

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

BSM

Est.
1968

**Brady Shipman
Martin**

**Built.
Environment.**

Environmental Assessment **Built Environment**

Client:

Offaly County Council

Date:

07 October 2024

DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

6991_RP01_Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Project No. 6991
Client: Offaly County Council
Project Name: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan
Report Name: Appropriate Assessment Screening Report
Document No. RP01
Issue No. 01
Date: 07/10/2024

This document has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Status	Date	Prepared	Checked
01	Consultation	07 Oct 2024	SG	NK/MH



Contents

- 1 Introduction 1
 - 1.1 Background 1
 - 1.2 Expertise and Qualifications 1
 - 1.3 Legal requirement for Appropriate Assessment 2
- 2 Methodology 3
 - 2.1 Baseline data collection 3
- 3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment 4
 - 3.1 Background 4
 - 3.2 Potential zone of influence 4
- 4 Description of the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan 5
 - 4.1 Overview 5
 - 4.2 Public Consultation 6
 - 4.3 Catalogue of Opportunities 6
 - 4.4 Description of the receiving environment 8
- 5 Potential impacts from the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan, including in-combination effects 15
 - 5.1 Description of any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Masterplan on European sites by virtue of: 15
 - 5.2 Description of any likely changes arising as a result of: 18
 - 5.3 Description of any likely impacts on European sites in terms of: 19
 - 5.4 Summary of potential impacts of the implementation of the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan 33
- 6 Mitigation specific to European sites 33
- 7 In-combination effects 34
- 8 Screening conclusion 35
- 9 References 36
- Appendix I: Background 37
 - Stages in the assessment 37
 - Conservation Objectives of European sites 38



1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Offaly County Council (OCC), in collaboration with Waterways Ireland (WI) has prepared the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan. The Masterplan aims to serve as a model for restoration, creating healthy and appealing public spaces, enhancing urban resilience, improving pedestrian accessibility, fostering vibrancy, and promoting the recognition of the harbour as a key resource for Tullamore.

The Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan aims to reconnect the Harbour to the town and enable it to become a vibrant economic and social quarter for living, working and leisure.

Brady Shipman Martin (BSM) has been appointed by Offaly County Council to undertake a screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in respect of the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan (hereafter either the 'Harbour Masterplan or the 'Masterplan).

This document constitutes an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared for this purpose. European sites are also known as Natura 2000 Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)) and are designated for nature conservation. The requirements for an Appropriate Assessment are set out under *Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)*, transposed into Irish law through the *European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)* and the *Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)*.

A comprehensive study has been undertaken and the potential impacts on European sites, both as a result of the implementation of the Masterplan and in-combination with other plans and projects, are appraised in this report.

This AA Screening Report should be read in conjunction with the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report (prepared by BSM, 2024).

1.2 Expertise and Qualifications

This report has been prepared by Sadye Goldfarb, Ecologist and Environmental Consultant at Brady Shipman Martin. She holds a Bachelor's Degree (Hons.) in Environmental Science from the University of Vermont and a Master's Degree in Biodiversity and Conservation from Trinity College Dublin.

This report has been reviewed by Namrata Kaile, Ecologist and Environmental Consultant at Brady Shipman Martin. She holds a Bachelor's Degree (BSc) in Life Sciences from University of Delhi and a Master's Degree (MSc) with distinction in Environmental Sciences from Trinity College Dublin. She is an associate member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (ACIEEM) and has been working professionally in the field of environmental consultancy for the last five years. Namrata is experienced in drafting and reviewing AA Screening Reports, Natura Impact Statements, EIA Screening Report as well as in coordination of EIARs. She is also experienced in undertaking baseline ecological surveys and preparing Ecological Impact Assessments Reports (EclA).

This report has been technically reviewed by Ecologist Matthew Hague BSc MSc Adv. Dip. Plan. & Env. Law CEnv MCIEEM. Matthew is an Associate with Brady Shipman Martin and is a highly experienced and qualified ecologist, with a master's degree in Ecosystem Conservation and Landscape Management. He has over 20 years of experience in ecological and environmental consultancy, across a wide range of sectors. He has prepared numerous reports for AA Screening as well as Natura Impact Statements, for projects of all scales, from small residential developments to nationally important infrastructure projects. Matthew is a Chartered

Environmentalist (CEnv) and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM). Matthew has also completed an Advanced Diploma in Planning and Environmental Law, at King's Inns and is a member of the Irish Environmental Law Association (IELA).

1.3 Legal requirement for Appropriate Assessment

European sites make up a network of sites designated for nature conservation under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the "Habitats Directive") and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (the "Birds Directive"). The requirements for Appropriate Assessment are set out under *Article 6 of the Habitats Directive*, transposed into Irish law by the *European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)*¹ (the "Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations") and the *Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)* (the "Planning Acts").

European sites are also known as Natura 2000 Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)). As defined in section 177R of the Planning Acts "European site" means:

- (a) a candidate site of Community importance,
- (b) a site of Community importance,
- (ba) a candidate special area of conservation,
- (c) a special area of conservation,
- (d) a candidate special protection area and
- (e) a special protection area.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that:

(3) Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have 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 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 first test is to establish whether, in relation to a particular plan or project, appropriate assessment is required. Sections 177U of the Planning Acts requires that the AA screening test must be applied to the Plan, as follows:

- To assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site;
- An appropriate assessment is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the development (plan or project), individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

This AA Screening Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive, the Planning Acts and the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations.

¹ SI No. 477 of 2011, SI No. 293 of 2021

2 Methodology

2.1 Baseline data collection

This assessment focused on habitats and species that are listed as Qualifying Interests (QI) (in the case of SACs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCI) (in the case of SPAs) in the designations for European sites. During the assessment the potential for *ex-situ* effects on European sites was also appraised.

This report takes the following guidance documents into account:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;
- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites- Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2021);
- Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Guidance issued by the European Commission (21st November 2018);
- Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community Interest under the Habitats Directive (Directorate – General for Environment (European Commission, 2021);
- Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (Office of the Planning Regulator, March 2021);
- Guidance for Public authorities on the Application of Articles 12 and 16 of the EU Habitats Directive to development/works undertaken by or on behalf of a public authority (National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) (2021)).

Information was collated from the organisations and websites listed below:

- Data on European sites and rare and protected plant and animal species contained in the following databases:
 - The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (www.NPWS.ie);
 - The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NDBC) (www.biodiversityireland.ie);
 - BirdWatch Ireland (www.birdwatchireland.ie);
 - Bat Conservation Ireland (www.batconservationireland.org).
- Information on land-use zoning from the online mapping of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (<http://www.myplan.ie/en/index.html>);
- Recent and historical OSi mapping and aerial photography, including www.geohive.ie;
- Information on local watercourses from www.catchments.ie;
- Information on water quality in the area (www.epa.ie);
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area (www.gsi.ie);
- Information on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (Article 17 report) (NPWS, August 2019);
- Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2024);
- Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the accompanying reports.

The report has regard to the following legislative instruments:

- Planning and Development, Act 2000, as amended;

- Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended;
- European Commission (EC) Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;
- European Commission (EC) Birds Directive 2009/147/EC;
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

The report takes full account of the details of the Masterplan and a detailed examination of all relevant elements was undertaken. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report (Brady Shipman Martin, 2024) was also reviewed in the preparation of this report.

3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

3.1 Background

The first part of the Appropriate Assessment process is the Screening phase. Screening identifies the likely effects of the implementation of the Harbour Masterplan on European sites that could arise, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and considers whether these impacts are likely to have a significant effect on the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

In accordance with sections 177U and 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the AA screening must be carried out:

- To assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the Harbour Masterplan, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site;
- An appropriate assessment is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the Harbour Masterplan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

Screening must be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation, and it is in this context that this AA Screening Report is prepared.

Following screening therefore, if there is a possibility of there being a significant effect on a European site, this will generate the need for an appropriate assessment for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. This means that if the conclusions at the end of the screening exercise are that significant effects on any European sites, as a result of the implementation of the Harbour Masterplan, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, are likely, uncertain or unknown, then an Appropriate Assessment must be carried out. This is in accordance with established precedent and case law.

3.2 Potential zone of influence

This assessment is based on the source-pathway-receptor model, which dictates that, for an effect to occur, there must be a 'source' (such as a construction site); a 'receptor' (such as a designated site for nature conservation); and a 'pathway' between the two (such as a watercourse that links the construction site to the designated site). A construction site or completed development may also create a barrier to movement, for example, by preventing the migration of fauna along a river corridor, or by obstructing the migration of birds.

Identification of a potential effect means that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the potential effect and the characteristics of the receptor. Although there may be a risk of an impact, it may not necessarily occur, and if it does occur, it may not be significant.

There are no set recommended distances for projects to consider European sites as being relevant for assessment. In 2010, DoEHLG stated that (pp. 31 – 32):

“The approach to screening is likely to differ somewhat for plans and projects, depending on scale and on the likely effects, but the following should be included:

1. Any Natura 2000 sites within or adjacent to the plan or project area
2. Any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of impact of the plan or project. A distance of 15km is currently recommended in the case of plans, and derives from UK guidance (Scott Wilson et al., 2006). For projects, the distance could be much less than 15km, and in some cases less than 100m, but this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in combination effects
3. Natura 2000 sites that are more than 15km from the plan or project area depending on the likely impacts of the plan or project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, bearing in mind the precautionary principle. In the cases of sites with water dependent habitats or species, and a plan or project that could affect water quality or quantity, for example, it may be necessary to consider the full extent of the upstream and/or downstream catchment.”

The 2021 Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) guidelines, *Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management*, state that the Zone of Influence “should be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor framework and not by arbitrary distances (such as 15 km)” (p. 8).

Therefore, considering the nature of the Harbour Masterplan and in accordance with the source-pathway-receptor model, the potential Zone of Influence (Zol) for the Plan has been defined as follows:

- Any site to which there is a pathway from the Harbour Masterplan study area, regardless of distance, upon which significant effects could arise, resulting from the implementation of any element of the Plan. See [Section 4.2](#).

Throughout the preparation of the Plan the ‘*Catalogue of Opportunities*’ were reviewed in the context of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, in order to ensure that no elements of the Plan would have a significant impact on any European site.

4 Description of the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

4.1 Overview

The Masterplan outlines Offaly County Council’s (OCC) collaboration with Waterways Ireland (WI) to create a unified vision for the Grand Canal Harbour, focusing on preserving its historical integrity while reconnecting it to the town and transforming it into a vibrant hub for living, working, and leisure. It also incorporates opportunities to advance UN Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring that future redevelopment balances social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

The **aspirations** of Waterways Ireland and Offaly County Council are for the harbour area to:

- Be unveiled for public discovery and heritage appreciation from behind existing high walls;
- Be transformed to become an attractive waterfront space for residents, citizens and visitors;
- Become the catalyst that unlocks economic and social regeneration opportunities;
- Be accessible for walking and cycling with connectivity to a 131km Grand Canal Greenway;
- Provide on and off water recreational activities;
- Become a key destination for boaters journeying from throughout the inland waterways network on the island.

4.2 Public Consultation

Public consultation formed an integral part of the preparation of the Masterplan.

The public consultation commenced on the 13th of June 2024 and ran for four weeks to 11th July 2024, with two weeks for submissions (closing on 25th July 2024). The PC was advertised with a press release in the local newspaper and on social media.

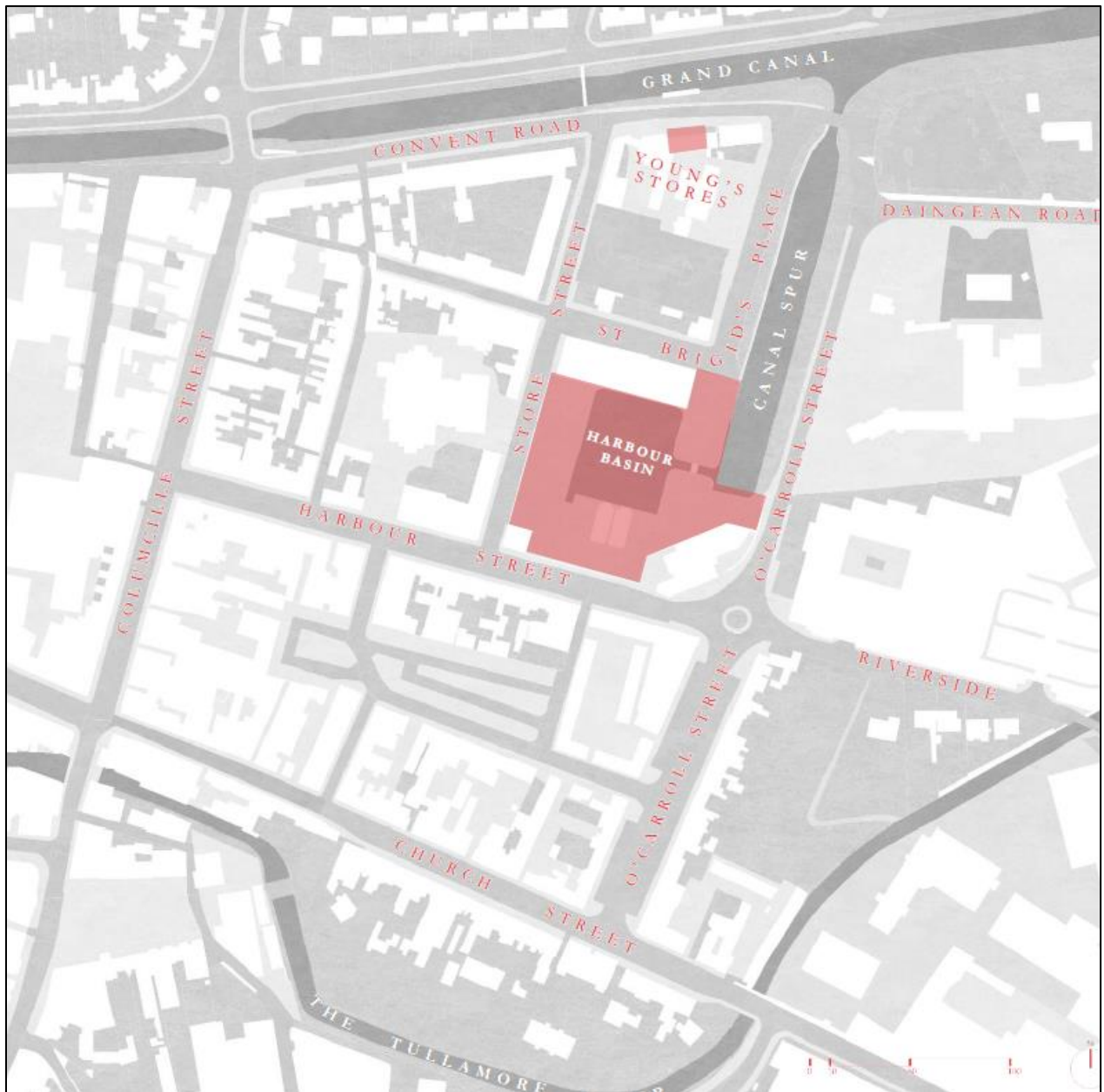
The Masterplan was available for inspection online and in the offices of Offaly County Council, Áras an Chontae, Tullamore Municipal District, Tullamore Library and a presentation was given to the elected members of Offaly County Council and Stakeholders on 13th June 2024. An open day was held in Tullamore Library on 20th June from 12pm to 7pm and the public were invited to make submissions in writing by 26th July 2024.

4.3 Catalogue of Opportunities

The Masterplan is focussed on the Harbour Basin in Tullamore, while also identifying opportunities to achieve enhanced amenity and connectivity from the Canal Spur line. The Masterplan describes possible sites of regeneration/development for the Harbour, which are referred to as the '*Catalogue of Opportunities*' and includes opportunities A to J. The opportunities are not interdependent and can be completed in any order.

Four key locations within the Harbour are identified as strategic locations for development: one at the south of the Canal Spur, where a building would act as a type of welcoming marker on entering the town by the canal system and also mark the connection with O'Carroll Street within the town; another on the north-eastern 'peninsula' of the Harbour, accessed from St. Brigid's Place; and at two other positions inside the existing limestone walls along the western and southern boundaries. The harbour basin is represented below in **Figure 4.1**, and the Catalogue of Opportunities is presented in **Figure 4.2** and described in **Table 4.1** below.

Figure 4.1 Location of the Grand Canal Harbour Basin (Extract from Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan, 2024)



Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Figure 4.2 Key Opportunity Sites (A – J) for Regeneration Projects (Extract from Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan, 2024)

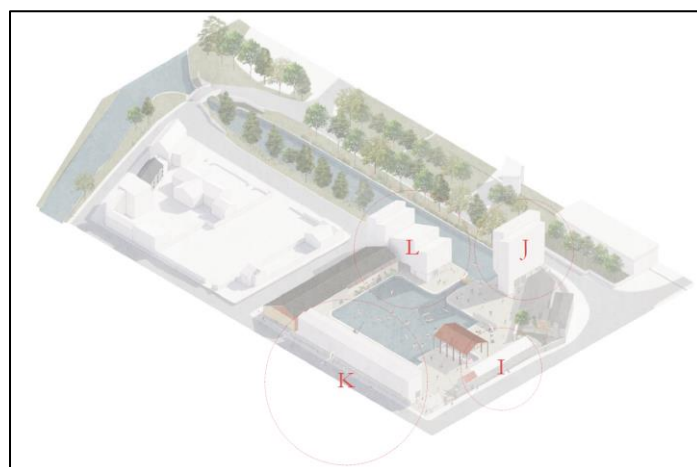
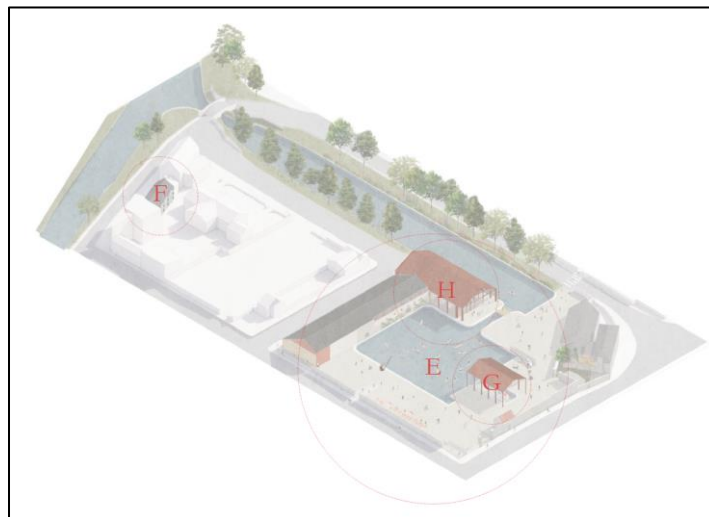
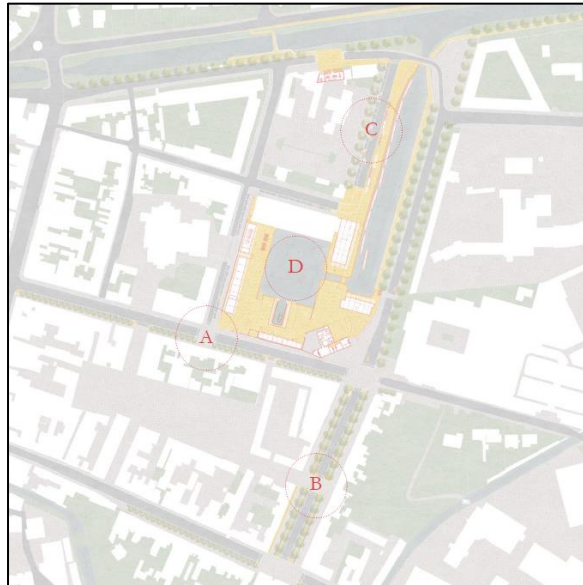


Table 4.1 Catalogue of Opportunities

Grand Canal Harbour Re-vitalisation Projects	Key Potential Features
<p>A. Reconnecting the Harbour to the Town Currently, the Harbour is an enclosed site with one entrance for vehicles from Harbour St. and one entrance for boats from the Canal.</p> <p>This opportunity proposes to enhance Harbour’s accessibility, visibility and urban connectivity. It aims to revitalize the Harbour as an economic and social centre by improving the public spaces around it.</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <p>Route to Transform -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Crossing to schools on opposite side of O’Carroll St.</i> ■ <i>Reinstate quay/embankment edge to original location behind sheet piling</i> ■ <i>Dredge Harbour Basin to reveal stone base</i> ■ <i>Restore quay walls around basin perimeter</i> ■ <i>Entrance established between North block and West boundary wall</i> ■ <i>Reinstated Entrance to crèche in St. Mary’s</i> ■ <i>Re-surface ground finish</i> ■ <i>New entrance along historic 19th C. axial vista</i> ■ <i>Refurbish remaining wall fragment from former Goods Store Building</i> ■ <i>Corner entrance as a possible future site (corner bungalow at present)</i> <p>Steps to Transform -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Parking bays reoriented</i> ■ <i>Parking bays reoriented and foot path added</i> ■ <i>Shared surface added as a forecourt to the harbour</i> ■ <i>Table crossing added between church and Harbour entrances</i> ■ <i>Carriageway reduced to one lane to maintain parking and footpath added</i> ■ <i>New pedestrian access to the Harbour from schools</i> ■ <i>New Ramped connection from O’Carroll St. to the Harbour</i> ■ <i>Table crossing added at Store St Harbour St junction</i> ■ <i>Carriageway narrowed to two lanes and 1 bike lane; footpath widened</i> ■ <i>Parking bays maintained to South only with new treeline</i> <p>Store Street - By reducing Store St. to a single lane of traffic, a new footpath can be integrated while maintaining parking to one side. The plan also shows a shared surface, creating a square between the church and the newly established entrance on the west boundary wall of the Harbour.</p>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Grand Canal Harbour Re-vitalisation Projects	Key Potential Features
	<p>Harbour Street - There is an opportunity to change Harbour St. by narrowing traffic lanes, confining parking to the shaded side of the street, widen foot paths on the south-facing side, add trees and table crossings for a better pedestrian experience accessible to all.</p> <p>St. Brigid's Place - Adding a footpath on both sides of the street would improve accessibility and connectivity to the terrace of shops along the length of St Brigid's Place on the Harbour side. A shared surface at the bend in the road creating a small square in front of the corner building on to the canal spur.</p>
<p>B. Transforming O'Carroll Street</p> <p>The junction of Harbour Street, O'Carroll Street, and Riverside currently has a roundabout dividing O'Carroll Street into two parts. Replacing the roundabout with traffic lights would create a larger, pedestrian-friendly area, improving crossings and enhancing O'Carroll Street as an important eastern space in the town.</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Tree line to be continued to the bank of the Grand Canal</i> ■ <i>Carriageway reduced to one lane of traffic to allow for footpath</i> ■ <i>Quayline hardscape widened to create linear park</i> ■ <i>Kiosks added along linear park to accommodate facilities</i> ■ <i>Tree line added to give enclosure to O'Carroll Street</i> ■ <i>Space in front of St Mary's expanded with potential for use by St. Mary's</i> ■ <i>Shared surface table crossing added in lieu of roundabout</i> ■ <i>Footpath added to South side of street</i> ■ <i>Defensible space allowed for inboard of 3m footpath for use by retailers</i> ■ <i>Carriageway narrowed; parking bays reorientated to be parallel to kerb</i> ■ <i>Footpath widened</i> ■ <i>Cycle lane added inboard of parking with verge for tree grates beside (yellow)</i> ■ <i>Shared surface table crossing added in front of the former infirmary</i> ■ <i>Carriageway narrowed and treeline added on south side of Church St.</i>
<p>C. The Canal Spur Quayline: A Linear Park</p> <p>The Canal Spur links the Grand Canal with the Harbour Basin, featuring a formal, urban character on the quay-lined west side and a more natural, pastoral feel on the east. There is an opportunity to enhance this by creating a linear park on the west bank,</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Creation of a linear park on the west side of the Spur</i> ■ <i>Add additional moorings and service amenities for boat-users</i> ■ <i>Planting a tree line on the western side of the street</i> ■ <i>Narrowing the carriageway and parking allocation</i> ■ <i>Deepening the area of hard paving from the quayline back</i>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Grand Canal Harbour Re-vitalisation Projects	Key Potential Features
<p>adding moorings and amenities for boat users, while fostering a promenade around the water that connects to the Harbour and the Grand Canal Greenway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Lifting bridge will continue to accommodate boating traffic and enable increased pedestrian connectivity throughout the Harbour area</i>
<p>D. Custodianship of the Stone Basin Crafted from finely cut limestone over 200 years ago, the Basin's longevity reflects the skill of its construction. The Harbour Basin is at a raised level relative to its context. It is a kind of water plateau, made with embankments, retaining walls and quays.</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Preserving the Basin and its heritage structures, including the Dry Dock, is an ongoing responsibility</i> ■ <i>Careful repair will be essential in transforming the Harbour into a functional civic space</i>
<p>E. Unlocking the Secret Water Square The ground surface of the Harbour surrounding the Basin was historically made of loose fill rather than stone, unlike the cut-stone Basin itself. It is now covered with concrete hardstanding which is cracked and undulating. There is an opportunity to redesign the Harbour's ground surface for improved public realm.</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Transform the Harbour surface with different materials and textures into a tapestry reflective of the Harbour's past.</i> ■ <i>Reconnect the Harbour to Tullamore.</i> ■ <i>Initial investment into the Harbour and Basin's landscape and quays would provide an opportunity to realise a new 'Water Square'.</i> ■ <i>Provision of good quality public realm around the Harbour.</i> ■ <i>Potential for a 'barge project' as a means of early activation in collaboration with local schools.</i> ■ <i>Utilise the educational value of the water network as it is in close proximity to numerous schools.</i> ■ <i>A potential floating classroom along the Canal Spur would deeply enrich the learning experience of the Tullamore and Offaly student population.</i> ■ <i>Re-develop the Harbour site as a home for water culture and education in addition to other uses.</i> ■ <i>Proposed use of the site for water leisure and recreational activities, this may include stand-up paddle, canal kayaking and canoeing.</i>
<p>F. Young's Stores: A Greenway Gatelodge Young's Stores is ideally located between the Harbour and the emerging Grand Canal Greenway. Its prime position makes it a</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Adaptive reuse of Young's Stores could provide visitor facilities, information and accommodation, supporting sustainable tourism development.</i>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Grand Canal Harbour Re-vitalisation Projects	Key Potential Features
<p>perfect pit stop on the Greenway a welcome point for Grand Canal boat users. Young's Stores offers the potential to become a kind of embassy for Tullamore where visitors are received, hosted and oriented to the Harbour site and visitor attractions as part of a visit to Tullamore. The location of Young's Stores is ideal for this as it is at the bridge where the Grand Canal Greenway cycle route transfers from the North bank to the South.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>The north facing forecourt space in front of Young's Stores, adjacent to the canal, could be designated as an outdoor seating area and become a new public amenity/gathering space.</i>
<p>G. The Dry Dock: Cherishing the Industrial Past</p> <p>The Dry Dock is likely the most significant piece of industrial heritage at the Harbour site, with only one of the two historic docks still open.</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Careful design of site development works is required to secure the integrity of this precious built heritage and continue its operation, serving both public and Waterways Ireland owned vessels.</i> ■ <i>Create a heritage experience for visitors and schools to discover.</i>
<p>H. Transforming the Lock-Gate Workshop</p> <p>The Harbour currently has a number of structures, principally the covering to the Dry Dock, Office Accommodation and a large workshop where lock gates are built. The Lock Gate Shed is a robust 20m x 40m space</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>The scale of the Lock-Gate offers opportunities for large scale events, which would suit its distinctive character and setting.</i> ■ <i>Adaptation of this workshop would allow for early activation of the Harbour with modest financial commitment, and without precluding future development.</i>
<p>I. Inhabiting the Harbour Walls</p> <p>The Basin is at the heart of the Harbour. All recommendations for future construction are appropriately distanced away from the</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Along Harbour Street inside harbour wall between a historic, small building, Battery Store and St. Mary's is a site, which could be inhabited as a newly-built building which would house small shops, studios or workshops.</i>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Grand Canal Harbour Re-vitalisation Projects	Key Potential Features
<p>Basin and its quays, in order to retain its unique character.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>These attractive and active uses would open towards the Harbour on one side and have high-level windows towards Harbour St. to catch the sun and to enliven Harbour St. at night.</i> ■ <i>Tullamore Harbour could be a locus for the craft and design collectives in the Midlands and perform as a complementary offering to the new Esker Arts Centre.</i> ■ <i>The long slender portion of the site would be ideal for creating small studio spaces as a terrace to the Harbour. A simple elegant structure along the Harbour's southern perimeter wall would be an economic way to achieve activation and transformation of the Harbour.</i>
<p>J. Marking a Point of Welcome</p> <p>The Canal Spur by its nature is a long vista on the approach to the Harbour Basin.</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>A tall building at the end of the Canal Spur would be an opportunity to restore the character of the Harbour and will mark the end of the Canal Spur and as a fulcrum at the centre of O'Carroll St.</i> ■ <i>Creating a crossing on O'Carroll St. and route along the eastern grassy canal embankment will make the Harbour more accessible and more visible from the schools, Whitehall and O'Carroll St.</i> ■ <i>Connect O'Carroll St. by ramp up to the Harbour level beside St. Mary's to provide a new connection to the town.</i>
<p>K. Re-Creating a Streetscape in the Harbour</p> <p>Restoring a development at the western edge of the Harbour, where a long perimeter building once provided a backdrop to the Basin, would recreate the historic sense of enclosure and enhance the aesthetics of the site.</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>A new building on the western edge of the Harbour, along the length of Store Street with an active ground floor with the possibilities of waterside eateries, coupled with accommodation for recreational pursuits.</i> ■ <i>The new double height entrance to the Harbour from Store St. made through the existing limestone wall. The new opening would connect the Harbour Spur entrance with the Church of the Assumption's eastern gates.</i> ■ <i>Potential quayside structures as a resource to the clubs for rowing/canoeing already in existence in Tullamore.</i>
<p>L. Where the Canal Spur Enters the Harbour</p> <p>The relationship between the Harbour Basin and Canal Spur creates a peninsula of land between them. The characteristics of this make it an ideal place for a large footprint building that could have a variety of</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>A new structure, occupying the peninsula between the Harbour Basin and the Canal Spur, with potential uses such as residential, commercial, food and/or retail establishments.</i> ■ <i>A new eastern entrance from O'Carroll St.</i>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

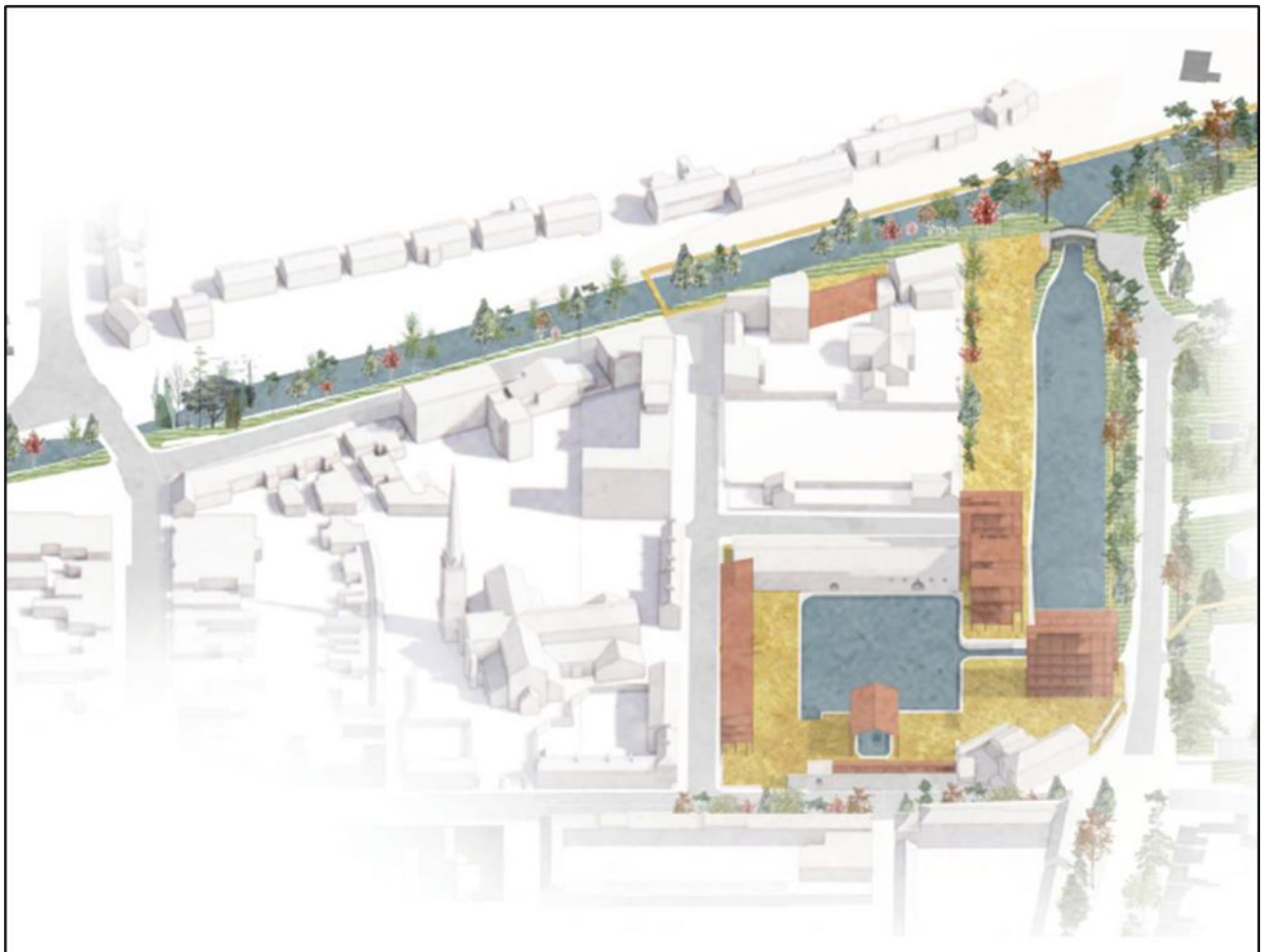
Grand Canal Harbour Re-vitalisation Projects	Key Potential Features
potential uses, including residential, commercial, food and/or retail.	

4.4 Description of the receiving environment

The Masterplan addresses the existing Grand Canal Harbour area which is situated between the Grand Canal to the north and the Tullamore River c. 170m to the south / south-east. A linear spur connects the Harbour Basin with the Canal, and the Harbour Basin is positioned to the north-east of Tullamore town centre, as shown in **Figure 4.3** below.

Development in the Grand Canal Harbour is set against the policies and objectives of the *Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027*. The Masterplan is not a statutory land use plan and does not set a framework for future development consents.

Figure 4.3 Harbour Masterplan Study Area (Source: Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan, 2024)



Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Tullamore in County Offaly is located on the Grand Canal, in the middle of the County. The town is located between Kilbeggan and Portlaoise on the N52 and is strategically located as inter-regional portal to the Northern, Western and Southern regions. Tullamore's neighbouring settlements include Athlone, Newbridge, Mullingar and Portlaoise.

Tullamore is served by the rail network and provides access to rail destinations such as Dublin Heuston, Galway, Westport, Ballina and Limerick. The main road access from the north is provided by the M6 via N52 or R420 and access from the south is provided by the M7 via N80 or N52 with local access via R421. The public bus routes provide access from locations such as Kinnegad, Portlaoise, Banagher and Dublin City Centre.

The Offaly section of the Grand Canal comprises of some 70 kilometres from Edenderry to Shannon Harbour. It passes through the towns of Daingean and Tullamore and the village of Pollagh. The Grand Canal is a focus for a wide range of uses, especially for recreation and tourism purposes.

As per the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027, the lands within the study area are zoned as:

- a. Open Space, Amenity and Recreation: *Protect and improve the provision, attractiveness, accessibility and amenity value of public open space, amenity and recreation.*
- b. Town Centre/ Mixed Use: *Provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of town/village centres, through consolidating development, encouraging a mix of uses and maximising the use of land, to ensure the efficient use of infrastructure and services.*
- c. Existing Residential: *Protect and enhance the amenity and character of developed residential communities.*
- d. Community Services/Facilities: *Provide necessary community, social, health, public administration and educational services and facilities.*

Tullamore has been designated the Decarbonising Zone (DZ) for Offaly which will act as a test-bed of new technology, innovation and ambitious approaches to climate mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity enhancement at a local community level, which may be scaled up across the county and further afield.²

As per the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) database the study area is underlain by Undifferentiated limestone of the Visean Limestones. The groundwater vulnerability within the study area ranges between Extreme and High.

The study area is located within the Lower Shannon catchment (25A), the Tullamore_SC_010 sub-catchment (25A_4) and the Tullamore_030 river sub basin. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) status of the Grand Canal and Tullamore River in the vicinity of the study area were recorded during the 2016-2021 WFD monitoring period as below (refer to **Figure 4.4**):

- Grand Canal Main Line (Lower Shannon) (IE_25A_AWB_GCMLW) (Good and 'not at risk');
- Tullamore River (IE_SH_25T030300) (Poor and 'at risk of not achieving good status').

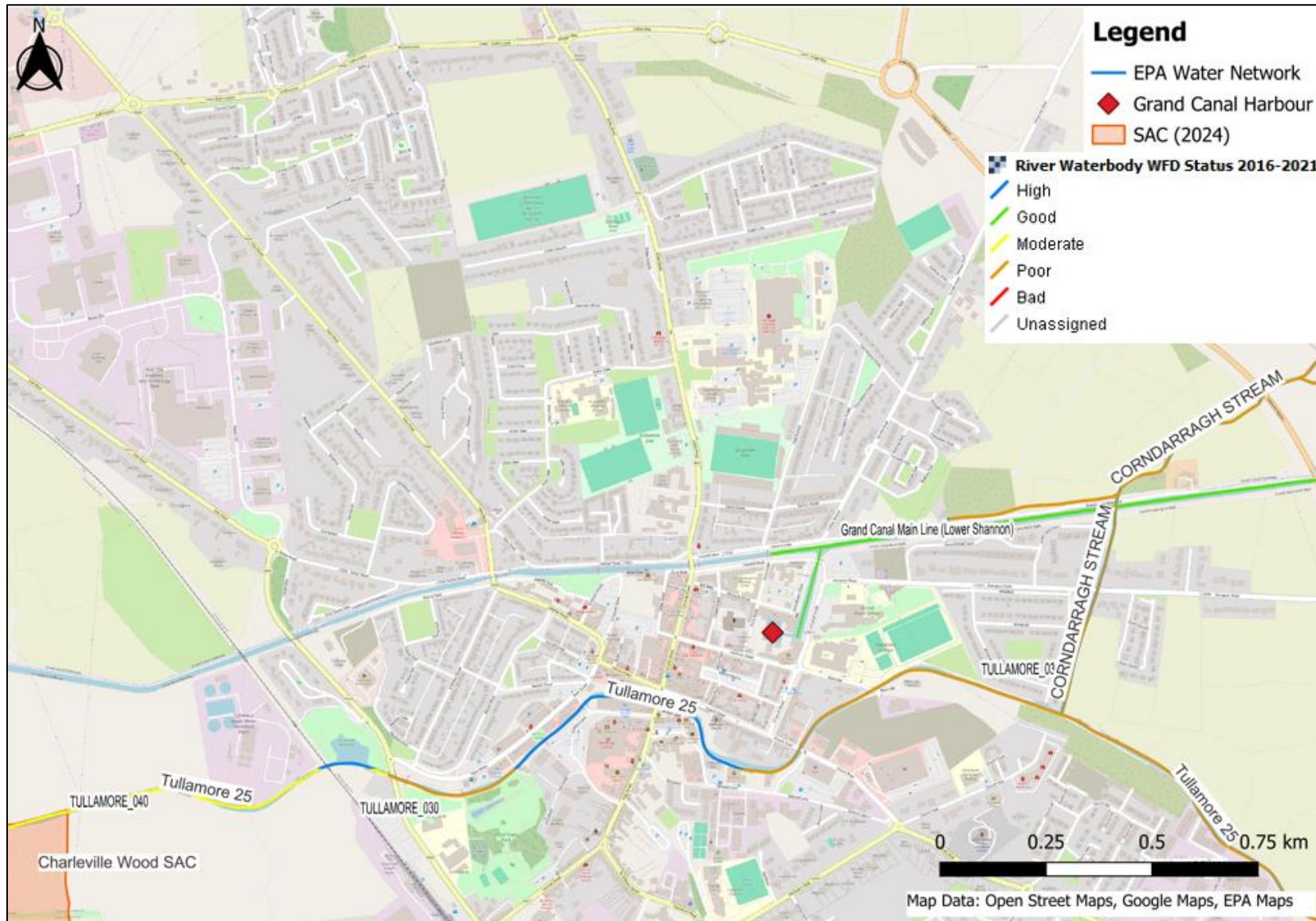
Tullamore River (IERI_SH_1994_0006) c. 170m to the south of the study area is identified as a nutrient sensitive river under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive Sensitive Area.

² [Offaly County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 –2029](#)

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Figure 4.4 WFD status of EPA waterbodies in the proximity of the Harbour Masterplan



4.4.1 European sites

There are no European (Natura 2000) sites within the Masterplan area. The nearest sites are listed below (and shown in **Figure 4.5**):

■ Special Areas of Conservation (SAC):

- Charleville Wood SAC (site code 000571), c. 1.7km to the west;
- Clara Bog SAC (site code 000572), c. 8.5km to the north-west;
- River Barrow and River Nore SAC (site code 002162), c. 10.8km to the south;
- Raheenmore Bog SAC (site code 000582), c. 10.9km to the north-east;
- Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC (site code 001831), c. 11km to the north-east;
- Clonaslee Eskers and Derry Bog SAC (site code 000859), c. 13.9km to the south-west;
- Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC (site code 000412), c. 15.8km to the south;
- Lough Ennell SAC (site code 000685), c. 17.6km to the north;
- Mountmellick SAC (site code 002141), c. 22.3km to the south-east;
- Ferbane Bog SAC (site code 000575), c. 22.5km to the west.

■ Special Protection Areas (SPA):

- Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (site code 004160), c. 14.1km to the south;
- Lough Ennell SPA (site code 004044), c. 18.6km to the north.

4.4.2 Other designated areas (other than European sites)

Designated sites (i.e. designated Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA)) within the potential Zone of Influence have been included in this assessment in order to address their potential to act as supporting sites for European sites. The nearest sites are listed below (and shown in **Figure 4.6**):

■ Natural Heritage Area (NHA):

- Hawkswood Bog NHA (site code 002355), c. 5.7km to the south;
- Scraggan Bog NHA (site code 000921), c. 6.2km to the south-west;
- Daingean Bog NHA (site code 002033), c. 10.3km to the east;
- Cloncrow Bog (New Forest) NHA (site code 000677), c. 13.4km to the north-east;
- Nure Bog NHA (site code 001725), c. 18.0km to the north;
- Ballynagrenia and Ballinderry Bog NHA (site code 000674), c. 20.7km to the north-west;
- Clonydonnin Bog NHA (site code 000565), c. 22.6km to the north-west;
- Clonreher Bog NHA (site code 002357), c. 24.2km to the south-east.

■ Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA):

- Grand Canal pNHA (site code 002104), within the site;
- Charleville Wood pNHA (site code 000571), c. 2.3km to the south-west;
- Ballyduff Wood pNHA (site code 001777), c. 2.9km to the north;
- Ballyduff Esker pNHA (site code 000885), c. 4.4km to the north-west;
- Murphys Bridge Esker pNHA (site code 001775), c. 4.9km to the north-east;
- Clonad Wood pNHA (site code 000574), c. 5.6km to the south;
- Derrygolan Esker pNHA (site code 000896), c. 6.1km to the north;
- Kilcormac Esker pNHA (site code 000906), c. 7.8km to the south-west;
- Rahugh Ridge (Kiltober Esker) pNHA (site code 000918), c. 7.8km to the north-east;
- Pallas Lough pNHA (site code 000916), c. 8.4km to the south-west;
- Clara Bog pNHA (site code 000572), c. 8.5km to the north-west;

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

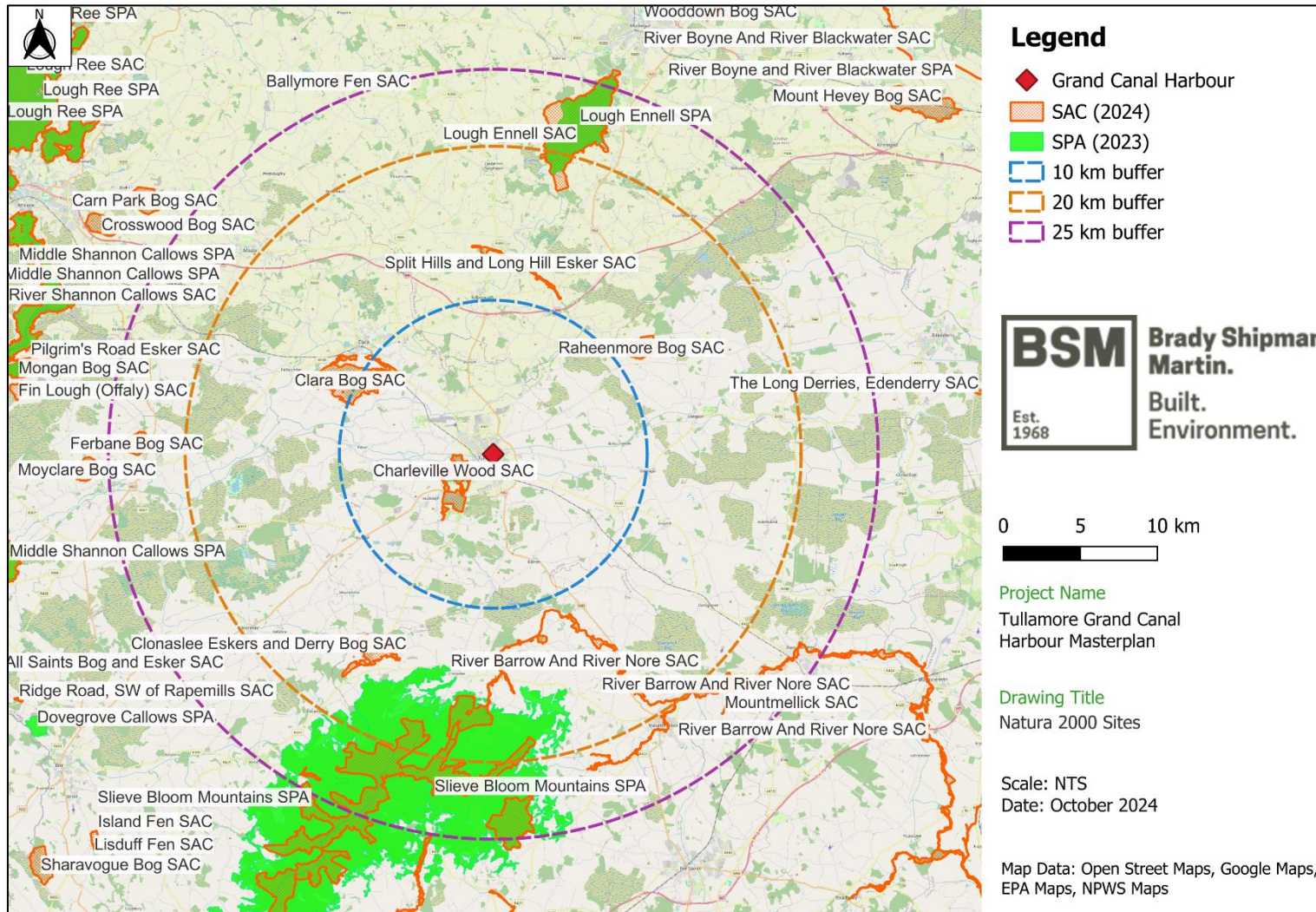
Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

- Ardan Wood pNHA (site code 001711), c. 9.6km to the north-east;
- Annaghmore Lough Fen pNHA (Offaly) (site code 000413,) c. 10.0km to the south-west;
- Raheenmore Bog pNHA (site code 000582), c. 10.9km to the north-east;
- Split Hills and Long Hill Esker pNHA (site code 001831), c. 11km to the north;
- Woodfield Bog pNHA (site code 000586), c. 11.6km to the north-west;
- Raheen Lough pNHA (site code 000917), c. 13.8km to the south-east
- Clonaslee Eskers and Derry Bog PNHA (site code 000859), c. 14.0km to the south-west;
- Slieve Bloom mountains pNHA (site code 000412), c. 15.8km to the south;
- Lough Ennell pNHA (site code 000685), c. 17.6km to the north
- Lough Boora pNHA (site code 001365), c. 19.0km to the west;
- Ballynagarby pNHA (site code 001713), c. 21.5km to the north-west;
- Ferbane Bog pNHA (site code 000575), c. 22.4km to the west;
- Camcor Wood pNHA (site code 000889), c. 23.7km to the south-west;
- Doon Esker Wood pNHA (site code 001830), c. 24.7km to the north-west;
- Lough Coura pNHA (site code 000909), c. 25.0km to the south-west.

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

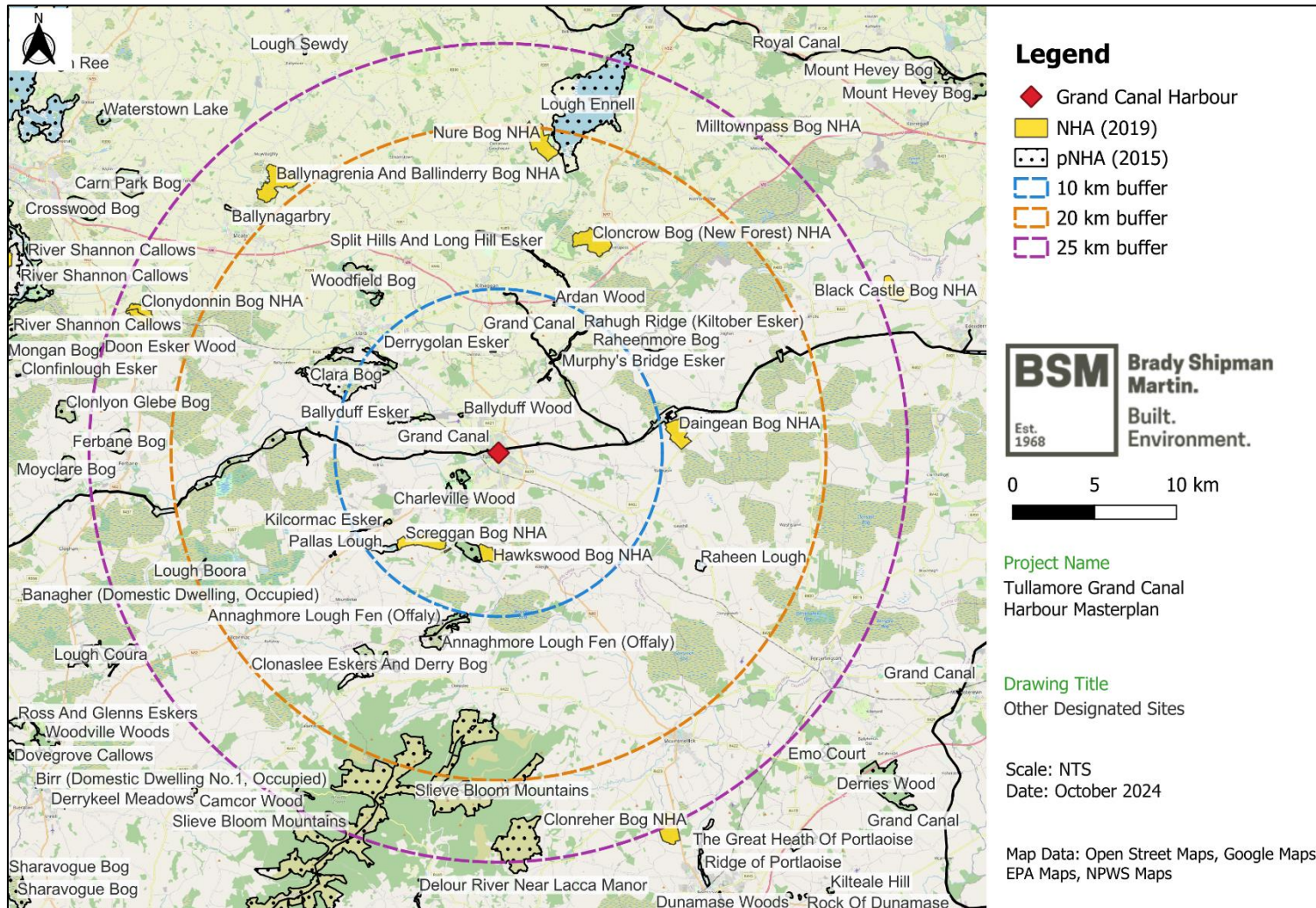
Figure 4.5 European sites within zone of influence of the Harbour Masterplan. 10km, 20km and 25km radii are shown for scale.



Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Figure 4.6 NHA and pNHA sites within zone of influence of the Harbour Masterplan. 10km, 20km and 25km radii are shown for scale.



5 Potential impacts from the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan, including in-combination effects

5.1 Description of any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Masterplan on European sites by virtue of:

5.1.1 Size and Scale

The Masterplan addresses the existing Grand Canal Harbour area which is situated between the Grand Canal to the north and the Tullamore River, c.170m to the south / south-east. A linear spur connects the Harbour with the Canal, and the Harbour basin is positioned to the north-east of Tullamore town centre as shown in **Figure 4.1** in the previous section.

The Masterplan is not a statutory land use plan and does not set a framework for future development consents. The Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets policies and objectives for the Grand Canal and states-

BLP-16 : It is Council policy to support the provision of outdoor pursuits, walking and cycling routes through the county's peatlands and network of industrial railways linking the River Shannon Blueway, Royal Canal, Grand Canal and Barrow Blueway across the midlands as outlined in the 'Major Cycling Destination in the Midlands of Ireland – Feasibility Study 2016', which is a priority of the 'Outdoor Recreation Plan State Lands and Waters' (2017).

BLP-23: It is Council policy to consider the Waterways Corridor Study 2002 and protect the recreational, educational and amenity potential of navigational and non-navigational waterways within the county, such as the Grand Canal Corridor, towpaths and adjacent wetland landscapes, taking into account more recent heritage and environmental legislation (including the SEA Directive) and environmental policy commitments.

The Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 further includes the following development policies for Tullamore:

ENTP-11: It is Council policy to strengthen and channel development into Tullamore the primary driver for economic development within the county, which is designated as a Key Town in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

ENTP-12: It is Council policy to promote Tullamore as a key location for economic development supporting the provision of increased employment through the expansion of the existing enterprise ecosystem in the town and smart specialisation and support the provision of physical infrastructure and zoned lands to realise the delivery of strategic employment lands in central accessible locations.

ENTP-13: It is Council policy to support infrastructural development in Tullamore to facilitate the development of Strategic Employment Zones.

RP-12: It is Council policy to consider the development of taller buildings on the 'Harbour site' and 'Texas site' in Tullamore as identified in Figure 7.8 of the County Development Plan [...].

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

The Masterplan document will guide future development within the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour area to reconnect the Harbour to the town and enable it to become a vibrant economic and social quarter for living, working and leisure. The Masterplan lists aspirations of Waterways Ireland and Offaly County Council, which are for the harbour area to:

- *Be unveiled for public discovery and heritage appreciation from behind existing high walls;*
- *Be transformed to become an attractive waterfront space for residents, citizens and visitors;*
- *Become the catalyst that unlocks economic and social regeneration opportunities;*
- *Be accessible for walking and cycling with connectivity to a 131km Grand Canal Greenway;*
- *Provide on and off water recreational activities;*
- *Become a key destination for boaters journeying from throughout the inland waterways network on the island.*

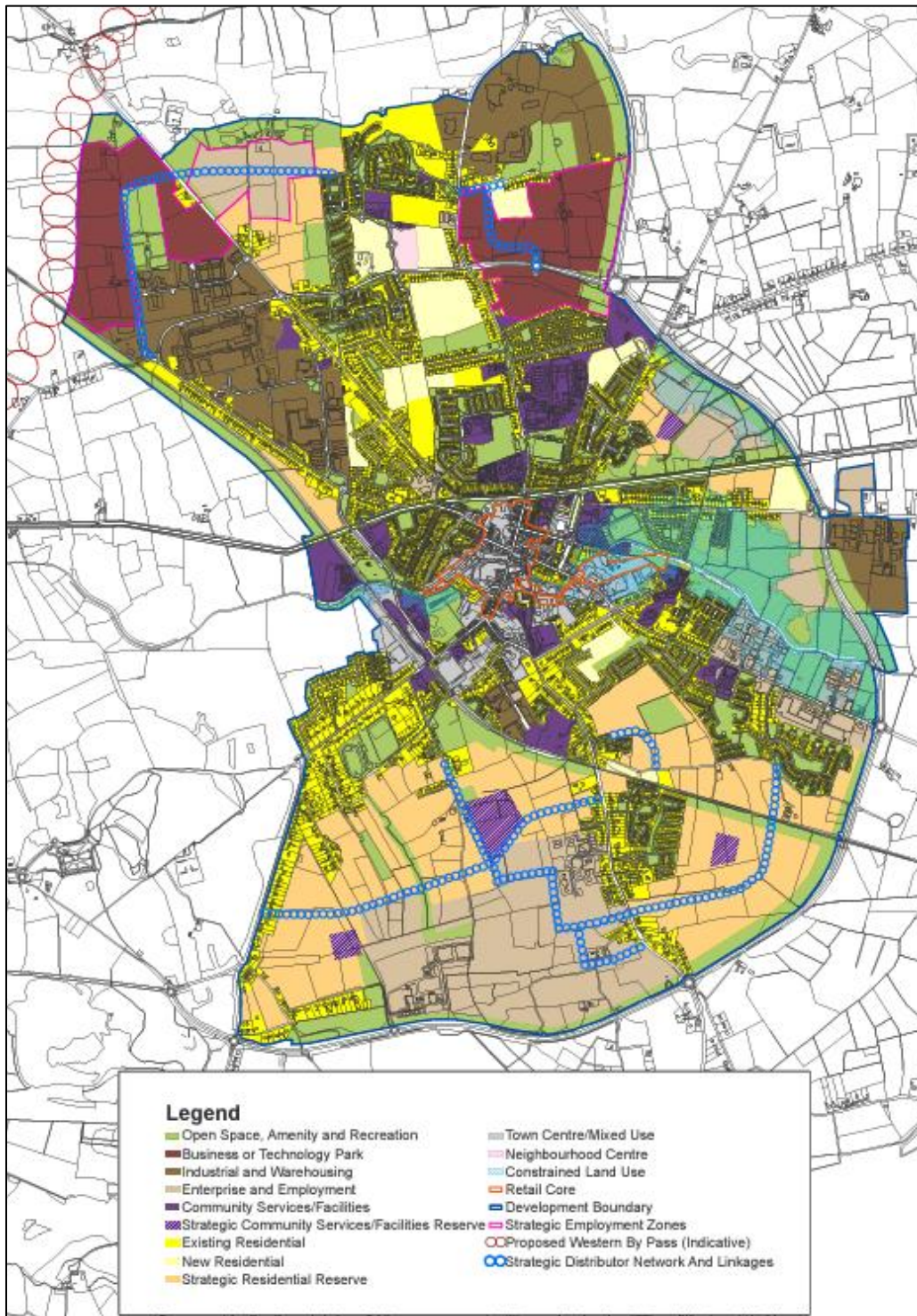
The Masterplan outlines a series of opportunities, based on the aspirations listed above, to unlock public access to the harbour site and envision its transformation as a compelling waterfront destination with multidimensional uses for citizens, residents, enterprises and visitors.

The *Catalogue of Opportunities* presented within the Masterplan includes modifications to the surrounding streets; suggested new entrance points into the Harbour; the restoration of the highly crafted, late 18th Century stonework of the Canal Harbour, the Dry Dock, the Canal Spur and Young's Store; as well as locations for possible development. Four key locations within the Harbour are identified as strategic locations for development: one at the south of the Canal Spur, where a building would act as a type of welcoming marker on entering the town by the canal system and also mark the connection with O'Carroll Street within the town; another on the north-eastern 'peninsula' of the Harbour, accessed from St. Brigid's Place; and at two other positions inside the existing limestone walls along the western and southern boundaries.

These opportunities are described in detail in [Section 4.3](#) of this report. The Masterplan explains that the Catalogue of Opportunities are not interdependent and that developments can be completed in any order. It should be noted that the opportunities identified as part of this Masterplan are likely to be subject to additional detailed design and permitting and environmental assessments.

The size and scale of the Masterplan will not result in any impacts that have the potential, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, to result in likely significant effects to European Sites.

Figure 5.1 Extract from the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Volume II Settlement Plans - Tullamore Town Plan)



5.1.2 Land take

There is no requirement for land take from any European site under any of the opportunities stated in the Masterplan.

5.1.3 Distance from European Site

There are no European (Natura 2000) sites within the Masterplan plan area. The nearest sites (all sites within the potential zone of influence) are described in [Section 4.4](#). A total of 10no. SACs and 2no. SPAs are located within 25km of the Plan area. The closest Natura 2000 sites to the study area is the Charleville Wood SAC (site code 000571), c. 1.7km to the west.

The guiding principle of the Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan is to reconnect the harbour with the town through the creation of vibrant public spaces, enhancing accessibility and visibility. The development aims to balance economic revitalization with heritage preservation by restoring historic canal infrastructure and introducing modern facilities for social and recreational use. The plan prioritizes pedestrian-friendly zones, redesigned streetscapes, and increased green spaces, promoting a sustainable urban environment.

Given this intention, it is expected that any potential impacts on European sites would be avoided in the first instance.

5.1.4 Resource requirement

There are no resource requirements from any European site as a result of any of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.

5.1.5 Emissions (to land, water or air)

There are no emissions of any kind that would result in significant effects on any European site as a result of any of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.

5.1.6 Excavation requirements

There are no excavation requirements from any European site as a result of any of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.

5.1.7 Transport requirements

There are no transport requirements related to any European site as a result of any of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.

5.2 Description of any likely changes arising as a result of:

5.2.1 Reduction in habitat area

The Masterplan proposes no reductions in habitat area in any European site.

5.2.2 Disturbance to key species

The 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan will not result in any disturbance to key species, in designated sites and elsewhere. No habitat or species disturbance will arise.

5.2.3 Habitat or species fragmentation

The ‘*Catalogue of Opportunities*’ presented within the Masterplan will not result in habitat or species fragmentation.

There will be no loss, fragmentation, disruption, disturbance or other change to any element of any European site as a result of the implementation of the Masterplan, and no interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of any European site.

5.2.4 Reduction in species density

The Masterplan will not result in any effects that have the potential to result in reduction in the extent of the qualifying habitats of European Sites, disturb qualifying species of European Sites in the wider surrounding area or affect species population.

5.2.5 Changes in key indicators of conservation value

The ‘*Catalogue of Opportunities*’ presented within the Masterplan will not result in any changes to key indicators of conservation value. The Masterplan will not result in any interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of any European site.

5.2.6 Climate change

The ‘*Catalogue of Opportunities*’ presented within the Masterplan all align with the National Climate Action Plan 2024, 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030, the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029. It is core strategy of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 to continue to build mixed use communities at approximate locations across the County that can sustain and grow a low carbon society.

5.3 Description of any likely impacts on European sites in terms of:

5.3.1 Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site

The Masterplan will result in no interference with the key relationships that define the structure of any European site.

5.3.2 Interference with the key relationships that define the function of the site

The Masterplan will result in no interference with the key relationships that define the function of any European site.

Potential pathways for impacts to European sites are presented in **Table 5.1** and **Table 5.2**.

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Table 5.1 Potential impacts on designated sites in the potential Zone of Influence

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of September 2024) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
Charleville Wood SAC (site code 000571), c. 1.7km to the west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) ■ 91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) * <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 11 Nov 2021), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	No
Clara Bog SAC (site code 000572), c. 8.5km to the north-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) ■ 7110 Active raised bogs ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ■ 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion ■ 91D0 Bog woodland <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 03 Aug 2016), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	No

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of September 2024) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.		
River Barrow and River Nore SAC (site code 002162), c. 10.8km to the south	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1016 Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> ■ 1029 Freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> ■ 1092 White-clawed crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> ■ 1095 Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> ■ 1096 Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i> ■ 1099 River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> ■ 1103 Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> ■ 1106 Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> (only in fresh water) ■ 1130 Estuaries ■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide ■ 1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonizing mud and sand ■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> ■ 1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> ■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> ■ 1421 Killarney fern <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i> ■ 1990 Nore freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i> 	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	No

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of September 2024) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation ■ 4030 European dry heaths ■ 6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels ■ 7220 * Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) ■ 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles ■ 91E0 * Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) <p>The following habitat is listed as Qualifying Interests on the NPWS website, but is not included in the Conservation Objectives document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1170 Reefs <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 19 July 2011) for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>		
Raheenmore Bog SAC (site code 000582), c. 10.9km to the north-east	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 	There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.	No

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of September 2024) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 02 Nov 2015), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	
<p>Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC (site code 001831), c. 11.0km to the north-east</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 20 Jun 2018), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Clonaslee Eskers and Derry Bog SAC (site code 000859), c. 13.9km to the south-west</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1013 Geyer's Whorl Snail <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> ■ 7230 Alkaline fens <p>The following habitat is listed as Qualifying Interests on the NPWS website, but are not included in the Conservation Objectives document:</p> <p>7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	<p>No</p>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of September 2024) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 07 Feb 2019) for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>		
<p>Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC (site code 000412), c. 15.8km to the south</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica Tetralix</i> ■ 7130 Blanket bogs (* if active bog) ■ 91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 06 Sep 2016) for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	<p>No</p>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of September 2024) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
<p>Lough Ennell SAC (site code 000685), c. 17.6km to the north</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7230 Alkaline fens ■ 3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 2, dated 02 July 2024) for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain and restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Mountmellick SAC (site code 002141), c. 22.3km to the south-east</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 05 Mar 2021) for the listed QI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	<p>No</p>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of September 2024) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
<p>Ferbane Bog SAC (site code 000575), c. 22.5km to the west.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7110 Active raised bogs ■ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ■ 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 02 Nov 2015) for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (site code 004160), c. 14.1km to the south</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A082 Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 23 Sep 2022), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SPA, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Lough Ennell SPA (site code 004044), c. 18.6km to the north</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A059 Pochard (<i>Aythya farina</i>) ■ A061 Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) ■ A125 Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) ■ A999 Wetlands and Waterbirds <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 28 May 2024), for each of the listed SCIs, the</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Masterplan study area and this SPA, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' presented within the Masterplan.</p>	<p>No</p>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of September 2024) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	Conservation Objective is to restore and maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.		

Table 5.2 Assessment of potential impact of the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan on the European sites within the potential Zone of Influence

Project	Potential Features	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation Required?
Catalogue of Opportunities			
A. Reconnecting the Harbour to the Town	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <p>Route to Transform -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Crossing to schools on opposite side of O'Carroll St.</i> ■ <i>Reinstate quay/embankment edge to original location behind sheet piling</i> ■ <i>Dredge Harbour Basin to reveal stone base</i> ■ <i>Restore quay walls around basin perimeter</i> ■ <i>Entrance established between North block and West boundary wall</i> ■ <i>Reinstated Entrance to crèche in St. Mary's</i> ■ <i>Re-surface ground finish</i> ■ <i>New entrance along historic 19th C. axial vista</i> ■ <i>Refurbish remaining wall fragment from former Goods Store Building</i> ■ <i>Corner entrance as a possible future site (corner bungalow at present)</i> <p>Steps to Transform-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Parking bays reoriented</i> ■ <i>Parking bays reoriented and foot path added</i> ■ <i>Shared surface added as a forecourt to the harbour</i> 	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Project	Potential Features	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation Required?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Table crossing added between church and Harbour entrances</i> ■ <i>Carriageway reduced to one lane to maintain parking and footpath added</i> ■ <i>New pedestrian access to the Harbour from schools</i> ■ <i>New Ramped connection from O'Carroll St. to the Harbour</i> ■ <i>Table crossing added at Store St Harbour St junction</i> ■ <i>Carriageway narrowed to two lanes and 1 bike lane, footpath widened</i> ■ <i>Parking bays maintained to South only with new treeline</i> <p>Store Street - By reducing Store St. to a single lane of traffic, a new footpath can be integrated while maintaining parking to one side. The plan also shows a shared surface, creating a square between the church and the newly established entrance on the west boundary wall of the Harbour.</p> <p>Harbour Street - There is an opportunity to change Harbour St. by narrowing traffic lanes, confining parking to the shaded side of the street, widen foot paths on the south-facing side, add trees and table crossings for a better pedestrian experience accessible to all.</p> <p>St. Brigid's Place - Adding a footpath on both sides of the street would improve accessibility and connectivity to the terrace of shops along the length of St Brigid's Place on the Harbour side. A shared surface at the bend in the road creating a small square in front of the corner building on to the canal spur.</p>		
<p>B. Transforming O'Carroll Street</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Tree line to be continued to the bank of the Grand Canal</i> ■ <i>Carriageway reduced to one lane of traffic to allow for footpath</i> ■ <i>Quayline hardscape widened to create linear park</i> ■ <i>Kiosks added along linear park to accommodate facilities</i> ■ <i>Tree line added to give enclosure to O'Carroll Street</i> ■ <i>Space in front of St Mary's expanded with potential for use by St. Mary's</i> 	<p>No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.</p>	<p>No</p>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Project	Potential Features	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation Required?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shared surface table crossing added in lieu of roundabout ■ Footpath added to South side of street ■ Defensible space allowed for inboard of 3m footpath for use by retailers ■ Carriageway narrowed; parking bays reorientated to be parallel to kerb ■ Footpath widened ■ Cycle lane added inboard of parking with verge for tree grates beside (yellow) ■ Shared surface table crossing added in front of the former infirmary ■ Carriageway narrowed and treeline added on south side of Church St. 		
C. The Canal Spur Quayline: A Linear Park	Key potential features include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Creation of a linear park on the west side of the Spur ■ Add additional moorings and service amenities for boat-users ■ Planting a tree line on the western side of the street ■ Narrowing the carriageway and parking allocation ■ Deepening the area of hard paving from the quayline back 	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
D. Custodianship of the Stone Basin	Key potential features include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preserving the Basin and its heritage structures, including the Dry Dock, is an ongoing responsibility ■ Careful repair will be essential in transforming the Harbour into a functional civic space 	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
E. Unlocking the Secret Water Square	Key potential features include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Transform the Harbour surface with different materials and textures into a tapestry reflective of the Harbour's past. ■ Reconnect the Harbour to Tullamore. ■ Initial investment into the Harbour and Basin's landscape and quays would provide an opportunity to realise a new 'Water Square'. ■ Provision of good quality public realm around the Harbour. 	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Project	Potential Features	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation Required?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Potential for a 'barge project' as a means of early activation in collaboration with local schools. ■ Utilise the educational value of the water network as it is in close proximity to numerous schools. ■ A potential floating classroom along the Canal Spur would deeply enrich the learning experience of the Tullamore and Offaly student population. ■ Re-develop the Harbour site as a home for water culture and education in addition to other uses. ■ Proposed use of the site for water leisure and recreational activities, this may include stand-up paddle, canal kayaking and canoeing. 		
F. Young's Stores: A Greenway Gatelodge	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adaptive reuse of Young's Stores could provide visitor facilities, information and accommodation, supporting sustainable tourism development. ■ The north facing forecourt space in front of Young's Stores, adjacent to the canal, could be designated as an outdoor seating area and become a new public amenity/gathering space. 	<p>No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.</p>	<p>No</p>
G. The Dry Dock: Cherishing the Industrial Past	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Careful design of site development works is required to secure the integrity of this precious built heritage and continue its operation, serving both public and Waterways Ireland owned vessels. ■ Create a heritage experience for visitors and schools to discover. 	<p>No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.</p>	<p>No</p>
H. Transforming the Lock-Gate Workshop	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The scale of the Lock-Gate offers opportunities for large scale events, which would suit its distinctive character and setting. ■ Adaptation of this workshop would allow for early activation of the Harbour with modest financial commitment, and without precluding future development. 	<p>No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.</p>	<p>No</p>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Project	Potential Features	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation Required?
<p>I. Inhabiting the Harbour Walls</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Along Harbour Street inside harbour wall between a historic, small building, Battery Store and St. Mary's is a site, which could be inhabited as a newly-built building which would house small shops, studios or workshops.</i> ■ <i>These attractive and active uses would open towards the Harbour on one side and have high-level windows towards Harbour St. to catch the sun and to enliven Harbour St. at night.</i> ■ <i>Tullamore Harbour could be a locus for the craft and design collectives in the Midlands and perform as a complementary offering to the new Esker Arts Centre.</i> ■ <i>The long slender portion of the site would be ideal for creating small studio spaces as a terrace to the Harbour. A simple elegant structure along the Harbour's southern perimeter wall would be an economic way to achieve activation and transformation of the Harbour.</i> 	<p>No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>J. Marking a Point of Welcome</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>A tall building at the end of the Canal Spur would be an opportunity to restore the character of the Harbour and will mark the end of the Canal Spur and as a fulcrum at the centre of O'Carroll St.</i> ■ <i>Creating a crossing on O'Carroll St. and route along the eastern grassy canal embankment will make the Harbour more accessible and more visible from the schools, Whitehall and O'Carroll St.</i> ■ <i>Connect O'Carroll St. by ramp up to the Harbour level beside St. Mary's to provide a new connection to the town.</i> 	<p>No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>K. Re-Creating a Streetscape in the Harbour</p>	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>A new building on the western edge of the Harbour, along the length of Store Street with an active ground floor with the possibilities of waterside eateries, coupled with accommodation for recreational pursuits.</i> 	<p>No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.</p>	<p>No</p>

Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Project	Potential Features	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation Required?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>The new double height entrance to the Harbour from Store St. made through the existing limestone wall. The new opening would connect the Harbour Spur entrance with the Church of the Assumption's eastern gates.</i> ■ <i>Potential quayside structures as a resource to the clubs for rowing/canoeing already in existence in Tullamore.</i> 		
L. Where the Canal Spur Enters the Harbour	<p>Key potential features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>A new structure, occupying the peninsula between the Harbour Basin and the Canal Spur, with potential uses such as residential, commercial, food and/or retail establishments.</i> ■ <i>A new eastern entrance from O'Carroll St.</i> 	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No

5.4 Summary of potential impacts of the implementation of the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan

There will be no loss of any habitat or species listed as a QI or SCI of any designated site as a consequence of the implementation of the Masterplan. There is, therefore, no potential for the effects of habitat loss or fragmentation to occur.

There will also be no significant effects on any European sites as a result of:

- Habitat loss and/or fragmentation;
- Land-take;
- Resource requirements such as water abstraction;
- Impacts to habitat structure;
- Mortality to species (such as roadkill);
- Noise pollution / vibration impacts;
- Light pollution;
- Emissions to air (including dust);
- Emissions to water.

Additionally, for the reasons outlined in this report for the European sites, no impacts on any other designated sites including proposed Natural Heritage Areas, will occur.

6 Mitigation specific to European sites

This screening assessment is consistent with the judgment of the European Court in Case C-323/17, *People Over Wind & Sweetman v Coillte* (Judgment of the Court (Seventh Chamber) of 12 April 2018) and the recent case-law of the High Court, including *Heather Hill Management Company CLG v An Bord Pleanála* [2019] IEHC 450 and *Sweetman v An Bord Pleanála* [2020] IEHC 39.

It is also consistent with the judgment in *Eco Advocacy CLG v An Bord Pleanála* [2021] IEHC 265. In that case, Humphreys J confirmed the core legal principle, being that regard should not be had to mitigation measures at AA screening stage. Humphreys J decided in that case that clarification was required from the CJEU on the matter (as it related to the consideration of SUDs and whether these represented mitigation measures).

The CJEU, in its ruling on this case dated 15 June 2023 clarified issues defining mitigation in the context of European sites³. It confirmed that Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 *must be interpreted as meaning that, in order to determine whether it is necessary to carry out an appropriate assessment of the implications of a plan or project for a site, account may be taken of the features of that plan or project which involve the removal of contaminants and which therefore may have the effect of reducing the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site, where those features have been incorporated into that plan or project as standard features, inherent in such a plan or project, irrespective of any effect on the site.*

In relation to European sites, there will be no impacts capable of giving rise to any likely significant effects as a result of the Masterplan.

No mitigation is necessary or proposed for the protection of European sites.

³<https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=274644&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=21723482>

7 In-combination effects

It is a requirement of Section 177U of the Planning Acts that, when considering whether a plan or project will have a significant effect on a European site, the assessment must take into account in-combination effects with other plans and projects. The assessment should consider plans and projects that are completed, approved but uncompleted, or proposed (but not yet approved)⁴. If there are identified effects arising from the plan or project, even if they are perceived as minor and not likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of a European site alone, then these effects must be considered in combination with the effects arising from other plans and projects.

Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the Council's policies and objectives for the development of the County over the Plan period and has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and AA. It seeks to develop and improve, in a sustainable manner the social, economic, environmental and cultural assets of the County. The Masterplan has had due regard to all relevant policies and objectives set out in the Development Plan.

On the basis of objective information, it can be excluded that the implementation of the Plan, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

A number of other plans were considered when assessing in-combination effects, but it was determined that there would be no in-combination effects with these:

- Project Ireland 2040, The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic vision for shaping future growth and development in the entire country over a 20-year period, which identifies heritage as a strategic investment priority, recognising 'Enhanced Amenities and Heritage' as a National Strategic Outcome;
- Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework (July 2024);
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) for the East and Midlands Area;
- Our Rural Future (2021-2025);
- Town Centre First (2022);
- National Smart Specialisation Strategy (2022-2027);
- Climate Action Plan (2024);
- 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030.
- Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027;
- Offaly County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029;
- Offaly Heritage Plan 2023 – 2027 (Biodiversity Action Plan for Offaly is incorporated into the Offaly Heritage Plan 2023 – 2027);
- Draft Tullamore Transport Plan 2024.

⁴ Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting European sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2001)

8 Screening conclusion

Following review of the Tullamore Grand Canal harbour Masterplan against the Conservation Objectives of the relevant European sites, **it is concluded that there is no possibility that the implementation of the Masterplan could result in any likely significant effects on European sites on its own or in combination with other plans and programmes.** This conclusion was reached without considering or taking into account mitigation measures or measures intended to avoid or reduce any impact on European sites.

In view of best scientific knowledge therefore, this report concludes that the Tullamore Grand Canal Harbour Masterplan, individually or in combination with another plan or project, is not likely to have a significant effect on European sites under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in light of their conservation objectives. The Masterplan **does not require an Appropriate Assessment** and the preparation of a Natura Impact Report.

9 References

- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2022). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine (Version 1.2).
- DoEHLG (2010a). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- DoEHLG (2010b). Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10: Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- DoHLGH (2024). EIA Portal.
- Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- European Commission (2021). Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites- Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2018). Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission Environment Directorate-General (2021). Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community Interest under the Habitats Directive.
- NBDC (2024). Biodiversity Maps.
- NPWS (2021). Guidance for Public authorities on the Application of Articles 12 and 16 of the EU Habitats Directive to development/works undertaken by or on behalf of a Public authority.
- NPWS (2024). Boundary data – Special Area of Conservation (SAC). [Update date 15/05/2024].
- NPWS (2024). Boundary data – Special Protection Area (SPA). [Update date 11/01/2024].
- NPWS (2015). Boundary data – proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). [Update date 01/11/2015].
- NPWS (2019). Boundary data – Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). [Update date 28/06/2019].
- NRA5 (2009). Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes.
- OPR (2021). Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.
- Wyse Jackson, M., FitzPatrick, Ú., Cole, E., Jebb, M., McFerran, D., Sheehy Skeffington, M. & Wright, M. (2016). Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants. Dublin Ireland: NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

⁵ Now Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

Appendix I: Background

The European⁶ network is a Europe-wide network of ecologically important sites (SPAs and cSACs – also known as ‘European Sites’ or ‘Natura 2000 sites’) that have been designated for protection under either the EU Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds) or the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna).

The main aim of the Habitats Directive is “to contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of the Member States to which the treaty applies”. Any actions taken must be designed to “maintain or restore, at a favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest”. Under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, an assessment is required where a plan or project may give rise to significant effects upon a European site.

In addition, it is a matter of law that candidate SACs (cSACs) and Sites of Community Importance (SCI) are considered in this process;

Article 6 (paragraphs (3) and (4)) of the Habitats Directive states that:

(3) Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have 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.

(4) If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest”

The requirements of the Habitats Directive are transposed into Irish law by means of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)* (hereafter referred to as the *Birds and Habitats Regulations*) and by the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended.

In Ireland, the statutory agency responsible for the designated areas is NPWS.

Stages in the assessment

European Commission guidance (2001)⁷ sets out the principles on how to undertake decision making in applying the Habitats Directive. The requirements of the Habitats Directive comprise four distinct stages:

Stage 1: Screening is the process which initially identifies the likely significant effects upon a European site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts may be significant. It is important to note that the burden of evidence is to show, on the basis of objective information, that there will be no significant effect; if the effect may be significant, or is not known, that would trigger the need for an Appropriate Assessment. There is European Court of Justice case law to the effect that

⁶ The EU Habitats Directive, Article 3.1, states “A Coherent European ecological network of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas pursuant to Directive 79/409/EEC shall be set up under the title European”

⁷ European Commission (2001) *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting European Sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6 (3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*

unless the likelihood of a significant effect can be ruled out on the basis of objective information, then an Appropriate Assessment must be made.

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment is the detailed consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's conservation objectives and its structure and function. This is to determine with scientific certainty whether or not there will be adverse effects on the integrity of the site in light of its conservation objectives. This stage also includes the development of mitigation measures to avoid or reduce any possible impacts.

Stage 3: Assessment of alternative solutions is the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that would avoid impacts on the integrity of the European site, should avoidance or mitigation measures be unable to cancel out adverse effects.

Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain. At Stage 4 an assessment is made with regard to whether or not the development is necessary for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) and, if so, of the compensatory measures needed to maintain the overall coherence of the European network.

Conservation Objectives of European sites

The conservation objectives for a European Site are intended to represent the aims of the Habitats and Birds Directives in relation to that site. To this end, habitats and species of European Community importance should be maintained or restored to 'favourable conservation status' (FCS), as defined in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive below:

The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- Its natural range and the area it covers within that range are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future;
- Conservation status of typical species is favourable as defined in Article 1(i).

The conservation status of a species will be taken as favourable when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future;
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Guidance from the European Commission⁸ indicates that the Habitats Directive intends FCS to be applied at the level of an individual site, as well as to habitats and species across their European range. Therefore, in order to properly express the aims of the Habitats Directive for an individual site, the conservation objectives for a site are essentially to maintain (or restore) the habitats and species of the site at (or to) FCS.

The European Commission guidance recommends that screening should fulfil the following steps:

1. Determine whether the plan (or policy) is directly connected with or necessary for the management of European sites;
2. Describe the plan and describe and characterise any other plans or projects which, in combination, have the potential for having significant effects on European sites;
3. Identify the potential effects on European sites;

Assess the likely significance of any effects on European sites.

⁸ Managing European sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. (European Commission 2000)

Brady Shipman Martin

DUBLIN

Canal House
Canal Road
Dublin 6
+353 1 208 1900

CORK

Penrose Wharf Business Centre
Penrose Wharf
Cork
+353 21 242 5620

mail@bradyshipmanmartin.com
www.bradyshipmanmartin.com

