

Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination Report

Edenderry Local Area Plan 2017-2023

September 2017



Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Determination in accordance with the EU's Habitats Directive Article 6(3) and the Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Natura 2000 sites are defined under the Habitats Directive (Article 3) as a European ecological network of special areas of conservation composed of sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II. The aim of the network is to aid the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. In Ireland these sites are designed as European sites - defined under the Planning Acts and/or Birds and Habitats Regulations as (a) a candidate site of Community importance, (b) a site of Community importance, (c) a candidate special area of conservation, (d) a special area of conservation, (e) a candidate special protection area, or (f) a special protection area. They are commonly referred to in Ireland as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

Introduction

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening determination has been made by Offaly County Council regarding the Edenderry Local Area Plan 2017-2023.

The Edenderry Local Area Plan, through a series of Policies and Objectives sets out the vision and direction for the future growth and development of Edenderry Town up to 2023. Proposed land use plans must undergo a formal “test” or “screening” to ascertain whether they are likely to result in any significant adverse effects on specific sites designated for their nature conservation importance. These sites are those designated under the European Commission’s Natura 2000 network of sites (hereafter “European sites”). These sites are designated on the basis of the presence of certain habitats and species that are deemed to be of international importance. The Irish Government and local planning authorities have a legal obligation to protect these sites.

The EC Habitats and Birds Directives are the framework for the designation of these sites. The EC Habitats Directive requires the “screening” of plans and projects under Article 6(3). If the screening process results in a judgement that likely significant effects may occur or cannot be ruled out, then a more detailed ‘appropriate assessment’ (AA) is required.

This report constitutes the Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination Report of Edenderry Local Area Plan 2017-2023 and follows on from the preparation of an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (April 2017).

Determination

Having regard to the content of the Edenderry Local Area Plan 2017-2023 and consideration of the potential for significant impacts arising from its implementation which may have the potential to adversely affect any Natura 2000 site; with regard to their Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objectives, it was determined as part of the Screening for Appropriate Assessment that it is possible to rule out likely significant effects on all European sites.

This decision has been informed by information and analysis prepared by Scott Cawley Ltd., Ecological Consultants. Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular, the nature of the Plan and its potential relationship with European sites, as well as considering other plans and projects, and applying the precautionary principle, it is possible to rule out likely significant effects on all European sites for the following reasons:

The AA screening process has identified that 6 European Sites lie within the potential zone of influence of the Local Area Plan;

- The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC,
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC,
- Ballynafagh Bog SAC,
- Ballynafagh Lake SAC,
- Mount Hevey Bog SAC and
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA.

These European Sites are not deemed to be at risk of likely significant effects from the proposed Plan due to the distance between the Plan and the European sites. Of the six European sites within 15km of the LAP boundary, five of them lie over 13km from the site. This distance is regarded to be far enough so as to warrant any effects to be imperceptible within the sites. The remaining site, The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC, lies c. 4km south-east of the Plan boundary. This site is designated for semi-natural grassland habitats. There is no impact pathway between the Local Area Plan area and this European site. Considering this and the distance between the other five European sites, as mentioned above, no significant impacts on European sites are predicted as a result of implementing the proposed Plan.

Taking the above on board, along with the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (April 2017), it is determined that further stages of Appropriate Assessment are not required. The Edenderry LAP has been prepared to ensure that any development (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity or conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites.



Director of Services,

Planning