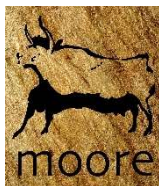


Report for the purposes of  
Appropriate Assessment Screening

Draft Galway City Noise Action Plan

July 2024




Prepared by: Moore Group – Environmental Services

On behalf of Galway City Council



<b>Project Proponent</b>	Galway City Council
<b>Project</b>	Draft Galway City Noise Action Plan
<b>Title</b>	Report for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment Screening Draft Galway City Noise Action Plan

<b>Project Number</b>	24111	<b>Document Ref</b>	24111 Galway City Noise AP AAS1 Rev2
<b>Revision</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>
Rev2	GCC Reviewed	G. O'Donohoe 	23 July 2024
<b>Moore Archaeological and Environmental Services Limited</b>			

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## Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment
ABP	An Bord Pleanála
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
EEC	European Economic Community
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FWPM	Freshwater Pearl Mussel
GIS	Geographical Information System
LAP	Local Area Plan
NHA	Natural Heritage Area
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
pNHA	proposed Natural Heritage Area
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System
UÉ	Uisce Éireann
WFD	Water Framework Directive

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. General Introduction

This report for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening contains information required for the competent authority to undertake screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the Draft Galway City Noise Action Plan 2024-2028, to determine whether its implementation is likely individually or in combination with other plans or projects to have a significant effect on any European sites, in light of best scientific knowledge.

Having regard to the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the “Planning Acts”), the purpose of a screening exercise is to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the Plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

If it cannot be *excluded* on the basis of objective information that the proposed project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site then it is necessary to carry out a Stage 2 appropriate assessment under the Planning Acts.

When screening the project, there are two possible outcomes:

- the project poses no potential for the possibility of a significant effect and as such requires no Stage 2 assessment; or
- the project has potential to have a significant effect (or this is uncertain and therefore cannot be excluded) and therefore a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the project is necessary.

This report has been prepared by Moore Group - Environmental Services to enable the competent authority to carry out AA screening in relation to the Plan. The report was compiled by Ger O’Donohoe B.Sc. Applied Aquatic Sciences (ATU Galway, 1993) & M.Sc. Environmental Sciences (TCD, 1999) who has over 30 years’ experience in environmental impact assessment and has completed numerous Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports and Natura Impact Statements on terrestrial and aquatic habitats for various development types.

## 1.2. Legislative Background - The Habitats and Birds Directives

Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive are transposed into Irish Law inter alia by the Part XAB of the Planning Acts (in particular section 177U and 177V) which governs the requirement to carry out appropriate assessment screening and appropriate assessment, where required, per Section 1.1 above.

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) is the main legislative instrument for the protection and conservation of biodiversity in the European Union (EU). Under the Habitats Directive, Member States are obliged to designate Special Areas

of Conservation (SACs) which contain habitats or species considered important for protection and conservation in a EU context.

The Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds), transposed into Irish law by the Bird and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 as amended, and the Wildlife Act 1976, as amended, is concerned with the long-term protection and management of all wild bird species and their habitats in the EU. Among other things, the Birds Directive requires that Special Protection Areas (SPAs) be established to protect migratory species and species which are rare, vulnerable, in danger of extinction, or otherwise require special attention.

SACs designated under the Habitats Directive and SPAs, designated under the Birds Directive, form a pan-European network of protected sites known as Natura 2000. The Habitats Directive sets out a unified system for the protection and management of SACs and SPAs. These sites are also referred to as European sites.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the requirement for an assessment of proposed plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites.

Article 6(3) establishes the requirement to screen all plans and projects and to carry out an appropriate assessment if required (Appropriate Assessment (AA)):

**Article 6(3):** *“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to an 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.”*

Article 6(4) establishes requirements in cases of imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

### 1.3. Legislative Background - Noise

The requirement of Local Authorities to prepare a Noise Action Plan (hereafter referred to as NAP) is set out for Member States under the Environmental Noise Directive (END) (2002/49/EC), a legal instrument for addressing adverse effects of environmental noise which have been transposed into Irish law<sup>1</sup> and require preparation of strategic noise mapping and implementation of NAPs. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the national

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<sup>1</sup> The END was transposed into Irish Law by the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 (S.I. 140/2006) (the “Regulations”). The Regulations were revised by the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 (S.I. 549/2018) and amended through the European Communities (Environmental Noise) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 663/2021).

competent authority responsible for implementing the END and will ultimately report noise mapping and action planning to the European Commission.

## 2. Methodology

The Commission's methodological guidance (EC, 2002, 2018, 2021 see Section 2.1 below) promotes a four-stage process to complete the AA and outlines the issues and tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.

Stages 1 and 2 deal with the main requirements for assessment under Article 6(3). Stage 3 may be part of Article 6(3) or may be a necessary precursor to Stage 4. Stage 4 is the main derogation step of Article 6(4).

**Stage 1 Screening:** This stage examines the likely effects of a project either alone or in combination with other plans and projects upon a Natura 2000 site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. In order to screen out a project, it must be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the Plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

**Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment:** This stage examines whether it is likely that the project, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, will have a significant effect upon the integrity of a European site. In order to 'screen out' a project (i.e. in order to conclude that it is not necessary to move to the 'Stage 2' appropriate assessment stage (see immediately below), the possibility that the Plan (individually or in combination with other plans or projects), will have a significant effect on the integrity of a European site must be excluded on the basis of objective information.

**Stage 3 Assessment of Alternative Solutions:** This stage examines alternative ways of implementing the project that, where possible, avoid any adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

**Stage 4 Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain:** Where imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist, an assessment to consider whether compensatory measures will or will not effectively offset the damage to the sites will be necessary.

To ensure that the Plan complies fully with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and all relevant Irish transposing legislation, Moore Group compiled this report to enable the competent authority to carry out AA screening in relation to the Plan to determine whether it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the Plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site(s).

## 2.1. Guidance

This report has been compiled in accordance with guidance contained in the following documents:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 rev.).
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10.
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018).
- Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive (EC, 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 (EC, 2021).
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021).
- Natura Impact Statement Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities (NPWS, 2024).

## 2.2. Data Sources

Sources of information that were used to collect data on the Natura 2000 network of sites, and the environment within which they are located, are listed below:

- The following mapping and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data sources, as required:
  - National Parks & Wildlife (NPWS) protected site boundary data;
  - Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) mapping and aerial photography;
  - OSI/Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rivers and streams, and catchments;
  - Digital Elevation Model over Europe (EU-DEM);
  - Google Earth and Bing aerial photography 1995-2024;
- Online data available on Natura 2000 sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie) including:
  - Natura 2000 - Standard Data Form;
  - Conservation Objectives;
  - Site Synopses;
- National Biodiversity Data Centre records;
  - Online database of rare, threatened and protected species;
  - Publicly accessible biodiversity datasets.
- Status of EU Protected Habitats in Ireland. (National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2019); and
- Relevant Development Plans;



- Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029
- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Galway City Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028

### 3. Description of the Plan

The Draft Galway City Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 has been prepared by Galway City Council in accordance with the regulations for major roads within its administrative area.

The Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Noise Directive (END)(2002/48/EC), the aim of which is to 'define a common approach intended to avoid, prevent, or reduce on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise'.

The END was transposed into Irish Law by the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2006 (S.I. 140/2006). These regulations were revised by the European Communities ( Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018, (S.I. No. 549/2018) and were amended through the European Communities (Environmental Noise)(Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I. No. 663/2021).

Environmental noise can be defined as unwanted or harmful outdoor sound created by human activities, including noise from transport sources and from industry. The Directive applies to environmental noise to which humans are exposed, in particular built-up areas, in public parks or other quiet areas in an agglomeration, in quiet areas in open country, near schools, hospitals and other noise sensitive buildings and areas. It does not apply to noise that is caused by the exposed person, noise from domestic activities, noise created by neighbours, noise at workplaces or noise inside means of transport or due to military activities in military areas.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is designated as the National Authority charged with overseeing the implementation of the Regulations. Galway City Council is designated a Noise Mapping Body for the purpose of making and approving strategic noise maps for Galway City. Galway City Council is also designated an Action Planning Authority with responsibility for the preparation of a Noise Action Plan for Galway City.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) as the designated noise mapping body for national roads prepared strategic noise maps for the major national roads in Galway City. Galway City Council participated in a centralised process to commission the preparation of noise maps and population exposure assessments for major non-national roads carrying in excess of 3 million vehicles per annum. Noise mapping was undertaken in 2022, (Round 4 Noise Mapping)(R4 Mapping).

Article 6.2 of the Environmental Noise Directive specifies the use of two noise level indicators when preparing environmental noise maps and action plans, the  $L_{den}$  and  $L_{night}$ .

- $L_{den}$  – the annual average noise level based on the day, evening and night-time noise levels. This is the noise indicator for overall annoyance.
- $L_{night}$  – the annual average noise level for the night-time period from 23:00 – 07:00. This is the noise indicator for sleep disturbance.

The indicators are weighted to account for the fact that the same noise level may be more annoying at different times of the day.

The results of the strategic noise maps provide information on the predicted noise levels at all noise sensitive properties within the assessment area, with an estimate of the number of inhabitants. This information is then used to identify Important Areas (IAs), where long term noise exposure to noise from infrastructure has potential to have adverse effects on the health of the exposed population. Following on from this, the Most Important Areas (MIAs), which are a subset of the IAs, were identified where the health effects are the highest. It should be noted that the process of identifying the Important Areas and Most Important Areas is of a statistical nature and pertains to the entire population encompassed by the noise maps. The Most Important Areas should not be construed as a precise assessment of harmful effects for specific buildings, nor are the extents of the Most Important Areas definitive. The Most Important Areas are indicative for the identification of areas with a relatively high number of people who may be potentially highly annoyed due to road noise.

The automated process identified 44 Most Important Areas along all the major roads in Galway City. These were prioritised to 10 Priority Important Areas (PIAs). Galway City Council selected 7 of these and is committed, subject to available resources and funding, to assessing these PIAs and confirming the relevant noise management measures for each PIA, including cost-benefit analysis and health benefits.

The Noise Action Plan is supported by a four-year programme for implementation (2024-2028) and will be reviewed every 5 years thereafter in 2028. Progress on the implementation of the plan will be reported to the EPA on an annual basis.

The following key actions are proposed over the lifetime of the NAP:

- Undertake noise monitoring and validate the noise model for all PIAs selected
- Review potential mitigation measures for all PIAs and cost benefit analysis
- Seek approval and funding for the implementation of mitigation measures.

This Plan is situated alongside a hierarchy of statutory documents that has been subject to environmental assessment/screening for environmental assessment, as appropriate, and forms the decision-making and consent-granting framework. The Plan does not provide consent or establish a framework for granting consent and will not be binding on any decisions relating to the granting of consent. In order to be realised, projects

included in this Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sectors) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework. All proposals for development/works under the Noise Action Plan will be required to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of environmental and planning legislation and planning and licensing processes, including existing provisions of land use plan(s) and policy documents such as the National Planning Framework, Galway Transport Strategy, Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 (including those provisions identified in the accompanying Screening SEA report).

Figure 1 shows the Plan location and Figure 2 shows a detailed view of the Plan boundary on recent aerial photography. Figure 3 shows the layout of the Plan.

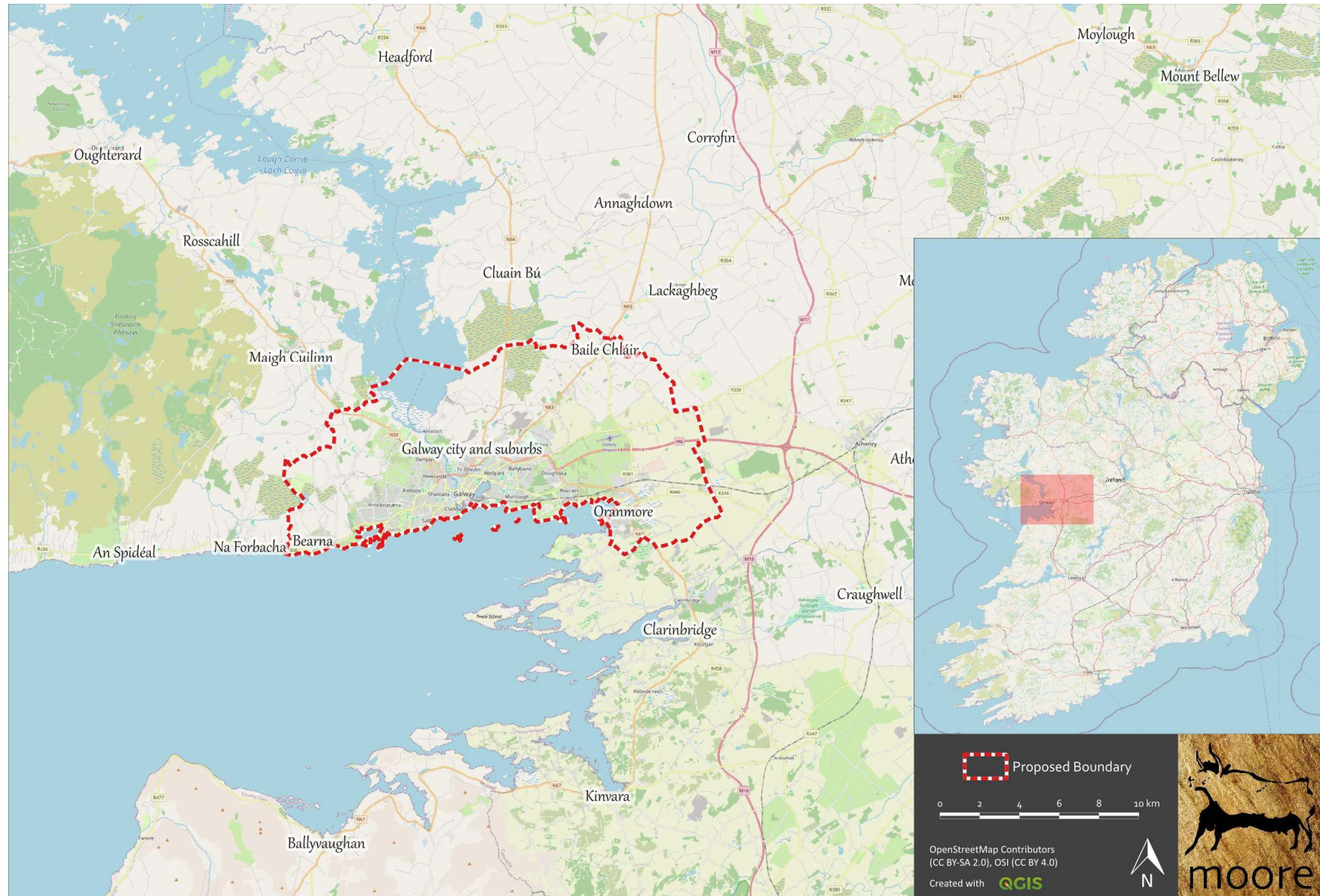


Figure 1. Showing the area wherein the Galway City NAP will be in operation.

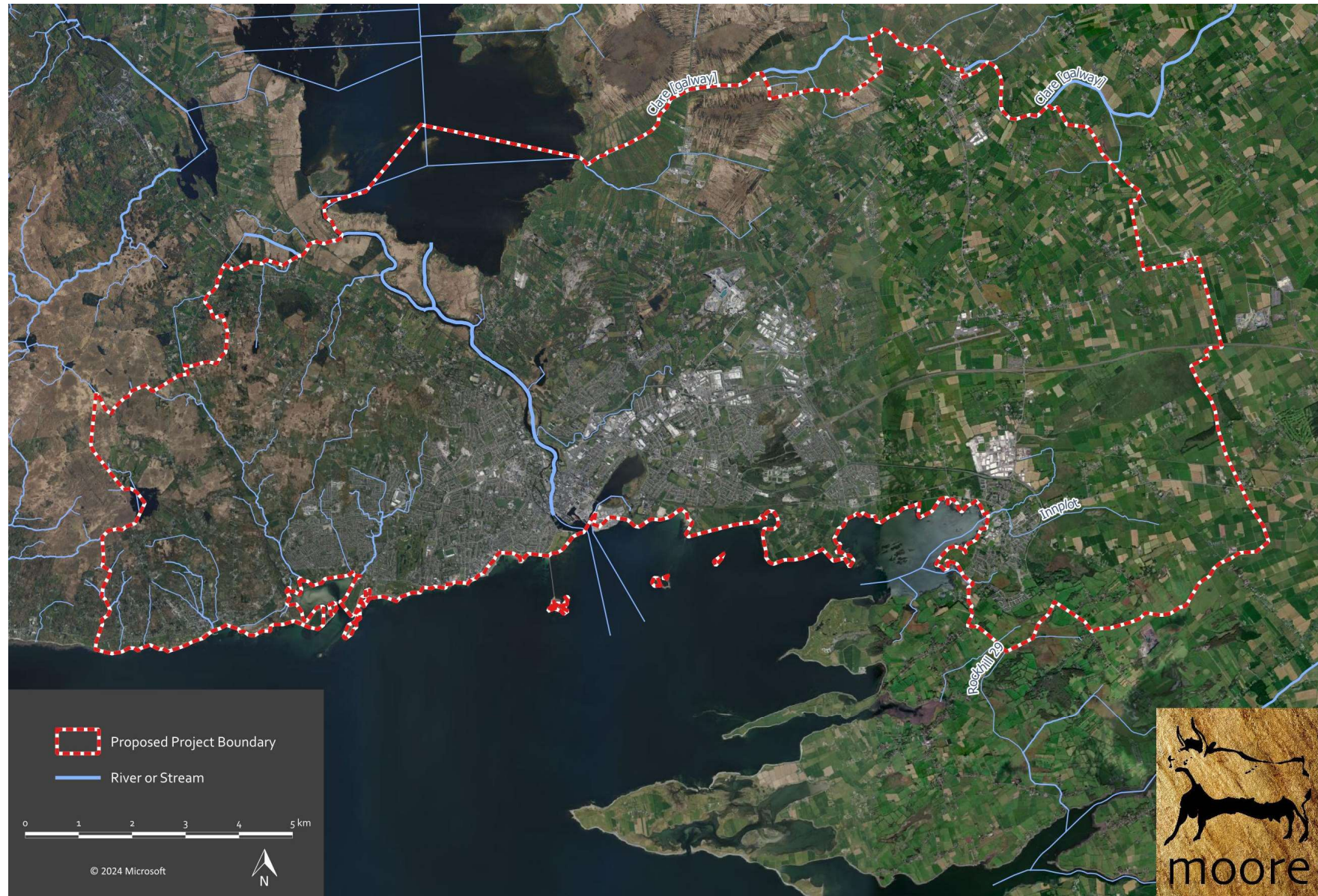


Figure 2. Showing the Galway City NAP boundary on recent aerial photography.

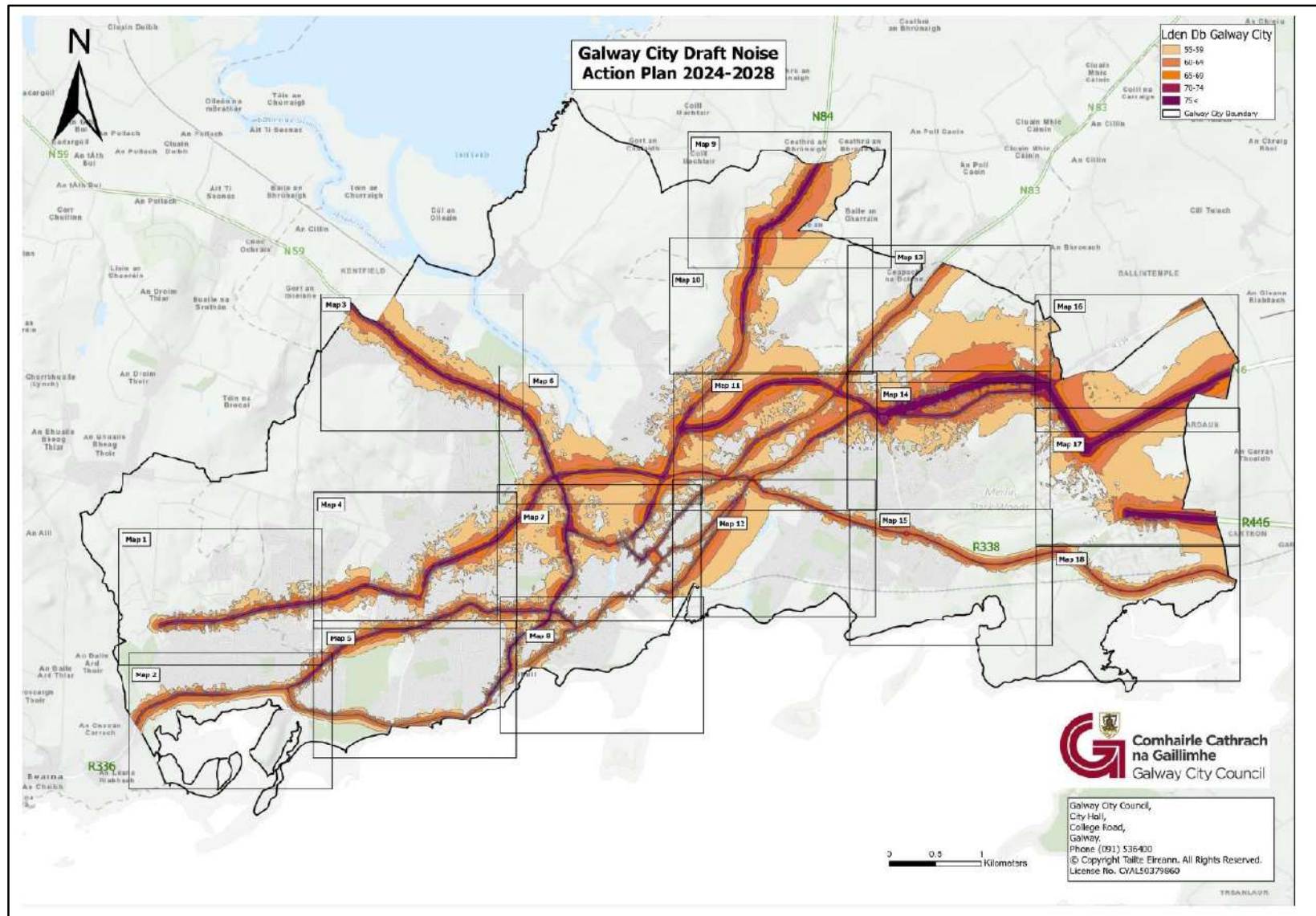


Figure 3. Strategic noise map showing  $L_{den}$  for major roads in Galway City.

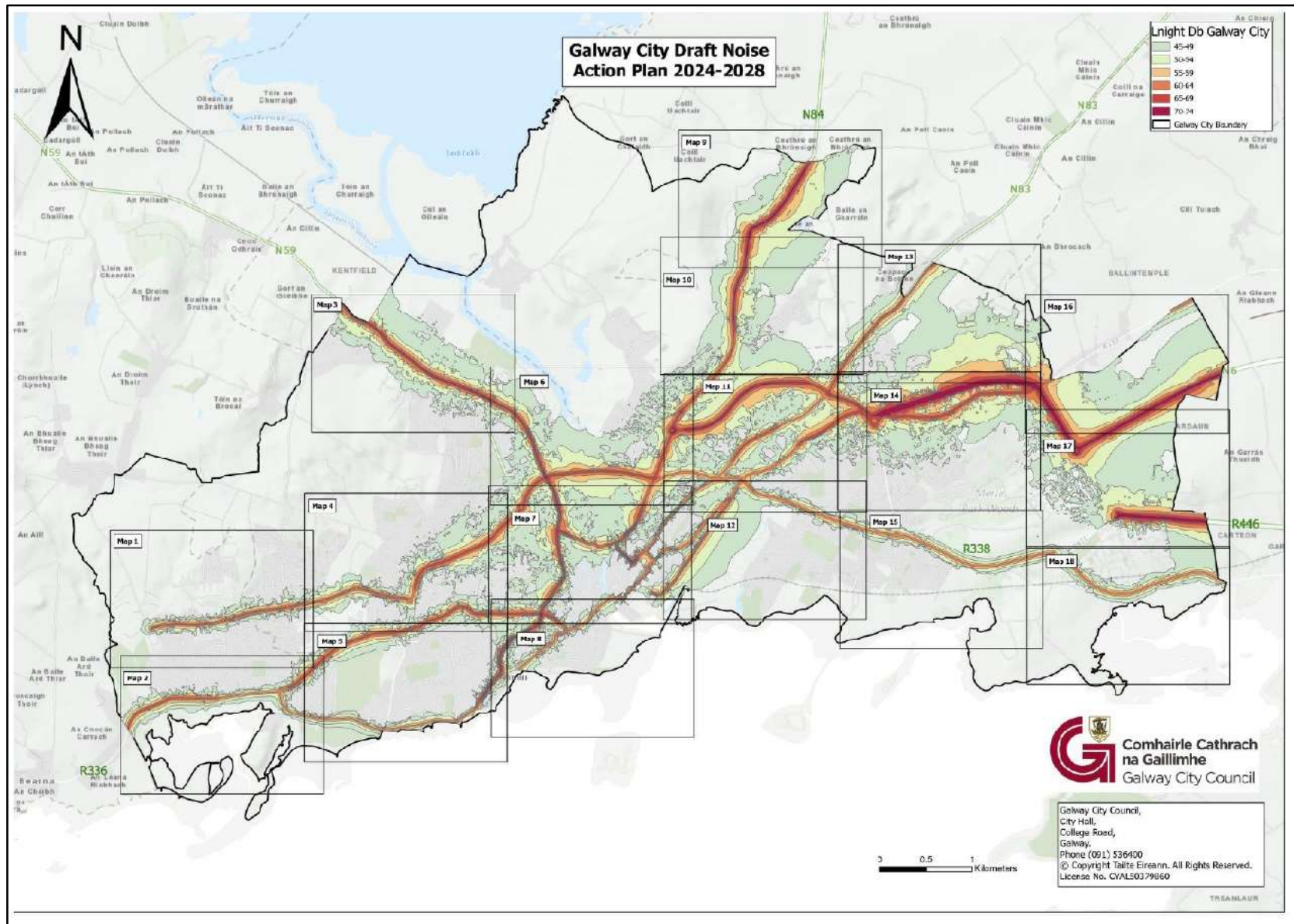


Figure 4. Strategic noise map showing  $L_{night}$  for major roads in Galway City.

## 4. Identification of Natura 2000 Sites

### 4.1. Description of Natura Sites Potentially Significantly Affected

A Zone of Influence (Zoi) of a Plan or Project is the geographical area over which it could affect the receiving environment in a way that could have significant effects on the Qualifying Interests of a European site. In accordance with the OPR Practice Note (2021), PN01, the Zoi should be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source- Pathway-Receptor framework.

The European Commission's "Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Methodological Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC" published 28 September 2021 states at section 3.1.3, that:

*"Identifying the Natura 2000 sites that may be affected should be done by taking into consideration all aspects of the plan or project that could have potential effects on any Natura 2000 sites located within the zone of influence of the plan or project. This should take into account all of the designating features (species, habitat types) that are significantly present on the sites and their conservation objectives. In particular, it should identify:*

- *any Natura 2000 sites geographically overlapping with any of the actions or aspects of the plan or project in any of its phases, or adjacent to them;*
- *any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of influence of the plan or project Natura 2000 sites located in the surroundings of the plan or project (or at some distance) that could still be indirectly affected by aspects of the project, including as regards the use of natural resources (e.g. water) and various types of waste, discharge or emissions of substances or energy;*
- *Natura 2000 sites in the surroundings of the plan or project (or at some distance) which host fauna that can move to the project area and then suffer mortality or other impacts (e.g. loss of feeding areas, reduction of home range);*
- *Natura 2000 sites whose connectivity or ecological continuity can be affected by the plan or project".*

*The range of Natura 2000 sites to be assessed, i.e. the zone in which impacts from the plan or project may arise, will depend on the nature of the plan or project and the distance at which effects may occur. For Natura 2000 sites located downstream along rivers or wetlands fed by aquifers, it may be that a plan or project can affect water flows, fish migration and so forth, even at a great distance. Emissions of pollutants may also have effects over a long distance. Some projects or plans that do not directly affect Natura 2000 sites may still have a significant impact on them if they cause a barrier effect or prevent ecological linkages. This may happen, for example, when plans affect features of the landscape that connect Natura 2000 sites or that may obstruct the*



*movements of species or disrupt the continuity of a fluvial or woodland ecosystem. To determine the possible effects of the plan or project on Natura 2000 sites, it is necessary to identify not only the relevant sites but also the habitats and species that are significantly present within them, as well as the site objectives.*

The Zone of Influence may be determined by considering the Plan's potential connectivity with European sites, in terms of:

- Nature, scale, timing and duration of all aspects of the proposed works and possible impacts, including the nature and size of excavations, storage of materials, flat/sloping sites;
- Distance and nature of potential pathways (dilution and dispersion; intervening 'buffer' lands, roads etc.); and
- Location of ecological features and their sensitivity to the possible impacts.

The potential for source pathway receptor connectivity is firstly identified through GIS interrogation and detailed information is then provided on sites with connectivity. European sites that are located within a potential Zone of Influence of the Plan are listed in Table 1 and presented in Figures 5 and 6, below. Spatial boundary data on the Natura 2000 network was extracted from the NPWS website ([www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)) on 23 July 2024. This data was interrogated using GIS analysis to provide mapping, distances, locations and pathways to all sites of conservation concern including pNHAs, NHA and European sites.

*Table 1 European Sites located within the potential Zone of Influence<sup>2</sup> of the Plan.*

Site Name	Site Code	Distance	Qualifying Interests
<b>Galway Bay Complex SAC</b>	000268	0.00	1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1150 Coastal lagoons* 1160 Large shallow inlets and bays 1170 Reefs 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> ) 1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 1365 Harbour seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i> 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows ( <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> ) 3180 Turloughs*

<sup>2</sup> All European sites potentially connected irrespective of the nature or scale of the Proposed Development.

			<p>5130 <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands</p> <p>6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)(*important orchid sites)</p> <p>7210 Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion davallianae*</p> <p>7230 Alkaline fens</p>
<b>Lough Corrib SAC</b>	000297	0.00	<p>1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i></p> <p>1092 White-clawed Crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i></p> <p>1095 Sea Lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i></p> <p>1096 Brook Lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i></p> <p>1106 Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i></p> <p>1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i></p> <p>1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i></p> <p>1393 Slender Green Feather-moss <i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i></p> <p>1833 Slender Naiad <i>Najas flexilis</i></p> <p>3110 Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>)</p> <p>3130 Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i></p> <p>3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp.</p> <p>3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation</p> <p>6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites)</p> <p>6410 <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)</p> <p>7110 Active raised bogs</p> <p>7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</p> <p>7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i></p> <p>7210 Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion davallianae</p> <p>7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)</p>

			<p>7230 Alkaline fens</p> <p>8240 Limestone pavements</p> <p>91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</p> <p>91D0 Bog woodland</p>
<b>Rahasane Turlough SAC</b>	000322	6.10	3180 Turloughs*
<b>Lough Fingall Complex SAC</b>	000606	6.25	<p>1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i></p> <p>3180 Turloughs</p> <p>4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths</p> <p>5130 <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands</p> <p>6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites)</p> <p>7210 Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion davallianae</p> <p>8240 Limestone pavements</p>
<b>Ross Lake and Woods SAC</b>	001312	6.73	<p>1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i></p> <p>3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp.</p>
<b>Connemara Bog Complex SAC</b>	002034	3.94	<p>1065 Marsh Fritillary <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i></p> <p>1106 Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i></p> <p>1150 Coastal lagoons</p> <p>1170 Reefs</p> <p>1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i></p> <p>1833 Slender Naiad <i>Najas flexilis</i></p> <p>3110 Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>)</p> <p>3130 Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i></p> <p>3160 Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds</p> <p>3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation</p>

			<p>4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></p> <p>4030 European dry heaths</p> <p>6410 <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>)</p> <p>7130 Blanket bogs (* if active bog)</p> <p>7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs</p> <p>7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i></p> <p>7230 Alkaline fens</p> <p>91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</p>
Inner Galway Bay SPA	004031	0.00	<p>A003 Great Northern Diver <i>Gavia immer</i></p> <p>A017 Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i></p> <p>A028 Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i></p> <p>A046 Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i></p> <p>A050 Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i></p> <p>A052 Teal <i>Anas crecca</i></p> <p>A056 Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i></p> <p>A069 Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i></p> <p>A137 Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i></p> <p>A140 Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i></p> <p>A142 Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i></p> <p>A149 Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i></p> <p>A157 Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i></p> <p>A160 Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i></p> <p>A162 Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i></p> <p>A169 Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i></p> <p>A179 Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i></p> <p>A182 Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i></p> <p>A191 Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i></p> <p>A193 Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i></p>

			A999 Wetlands
<b>Lough Corrib SPA</b>	004042	0.00	A051 Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> A056 Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> A059 Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i> A061 Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i> A065 Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i> A082 Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i> A125 Coot <i>Fulica atra</i> A140 Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> A179 Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> A182 Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i> A193 Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> A194 Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i> A395 Greenland White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> A999 Wetlands
<b>Rahasane Turlough SPA</b>	004089	6.10	A038 Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> A050 Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i> A140 Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> A156 Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i> A395 Greenland White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> A999 Wetlands
<b>Cregganna Marsh SPA</b>	004142	0.00	A395 Greenland White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>
<b>Connemara Bog Complex SPA</b>	004181	8.56	A017 Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> A098 Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i> A140 Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> A182 Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>

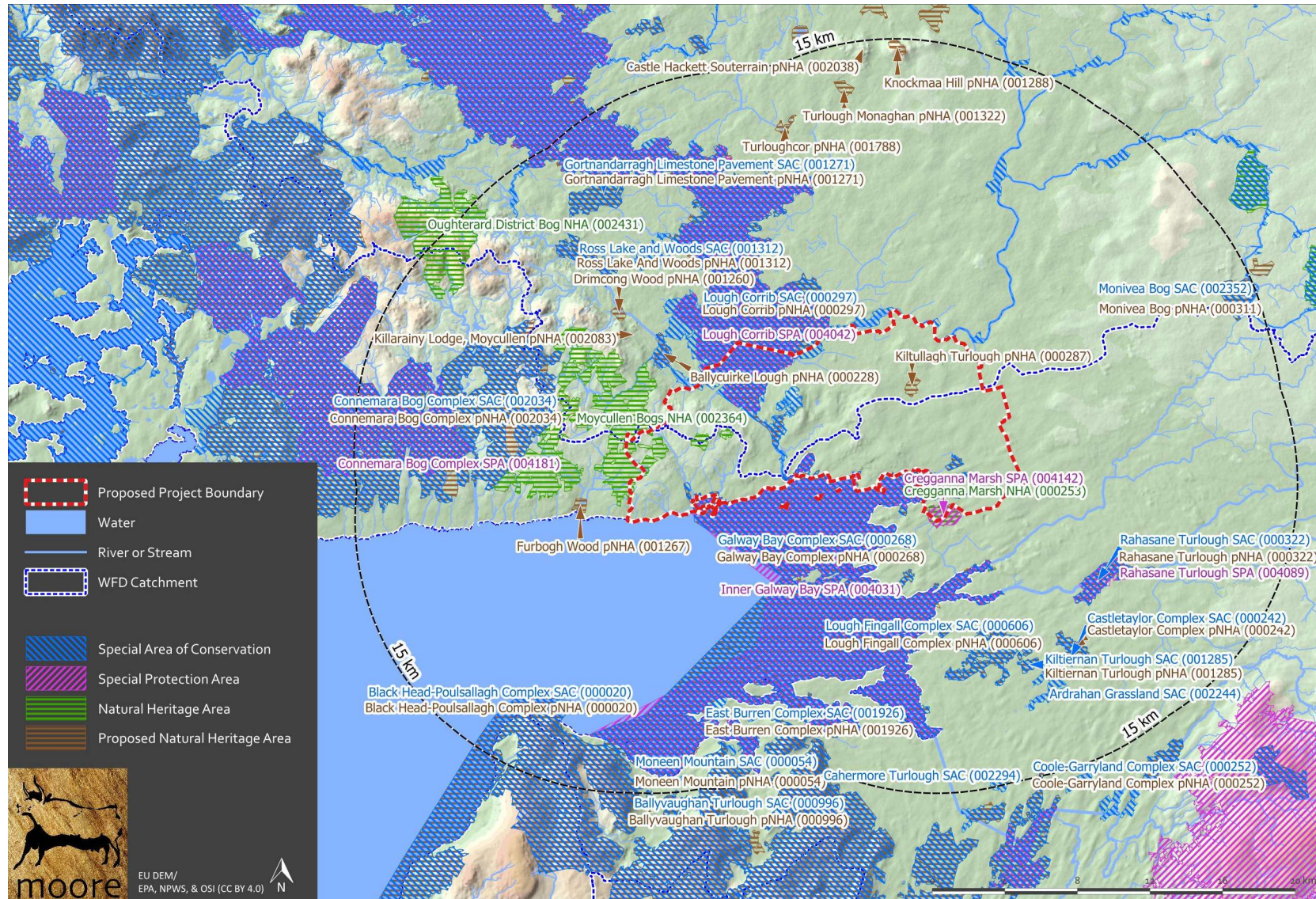


Figure 5. Showing European sites and NHAs/pNHAs within the wider Potential Zone of Influence of the Proposed Plan.

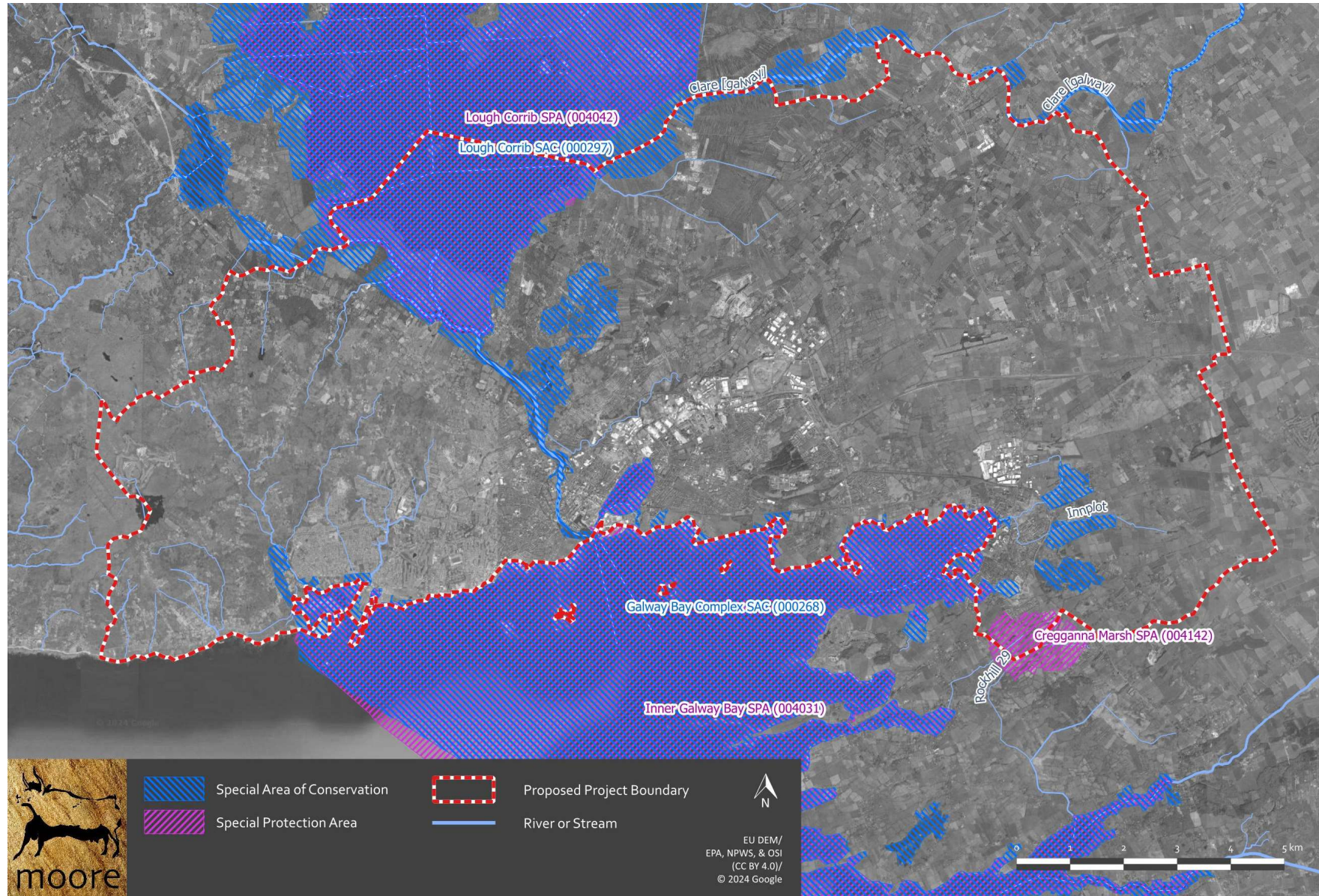


Figure 6. Detailed view of European sites in the nearer Potential Zone of Influence of the Proposed Plan.

## 4.2. AA Screening

The AA Screening Matrix (based on the Guidance in “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” is presented below in Table 2.

<b>Brief Description of the Plan</b>
<p>The primary noise source to be considered by the Action Planning Authority in Galway City relates to major roads carrying in excess of 3 million vehicles per year, as defined in the Regulations. Major roads include national, regional and local roads within Galway City. National primary roads generally link the main centres of population and to/from ports and airports. These routes can be motorways, dual carriageways and two-way roads. National secondary roads generally link centres of lesser populations and tend to be good quality two-lane roads. Regional roads provide links between national routes and towns and villages that are not located on the busier routes. Local roads are public roads other than national or regional roads.</p>
<b>Identification of Natura 2000 Sites</b>
<p>Natura 2000 sites within Galway City and within the potential Zone of Influence of the City were considered in Table 1 and Section 4.2. There are Natura 2000 sites within the plan area.</p>
<b>Is the plan directly connected with, or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 site(s)?</b>
<p>The Plan is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the conservation management objectives of the above listed Natura 2000 sites in Section 4.2.</p>
<b>Describe the individual elements of the NAP (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the European Sites.</b>
<p>Noise can be a principal source of disturbance for species listed as QIs of SACs and SPAs. The purpose of the NAP is to provide a strategic long-term management of environmental noise from traffic on major routes within the City, particularly where the noise exposure levels have the potential to induce harmful effects on human health. This will require reduction of existing environmental traffic noise where practical and also protection of the future noise climate in areas not currently impacted by traffic noise. The NAP does not propose any measures which could increase or negatively affect existing noise levels within Natura 2000 sites. As a consequence of the measures included in the NAP, any reduction in noise in areas near to, or within Natura 2000 sites will ultimately contribute to a beneficial effect in these sites and their QI features. The potential noise impacts that arise from future development works will be assessed in their own right through Planning and Licensing processes, including through Environmental Impact Assessments, Strategic Environmental Assessments, Appropriate Assessments, and application of relevant Guidance relating to noise.</p>



**Describe any likely direct, indirect, or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the nearby Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:**

**Size and scale:** The NAP will have no significant effects upon Natura 2000 sites by virtue of its size and scale. No Significant Effects Likely.

**Land-take:** There will be no land-take from any Natura 2000 site. No Significant Effects Likely.

**Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site:** There are Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence of the plan boundary. No Significant Effects Likely.

**Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.):** There will be no resource requirements from any Natura 2000 site. No Significant Effects Likely.

**Excavation requirements:** There will be no excavation requirements from any Natura 2000 site. No Significant Effects Likely.

**Transportation requirements:** There will be no excavation requirements from any Natura 2000 site. No Significant Effects Likely.

**Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc:** The Plan pertains to the period covering 2024-2028. No Significant Effects Likely.

**Describe any likely changes to the nearby Natura 2000 sites arising as a result of:**

**Reduction of habitat area:** There will be no reduction of habitat area in any Natura 2000 site.

**Disturbance to key species:** There will be no disturbance to key species in any Natura 2000 site.

**Habitat or species fragmentation:** There will be no habitat or species fragmentation in any Natura 2000 site.

**Reduction in species density:** There will be no reduction in species density in any Natura 2000 site.

**Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.):** There will be no changes in key indicators of conservation value in any Natura 2000 site.

**Describe any likely impacts on the nearby Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of:**

**Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site:** It is not considered likely that there will be any significant impacts on the key relationships that define the structure or function of the Natura 2000 sites identified.

**Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:**

**Loss - Estimated percentage of lost area of habitat:** None

**Fragmentation:** None

**Disruption & disturbance:** None

**Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.):** None

**Are there other projects or plans that together with the project of plan being assessed could affect the site? (In-Combination Impacts/Effects)**

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combinations with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely impact upon European Sites. The following plans have been considered:

- Ireland 2040 - Our Plan, the National Planning Framework
- Northern and Western Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032
- Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029
- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Galway City NAP when considered on its own will have no significant effects upon the Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence of the plan boundary and therefore, the potential for in-combination effects to arise when the NAP plan is considered with the implementation of the plans cited above, or other plans / projects is low

#### 4.2. Ecological Network Supporting Natura 2000 Sites

A concurrent GIS analysis of the proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) and designated Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) in terms of their role in supporting the species using Natura 2000 sites was undertaken along with GIS investigation of European sites. These supporting roles mainly relate to mobile fauna such as mammals and birds which may use pNHAs and NHAs as ecological corridors or “stepping stones” between Natura 2000 sites.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations 2011 place a high degree of importance on such non-Natura 2000 areas as features that connect the Natura 2000 network. Features such as ponds, woodlands and important hedgerows were taken into account in the decision process and during the preparation of this AA Screening report.

The NHAs and pNHAs identified in Figure 5 are located outside the Zone of Influence, with the exception of those which share the boundaries of the associated Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA. Accordingly, the Galway Bay Complex pNHA is considered under its higher conservation status as a European site.

## 5. Identification of Potential Impacts & Assessment of Significance

The Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites considered in the assessment and therefore potential impacts must be identified and considered.

### 5.2. Assessment of Potential In-Combination Effects

In-combination effects are changes in the environment that result from numerous human-induced alterations. In-combination effects can be thought of as occurring through two main pathways: first, through persistent additions or losses of the same materials or resource, and second, through the compounding effects as a result of the coming together of two or more effects.

The Galway City Development Plan and Galway County Development Plan in complying with the requirements of the Habitats Directive requires that all Plans and Projects that could affect the Natura 2000 sites in the same potential Zone of Influence of the Plan area would be initially screened for Appropriate Assessment and if requiring Stage 2 AA, that appropriate employable mitigation measures would be put in place to avoid, reduce or ameliorate negative impacts. In this way any, in-combination impacts with Plans or Projects for the Plan area and surrounding townlands in which the Plan site is located, would be avoided.

There are no predicted in-combination effects given that it is predicted that the Plan will have no effect on any European site.

Any new applications for the Plan area will be assessed on a case by case basis *initially* by Galway City Council or Galway County Council depending on the administrative area which will determine the requirement for AA Screening as per the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

## 6. Conclusion

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, relevant case law, established best practice and the precautionary principle, this Report for AA Screening has examined the details of the Draft Galway City Noise Action Plan 2024 – 2028 in relation to the relevant Natura 2000 sites within a Zone of Influence of the Plan.

At this stage of the AA process, it is for the competent authority, i.e., Galway City Council, to carry out the screening for AA and to reach one of the following determinations:

a) AA of the plan is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on any European sites;

b) AA of the plan is not required if it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on any European sites.

The finding of this report is that; It can be *excluded* (on the basis of objective information provided herein, individually or in combination with other plans or projects and in the absence of any mitigation) that the Plan will have a significant effect on any European site.

An appropriate assessment is not, therefore, required.

## 7. References

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2010) Guidance on Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (as amended February 2010).

European Commission (2007) Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive '92/43/EEC: Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interests, compensatory measures, overall coherence and opinion of the Commission. European Commission, Brussels.

European Commission (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.

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, Brussels 28.9.21.

European Commission (2021) Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive, Brussels 12.10.21.

NPWS (2019) The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.

NPWS (2024) National Parks and Wildlife Service Metadata available online at <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data>

Office-of-the-Planning-Regulator (2021) Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management OPR Practice Note PN01. March 2021