Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and Determination for Proposed Variations 5 & 6 to Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 (July 2020)
1 Introduction

Galway City Council proposes to make two variations to the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 under Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening is the process for determining whether the Proposed Variations would warrant a SEA. Such a determination is required to take account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A ‘Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment’ of the SEA Regulations, as amended, and submissions or observations from Environmental Authorities.

A summary of the Proposed Variations to the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 are as follows:

- Proposed Variation No. 5: To align the Development Plan with the National Planning Framework (NPF), Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) and Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and to incorporate the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy.
- Proposed Variation No. 6: Insert the following Specific Objective in Chapter 11 Section 11.2.2 Natural Heritage, Recreation and Amenity RA Land Use Zoning Objectives: RA lands at Cappagh Park. The Council will consider the development of an Aquatic Sports and Fitness Centre adjoining and linked with the existing community centre.

The assessment in this report takes into consideration relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A ‘Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment’ of the SEA Regulations (as amended), the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 and accompanying environmental reports. Therefore, this report should be read in conjunction with the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 and accompanying environmental reports. It is also informed by the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for Proposed Variations 5 and 6 to the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 (July 2020) which concluded that the Proposed Variations do not have the potential to give rise to significant effects upon European sites, alone and or in-combination with other plans and projects.

2. Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023

The Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 SEA Statement and accompanying Environmental Report outlined that the SEA process was integrated throughout the preparation of the Development Plan and guided the preparation of development scenarios for the city. The overarching Core Strategy of the Development Plan supports the strategies, policies and objectives for the protection of the city’s environment. Section 1.2 of the Plan sets out a strategic vision for Galway and the following strategic goals for the city:

1. Achieve a high quality of life for all citizens through the provision of a good quality, attractive, built environment, through the protection of the unique natural environment and through facilitation of key economic, cultural and social supports.
2. Enable the city to fulfil its role as a National Gateway, a regional centre and contribute to the economic recovery through the provision of balanced and sustainable economic opportunities for growth, innovation and investment across all employment sectors and allow the role of the Gateway to harness the strengths and maximise the economic development for the whole West Region.
3. Promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through proactive measures in line with EU commitments to tackle climate change and reduce vulnerability to the harmful effects of climate change, in particular sea level encroachment and extreme weather events, through specific adaptation measures.
4. Apply the principle of sustainability particularly where it relates to the uses of land, buildings, water, energy, waste and through the encouragement of sustainable modes of transport and the integration of transportation with land use.
5. Aspire to make Galway an equal and inclusive city, particularly through facilitating all forms of social inclusion in the built environment, including in the public realm, housing, community facilities, in access to employment opportunities and public transportation
6. Protect the distinctive and diverse natural environment in the city and strengthen the green network and linkages, recognising the biodiversity value of the amenity, the range of recreational benefits this provides,
the potential through facilitating active and healthy lifestyles, the effect it can have on the quality of general health and well-being and the value it has for providing an attractive city setting.

7. Encourage a sense of collective identity and a shared vision through civic engagement on projects such as the development of a Local Economic and Community Plan for Galway and also on the promotion of specifically focused projects such as the European Capital of Culture 2020, that will promote the unique form and character of the city, give opportunities for the development of cultural, community and other beneficial infrastructure and enhance and diversify the city economy.

Chapter 4 Natural Heritage, Recreation and Amenity includes recreational policy that supports passive and active recreation within Cappagh Park. The park is part of Barna Woods/Lough Rusheen City Park and a city wide green network. The Development Plan’s strategy includes to ‘provide for a green network that allows for the sustainable use, management and protection of natural heritage, recreation amenity uses, parks and open spaces in an integrated manner’.

The SEA process of the Development Plan concluded that, after taking account of the measures which have been integrated into the Plan, which provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development, the Plan is mitigated so as not to have significant adverse environmental impact. A full review of the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 will commence January 2021.

3. Proposed Variations to Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023

Galway City Council as a Planning Authority is proposing to make two variations to the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 as provided for in Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The Proposed Variations are presented below:

Proposed Variation No. 5 (PV5): To align the Development Plan with the National Planning Framework (NPF), Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) and Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and to incorporate the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy.

Introduction

Following the publication of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the making of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) which includes the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA), Galway City Council is required under Section 11 (1) (b) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, to vary the City Development Plan to align with these policy documents. This legislation requires that this must take place within 26 weeks of the approval of the RSES by the Members of the NWRA (24th January 2020). This timescale was further extended by eight weeks in accordance with Section 251A (inserted by Section 9 of the Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Act 2020 (No. 2 of 2020)) of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Notwithstanding this variation process, the planning authority is statutorily obliged to commence a full review the City Development Plan 2017-2023 in January 2021. It is considered appropriate, given the imminent review process to commence in 6 months, that this variation will embody the main principles of the NPF, RSES and MASP. The review of the City Development Plan will allow a process to include for a more detailed comprehensive review. The key elements which are considered immediately necessary and legally required are proposed at this interim stage. It also takes account of the fact that the development plan already supports many of the policies of the NPF, RSES and MASP.
The main changes proposed under this variation are as follows:

- Incorporate the NPF and RSES into the plan recognising these as the primary national, and regional planning frameworks which the development plan must align with.
- Replace all National Spatial Strategy (NSS) references in the plan to the National Planning Framework and all Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) in the plan to the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES).
- Incorporate the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) into the Core Strategy.
- Update the population targets in the Core Strategy and the related housing targets to reflect what is set out for the City by the RSES and MASP. It is noted that these targets do not require changes to land uses in the city and can be accommodated in the existing core strategy.
- Include an objective to carry out a Density and Building Height Study in accordance with MASP objectives and in conjunction with SPPR1 of the Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities’, (2018).
- Include an objective to prepare a Housing Need Demand Assessment in accordance with the NPF to inform land use and housing policy.
- Incorporate the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 “Climate Resilient Galway City” and the National Climate Adaptation Framework.

Proposed Changes to the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023

This section should be read in conjunction with the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023.

Amend Development Plan Text

Replace references to the National Spatial Strategy (2002–2020) (NSS), to Project Ireland 2040 including the National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF).

Replace references to the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs), to the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) including the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP).

Insert in Preface – Strategic Policy Framework

This variation shall be read in conjunction with the existing Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 and shall prevail in case of any conflict between it and existing policies and specific objectives.

The National Development Plan and the National Spatial Strategy (2002–2020) (NSS) has been superseded by Project Ireland 2040 including the National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF). The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) have been superseded by the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES). The RSES includes a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) 2020-2032 for Galway City and Metropolitan area. The NPF/RSES/MASP is the statutory framework for planning at national and regional level and the city development plan reflects and aligns with this hierarchy.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Core Strategy

Amend Strategic Goal

Enable the city to fulfil its role as a National Gateway, an NPF designated Regional City, a regional centre and contribute to the economic recovery through the provision of balanced and sustainable economic opportunities for growth, innovation and investment across all employment sectors and allow the role of the Gateway City and Metropolitan Area to harness the strengths and maximise the economic development for the whole West Region.
Amend Section 1.4 Core Strategy – Galway City

National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (NSS)

The NSS sets out a planning framework for the future sustainable development of Ireland. It proposes a more balanced pattern of population, employment and physical development between regions. It advocates the continued support of development in the Greater Dublin Region but with a focused development in the nine Gateway Cities and nine Hub Towns. Galway has been identified as a Gateway having the characteristics and critical mass that can facilitate the national objectives and sustain and drive the wider regional economy of the west. This approach was reaffirmed in the Update and Outlook NSS (October 2010) but owing to recent economic, societal and demographic changes, the DECLG in 2013 advised that a comprehensive review of the NSS was intended. This review is still awaited, in the interim the NSS still remains the national policy on spatial planning.

Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF)

Published in February 2018, the NPF is the strategic planning framework for the future sustainable development of the country to 2040. It proposes the focussed development of the four Regional Cities as viable urban centres of scale which can act as alternatives and a counterbalance to the continued growth of Dublin and its surrounding region and act as drivers of growth for their respective wider regions. Galway has been designated as a Regional City and together with the Metropolitan Area has the characteristics and capacity to deliver the national strategic outcomes of the NPF which include sustainable city living, a strong economy, enhanced quality of life and reduced carbon footprint. The NPF envisages the population of Galway City and Suburbs to grow by between 40,000 - 45,000 people by 2040 which is an increase of almost 55%. It also targets half of the homes to accommodate this population increase to be located within the existing built footprint.

The NPF is supported by the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework (July 2018). It sets out a programme for the implementation of the NPF and includes transitional population projections at Regional and County level to inform development plans.

The NPF is underpinned by the National Development Plan (NDP) which sets the framework for national capital investment to 2027. Additionally an Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) has been put in place to support the objectives of the National Planning Framework for the Regional Cities and their Metropolitan Areas and for a number of large towns.

Regional Planning Guidelines West Region (RPGs) 2010-2022

The NSS has been implemented at regional level through the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs). The RPGs provide a broad planning framework at regional level and reflect the objectives of the NSS. With respect to Galway City this means that the guidelines support the role of the Gateway and acknowledge the role of the city as a key economic driver for the West Region. The RPGs, based on the NSS regional population projections, aim to concentrate population in the Galway Gateway and have included for a targeted population of 98,700 for the city by the year 2022.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES)

This RSES provides a high-level development framework for the Northern and Western Region to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and objectives of Government. It sets out a settlement hierarchy for the region, including key target locations for population and employment growth. It includes a range of Regional Policy Objectives which supports future investment in infrastructure and services and which align with the spatial framework of the NPF.
It establishes Galway as the largest regional urban centre. It recognises the primacy of the city in the settlement hierarchy of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) area. It also acknowledges the significant influence that the city exerts on much of the western part of the region in developing the economy and in improving competitiveness. Reflecting this influence and as required by the NPF, the RSES includes a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan for Galway. A key sustainability element of the RSES and MASP is to deliver growth in a compact form with an objective to locate at least half of all new homes that are targeted within the city footprint of the MASP.

**Insert in Section 1.4 Core Strategy – Galway City**

**Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)**

There is a requirement under the National Planning Framework for a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Galway to be developed and implemented as part of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. The MASP area includes Galway City and its environs and the county settlements of Bearna, Oranmore and Baile Chláir (see map). The MASP is a strategic planning framework which identifies Strategic Growth Areas and opportunities for regeneration. It identifies key infrastructure, services and facilities that will be required to support sustainable city growth and regeneration. It sets out how the NPF population targets can be met in accordance with the principles of sustainable development with the aim to deliver compact growth.

For the city and suburbs, the population targets set out in the MASP are to accommodate 23,000 persons to 2026 and a further 12,000 persons to 2031, to be substantially delivered within the existing built-up footprint.

The MASP, on review of relevant city, county and local area plans, affirms that the NPF population targets can be adequately provided for on the current zoned lands within existing local level plans in the MASP area. It identifies Strategic Growth Areas which are part of the settlement and development strategy for the city and also includes county settlements within the metropolitan boundary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan- Strategic Growth Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Ardaun LAP Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Regeneration Lands at Ceannt Station Quarter, Inner Harbour and Headford Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consolidation of the existing neighbourhoods of Knocknacarra, Rahoon, Castlegar and Roscam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Murrough LAP Area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the Galway County Council Administrative area of the MASP, Baile Chláir, Bearna, Oranmore and Briarhill are identified to accommodate a portion of the MASP population growth targets.
Section 1.5 Population, Households and Housing Targets

Amend Table 1.1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Av</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Average Household Size</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSO Census</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>75,529</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>27,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPGs Targets</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>88,500</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>32,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPGs Targets</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>98,700</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>36,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO (City &amp; Suburbs)</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>79,900</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>29,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSES/MASP (+23,000)</td>
<td>2026</td>
<td>102,900</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>37,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSES/MASP (+12,000)</td>
<td>2031</td>
<td>114,900</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Insert in Section 1.5 Population, Households and Housing Targets:

The National Planning Framework sets out a targeted pattern of growth for Galway City and Suburbs to 2040 of between 40,000 - 45,000 people. Specific population targets for Galway City are set out in the RSES and MASP. The target for the city is to reach a population of 102,900 by 2026, that is an increase of 23,000 people from the Census 2016 City and Suburbs Population of 79,900. Longer term to 2031, the target for the city is to grow by a further 12,000 to 114,900 population.

It is estimated based on the RSES/MASP population targets, that the increase in the number of households in Galway City from 2016 to 2026 would be in the order of 8,443 (See Table ). This is taking the census records of 2011 households as the baseline and adopting the average size of city households then at 2.72 to be constant from 2011 to 2026. The current Development Plan estimates a potential housing yield to 2023 of 9093 units based on residential land availability. These estimates indicate sufficient capacity for the Development Plan period 2017–2023. It is therefore considered that the Core Strategy and policies and objectives of the Plan is consistent with the National Planning Framework Policy the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan.

As part of the review of the Development Plan which will commence in January 2021, a ‘Housing Need Demand Assessment’ (HNDA) will be undertaken in order to correlate and accurately align future housing requirements. It will consider current household sizes and demand for a range of suitable housing types. The HNDA will inform land use and housing policies. In addition a Density and Building Height study for the city will also be carried out in accordance with the requirements of SPRR1 of the Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), which will support sustainable densities within the city and inform the development and settlement strategy for the city.

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1 SPRR 1 states that in accordance with Government policy to support increased building height and density in locations with good public transport accessibility, particularly town/ city cores, planning authorities shall explicitly identify, through their statutory plans, areas where increased building height will be actively pursued for both redevelopment, regeneration and infill development to secure the objectives of the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and shall not provide for blanket numerical limitations on building height.
Chapter 2 Housing and Sustainable Neighbourhoods

Amend Policy 2.2 Housing Strategy

Secure the implementation of the Housing Strategy 2017-2023, which has been informed by the Core Strategy, by ensuring Ensure that sufficient suitable lands are zoned to meet the extent of housing needs identified in the Strategy in accordance with the NSS and Regional Planning Guidelines National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) targeted population for Galway City.

Insert in Policy 2.2 Housing Strategy

- Undertake a ‘Housing Need Demand Assessment’ (HNDA) in order to correlate and accurately align future housing requirements. The HNDA will inform land use and housing policy.

- Undertake a Density and Building Height study for the city which will support sustainable densities within the city. The study will be undertaken in accordance with SPRR1 of the Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018).

Chapter 3 Transportation

Amend Policy 3.5 Public Transport

Support the long term plans for the re-development of Ceannt Station as a multi-modal transportation interchange in the context of Galway as a Gateway and a Regional Centre, an NPF designated Regional City and Metropolitan Area within the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area.

Chapter 5: Economic Activity

Amend Strategy

Support and facilitate the sustainable economic development of Galway as an NPF designated Regional City and Metropolitan Area within the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area.
Chapter 8 Built Heritage and Urban Design

Insert in section 8.8 Specific Objectives

Undertake a Density and Building Height study for the city. The study will be undertaken in accordance with SPRR1 of the Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018).

Chapter 9 Environment and Infrastructure

Amend Section 9.2 – Climate Change Resilience

In the future and subsequent to the publication of national guidelines, it is anticipated that a climate change adaptation strategy will be prepared for the city having regard to the EPA Local Authority Adaptation Guidelines, (2016), for climate change.

Galway City Council adopted its Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 on the 9th September 2019. This Strategy is a requirement under the National Adaptation Framework 2018. It sets out strategic priorities, measures and responses for adaptation as required by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. The strategy is based on four main themes including (i) critical infrastructure and buildings, (ii) natural and cultural capital, (iii) water resources and flood risk management and (iv) community services. It includes a range of actions under each theme, to be implemented over the period of the Strategy in partnership with the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) and key stakeholders.

Policy 9.2 – Climate Change Resilience

Support the implementation of the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework, 2012.

Support the implementation of the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024.
Proposed Variation No. 6 (PV6): Insert the following Specific Objective in Chapter 11 Section 11.2.2 Natural Heritage, Recreation and Amenity RA Land Use Zoning Objectives:

RA lands at Cappagh Park. The Council will consider the development of an Aquatic Sports and Fitness Centre adjoining and linked with the existing community centre.

The purpose of this variation is to allow for consideration of an Aquatic Sports and Fitness Centre on Recreation and Amenity Lands at Cappagh Park. Government funding has been awarded under the Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund to advance the design and implementation of a facility for Swimming, Water Polo and associated fitness facilities at this location. Elected Members recently considered a feasibility study of options for delivery of a facility. The study was an agenda item at the June Council meeting and Members voted to give support to the project.

The inclusion of this specific objective will enable detailed plans for the large scale sports facility to advance to the planning process stage.
4. Assessment in terms of Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 as amended

Proposed Variation No. 5 (PV 5): To align the Development Plan with the National Planning Framework (NPF), Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) and Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and to incorporate the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy.

1.0 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLAN HAVING REGARD IN PARTICULAR TO:

1.1 The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions, or by allocating resources

The Proposed Variation is to align national, regional and local planning policy and incorporate recent changes in national and regional planning policy including Project Ireland 2040 – The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the NWRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) which includes the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP). Following the publication of the NPF and the making of the RSES, Galway City Council is required under Section 11 (1) (b) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, to incorporate these in the Development Plan.

The Development Plan sets out a strategy for the planning and development of Galway City and is the framework for lower tier plans and projects within the city boundary. The main changes proposed can be summarised as follows:

- Incorporate the NPF and RSES into the plan recognising these as the primary national, and regional planning frameworks which the development plan must align with.
- Replace all National Spatial Strategy (NSS) references in the plan to the National Planning Framework and all Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) in the plan to the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES).
- Incorporate the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) into the Core Strategy.
- Update the population targets in the Core Strategy and the related housing targets to reflect what is set out for the City by the RSES and MASP. It is noted that these targets do not require changes to land uses in the city and can be accommodated in the existing core strategy.
- Include an objective to carry out a Density and Building Height Study in accordance with MASP objectives and in conjunction with SPPR1 of the Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities’, (2018).
- Include an objective to prepare a Housing Need Demand Assessment in accordance with the NPF to inform land use and housing policy.
- Incorporate the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 “Climate Resilient Galway City” and the National Climate Adaptation Framework.

Environmental assessments were integrated into the various stages of the making of the NPF, RSES and the Development Plan. The Development Plan already supports many of the policies of the NPF and the RSES and the Proposed Variation includes minor technical amendments to align national, regional and local planning policy. The Core Strategy of the Development Plan sets out a six year growth strategy for the city in a manner that is consistent with national and regional policy and Section 28 Guidelines. Population and housing targets do not require changes to land uses in the city, with sufficient capacity for the Development Plan period 2017–2023. It is therefore considered that the Core Strategy and policies and objectives of the Plan are consistent with the NPF, the RSES and the MASP.

The Development Plan includes climate change resilience Policy 9.2 to ‘support the implementation of the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework, 2012’ and an objective to ‘prepare a local climate change adaptation strategy’. The Strategy is a requirement under the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework and sets out strategic priorities, measures and responses for adaptation as required by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. The Strategy is based on four main themes including (i) critical infrastructure and buildings, (ii) natural and cultural capital, (iii) water resources and flood risk management and (iv) community services. The Proposed Variation is consistent with climate change resilience policy and an action of the Climate Adaptation Strategy to integrate the strategy into the Development Plan. The Proposed
Variation notes that a full review of the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 will commence January 2021. The review of the Development Plan will address the longer term objectives and policies of the NPF, RSES and MASP within a comprehensive detailed review process.

1.2 The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy

The Development Plan influences local plans and projects within the city boundary. The Proposed Variation will ensure that the Development Plan aligns with the relevant policies and objectives of higher level national and regional plans.

1.3 The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development

The SEA of the Development Plan previously considered potential environmental impacts of Development Plan strategy, policy and objectives and the integration of environmental considerations, in consultation with the relevant Environmental Authorities. Environmental considerations including protective policy and mitigation measures are in the Development Plan and continue to apply. The Proposed Variation is consistent with the Development Plan’s strategy and will support sustainable development measures of higher level national and regional plans. The Proposed Variation does not change existing protective policy and mitigation measures in the Plan. It strengthens climate change resilience policy and sustainable development measures within the Development Plan. The Proposed Variation is also subject to Screening for AA in compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

1.4 Environmental problems relevant to the plan

The SEA and AA of the Development Plan previously considered potential environmental impacts, in consultation with Environmental Authorities, and ensured that where potential uncertain or negative environmental effects arose they would be balanced by mitigation measures to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and that any potential impacts are addressed at project level detailed design stage. They include measures listed in the following listed below:

- Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna, Population & Human Health, Soils & Geology
- 4.1 Aim, Context and Strategy – Strategy
- Policy 4.1 Green Network
- Policy 4.2 Protected Spaces: Sites of European, National and Local Ecological Importance
- Water
- Policy 4.3 Blue Spaces: Coast, Canals and Waterways
- Policy 4.5.1 Community Spaces: Greenways and Public Rights of Ways
- Policy 5.1 Enterprise
- Policy 7.2 Creative City
- Policy 9.3 Flood Risk Assessment
- Policy 9.6 Water Quality
- Policy 9.8 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- Policy 9.9 Safe Environment - Control of Major Accident Hazards Directive (Seveso III Directive)
- Policy 9.11 Light Pollution
- Policy 9.13 Telecommunication
- Policy 9.14 Energy and Associated Infrastructure
- Material Assets
- 9.1 Strategy
- Policy 9.4 Renewable Energy
- Policy 9.12 Waste Management
- Policy 9.13 Telecommunication
- Policy 9.14 Energy and Associated Infrastructure
- Air and Climatic Factors
- 3.1 Aim, Context and Strategy
- Policy 9.10 Air Quality & Noise
- Cultural Heritage, Landscape
- 4.1 Aim, Context and Strategy – Strategy
- Policy 4.1 Green Network
- Policy 4.2 Protected Spaces: Sites of European, National and Local Ecological Importance
Policy 4.3 Blue Spaces: Coast, Canals and Waterways
Policy 4.4.1 Green Spaces: Urban Woodlands and Trees
Policy 4.5.1 Community Spaces: Greenways and Public Rights of Ways
Policy 8.5 Archaeology
Policy 8.7 Urban Design

The Proposed Variation does not alter mitigation measures set out in the Plan. The Proposed Variation is compatible and strengthens climate change resilience policy and sustainable development measures within the Plan. It is noted that the SEA Screening Report of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy June 2019 highlights overall likely positive, long-term effects on the environment.

1.5 The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)

Plans and programmes are addressed in the Development Plan and the SEA and AA of the Plan. The Proposed Variation includes measures that relate to requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 and is consistent with the implementation of European Union legislation. The Proposed Variation is also subject to Screening for AA as required under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

2.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTS AND OF THE AREA LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED, HAVING REGARD, IN PARTICULAR TO:

2.1 The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects

The Proposed Variation responds to recent changes in both national and regional planning policy. Legislation requires Development Plans to be consistent with the population targets set out in the NPF and RSES. The main changes proposed can be summarised as follows:

- Incorporate the NPF and RSES into the plan recognising these as the primary national, and regional planning frameworks which the development plan must align with.
- Replace all National Spatial Strategy (NSS) references in the plan to the National Planning Framework and all Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) in the plan to the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES).
- Incorporate the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) into the Core Strategy.
- Update the population targets in the Core Strategy and the related housing targets to reflect what is set out for the City by the RSES and MASP. It is noted that these targets do not require changes to land uses in the city and can be accommodated in the existing core strategy.
- Include an objective to carry out a Density and Building Height Study in accordance with MASP objectives and in conjunction with SPPR1 of the Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities’, (2018).
- Include an objective to prepare a Housing Need Demand Assessment in accordance with the NPF to inform land use and housing policy.
- Incorporate the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 “Climate Resilient Galway City” and the National Climate Adaptation Framework.

The Proposed Variation will not result in significant effects on the environment over and above any identified (and mitigated against) as part of the SEA of the existing Development Plan. Population and housing targets do not require changes to land uses in the city, with sufficient capacity for the Development Plan period 2017–2023. A full review of the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 will also commence January 2021.

2.2 The cumulative nature of the effects

The nature of effects has been considered under the SEA and AA of the Development Plan and the Development Plan already supports many of the policies of the NPF and RSES. The Proposed Variation aligns with national and regional planning policy and it is not anticipated that the Proposed Variation will result in additional cumulative effects beyond those already considered in the SEAs for the City Development Plan.

2.3 The transboundary nature of the effects

The Proposed Variation will have no transboundary effects, over and above effects identified in the Development Plan.

2.4 The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)

The overall strategy of the Development Plan is to protect and improve the environment of the city and the Plan incorporates mitigation measures to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and
ensure that any potential impacts are addressed (See also Section 1.4 above). The Proposed Variation aligns the Plan with existing national and regional policy, the requirements for sustainable development within the Plan and does not alter safeguards in the Plan. The Proposed Variation strengthens climate change resilience policy and sustainable development measures within the Plan. It is noted that the *SEA Screening of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy June 2019* highlights that the climate policy in the Strategy will work to reduce the risk to Galway City of the effects of climate change.

### 2.5 The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of population likely to be affected)

The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects will not be over and above the effects from existing strategy, policies and objectives for the Plan.

### 2.6 The value, and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

- (a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;
- (b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;
- (c) intensive land use

Any development proposal resulting from the Proposed Variation will be assessed against policy including environmental protection policies set out in the Development Plan and in line with the requirements of EU and national legislation. The Development Plan includes existing policies to facilitate sustainable development and growth of the city in line with EU and national legislation. Policy is included in the Development Plan to ensure that special natural characteristics and cultural heritage are protected. The Proposed Variation supports intensive land use and the regeneration of brownfield sites in line with national and regional planning policy. Mitigation measures are included in the Plan to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects. The Proposed Variation will not alter these safeguards.

### 2.7 The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status

The Development Plan includes existing policies that protect areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status and the Proposed Variation will not alter safeguards. The Proposed Variation is also subject to Screening for AA in compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.
Proposed Variation No. 6 (PV6): Insert the following Specific Objective in Chapter 11 Section 11.2.2

Natural Heritage, Recreation and Amenity RA Land Use Zoning Objectives: RA lands at Cappagh Park.

The Council will consider the development of an Aquatic Sports and Fitness Centre adjoining and linked with the existing community centre.

### 1.0 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLAN HAVING REGARD IN PARTICULAR TO:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1 The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions, or by allocating resources;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Proposed Variation is to insert a specific objective relating to RA zoned lands at Cappagh Park to consider the development of an Aquatic Sports and Fitness Centre adjoining and linked with the existing community centre. The specific objective relates to lands adjoining the Knocknacarra Community Centre and playing pitches within the park. The Galway City Development Plan 2011-2017 previously included a specific objective for a swimming pool/sports hall on these lands ‘Develop a Community Centre/Sports Hall, a swimming pool with associated ancillary facilities on a phased basis adjoining and linked with the existing changing rooms at Cappagh and Doughiska on RA zoned lands’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.2 The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Proposed Variation has no likely impact on regional/national/local plans. The Proposed Variation relates to RA zoned lands at Cappagh Park and will influence site specific projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.3 The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The SEA of the Development Plan previously considered potential environmental impacts of Development Plan strategy, policy and objectives and the integration of environmental considerations, in consultation with the relevant Environmental Authorities. Protective policy and mitigation measures are included into the Development Plan to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and ensure that any potential impacts are addressed at project level detailed design stage. Any development arising from the Proposed Variation must consider safeguards and environmental considerations in line with Development Plan policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.4 Environmental problems relevant to the plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Proposed Variation is to insert a specific objective relating to RA zoned lands at Cappagh Park to consider the development of an Aquatic Sports and Fitness Centre adjoining and linked with the existing community centre. The Galway City Development Plan 2011-2017 previously included a specific objective for a swimming pool/community Centre/sports hall on these lands as outlined above. The Proposed Variation is consistent with an existing recreational objective in the Development Plan to ‘Develop a Community Centre/Sports Hall, a swimming pool with associated ancillary facilities on a phased basis adjoining and linked with the existing changing rooms at Doughiska’. The Development Plan incorporates mitigation measures to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and ensure that any potential impacts are addressed at project level detailed design stage. They include avoidance/mitigation measures specified under 4.1 Green Network, 4.2 Protected Spaces: Sites of European, National and Local Ecological Importance, 4.3 Blue Spaces: Coast, Canals and Waterways, 4.4.1 Green Spaces: Urban Woodlands and Trees, 4.5.1 Community Spaces: Greenways and Public Rights of Way, 9.3 Flood Risk Assessment, 9.4 Renewable Energy, 9.5 Sustainable Building Design and Construction, 9.6 Water Quality, 9.7 Water Services, 9.12 Waste Management, 9.13 Telecommunication, 9.14 Energy and Associated Infrastructure and development management requirements and standards of Chapter 11. The Proposed Variation does not alter mitigation measures set out in the Plan and no additional significant impact would be expected to result from the Proposed Variation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.5 The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These plans and programmes are addressed in the Development Plan and the SEA and AA of the Plan. The Proposed Variation does not conflict with any European Union legislation on the environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTS AND OF THE AREA LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED, HAVING REGARD, IN PARTICULAR TO:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1 The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Proposed Variation may give rise to a future development proposal. Any future development proposal must accord with avoidance/mitigation measures of the Development Plan at project level detailed design stage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 The cumulative nature of the effects

The nature of effects has been considered under the SEA and AA of the Development Plan. The Proposed Variation is consistent with recreation policy and objectives in the Development Plan, it does not materially alter the strategy in the Plan and is not likely to have significant effects on the environment subject to the protective measures in the Plan to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects.

2.3 The transboundary nature of the effects

The Development Plan applies to Galway City and the Proposed Variation relates to RA zoned lands at Cappagh Park. The Proposed Variation is consistent with policy of the Plan previously assessed under the SEA and AA process. No transboundary nature of effects identified.

2.4 The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)

The Proposed Variation is consistent with recreation policy and objectives in the Development Plan and does not alter safeguards in the Plan. There is potential for impacts on the local environment, which would require assessment as part of any future development proposal arising from the Proposed Variation in line with Development Plan policy. The lands to which the Proposed Variation relates are in proximity to European sites Galway Bay Complex SAC, Lough Corrib SAC, Inner Galway Bay SPA and Lough Corrib SPA. The Proposed Variation is subject to screening for AA in compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

2.5 The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of population likely to be affected)

The Development Plan applies to Galway City and the Proposed Variation relates to Cappagh Park on RA zoned lands. The Proposed Variation will influence site specific development projects.

2.6 The value, and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;
(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;
(c) intensive land use

Policy is included in the Development Plan to ensure that special natural characteristics and cultural heritage are protected. Mitigation measures are included in the Plan to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects. The Proposed Variation will not alter these safeguards. Any plan or project will be assessed against these policies and other environmental protection policies set out in the Development Plan and in line with EU and national legislation.

2.7 The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status

Existing environmental policies outlined in the Development Plan protect areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status. Any plan or project will be assessed against policy including environmental protection policies set out in the Development Plan and as stated in line with EU and national legislation. The Proposed Variation is subject to screening for AA in compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

5. Consultation

An initial assessment of the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) 2004 Regulations (as amended) recommended that the Proposed Variations were not likely to have such a significant effect on the environment to warrant a Strategic Environmental Assessment. As part of the SEA screening process, consultation takes place with Environmental Authorities as set out in the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations. Any submissions received are to be taken into consideration by the City Council in determining whether or not the Proposed Variations would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The relevant authorities notified were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultee</th>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
<td>Observation received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment</td>
<td>Observation received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht</td>
<td>Acknowledgement received</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A summary of observations are detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultee</th>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine</td>
<td>Acknowledgement received, no observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government</td>
<td>No comment received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway County Council</td>
<td>No comment received</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Authority</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that Variations are consistent with need for proper planning and sustainable development. Adequate and appropriate infrastructure should be in place, or required to be put in place, to service any development proposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that Variations align with higher level plans and programmes including NPF and RSES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take into account the need to align with national commitments on climate change mitigation, including incorporating local climate adaption plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take into account SEA legislation, guidelines and resources including for any modifications to the Proposed Variations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlights legislative requirements for consultation with Environmental Authorities including that a copy of determination should be made available for public inspection and sent to Environmental Authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure Variations comply with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste Policy &amp; Resources Efficiency Division of Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult with Regional Waste Management Planning Office regarding waste policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comments from the EPA are noted. The SEA screening process is being carried out in consultation with the relevant bodies and legislative requirements of the SEA Directive and national legislation are being adhered to. SEA guidance including that issued by the EPA has informed the screening process. The Development Plan already supports many of the policies of the NPF and the RSES and Proposed Variation No.5 aligns the Plan with existing national and regional policy. It also strengthens climate change resilience policy and sustainable development measures within the Plan through incorporating the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 “Climate Resilient Galway City” and the National Climate Adaptation Framework. The Proposed Variations were also subject to Screening for AA in compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive which concluded that the Proposed Variations do not have the potential to give rise to significant effects upon European sites, alone and or in-combination with other plans and projects.

The comments received from the Waste Policy and Resources Efficiency Division of DCCAE are also noted. The Proposed Variations do not relate to waste policy however consultation with the Regional Waste Management Planning Office will take place as part of the Development Plan review.
6. **Determination**

Having considered the Proposed Variations in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended) and the observations received from the Environmental Authorities (EPA & DCCAE), it is considered that the Proposed Variations to the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 would not be likely to have such significant effects on the environment to warrant a full Strategic Environmental Assessment. This determination considers the Proposed Variations within the framework of the overall Development Plan, taking account of the policies and objectives set out in the Plan and the *Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for Proposed Variations 5 and 6 to the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 (July 2020)* which concluded that the Proposed Variations do not have the potential to give rise to significant effects upon European sites, alone and or in-combination with other plans and projects. A summary of the assessment is below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposed Variation No. 5:</strong> To align the Development Plan with the National Planning Framework (NPF), Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) and Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and to incorporate the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Proposed Variation seeks to respond to changes in national and regional policy in particular the NPF and RSES. Environmental assessments were integrated into the various stages of the making of the NPF, RSES and the Development Plan. The Development Plan already supports many of the policies of the NPF and the RSES and the Proposed Variation includes minor technical amendments to align national, regional and local planning policy. The Core Strategy of the Development Plan sets out a six year growth strategy for the city in a manner that is consistent with national and regional policy and Section 28 Guidelines. Population and housing targets do not require changes to land uses in the city, with sufficient capacity for the Development Plan period 2017–2023. The Proposed Variation also strengthens climate change resilience policy and sustainable development measures within the Plan through incorporating the Galway City Council <em>Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 “Climate Resilient Galway City”</em> and the National Climate Adaptation Framework. The amendments provide greater policy consistency and are not likely to have such a significant effect on the environment to warrant a Strategic Environmental Assessment. A full review of the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 will commence January 2021.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Proposed Variation No. 6:** Insert the following Specific Objective in Chapter 11 Section 11.2.2 Natural Heritage, Recreation and Amenity RA Land Use Zoning Objectives: RA lands at Cappagh Park. The Council will consider the development of an Aquatic Sports and Fitness Centre adjoining and linked with the existing community centre.

The Proposed Variation is to insert a specific objective to consider the development of an Aquatic Sports and Fitness Centre adjoining and linked with the existing community centre. The Galway City Development Plan 2011-2017 previously included a specific objective for a swimming pool/ community Centre/ sports hall on these lands. The Proposed Variation is consistent with existing recreational policy/objectives and is not likely to have such a significant effect on the environment to warrant a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Measures are integrated into the Development Plan, which provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development and would apply to the Proposed Variations. Monitoring measures identified for the Development Plan would also apply.

*Planning Department*

*July 2020*