the GCDP, including specific provisions regarding environmental quality standards such as those derived from the Water Framework Directive, it is not anticipated any environmental quality standards will be exceeded. The nature and scale of the projects that may be developed as a result of the implementation of the Masterplan are not recognised sources of pollution and are such that they are unlikely to have significant effects on environmental receptors.</p>

Designated Environmental Authority	Submission	Response
		<p>The AA Screening has concluded, in view of best scientific knowledge, 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 and projects, will not have a significant effect on any European Site.</p> <p>As the Masterplan is a guidance document only, any new development relating to the Inner Harbour will be assessed for compliance against the GCDP policies and will be subject to a planning application and site-specific EIA and AA, as appropriate.</p>
DHLGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It is noted that the proposed masterplan area is situated proximal and partially within the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Galway City as defined in the Urban Archaeological Survey of Galway City and on the Record of Monuments and Places. This is subject to statutory protection in the Record of Monuments and Places established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1930-2014.</li> <li>➤ Regard the Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage – Published by Dúchas The Heritage Service) and to the Archaeology and Flood Relief Schemes: Guidelines (NMS 2023).</li> <li>➤ The proposed Masterplan area incorporates and is proximal to a number of marine areas and waterways, which contain previously recorded and potential underwater cultural heritage, including wrecks, archaeological objects and submerged palaeolandscape features and deposits. Section 3 of the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Masterplan has been sensitively designed to create a mixed-use urban quarter that reveals the maritime trading history of the city, by transforming the use and character of the historic dock from a functional dock to become a highly integrated yet distinctive part of the city centre.</li> <li>➤ The proposed design of the scheme has been informed by a Flood Risk Assessment, Engineering Assessment, Traffic and Transport Assessment and Seveso Optimisation Report, to ensure it is sensitively designed and creates a high-quality environment.</li> <li>➤ All forthcoming applications for development will be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.</li> <li>➤ Any forthcoming planning application will be accompanied by a Cultural Heritage Assessment which outlines how the heritage and character of the site have been protected and enhanced.</li> </ul>

Designated Environmental Authority	Submission	Response
	<p>National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987 is the primary piece of legislation for the protection of wrecks over 100 years old and archaeological objects underwater, irrespective of age. Wrecks that are less than 100 years old and archaeological objects or the potential location of such a wreck or archaeological object can also be protected under Section 3 of the 1987 (Amendment) Act. Underwater Cultural Heritage also encompasses a broad range of marine/freshwater heritage, the protection of which is provided for in legal codes and guidelines. The Wreck Inventory of Ireland Database (WIID) is the official register of historic shipwrecks protected under the National Monuments Acts. All wrecks over 100- years old are protected under the 1987 and 1994 (Amendment) Acts of the National Monuments Acts.</p> <p>➤ Archaeological monuments that are underwater are afforded statutory protection in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) established under section 12 (Recorded Monuments) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1930-2014. The Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Islands 1999, see section 3.6.1(3) and 3.6.4) sets out national policy on the protection of the underwater, as well as terrestrial, archaeological heritage in the course of development.</p> <p>➤ The draft <i>National Planning Framework</i> states that ‘the protection of archaeological heritage is recognised as a core component to achieving sustainable development’ and the <i>National Marine Planning Framework</i> includes the statement that:</p>	

Designated Environmental Authority	Submission	Response
	<p><i>‘Proposals unable to contribute to the protection of the significance of heritage assets will only be supported if they demonstrate that they will, in order of preference, avoid, minimise, or mitigate harm to the significance of heritage assets. If it is not possible, to avoid, minimise or mitigate harm, then the public benefits for proceeding with the proposal must outweigh the harm to the significance of the heritage assets. Proposals should consider the potential impact of their application on heritage assets from the earliest stages of project development, taking into account the potential risk of damage to, or degradation of, assets. Expert advice will be required at all stages to inform the development of the proposals. Such proposals may include plans to avoid locations where heritage assets may be located, or to minimise compromise or harm through the use of less invasive construction techniques. Proposals should consider evidence for the level of significance of a heritage asset, including information and advice from relevant regulators and advisors, and on how they are managed. This applies to both identified heritage assets and the potential for such assets to be discovered during development or activity’ (National Marine Planning Framework, 89).</i></p> <p>➤ Note Policy 8.4 Archaeology in the Galway City Development Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Protect and promote archaeological heritage of the city.</li> <li>○ Ensure that proposed development within the designated city centre Zone of Archaeological Notification is not detrimental to the character of an archaeological site or its setting.</li> </ul>	

Designated Environmental Authority	Submission	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have regard to the archaeological recommendations of the Department on any planning applications.</li> <li>○ Endorse the sustainable use of archaeological heritage as an educational and cultural resource and promote public awareness of the archaeological heritage of the city.</li> <li>○ Require the surveying, recording or excavation of archaeological heritage during the development process, where appropriate.</li> <li>○ Seek the preservation in situ or, at a minimum, preservation by record of archaeological sites/monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places and of previously unknown sites, features or objects of archaeological interest that are revealed through development activity.</li> <li>○ Ensure that any development proposal with potential to impact on archaeological heritage includes for an archaeological assessment. This includes within terrestrial, riverine, inter-tidal and sub-tidal environments</li> </ul> <p>➤ The entirety of the area can be regarded as being of high archaeological potential. Its archaeological and built heritage requires careful consideration in the assessment and design process for the Plan. National policy on the protection of archaeological heritage states ‘there should always be a presumption in favour of avoiding developmental impacts on the archaeological heritage’ and, given the archaeological sensitivity of the masterplan area, this core principle should be proactively enshrined within the design process.</p>	

Designated Environmental Authority	Submission	Response
DHLGH	The masterplan provides an important opportunity to celebrate the city's important maritime and military heritage, for example the association of nearby Forthill Graveyard with the Spanish Armada, the late medieval Augustinian foundation which was demolished in the 17th century and a star-shaped fort was subsequently built on the site.	The public open spaces will be designed to retain and protect natural features and habitats of importance within the site. They will also provide linkages to social, cultural and heritage buildings / event spaces via active travel modes of transport.